

THREE GREAT DIVISIONS

IN THE CHURCH

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Eschatology

Church Government

These are the areas that this book seeks to address.

The gifts of Holy Spirit are promoted like a sideshow in a circus
To enhance reputations of men their ministries

An exodus institutionalized religion is trying hard to ignore is
under way No earthly power can stop it for it is born of God.

“And whatsoever is born of God overcomes the World”

Without exception deep-rooted religious systems will do everything
within their power to preserve their domain when threatened.

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FOREWORD

For the record this effort is not an attempt to declare that every person that ever stood in a pulpit or for that matter still stands in one before a group of God's people is not genuine. I did so for twenty-five years. There is a multitude of honest servants trying to take care of a flock of sheep and that's beyond question. So to all those dear brothers and sisters that are actively serving, I pray that the Great Shepherd of the sheep will lead you into all the truth.

It seems like the Church has divorced itself from reality?

For several years now some of us have been giving serious thought to the very make up of how we do church nowadays. I fear that the church has so separated faith issues from life concerns that it has opened up an enormous gap between the religiosity and reality. In so doing it discourages us from being ourselves in church, since being ourselves is presumed to be other than what's acceptable. Take for example the manner in which we speak. It's a sort of religious language so meaningless to the man in the street that we have to leave it at the church door when we exit. Preachers sound different to the rest of us. Their religious lingo sounds like a different dialect. If we were to conduct our business life in this manner we would be labelled as strange, and people might think twice about wanting to do business with us. This unintelligible jargon-laden preaching solicits alienation and silent rage among the faithful, and is the butt of many jokes among the irreligious.

There's a message for every problem. Prayer fixes everything. God saves the day; the faithful triumph; the good always prosper. But our lives seem more complicated than that. It's not to say that we don't believe in the power of prayer or the faithfulness of God, but the way it's presented publicly in church services makes it less real than it is. It's all become rather artificial and Pollyanna. When every prayer is answered, and every testimony has a happy ending, we start to feel a growing sadness that there must be something wrong because life isn't always like that for us or most of our friends.

As we feel increasingly alienated from the faith that's dished up on Sunday we have finally come to realize that testimonies don't build faith but in most cases are just a big put-down. And so over a long time now a silent, seething kind of rage has been developing among thinking saints. So where is the avenue for the expression of these feelings of alienation and anger? Well it will not be found in the Church. Since we seem to have developed faith communities of silence, many of us must remain mute, and when it's all over on Sunday mornings all we are left with are our feelings of genuine sadness and disappointment. In other words I must be less than myself in church.

It's a fact that you only need three skills to get by in church these days; to be able to sing, to listen and to give. Singing, listening and giving, that's all you ever need on any given Sunday. It will get you through six worship songs, a lengthy monologue, that's a promise. P.S. Don't forget to take some money, it will save you any embarrassment when the offering is taken up, If you're not much of a listener, but more of a talker, to bad, you'll have to learn to be seen and not heard. A teachable spirit, they call it. Have you noticed the only people who talk about our need to be teachable are those who want to do all the teaching?

Travelling among Christians of all persuasions, I find the same feelings of estrangement, anger, sadness and silence. It's as if we're all looking for places where we, as Christians, can be ourselves and speak freely. Surely it's only through frank, honest conversation and interaction that genuine learning and personal growth can take place. There is a resurgence of house or cell groups, which some people say is the place for such interchange. But when the public gathering of the faithful doesn't reflect in any significant way the private life of the community then it's irrelevant, but worse still it's deceitful. "True worship is in spirit and truth" Jhn4:

If the church continues to be a place where some people have all the say and others have nothing to say, this silent invisible revulsion will eventually explode. People want their voices back. They want their churches back. They want to be part of a faith community and a worship experience that involves conversation, honesty, vulnerability, creativity and consensus. They do want

biblical truth; but they seem to think that you can have a meaningful experience of God's presence without sitting silently in rows, all facing the front.

A SINCERE APPEAL

Philip Yancey, writing in *Christianity Today* having talked about how his church experience encouraged him to dislike himself, to be always questing to be someone/something different, says, “Ultimately, I came to see that my entire project of reconstructing my personality had been misguided. God did not want to work with a wholly different personality; he chose me, as I was.” Since God accepts us as we are, surely we ought to expect our churches to do the same thing.

The sectarian spirit of today can never achieve the ideal of God. The clergy are responsible for division, schism and strife. The common people sigh for unity. They do not want to hate their fellowmen, but they are taught prejudice, animosity and fear by leaders who segregate them with human creeds as barriers to prevent them from mixing with other brethren and thinking for themselves. The early Christians belonged to no sect. They had no other creed than Christ. They were not fractured into diverse groups, each with a top echelon of clergymen who exploited them for gain and manipulated them for political prestige. This kingdom of priests recognizes no high priest but the Son of God now, who has been crowned King of kings.

If this generation is to see any rapid strides in restoration it must begin with the elimination of the whole clergy idea, under whatsoever name or system that idea is perpetuated. Labelling poison by a harmless name does not change its nature, but makes it the more dangerous. There must be a purging from our very thinking of a clergy system, which is repugnant to God.

The saintly David King said in a paper which he read at the annual meeting of the churches of Christ, in Leeds (England) in 1876: “Nothing seems more opposed to the genius of the Christian system than the recognition of a class of professionals paid for preaching, as are lawyers for pleading, and doctors for prescribing, irrespective of need.” In the same speech he also declared:

Paying one man to fill the pulpit with a view to keep up preaching and worship acceptable to a stated congregation, whether that man be called evangelist or pastor, almost invariably exiles New Testament order.

Many preachers are unwilling victims of a modern condition, which they secretly detest and even openly question. Many realize that the position, they occupy as “The Minister” in a local congregation, is without scriptural warrant. Such men must through prayer and meditation strengthen their hearts until they develop the courage to break away from tradition and cease to cater to that which enslaves both them and the Church.

It is for these reasons that the spiritual goals that pastors struggle to reach are not just difficult, but impossible. It’s difficult because it would be like entering a forest with a hammer to cut down trees. It’s impossible because God resists it. It’s demoralizing because instead of their people becoming mature they become weak, carnal and dependant. Consequently discerning, frustrated dissatisfied sheep begin to wander from church to church (high places) looking for reality.

In spite of the fact that many good things can happen within the system the good can become the enemy of the best. Pastors rely primarily on the happy hour on Sunday mornings to achieve their goals. The chief instrument they depend upon is their sermon delivered from a pulpit; and it better be entertaining if they want people to keep coming back. A typical Sunday morning menu consists of a song service; some announcements, and an offering followed by a 30-45 minute “monologue” aimed at producing warm and fuzzy feelings. Nowadays saints are loath to come out on Sunday nights in appreciable numbers except on rare occasions, and why should they? Monotonous preaching has produced disinterested listeners. For this reason many Christians today are no longer loyal to one church in their search for food. The reality that the demands upon workers by employers nowadays is greater than it has ever been, making their time too precious to waste doesn’t seem to have registered on preachers who can lie in on Monday mornings. Prayer

meetings and Bible studies are poorly attended, while in leadership meetings, tried, burdensome and useless programs that proved fruitless last time around are (under a different slogan) revived. Activities are a must to keep the faithful loyal to their franchise in case they begin to wander. But then there's another problem, because the saints seem loath to come out midweek because they don't want to be drafted into some dumb program and that's a fact. Perhaps if all the faithful received a pay package similar to their pastor they too would have time for all these fruitless activities, but alas they live in the real world and must go and work to earn a living to feed their families.

With great expectations Pastors regularly attend costly conferences to be taught the latest techniques that they are told will hone their gift and get their church up and running. In addition some will spend time on their knees seeking God for keys to take their community for Him, but sadly they can't seem to get His cooperation, or the troops motivated.

If the modern pastor as seen today is as important as he claims he is, then why is this highly prominent individual who sticks out like a sore toe not seen frequently throughout the first century church? Ephesians 4:11-13 is the text quoted to establish his bona fides. In rank of importance he doesn't even make Paul's list in 1Cor 12:27. In the mouth of two or three witnesses let everything be established. But this individual who believes he has a mandate from God to be the guiding light of a local flock cannot be found once, yet alone two or three times in the entire New Testament record. If he is so absolutely indispensable to the well being of the saints, why is he so invisible? The New Testament does not support the exalted position he holds in the modern church. He is without contradiction a trespasser, meddling in God's affairs. He cannot be seen in Acts, nor did he ever exist in Paul's thinking. He has about as much validity as Big-Foot. You cannot build a case for the modern pastor on one proof text Eph 4:11-13, because then you are just as guilty as the Mormons who baptise for the dead.

Such a prominent individual would have to be seen many times, not only throughout the churches that the apostles planted,

but many scriptures would be seen to validate his position. Do we have the right to ignore the infallible record in Acts and the Epistles, in spite of the fact that some teach that the book of Acts is not reliable for doctrinal exposition? Which I must add is absolute nonsense. Is the New Testament account unreliable? Or is it possible that our interpretation is flawed? Pastors **as we see them today** are non-existent in the inspired record. I realize that any effort to try and influence the institutionalised church to accept truth is no more likely to succeed than the attempts made by the prophets to warn Judah of impending judgment (2 Chronicles 36:16). Jesus never changed the Jews (if indeed he ever tried or wanted too?); and Luther never succeeded in changing Catholicism. What did they do? They went out from among them; it was their only course. Hindsight reveals to us that change has always been unacceptable to religious bigots.

Most churches grow peak plateau and then slowly fade away.

Most churches grow, plateau and immediately begin to die spiritually, eventually evaporating. You may say yours is different, but I wouldn't hold my breath if I were you because hindsight proves otherwise. Some ministers have embarked upon self-destructive building programs that all but destroyed their people leaving the next generation with a mammoth financial burden while they move on to greater follies. These ambitious projects stand as a mute testimony to failed human effort and can be found in every major city around the world. That's undeniable because the ruins are there for all to see while the causes and effects should not be lost to us. Hindsight doesn't lie.

"Don't let your Pastor become another statistic" was the bold headline in a prominent Christian Magazine. It went on to say, "recent surveys indicate that pastors need all the encouragement they can get".

- 50% feel unable to meet the needs of the job.
- 80% believe that pastoral ministry has affected their family negatively.
- 70% say they have lower self-esteem than when they entered the ministry.

- 40% report a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
- 70% do not have someone they consider a friend.

(Source National Day of Prayer Task Force.)

"If you can't take the heat (and most can't) stay out of the kitchen)"
Pres.H.Truman.

THE JESUS REVOLUTION

In the late fifties and the early sixties a visitation of unprecedented significance began that would eventually impact the youth of the entire western civilization. The Jesus Revolution, as it became known as, commenced on the West Coast of the United States among the Hippies (the flower people). As it spread it began to challenge the staid and formal religious institutions of the Protestant faith.

They were the “Rock Culture” who protested with their music and their lifestyles against the legacy of a society that had given them the cold war and its very real threat of nuclear annihilation. The sixties were the most explosive decade to that time in any century of human history. The Korean War, the Cuban crisis and the Vietnam War came as the nations lurched from crisis to crisis with the real possibility of global conflict. This generation wanted no part of it and so they protested. Some students lost their lives for their convictions at the hands of the US National Guard.

Kent State Shooting Aftermath:



Rising opposition to the U.S. action in Vietnam led to several domestic confrontations between civilians, (most often demonstrating students) and peacekeeping troops. National Guard troops stunned the nation as they shot into a crowd of protesters during a 1970 demonstration at Ohio’s Kent State University, killing four students and wounding nine.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, the war in South East Asia was opposed by millions of individuals around the world. In the U.S. activities of the anti-war movement such as marches, demonstrations, and letter-writing campaigns inevitably had an effect, and by mid-1973, U.S. combat forces were no longer there.

In the midst of all that was going on, the youth of the nation started to experiment with psychedelic drugs as they began to walk away from the values of a society that could offer little hope because they saw it had no answers. And so they commenced to cast off restraint, and rebel against a society that demanded that they not only take their place in it, but fight for it also. They fled the draft for the Vietnam War to Canada, Sweden and other countries by the thousands. This seeking and searching generation began to experience an outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God that was more than most churches could handle. They began to worship with musical instruments that been thought unsuitable to praise God with. They expressed their love for Jesus with some of the most enduring and beautiful songs that have ever been written. They were fervent and real in their earnest endeavours to share Christ with all and everyone they could. Still the organized church and in particular the Pentecostals, (true to form) fought what God was doing rather than humbly seeking what they might learn. One rare exception was Chuck Smith in Costa Mesa California. That's an undeniable and historical fact.

After organized Pentecost finished ridiculing and resisting this visitation (some went as far as refusing to allow these young people into their churches until they had a wash and dressed more conventionally, so when that didn't work) they set out to absorb and control it, which to a large degree they were unsuccessful. Organized Pentecost believed they were the guardians of present truth and that these young people ought to be coming and joining their churches where they could be taught. These new Christians were looked upon with suspicion; some even doubted they were saved. Oh how the pendulum swings, just look at whose doing the weird stuff now?

What happened is history. New kinds of churches began to spring up that were less judgmental and more accommodating than the intolerant and inflexible Pentecostal movement.

I know this is true because I was Chairman for 6 years of the Pentecostal Ministers Fraternal in Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand, and I saw what went on first hand.

TRADITION VS TRUTH

Each one of us is the creation of a particular tradition. It's something about which we had very little say. It just happened and there was little we could do about it. Either we were born into one, receiving it directly from our parents, or we became part of one when we were born again.

That's just the way things are but it isn't necessarily a bad thing, because it would be incorrect to say that all tradition is wrong. However there come times for most of us when some of our tradition comes under intense pressure from the Word of God, and we have to decide whether it's standing up to the close scrutiny it's getting or not. This has been my personal experience. While I am indebted to my teachers beyond measure and could never repay them for the contribution they made to my spiritual well being, the fact is they were not infallible, and I was very gullible.

My wife and I were saved as a result of our landlady witnessing to us after having attended an Oral Roberts Crusade in Sydney Australia in 1956. I was raised as a Roman Catholic, while Anne was Presbyterian. So it was certainly a life changing experience for both of us.

We moved to New Zealand shortly after we married and immediately became involved in a local church where we began to take root in the Lord. We dearly loved the fellowship, which gradually became a large part of our lives for the next 25 years. As the church grew numerically, it joined with an expanding group of local churches throughout the country.

Our fellowship supported tent crusades that were conducted around the country each summer by an evangelist from among us. People from all over New Zealand and many parts of Australia attended a Bible School that operated each winter for a number of years.

We fully accepted that what we were being taught was biblical and had no reason to suspect that it was at all otherwise. Our teachers

were men of integrity (if not experience), and the evidence of God's blessing in our midst was abundant.

Then in 1987 after many years pioneering churches I began travelling internationally. This exposed me to other points of view that I had never had to deal with so long as I was insulated within the circle of our own movement. Suddenly I found myself having to defend beliefs that for years I had accepted without question. We had some doctrines that we strongly propagated which distinguished us from other groups, but now these were being called into question.

I'm still quite comfortable with many of the things we were taught, but I hasten to add some of our mentors eventually began to compromise. In the course of time certain matters began to trouble me, such as the mixture of Law and Grace with all the bondage and confusion its propagation brings. In particular the use of the Levitical tithe for the support of the priestly class was of some concern. Without this legalistic, scripturally unsupportable application of Old Testament law, many Church organizations and ministries would become insolvent. These matters were disturbing and needed to be addressed and not just swept under the carpet.

I am not saying that our teachers were knowingly promoting this mixture of law and grace, but their failure to rightly divide the word of truth particularly over this issue, paved the way for financial abuse that became common among their next generation of preachers. Slowly these fellowships degenerated into a highly structured and institutionalised denomination, sustained by rules, regulations, and a financial levy placed upon each church to propagate their movement. They are now are no different to the denominations they once highly criticized, and like them have established an earthly hierarchy with their own elected king.

**You may fleece a sheep many times;
But you can only strip the wool off their backs once.**

Over the past forty years we have witnessed many changes in the manner in which churches operate. Practices that once would never have been countenanced have become commonplace. We

accept that change is inevitable but we don't want change for change's sake. Change doesn't necessarily equate with progress, nor is knowledge a substitute for wisdom. Tragically money has become a god because of its power. More and more preachers unscrupulously "Go for gold," not because they want to relieve the poor, but rather to finance their dreams. Ministries preaching a mixture of Law and humanism have become very adept at stripping the wool off the backs of their sheep.

When you hold a conviction privately that's your business.

When you espouse one publicly then that's everyone's business.

Our resistance to lies, innuendo and deceit, (even though it may stem from ignorance) must always be visible.

Isaiah 58:1. "Cry aloud and spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins".

PUT UP OR SHUT UP

All spheres of public life are constantly under scrutiny. We see it in politics, in Local Body Government, in the field of medicine, science, and foreign affairs education and even in sport. Litigation and Lawsuits are commonplace in every level of society.

Make one rash statement and you will quickly be pulled into line and possibly ridiculed. The media are the self appointed watch dogs of society and will allow nobody no matter whether they are President, Prime Minister, King, or politicians to get away with anything that's inaccurate. In other words we live in a regulated society that censors with ruthless efficiency all that is written and spoken.

You will be held accountable for every public statement that you utter. Your critics will demand proof of the claims you make, so you had better get your facts right or you could find yourself in very serious trouble. Promising careers have been brought to an abrupt halt, and in some cases completely ruined. Make a "faux pas" and you will be constantly reminded of your folly, and never be allowed to live it down. "Read my lips" *President George Bush 1992.*

Yet when it comes to Church leaders it seems that these rules don't apply. Instead they close ranks, and if anyone calls for an explanation, or questions the truthfulness of what was preached publicly, they are accused of "judging," and the matter is treated as a personal attack on the leader. The laity is effectively muzzled by such clichés as "you mustn't judge," or "you're not showing a loving attitude," and so is made to feel uncharitable because they dared to question an authority figure. In turn this gives pastors great boldness to continue preaching adulterated, poorly researched nonsense. They promote programs and visions that they expect their flocks to pay for, and I mean pay; in some cases dearly. Well all that will eventually have to stop.

Insulate a fool from his folly and he will never learn.

Many Church leaders have hidden behind this facade for so long that they actually start to believe they don't have to answer to the rank and file of their churches, and so individuals are denied the right to an explanation. Confidently they deliver their uninterrupted Sunday morning monologues safe in the knowledge that they are unlikely to be challenged, but if they are, it usually ends up with the preacher taking offence, and the inquirer being frozen out of fellowship.

FREE INDEED

If there is one book that every Christian should read repeatedly it is most certainly the Epistle to the Galatians, this is the first letter that Paul wrote. It's an introduction to what Christ has done for us. It tells us of the wonder of the Grace of God and the freedom He purchased for us at Calvary from sin, guilt, and all forms of religious bondage.

Freedom is an awesome thing yet so few of God's people have it to enjoy, although it is the privilege of every blood bought child of God. Our precious freedom must be jealously guarded because religious people are continually trying to take it from us and make us conform to some unscriptural model. Religious leaders just can't help themselves. We came to Christ, and in most cases came under the influence of some religious bias that left us wondering if we will ever be able to live up to the standard they set for us.

Our freedom never came cheaply. Our blessed Saviour paid for it with His very own life to provide it for us. It is undoubtedly the most precious of all His gifts. To be free from condemnation and to be able to worship Him in spirit and in truth is what He seeks for us to rejoice in, and Himself to receive. He whom the Son sets free is free indeed. So why is it that organised religion is forever trying to take it from us by imposing man made rules and restrictions? Do they want us to live by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Rules and regulations are what the Pharisees were imposing upon their people when Jesus came. This path will only lead to self-destruction.

For example we are told when to meet; where to meet; how often to meet; how we are to meet; what we can do and what we cannot do when we come together. We can't ask questions during the service but must sit there in stony silence listening to a monologue, which from week to week deals with non-essentials. We are forbidden to practice our Christianity collectively outside the authorized meeting place without special permission from our

authorities. They maintain strict control over *all corporate* expressions of our faith. We must stand when they tell us, and sit when they tell us; we must all face in same direction, which is always towards those that are running the program. Why do we so easily give up this precious freedom that was purchased for us at so great a price?

There are many reasons, as we shall see. Some saints are unwilling to take responsibility for their lives because they find it much easier to let another make their decisions for them. But if our freedom to think unhindered is surrendered to the clergy then how will we ever learn?

The Master avoided answering questions time and again, but instead He would respond with a question of His own. The enquirers were thus encouraged to find the answer themselves. This is how we too will come to know the voice of the Holy Spirit and learn His ways. A good teacher won't answer all your questions, but he will show you how to find them. The practice of all religious systems is to teach you their creed. They do not encourage you to search for the truth. It's called brain washing.

Then some of us are just plain lazy, or we have become so intimidated and so full of fear that we are happy to hand over our lives and minds to some organization. At least that way when things don't work out you will always have somebody to blame for your predicament. One of the great basic urges in human nature is to look for a scapegoat, someone to blame for our failures. Eve said the Devil made me do it; Adam said the woman made me do it.

Look at the huge following the shepherding movement enjoyed that was introduced to America from Argentina. Soon preachers from all around the world grabbed this legalistic, manipulative, spirit soul and body controlling doctrine like a drowning man clutches a straw. You see, pastors just love programs that are going to help them increase their control and grow their church.

By multiplied thousands, people handed over their minds to this oppressive doctrine run by half a dozen men. Women were to be seen and not heard and so a great resource was effectively muzzled. As time went by we saw this top-heavy movement brought down like Nebuchadnezzar's image, as will all who set themselves in opposition to the Kingdom of God.

Next we have the "self-righteous" who like the Pharisees are so glad they're not like other men. They like to score their "brownie points" by letting others know how they read three chapters of the bible every morning before they go to work, and of course they pray for at least an hour a day.

We feel condemned as men like Rees Howells and Praying Hyde are held up to us as role models, wondering if we are ever going to make it. Somehow we feel that we must do something to become worthy of eternal life. That way we become easy victims for religious institutions who capitalize on guilt, and condemnation to keep their people in line. This way they can make them amenable to their expansionary projects. It's the Tower of Babylon all over again. They capture the hearts and minds of the ignorant to build themselves a name in the earth. Individuals as well as religious movements are guilty of this. They use the "altar call" to convict the saints of their unworthiness, and when they get them (to use their terminology) to the 'altar' they patch them up with a prayer until the next time.

The way pastors and their movement's judge the effectiveness of meetings evangelists take for them is by how "Big" the altar call is. I am not saying that their motives are bad, any more than I would say that Peter's motive to build three tabernacles on the Mount of Transfiguration was, but it wasn't what God wanted, and so He told Peter to hush up and listen to Jesus. I think we should all take heed to His advice to Peter.

And so we “go to church” (that’s the building where we all face the same way to listen to our weekly monologue). It just doesn’t feel like Sunday if we haven’t had our 45-minute sermon. Presenting yourself to hear your pastor deliver his weekly sermon is an absolute must. Most Pentecostals, Charismatics, and evangelicals are under such bondage to this habit that they feel sure that they have committed a mortal sin by not attending. To comply with the requirements of the temple orators we must get committed to their programs, pay our dues, thus proving to them and our relieved conscience that we are maintaining our good standing with them and God.

So you see freedom is something that can be lost very easily. Through your ignorance it can be taken from you by the manipulative actions of a person or persons who have an agenda of their own.

Stand fast in the liberty that Christ has given to you and don’t become entangled in religious bondage. If you’re not free to worship God in spirit and truth, when and where you choose you’re in bondage. Get free from the interference of control freaks that are more interested in what you can do for their programs rather than how they can best serve the Lord by becoming servants of His people.

Mary had a little lamb
That would have become a sheep
If it hadn’t joined a Bible Church
And died from lack of sleep.

Unknown.

BEYOND DECEPTION

The robber is never more dangerous than when he is reported to be out of town. During the Spanish Civil war, when General Franco was asked how he planned to take the last of the loyalist strongholds he replied. "I have one column coming from the north, a second advancing from the south, I have a third column marching from the east and a fourth column approaching from the west." Then the inquirer asked, "Which column do you expect to commence the offensive?" Franco replied, "The fifth column." But you only mentioned four columns, where is this fifth column asked his inquirer? "Inside the enemy's camp," replied the general.

The parables in Matthew 13: make it abundantly clear that tares were among the wheat; bad fish were in the net; unclean birds were in the mustard tree of faith, and leaven was in the meal. Mixture is a characteristic of the times in which we live. Jesus warned His disciples about what things would be like before His return. Paul warned the brothers from Ephesus about conditions that would surely arise after his departure. At Miletus Paul tells the elders of Ephesus what shall befall him and them and warned them to be on their guard.

Acts 20:17-35.

"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." **"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations,** which befell me by the lying in wait of the **Jews:**"

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have **showed you,** and have taught you publicly, and **from house to house,** testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now,

behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

This writer is fully persuaded that many, men that occupy pulpits exercise a ministry they never received from the Lord but decidedly from another source.

“And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed (**not fleece**) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing **grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock.** Also of your own selves shall men arise, **speaking perverse things**, to draw away disciples after themselves? Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to **the word of his grace**, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them, which are sanctified.”

Paul goes on, “**I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.**”

Television Evangelists can't say that. I receive letters regularly appealing for money. We should not support these parasites that appear regularly on our TV screens. I do not object to them as individuals, but I strenuously object to the methods that they use to support their ministries. When they resort to begging and merchandising products to stay solvent suggests that God's way of supporting their shady ministry is too risky. Saints in third world countries have to trust God for their support. These ministries can

only survive in an affluent society. Their ministries would never endure in countries like China, Africa, Asia, or Eastern Europe. They might have to resort to prayer.

“Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me.” Paul worked physically with the tools of his trade to provide for himself and the rest of his team of church planters.

**There’s little chance of a return when you give to the poor.
That’s why preachers are too smart to be caught doing that,
They much prefer to spend it on themselves and their dreams.**

“I have showed you (not instructed) how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak” and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” It is absolutely acceptable, that they that preach the gospel may live by the gospel, for the Scripture says, “Muzzle not the ox that treads out the corn.” We know this proverb was not just for the oxen’s sake but also for those that labour in the word and doctrine. However, our service must be without expectation of reward. It must be freely given with no strings attached. We are not saying that it is wrong to receive financial support as we serve the Lord. But if we claim it as of right we are nothing but hirelings. In spite all this, we have these high-flyers demanding appearance money even when they travel to third world countries. Puffed up with their own importance acting under the delusion that they are God’s answer to a dying world, they ply their trade preying on the saints. Their pride knows no bounds. Without some guarantee they won’t go. I fervently wish they would stay at home.

“They have gone the way of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness and prostituted his gift for money.” These people are a stumbling block to the cause of the gospel and the butt of jokes among the unsaved. God is upset and will most surely deliver His people out of the mouths of all these greedy dogs.

What's the difference between putting your money into the pocket of a Pentecostal prosperity preacher, or putting it under the garter of a whore in a strip joint? There's none, they have equally prostituted themselves. Besides you shouldn't be seen in places like that. In case you wondered it's called spiritual fornication.

A church in our city formed a group they called "The 2000 Club." To join you had to pledge \$2000 per annum over and above your tithes and offerings for the building fund. Deductions by automatic payment were encouraged. For the privilege of being **ripped off** you become a financial member of this valiant club who hold meetings ineligible to non-pledgers. This same church hired a well known Movie and Television personality for a Christmas outreach service. The fact that he was not believer didn't seem to be a consideration. He certainly pulled a crowd, and if that's what they were trying to do they were successful. What ever else it had to do with presenting the gospel one can only hazard a guess. Perhaps using the unconverted for church outreaches are a new innovation. No doubt more Pentecostal churches will follow suit, although these professionals can be quite expensive. No matter, money's not a problem, there's plenty more where that came from.

Automatic teller machines are being installed in many Pentecostal churches nowadays. No longer is giving seen as an act of worship but a duty. This machine in the church foyer is an effective way of making certain that nobody slips through the net. It's for the convenience of the saints so they say. Although they much prefer to directly debit the accounts of members.

At Antioch Peter ate with the Jews and refused to eat with the Gentiles. He compromised because he feared the Jewish Christians, who were demanding that the Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. But that's mild compared to the manipulators that occupy the pulpits of many churches in this day and age Gal 2:13.

Paul foretells that there will be a departure from the faith in later times.

“Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **seducing spirits**, and **doctrines of devils**; Speaking lies in **hypocrisy**” I Timothy 4:1-2.

LAW OR GRACE

Is tithing part of the new covenant? If not, why then do the preachers of the Evangelical/Charismatic/Pentecostal movements in particular, cling to it like a drowning man clutches a straw? One doesn't have to be Einstein to work out that without tithing they would probably have to go and find a job.

Like their political counterparts they devise an endless array of taxes to finance their political ends. The visible church pursues the tithe from their members relentlessly. They have in fact been so successful in their campaign to place this burden upon their people that they are scarcely ever challenged in regard to this illegal practice. Not content with the tithe, they claim the first fruits of all your increase; faith pledges for the building fund; offerings for missions; and of course have special offerings for the visiting minister.

To say that "the N.T. believer" is not required to tithe, strikes at the very root of the Pentecostal religious system. For these carnal unscriptural systems cannot survive, unless tithing is rigorously propagated, and practiced with the utmost diligence.

Tithing is absolutely necessary if Priestcraft is to continue to prosper. This is definitely the soft underbelly of religion. To touch this is to touch the most hallowed doctrine of the present religious system. Undermine this lie and the beast will die. Whether it is pursued vigorously or not doesn't alter the fact that the people will be made aware one way or another that they are expected to tithe. In most American churches individual records are kept of every members giving for tax purposes. This way they can check up on 'who is, and who isn't' tithing.

To teach that tithing is no longer binding under Grace, and that it is not an essential element of Christianity, would destroy the priestly class, putting most of them out of a job. Yes, they would have to go and do some real work to earn a living the same way as other people do.

There's only one thing you can do for a slave, "Set him free."

The enforcement of the law of tithing is one of the most powerful tools in the churches' arsenal. This law produces guilt and condemnation. It accuses you of disobedience and tells you that you're a thief. It makes you try harder to commend yourself to God. It can produce an overwhelming sense of failure as though you have let God down.

In an attempt to ease a guilty conscience one works even harder to get back into God's favour. Such is the power of the Law. Whenever you add law to the grace of God, however minute, you detract from the sacrifice of Christ and diminish the efficacy of the cross. If you add one iota of law to the finished work of Christ at Calvary you have "fallen from grace." You are then obliged to keep all the law. You can't live under two covenants at the same time. If you are under law then your saviour's efforts were inadequate. And so now you must save yourself by your own efforts. No man can serve two masters. Law and Grace cannot live under the same roof.

Dear brother and sister, stand fast in the liberty where with Christ has set you free and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Stop feeling guilty and listen to the truth. The Law gave Israel no hope. It's a hopeless proposition. Its major purpose was to point forward to the Cross. If it couldn't help Moses or Israel then why do you believe that it will do for you what it couldn't do for them.

Why do preachers push tithing and all its other accoutrements upon the saints such as the double tithe and firstfruits? They weigh

people down with burdens beyond their ability to bear. That's exactly what the Pharisees did.

I know some people attending a particular church who tell me their pulpiteers can't keep their hands, (proverbially speaking of course) out of their pockets. It's usually because they are about to embark on an ambitious building program. So this Old Covenant law of tithing is their "milk cow" without which their programs would collapse. Their ministries would cease for lack of support. Their ambitious building programs wouldn't get off the ground. Without this tax preachers could no longer use people to serve them and their dreams. These ministers surround themselves with "yes men" and together they apply pressure on their people to give. They want their people to be compliant and to yield to these unscriptural practices that fill their coffers while burdening their people.

**What kind of men do pastors choose to be their elders?
Unquestionably only those who will blindly follow them.**

A large number of Christians only tithe sporadically. Therefore they are under a curse according to the clergy's interpretation of Malachi 3: 8-9, a passage these men love to quote. It's the perennial favourite on this subject. People are flailed with it regularly. According to the temple tax gatherers if we don't tithe we are in big trouble with God. Well that's just not true and we know where lies come from.

If leaders will lie about money they'll lie about anything that suits them. Christ became a curse for us. We are not under the Law but under Grace. The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law.

Don't listen to those preachers because they have a vested interest. They have an angle when they promote it. It means a better than average standard of living that in most cases is much higher than the people they are supposedly serving. Many set their own salaries. They attend all the conferences at the saints' expense. They

dip their hand into the treasury as often as they deem necessary. Some teach that the entire tithe belonged to the priests so they pocket the lot. Yes they do, I know because I watched some of them do it for years. I lie not. Then if you're really successful you can travel business class and get first class treatment as the "visiting Man of God," where you will be waited on hand and foot. This for many preachers is heaven on earth; it's enjoying a comfortable lifestyle on your hard-earned cash.

The Law gave no hope.

Release from Law gives great freedom and great hope. Don't ever place your trust in works, even righteous ones, but in Christ and Him alone. The problem today is not much different to the one that the early church faced, namely that the disciples of Moses were trying to take over the church. It's the Galatian problem all over again with one exception, in Paul's day the legalists were unsuccessful.

Every Gentile church that Paul planted had to deal with Jewish Christians coming among them and insisting that they come under the Law of Moses. The Galatian problem is still very much alive. In Acts 15: the first council of the church in Jerusalem tackled the problem head on. The answer that Peter and James gave to Paul and Barnabas was: "It seems good to the Holy Ghost and to **us** (that's **the whole church**, all the brothers and sisters) that you abstain from meat and blood offered to idols, don't commit fornication, and remember the poor. That's it, full stop.

When is the last time you saw the leaders of your franchise take the tithes and give them to the poor? They would never do something as scriptural as that. They prefer to devour the portion of the widows and fatherless on themselves and their carnal desires. The law of tithing as taught by many in the church is born of greed and practiced with skilful deception. Others may teach with pure motives in ignorance, but whatever the motivation, it is 'not of faith. It's much easier to preach compliance to law than it is to trust God.

God helps those that help themselves, seems to be the philosophy behind much of what's done in Christendom.

THE LAW VS FAITH

Laws and regulations appeal to the religious nature of man. All false religions strive to commend themselves to their deity. Most Christians struggle with this problem all their lives. It is a cruel hoax that causes many to feel undeserving because they are not worthy. But that's the wonder and blessedness of the grace of God. It's God giving us what we can never earn and don't deserve.

In a growing number of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches a 10-15 minute period is devoted to a mini-monologue before the 45 minute one, where the sole aim is to extract as much money as possible from the pockets of the saints. If you're not a regular tither this mini sermon is designed to make you one, and you will be admonished to do so and get committed. (These mini messages are usually given to some up-and-coming enthusiastic hopeful to perform. That way the Pastor doesn't cop the flak, and the "hopeful" gets a chance to impress his idol.)

Committed to what may I ask? Jesus committed Himself to no man for He knew what was in men's hearts. In my travels I have met people in many parts of the world who sold a home and gave the money to some preacher to whom they were committed only to become bitter as they saw their hard earned life savings go down the drain. In addition we are told that if we don't tithe and bring it all into the storehouse we are disobedient, and can't expect God to bless us. Well I'm trembling in my boots, I don't think, because that's a downright lie.

**Triumphantly the Temple Lackeys cry out
"Tithing was 450 years before the law"
To which I reply "And so was Circumcision."
"While The Sabbath was 2500 years before that"**

Five times Paul spoke of how he laboured with his hands. Acts 18:3; 20; 34; 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 9:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 5:8. And not only for himself but also on occasions for those (Acts 20:34,) that

travelled with him also. Most preachers would find earning a living too demeaning.

**Only a covetous person would dispute
the evidence of the infallible Word**

Nowhere in the record did Jesus or the disciples ever receive tithes. **Not once** since the day of Pentecost did the apostles ever tell converts to tithe. No they never did. And when Paul and Barnabas took the gospel to the Gentiles there is no evidence that he told these non-Jewish believers to begin to tithe.

THE ARGUMENT FOR GRACE

We have no doubt about our responsibilities to give. But as for tithing being incumbent upon New Testament believers, it is simply not true. There is no doubt that the very survival of all these outlandish expansionary Charismatic/Pentecostal movements is dependent on the tithes and offerings.

Manipulating Malachi 3: 8-10.

Come to church with me and listen to this morning's message on tithing. It was explained that according to the Bible we are required to give a tenth of our income to the church. The scriptures cited were Malachi 3:8-10 and Genesis 4:20. It was further said that according to these passages, those who did not tithe robbed God! And that this is part of the reason why there is no revival in the church. We were told that less than 20% of those attending a church paid tithes, while in those churches that are experiencing "revival" the majority of the congregation tithed. We were then exhorted to show our faith and to stop limiting God for how else will souls be won for the Lord? If 90% of the congregation gave tithes to the church then we'd see a "real move" of God in our midst, and so the message went on.

All compulsory giving strengthens the hands of evildoers.

I used to tithe but now I am one of the non-tithing members in the body of Christ. I love Christ with all my heart but like some of the other non-tithers, I take offence at this doctrine and think it's important that you know why! If you are responsive to feed back from people, please take time to consider this critique, and then you will probably be able to help them.

As a new Christian I was taught to tithe. I tithed faithfully and cheerfully for a number of years until a first-hand exposure to third world poverty brought me to a careful study of what the Bible teaches in regards to New Testament giving. It gradually became clear that what I in particular had been taught and the church in

general taught on tithing could not be reconciled with what the Bible said.

I'm not expressing the view of a penny-pinching novice. Nor am I out to 'split hairs' or make trouble for ego's sake. I'm writing as a concerned Christian who believes that the teaching of tithing is erroneous, undermines the Priesthood of the believer, while doing violence to the credibility of the church of Jesus Christ. These are serious charges and I don't make them lightly. Please bear with me and decide for yourself whether or not these accusations have any substance.

Why I stopped tithing!

It's unscriptural. Any important doctrine that has a profound bearing on our life should have a clear foundation in the New Testament. It would be safe to say that unless a teaching or concept was outlined and expounded by the New Testament writings or in the form of a favourable commendation of Old Testament principles and practices it would be invalid today. In other words, if Jesus or the apostles didn't teach something what right have we to **insist** on it today? Yet the few times Jesus mentioned tithing it was in a derogatory sense when berating the hypocrisy of the Pharisees! Matthew 23:23; Luke 11: 42; Luke 18:12.

Apart from Old Testament references in the Gospels and Hebrews there are no other references to tithing in the New Testament. Yet the clergy claim we are obligated to pay tithes. If Jesus and the primitive church did not teach tithing why is it taught today? What is the motive behind teaching the Law of Moses? A brief glance at early church history may help. Prior to the 4th century the church teaching in regards to Christian giving remained relatively pure and bible centred. The church father Tertullian wrote in the 2nd century and commenting on the worship of the church explained:

“Our presidents are elders of proven character, men who have reached this honour not for a price, but by character; for nothing that is God's goes for a price. Even if there is a chest of sorts, it is not made up of money paid in entrance fees, as if religion were a matter

of contract. Every month the men bring some modest coin or whenever he wishes, and only if he does wish, and if he can, for nobody is compelled; it is a voluntary offering. You might call them the trust funds of piety, for they are not spent upon banquets, nor drinking parties, nor thankless eating-houses; but to feed the poor and to bury them. For boys and girls who lack property and parents and for slaves grown old shipwrecked mariners and any that may be in mines, islands or prisons. Apology 39-4B6. T. Glover PP 174-7.

During the 2nd century persecution of Christians was common. It is unlikely that, (as with the first church) the acquisition of property and assets as an institution had become a common practice up to this point in time. However, during the third century certain introversion seemed to take hold of the church turning it slowly from its evangelical heritage towards a more structured and controlled form of religion.

During the third century local assemblies no longer had autonomy but were ruled over collectively by Bishops. Most religious leaders were called 'Priest' and gradually took the place of mediator in religious ceremony.

Tithing and Priestcraft grew side by side in the Fourth Century. As Constantine brought an end to the persecution of Christianity in 313 AD a new tide of abuse burst forth from within. A gross neglect of the teachings of Christ and the apostles flourished in the newfound humidity of a protected religious system. Doctrinal corruption of every type became the order of the day. The same 'spirit of error' that introduced the mediator priest also continued with the heresies of Maryology, infant baptism, the celebration of mass, and other such ceremonial form.

This structured form was a far cry from the simplicity of the apostolic church requiring an ever-increasing level of finance to support it. 'Tithing', of course, was a natural progressive teaching. **If a priesthood of Levitical nature was to be supported what better way was there than the tithe of the Levites?** Compare this quotation from the fourth century to that of Tertullian's 2nd century commentary mentioned before: "For the Lord says to you in the

gospel; unless your righteousness abounds more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now herein will your righteousness exceed theirs; if you take greater care of the priests, the orphans and the widows? So therefore shall thou do as the Lord has appointed and shall give to the priest what things are due to him. (BK II CH 75) “Apostolic Constitutions.

“All the first fruits of the winepress, the threshing floor, the oxen and sheep, shall thou give to the priests that thy store-houses and garners and products of thy land may be blessed. Thou shalt give the tenth of thy increase to the orphan and to the widow, to the poor, and to the stranger. All the first fruits of thy hot bread, wine, or oil, or honey, or nuts, or the first fruits of other things shall thou give to the priests” (BK III CH 29) Apostolic Constitutions.

During the period of history presented here, the destitute were still the beneficiaries of the church. The Levitical tithe was to be their portion and the newly established priesthood was to receive the 'first fruits', once again a Levitical concept. By the close of the fourth century the trend had progressed one step further with the priest receiving the tithe as his due and the orphan and widow ousted from their God given sanctuary. You will also notice the corrupt and egocentric interpretation of scripture in the first quotation from BK II CH 75. “How will your righteousness exceed theirs?” The answer never came from the book of Philippians; “And being found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”, but from the pressure of expediency. The ultimatum given is clear; if you want to enter heaven, give how we say:

Church history shows that this attitude was eventually carried to the point, where according to the teaching of the day, you could actually shorten your stay in purgatory, by a generous donation to the church. This sounds preposterous to the Bible believing church of today but I wonder how we could substantiate from scripture our teaching of tithing to the apostolic church of the first century? Let's look closely now at the structure supporting this teaching.

The Malachi proof text.

Malachi 3:8-10 is an integral part of the modern tithing doctrine. As there is **no** New Testament attestation of this teaching, this text always has to be cited. But is the context of this passage relevant to the teaching it is supposed to support? According to the exposition of this text we are told that we are robbing God by not paying tithes. The tithes are to be brought to the church building because again we are told this is the storehouse, i.e. where the Christian is fed from God's word. Competition for your tithes is heating up with individual preachers claiming to be storehouses also. They encourage believers to tithe to them personally. They are part of a growing number of preachers who are competing with pastors for their share of this lucrative market. In return for your tithes they will give their personal cell phone number, and guarantee you a good seat in their conferences when you attend. Then other pastors allow high profile ministers to come in and take up their own offerings? Does your pastor promote these kinds of people among you? If he does then he's no watchman but just a dumb dog. Who were the intended recipients of the Hebrews' storehouse mentioned in Malachi? We shall see as we read on.

There were three tithes in Israel:

The First tithe was for the support of the Levitical priesthood. They were supported by the Lord's provision in the tithe this was their inheritance. It was a yearly tithe. It appears that the Levites received and utilized this resource on a day-to-day basis. Numbers 8:21-23).

The Second tithe is not to be confused with the tithe for the Levites. This was for the individual and his household to cover expenses at the national feasts so there would be no excuse for failing to attend. Deut 14:22-24. This was also a yearly tithe and was laid aside by each family to be consumed by them at the annual feasts.

The Third tithe was a special tithe for the poor. It was to relieve the suffering of the Levites, the widows, the fatherless, and the strangers. According to Deut 14:28-29 every three years these tithes (equal to 3.3% of the annual GNP) were to be brought together and laid up

within the gates. This was received every third year and so was not a burden.

At this point of Israel's history there was a large number of working males numbering hundreds of thousands. The tithes from these individuals when brought together and laid up would certainly require storage. Verse 29 then indicated the intended recipients. Along with the priests, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow shall come and eat and be satisfied. In Malachi 3: we have another reference to the third tithe. These verses describe a purging of the Levites that they may offer the Lord an offering of righteousness. Then in vs5 judgement is pronounced upon the sorcerer, the adulterous, the liar and those **that oppress the labourer (the poor), the widow, the orphan and the stranger.**

Throughout the Old Testament God's tender mercy towards the weak and poor is evident as we've just seen in Deuteronomy 14:29. It seems clear beyond contradiction that God instituted the storehouse mentioned in these verses for the provision of the unfortunate. God's heart has always been thus inclined. Jesus continually crystallized this concept amongst those who would listen, driving home a fact that is self-evident even beyond the sphere of Christianity; "As you've done this to the least of my brethren you've done it unto me." It's inaccurate to say Malachi 3:8-10 upholds the claim that Christians not supporting their local church institution with 10% of their income and more are robbing God. This chapter is addressing the oppression of four classes of people **by the rulers**. They are the hireling of his wages; the widows, the fatherless, the orphans, and the strangers who were all suffering because of the people's hard-heartedness.

One can't help but draw a parallel, that the church that does not support the poor and destitute consistently and generously, but demands the tithe to consume upon themselves and their building programs, is committing a grave dishonour to their Lord. **They and their leaders are the thieves.**

However the teaching of the New Testament is irrefutable on this point, that, we are no longer under law but under grace (Romans 6). If we return to keeping the law we return to the dominion of sin. So how can we then subject ourselves to a requirement of law? And so the modern church comes up with a teaching to find an answer to this dilemma in Abraham.

Trying to make the doctrine stick.

Of the many references to tithing in the Bible, all are referring to the Mosaic Covenant except two. For a modern church doctrine with no New Testament textual support, these two scriptures and the inference thereby drawn are flimsy indeed. The thread that supports this teaching above a sea of error will break the first time it's tested, as we shall show.

Genesis 14:20 Abram and Melchizedek:

This is the proof text used to show the validity of the modern tithe. The other is found in Genesis 28:22 and is generally overlooked as it deals with Jacob doing a deal with God. The expositors of the tithing doctrine use this one verse to resolve the obvious inconsistency between last week's sermon, "The atonement of Christ liberates us from the bondage of law," and the sermon this week, "You rob God if you don't give 10%". The exegesis is that Abram, prior to the institution of the law, gave a tithe of the spoils of war to Melchizedek, thereby establishing a precedent transcendent of the law. Abram tithed therefore so should we. Superficially this seems a reasonable inference.

Consider the following problems. Abram gave a tithe of the spoils of war. This was not his normal source of income as he was not a warlord. This probably was the only time he ever tithed.

However, if Abraham was to set precedents for the establishment of church practice and ceremony (other than tithing alone), what an interesting Saturday we'd have! As we entered the church with our wife and concubine we'd pause to pay our tithe to the priest and receive in return wine and bread. Upon finding a seat

we'd settle down to watch a beautiful animal sacrifice before the announcements. The message would probably be on salvation by fleeing Sodom and Gomorrah, followed by an earnest entreaty to anyone out there that has never been circumcised to come to the front! (Yes, I see that hand.) This church service would, of course, have the same endorsement of scripture as tithing, because Abraham before the Mosaic Law practiced all of these components!

We'd meet on the Saturday of course, because the Sabbath was instituted even prior to Abraham. (Genesis 2:3). So therefore, the dilemma remains. Observe part of the law and you are obliged to keep all the law; enforce part of the Old Covenant and you must enforce the entire covenant. This can lead to an interesting question. Why is such an erroneous system of scriptural exegesis still being maintained to support such a farcical teaching? Circumcision has greater scriptural weight in its support than that of tithing.

Didn't Paul circumcise Timothy? Yet neither tithed.

Why is tithing taught over circumcision? Why did the teaching of tithing grow alongside the institutionalisation of the church? Why did this impostor, the tithing, supplant New Testament 'giving', as is clearly revealed in the word? Before attempting to address these questions, let's consider first how the original Christians worshipped the Master in their giving.

New Testament giving.

When was the last time you gave alms? To many the word sounds quite alien when spoken, it induces mental images of beggars in dirty streets, soiled bandages and poverty. And yet alms were seen as an expression of mercy, pity and love, given by the fortunate to the unfortunate as worship to God during the New Testament times. Jesus himself taught us how to give alms before he taught us to pray. (Matthew 6:1) Jesus, in his rebuke of the hypocritical Pharisees, advised them to give alms '**as you are able**' before deriding their practice of tithing (Luke 11: 41-42).

In the following chapter Jesus goes further, telling those who would seek the kingdom to "sell all that you have **and give alms.**"

This is not a ritualistic law-bound tenet, but a dynamic form of worship wholly acceptable to a merciful God. The very nature of alms transcends Christian boundaries. It seems to be written on the heart of any man who earnestly seeks his creator's countenance that in providing for the destitute, he's serving his God. Cornelius we're told was a devout man one that feared God, **giving much alms** to the people and praying to God always. In response to his devotion the Lord appeared to him saying, "thy prayers **and thine alms** are came up for a memorial before God".

Cornelius was a Roman Centurion, a gentile, and as such was barred from the Jewish place of worship. And yet his devotion led him to pray and to give alms. (Acts 10:2). In the previous chapter Tabitha, a disciple, was described favourably as a women "full of good works **and alms deeds**". Paul himself confessed to **giving alms** Acts 24:17; in fact, the teaching of alms giving is one of the most concise and scripturally attested practices of the New Testament. Yet, when was the last time you were exhorted to give alms?

Summary: As we have seen I contend that a simple Bible study clearly indicates that the practice of tithing has not had any relevance to the church of Jesus Christ at any stage of history. It was introduced around the 4th century to assist in the support of a new concept, the church institution.

The tithe then, was one of many 'Levitical' terms and elements (i.e. priest, clergy, temples, vestments, titles etc) that were established in this period. The teaching has been firmly entrenched ever since. Once again the question must be asked, why? With regret I am of the opinion that the answer lies in the meaning of the word heresy: GK: (hairesis); that which is chosen, and hence, an opinion, especially self-willed opinion which is substituted for submission to the power of truth. Such erroneous opinions are frequently the outcome of personal preference or the prospect of advantage.

The New Testament church was a body of believers that came together regularly. The meetings occurred spontaneously within the houses of the believers Therefore; no precedent was established to indicate how a latter-day, asset-orientated, church infrastructure was

to support itself. Faith offerings are fine but somewhat unreliable, erratic and ungovernable. An institution that has consistent and regulated expenditure requires constant and reliable source of income. The Old Testament tithe suits the system admirably. Generally, a person who is constantly badgered with this teaching will feel obligated to tithe.

**Tithing has been maintained through the
years because of the prospect of advantage
towards a financially dependent institution**

This is not a comment on the validity of the structure itself but the means by which it supports itself. I am saying the 'church' as we know it today should stop supporting itself with tithing and give its money to the poor. I believe the tithe should be defrocked for the impostor it is and the giving of alms, as taught in the New Testament be re-established.

We are stewards of our possessions and all that we acquire from our lawful employment. And it is essential that a steward should be faithful. The Lord should always direct our giving, with special consideration to the less fortunate. Not forgetting that the workman is worthy of his hire.

Matthew 25:45&41. “In as much as ye **did it not** to one of the least of these brethren **ye did it not to me**. Depart from me **ye cursed.**”

“If this western, asset-rich church continues to invest tithes in buildings, carpets, padded seats and parking lots, while our brothers and sisters in third-world nations sit in the dirt under a tree worshipping Christ with empty stomachs, then we are the ones that will be accursed.”

Proverbs 28:27 “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.” The apostles never taught on tithing but giving, and then never of necessity but with a willing heart and cheerful attitude. 2 Corinthians 8:8; it is not an order, or commandment but an exhortation. “And if the eagerness to give is present then it is according to what anyone has, **not to what**

one doesn't have." It was never the apostles intention that people be burdened. Legalism has no place in the Christian assembly. The apostles never threatened (as pastors do) the people with the consequences of failing to tithe.

2 Corinthians 8:13-14. "For it is not intended that other people be eased and relieved of their responsibility and you be burdened and suffer unfairly, but to have equality, share and share alike; **your surplus over necessity** at the present time going to meet their want and to equalize the difference created by it, so that at another time **their surplus** in turn may be given to supply your want. Thus there may be equality."

"As it is written he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little did not lack." (Exodus 16:18).

**We are not under any compulsion to tithe.
We are encouraged to give, and then "only"
over and above our necessity (2 Cor 8:14-15).**

It sickens me to hear preachers telling people to pay their tithes first, and to tithe on their gross wages, and if they don't have enough for their necessities, then trust God. How often I have heard them say, "You can't afford not to tithe." So you see, I'm one of a growing percentage who used to tithe but don't any longer. I believe that if I did tithe; that is, if I gave money to the church then I'd be robbing the needy to aid and abet their dreams.

I am also of the opinion that revival will tarry as long as we continue to pay credence to heresy while truth suffers side by side with millions of starving people. It is abundantly clear that the tithe teaching in the majority of structured churches is purely for the benefit of the organization and the men that support the structure. You may say to me, "do I really expect to see the church turn around and repent of this teaching"? It would be naive of me to say yes, but perhaps over a period of time some honest teachers of the Word will start to emphasize giving according to grace, while allowing the tithe to die a well-deserved death!

MUZZLE NOT THE OX

Grain in the East is usually threshed by spreading the sheaves out on a floor, over which oxen and cattle are driven to and fro until the grain is trodden out. Moses ordained that the ox was not to be muzzled while threshing. It was to be allowed to eat both the grain and the straw. Deut 25:4. We are not saying that it is wrong to receive financial support. But our service should be gratuitous and free of expectation.

The scripture plainly teaches believers to give as God gives, liberally and freely. And that it is right for those who labour in the Gospel to be supported from the offerings of the people to whom they minister. If we follow the pattern of the Apostle Paul he worked at tent making to support himself and others throughout his ministry, yet he gladly accepted what on rare occasions was given to him.

Five times Paul mentions how he laboured with his hands. Acts 18:3; 20; 34; 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 9:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 5:8. And not only for himself but also on occasions for those that travelled with him as well Acts 20:34. But in Galatians 6:6 Paul plainly states that those that are taught in the word **have an obligation to communicate**, and distribute material support to those that minister.

Philippians 4:14-19. “Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. (Notice he makes no reference to tithing) For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus **the things which were sent from you**, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. (I have all: or, I have received all). But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

The record shows they received only **one** offering during the entire first two missionary journeys. Missionaries today won't go

anywhere without guarantees. Nor will pastors or itinerants preach for nothing.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Socrates (470-399 BC) Was a Greek philosopher, who profoundly affected Western philosophy through his influence on Plato.

Born in Athens, the son of Sophroniscus, a sculptor, and Phaenarete a midwife, he received the regular elementary education in literature, music, and gymnastics. Later he **familiarized** himself with the rhetoric and dialectics of the Sophists.

Sophists. Greek sophistes; “expert, master craftsman, man of wisdom.”

In the 5th century BC this was a name applied to itinerant teachers who offered instruction in several higher branches of learning for a fee. Socrates believed in the superiority of argument over writing and therefore spent the greater part of his mature life in the marketplace and public places of Athens, engaging in dialogue and argument with anyone who would listen or who would submit to interrogation. Socrates was reputedly unattractive in appearance and short of stature but was also extremely self-controlled. He enjoyed life immensely and achieved social popularity because of his ready wit and a keen sense of humour that was completely devoid of satire or cynicism.

Plato (428-347 BC) was a Greek philosopher, and one of the most creative and influential thinkers in Western philosophy. He was born to an aristocratic family in Athens. As a young man Plato had political ambitions, but he became disillusioned by the political leadership in Athens. He eventually became a disciple of Socrates, accepting his basic philosophy **and dialectical style of debate: the pursuit of truth through questions, answers, and additional questions.**

In 387 Plato founded the Academy in Athens, the institution often described as the first European University. It provided a comprehensive curriculum, including such subjects as astronomy,

biology, mathematics, political theory, and philosophy. **Aristotle** was the Academy's most prominent student.

Plato's writings were in dialogue form; philosophical ideas were advanced, discussed, and criticized in the context of a conversation or debate involving two or more persons.

The dialogues may be divided into early, middle, and later periods of composition. The earliest represent Plato's attempt to communicate the philosophy and dialectical style of Socrates. Several of these dialogues take the same form. Socrates, encountering someone who claims to know much, professes to be ignorant and seeks assistance from the one that knows. As Socrates begins to raise questions however, it becomes clear that the one reputed to be wise really does not know what he claims to know, and Socrates emerges as the wiser one because he at least knows that he does not know.

Aristotle (384-322 BC), Greek philosopher and scientist shares with Plato and Socrates the distinction of being one of the most famous of ancient philosophers. Aristotle was born at Stagira, in Macedonia, the son of a physician to the royal court. At the age of 17, he went to Athens to study at Plato's Academy. He remained there for about 20 years, as a student and then as a teacher. Next Aristotle went to Pella, the Macedonian capital, where he became the tutor of the king's young son Alexander, later known as Alexander the Great. In 335, when Alexander became king, Aristotle returned to Athens and established his own school, the Lyceum. Because much of the discussion in his school took place while teachers and students were walking about the Lyceum grounds, Aristotle's school came to be known as the Peripatetic ("walking" or "strolling") school.

Peripatetics were the students and followers of Aristotle. The name may be derived from Aristotle's custom of walking about while lecturing.

It is interesting to note that while the Lord most certainly never copied any style but had His own, His method of training His disciples however was closer to the Greek style of imparting truth. It was most definitely dialectic dialogue giving opportunity for many

questions to be raised and answers to be given. It is evident from the gospel accounts and the Pauline epistles, that conversational intercourse was taking place continually as they travelled from place to place.

RHETORIC

Rhetoric is the art of effective speaking. It often uses artificial or exaggerated language **not requiring an answer**, hence the rhetorical question. No one in the audience should ever interrupt the pulpiteer while he is speaking. The preacher isn't interested in hearing your questions or what you think, only in what he has to say. Besides you will put him off balance and make him very angry because it will cause him to lose his place and forget what he wanted to say. You see it's all been carefully rehearsed and then memorized, as he desperately wants to get his point across.

Rhetoric, in its broadest sense, is the theory and practice of eloquence, whether spoken or written. Spoken rhetoric is oratory. Rhetoric defines the rules that should govern all prose composition or speech designed to influence the judgment or the feelings of people and is thus a form of propaganda. It therefore treats all matters with forcefulness and style. In a narrower sense, rhetoric is concerned with a consideration of the fundamental principles according to which oratorical discourses are composed, these being invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery.

Classical Rhetoric:

The establishment of democratic institutions in ancient Greece imposed on all citizens the necessity of public service, making skill in oratory essential; hence a group of teachers arose known as Sophists, who endeavoured to make men better speakers by rules of art. **Plato satirized the more technical approach to rhetoric, with its emphasis on persuasion rather than truth.** During the Renaissance Rhetoric was a prescribed subject in colleges and universities, public disputations and competitive exercises (debating) keeping the practice long alive.

Modern Rhetoric:

Oxford University still carries on this tradition where in the 80's Jerry Falwell debated New Zealand's Prime Minister David Lange on the issue of Nuclear Disarmament. In the early 18th century, rhetoric declined in importance, except in the political arena where

the debating platform continued to furnish numerous opportunities for effective oratory.

Two Scottish clergymen Hugh Blair and George Campbell did much to revive the popularity of Rhetoric in the late 18th and 19th centuries with two books. One written by Blair entitled “The lectures on Rhetoric” and the other by Campbell “The Philosophy of Rhetoric” A further work by the British logician Richard Whately furthered the cause.

DEFINITIONS CAN BE DANGEROUS

In the first half of the 20th century, a revival of the study of formal rhetoric, encouraged largely by the exponents of the linguistic science known as semantics, occurred throughout the English-speaking countries of the world. Seminaries latched onto this eagerly. It was just another example of the church getting its leading from the world.

Systematic theology begins with a definition and then moves out from that. It is basically the doctrine of St Augustine who stole it straight from the heathen philosopher Aristotle. Aristotelian rationalism has overwhelmed our seminaries for hundreds of years. When you attend a theological seminary you are going to be taught a rationalistic view of Christianity and nothing else. Christianity is the mind of Jesus Christ. Rationalism is the mind of man. In seminary you will learn rhetoric, which is the art of public speaking. They call it a sermon but it's simply rhetoric. The sermon is a relic of Greek Roman culture.

It will **start** with a "definition" which according to the dictionary is a "conclusion, sure, specific, clear, certain, to be look on as final", the last word on a matter. Commencing with a definition you will then be taught how to rummage through the Bible to gather up your proof texts and conclude with your definition again. It's not honest; **it's brain washing**.

The tenets of faith of a denomination are a definition of the things they stand for and when I say stand, I mean they are fixed and frozen solid in place. Seminarians are told what they will study. What textbooks are acceptable and what are not. One thing for certain is you won't be studying the Bible. Surprised? And you still want to go to seminary! You amaze me.

The first things your lecturers will tell you are that you are there to learn a **rationalistic** view of your faith. You will digest the definitions and learn to present them in rhetorical sermons that hopefully make sense.

Even after several years of training most preachers can't do that. Right then you should pack your bags and leave because true Christianity is to have the mind of Jesus Christ.

The Apostles' Creed is a cluster of rationalistic definitions, which most historic traditions proclaim and hold sacred. Well they haven't done them a lot of good have they?

OUR BLESSED HERITAGE

We should think long and hard about whom we lend our minds to for our spiritual education. We tend to think that history is just a thing of the past when in actual fact it's recurring continually. To understand the story of the King James Bible, we have to take a brief look at the earlier history of the Bible in English. The story is one of martyrdom and repression. It starts with John Wycliffe's translation of the scriptures in the 1380s, for which he was denounced as a heretic.

The orthodox view was that to make the Bible accessible to the common people would threaten the authority of the Church, and lead the people to question its teaching.

A scandalized contemporary wrote: "This Master John Wycliffe translated from Latin into English - the Angle (Anglo-Saxon) not the 'angel speech' and so the pearl of the gospel is scattered abroad and trodden underfoot by swine."

This sentiment was echoed by the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes who sourly observed: "After the Bible was translated into English, every man, nay, every boy and wench that could read English, thought that they spoke with God Almighty and understood what he said." So Wycliffe and his dissident Lollard movement were rigorously suppressed. Similarly when William Tyndale published his translation of the New Testament from the Greek in 1525, he entered into a conflict with Church and State that eventually brought him to the stake. Translating and publishing God's word in the language of the people was as revolutionary an act as, in the eighteenth century, advancing the proposition that states should be ruled by democracy not kings.

It seems to me that this passage is saying the same sort of thing that we are endeavouring to draw attention too. But like many other things that occur historically, it's all happened before. (Ecc. 1:9-10).

The comment of Thomas Hobbes seems to me to be especially relevant. "How dare ordinary people commune with God?"

MIND DOESN'T MATTER

We have definition preaching in just about every branch of the church with pre-digested and regurgitated conclusions, with a text or two thrown in for good measure. The Charismatic/Pentecostal/Churches are experts at this deceptive art, with some surpassing others in the many and varied methods by which they present it. Some support their presentations with banners, bands, shophars, choirs, roaring, dancing, yelling, barking, rolling, running, screaming, fainting, staring, and not staring, falling, flailing, twisting and writhing. I'm flummoxed for more metaphors so these will have to suffice.

Then you're encouraged to go get a drink from the South African Bartender. "Breast up to Joel's bar and have a drink" cries the bartender as he urges the congregation on to more and more outlandish behaviour. I assume that they are referring to the Holy Spirit. The great tragedy today is that the Blessed Holy Spirit is portrayed as the ringmaster in a circus, where gyrating, running, falling, laughing, barking and roaring saints urged on by the audience are the performing mammals.

Highly publicized conferences with well-known speakers cater to the fleshly desires and upbeat emotions of the crowds. These gatherings are very successful in drawing large numbers who disappear quicker than they appeared as soon as the circus leaves town. The preachers must accept full responsibility for this state of affairs because they have created an appetite for the diet they are serving up. Only now it's more than just an appetite, it's an addiction. I personally know pastors who minister to the flesh (pushing people over) in every service at least two or three times.

The level of spirituality achieved by this method is temporal, emotional and material. Temporal, because it doesn't last. Material as it centres on gold dust, and teeth supposedly being filled with gold and silver. Emotional because its life without intelligence, as people laugh and fall over, do carpet time, or have a drink metaphorically speaking at Joel's bar. The leaders call it revival, a sign that

demonstrates God's love for us. They claim gold dust and feathers are falling in meetings around the world. It's been seen on people's hands, while videos are circulating showing a sister shaking gold dust out of her hair onto a Bible.

Temporal things exaggerate themselves and are always clamouring for our attention, while at the same time they tend to dim eternal realities.

A minister's wife was serious when she told me of a church in America that swept up the gold dust that fell in a meeting, and then sold it to pay the mortgage off on the church, I thought, "pull my other leg".

We have become program junkies. There are so many destinations that you can travel to for a fix if you can afford it. Most pastors can go because they can just take it out of the church treasury. The list is impressive and could go on ad infinitum. Conference circuit preachers (and they don't come cheap) peddle their particular programs pocketing thousands. Adored by their fans, intoxicated with the importance of their message, they offer the latest fix to anyone stupid enough to pay for it. We don't question the sincerity of many of these men with regard to some method they have discovered that assisted them in building their church. But must they then, formulate, package, copyright and promote their particular discovery proclaiming it as a cure-all for barrenness? Most of them use clones to assist them. Many Americans have successfully cloned themselves in Australia. Their pathetic clones market the products of their American masters religiously. Then of course we have our home-grown varieties. Actually the market has become flooded with all these conferences and their accompanying books, videos and cassettes. And they are not going to go away, because as one loses its market share something with fresh new appeal will always be forthcoming to take its place.

In the midst of this entire goings on where are the voices calling us to repentance and restoration? "None saith restore," says Isaiah. How can we continue to look to these beggarly elements when we

should be preaching Christ? God's silence is deafening. How can churches that once believed in restoration (Acts 3: 19-21) start looking to insipid programs for answers? I once belonged to a fellowship of men who were committed to restoration but gradually they began to compromise and then train the next generation of pastors to walk in strange paths.

I am greatly troubled and saddened to see what has become of the movement, which I was once a part of. I do not wish ill of my brethren but the senior members are undoubtedly to blame for this deplorable condition. Expediency and religious politics became the order of the day and it is sad to see what happens when truth falls to the ground.

Lazy preachers love formulas, it saves them the trouble of seeking God.

Jeremiah 48: "Moab hath settled on his lees, he has not poured himself from vessel to vessel, therefore he has gone stale." Yes, their wine has turned to vinegar and is not fit for consumption. God has never raised a committee yet to do His bidding, He uses faceless men. Voices crying in the wilderness, and they are always in the minority? Do I expect them to change this state of affairs? Absolutely not! Then what is their purpose? It's to prepare the way of the Lord and a people for His name's sake. How? By calling them to sanctify themselves and come apart to gather under His headship.

THE SERMON

It must be said from the outset that scripture does not preclude preaching and teaching. In fact sound bible preachers and teachers are in short supply. The Scriptures are very clear on the need for instruction from gifted teachers (Acts 13:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:2). So to question the “sermon” concept is not to question the need for teachers within the body. However, there are some inherent problems and limitations with the “sermon” idea. The following is a brief examination of some of those problems.

The very notion of a “sermon” comes not from the New Testament, but Greek culture. With the rise of the Constantinian church (4th century AD), all sorts of paganistic and Greek ideas entered Christian thought and practice. For instance body life with all its inherent gifts was replaced by a one-man rule “the Bishop,” (known today as “the Pastor”). The practice of mutual edification that marked the gatherings of first century Christianity was replaced by a mystical and abstract “order of worship” which allowed no participation from the “laity.” Large religious edifices replaced the humble gathering of Christians within homes and the corporate dimension of teaching that allowed every believer to participate (1 Corinthians 14:26; Col. 3:16) was replaced by the teaching “office” of professional orators. Such unbiblical and Greek ideas were even carried over into the very way Christian truth was taught. With the conversion of men such as Chrysostom, (the man with the golden tongue) and Ambrose, (both were extremely gifted speakers and popular lecturers in the Greco-Roman culture of their day) polished rhetoric, grammar and eloquence began to take centre-stage within Christian assemblies. Influenced by Greek notions of rhetoric and philosophical wisdom, Christian teachers began to follow the communication patterns of their contemporaries, which Paul never did. 1Corinthians.1: 17, 22; 2:1-5. Simple biblical truth was replaced by *messages*, which were theoretical and unpractical for practical godly living. Eventually only those who were trained and “ordained” in the new forms of speech were allowed to address the assembly promoting the idea that only ‘professionals’ had anything worth listening to, while the laity attended services only as spectators.

“The sermon” concept is so entrenched in the minds of believers that most feel guilty if they haven’t gone to hear a 45-minute monologue on Sunday. Great men of God from past ages are revered not for their humility and servant spirit, but for their oratorical skills. Even today we bestow our greatest honour on men who are charismatic and eloquent when preaching or lecturing. The pastor’s dynamics behind the pulpit is what holds most churches together, not a body of believers mutually loving and serving one another.

CLERICAL MANIPULATIONS

We don't have to cast our minds back very far to remember some of the most incredibly manipulative methods imaginable, have been introduced into the church by Pentecostal clergy. As we reflect one wonders how could this have ever happened? We are not talking about the apostate church of the Dark and the Middle Ages before the reformation; nor are we speaking of those cranky prophetic movements of a hundred and fifty years ago such as the SDA's and JW's, but we are talking about the church of the modern era. The one that came into prominence 100 years ago which was followed by the charismatic visitation that commenced in the fifties and sixties. During this time some of the most bizarre movements, totally alien to the Gospel of the first century have arisen that seem to give credence to the widely held belief that we are living in the end of the age.

The discipleship movement of the seventies and eighties was destructive and deviously deceptive to put it mildly. The trail of wrecked lives and the carnage it caused can be found in abundance throughout the western church. Nor were the clergy that concocted this controlling movement novices, but rather the *crème de la crème* of the Pentecostal clergy. These men were household names. They were authors and speakers with worldwide followings. Thank God that some of them saw the error of their ways and repented. But alas it was too late, because for many the damage was already done. No, we're not saying they were blatant in the propagation of their manipulative cult but they were wrong and greatly deceived.

We are presently being bombarded with one bizarre thing after another. We now have gold dust; fool's gold would be more appropriate. Videos of a woman in a trance have been circulating showing her being led around shaking gold dust out of her hair over a Bible. A prominent British leader when asked why would God do something like this replied, "He's doing it to show us that He loves us". Didn't he do that when he sent His Son to die for us replied his

interviewer. God's love as demonstrated at Calvary seems insufficient for these revivalists.

Many pastors are so ignorant of Bible doctrine that they don't know what to do or tell their people. So they just go with the flow, "calling the things that are not as though they are". They are dumb dogs that never bark, embracing what they should reject and rejecting what they should embrace. Following the herd, they lead their unsuspecting people in strange paths to become the victims of another hoax. In so doing they compromise the faith of God's people and put a stumbling block before the lost.

CURED BY CRUCIFIXION

Without contradiction God wants us to live a crucified life. That we are called to take up our cross daily is irrefutable. Because our flesh recoils from such a prospect and wants no part of it, the Lord makes arrangements for each one of us to have our own personal encounters with the cross. It's sometimes been referred to as the 'death route'. He arranges these experiences without ever consulting us. The reason being that if we had prior knowledge about when and where these events were going to take place we wouldn't show up. So while we go about our business, filled with grandiose ideas, making great plans to evangelise our communities and the world for God by such and such a date, He is arranging for our demise. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter". He was led there! It was all pre-arranged. Who did this to Him? His loving Father did. He led him to the altar, the place of slaughter. "And as a sheep before his shearers is dumb He opened not His mouth." Our problem is the moment we get into strife we just can't keep our mouths shut, and that just goes to prove that we're not dead. And it just gets us into more strife.

Jesus knew some things and so He kept silent. What did He know? He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God, and He was going to God. He knew to get there He had to die. He knew He had to die if He was to be the Saviour. He knew the only way to the open tomb, was by way of the Garden and the Cross. In other words He knew what He was here for. And I think it's about time we knew that also.

He and His Father talked it all over first in the garden. He had a "gethsemane experience." At first He hesitated and then He let go and placed Himself in His Father's hands. Oh to have an experience like that. Well you will because that's what He's doing in your life. Teaching you to take up your cross daily and remember that's it's not "my will" but "His will." But you must go to the garden first. Now it's one thing to talk about it but quite another thing to go to the garden and sort it all out with the Lord. My dear brother and sister, God doesn't want your service He wants you to go to the cross. He doesn't need your great programs and sacrifices to reach the nations;

He wants you to be conformed to the image of the Son who only did His Father's will.

When Jesus was being crucified the issue of death had been settled once and for all in the garden with His Father. Most of us are dragged to the cross kicking and screaming. We love showing all that will look the stripes on our backs that we received in the houses of our former friends/enemies. That's because we haven't come to terms with God's arrangements. The order is the garden, the cross, the grave, and then the open tomb. The last enemy to be overcome is death. But nobody wants to die to become an overcomer. Paul said it's no longer I that liveth, but Christ lives in me. To exchange our life for His we have to die first.

We'd rather attend another conference, for a financial consideration of course, (Oh how these preachers love to hear themselves talk) where Apostles and Prophets will teach us to discern the move of God. We will receive teaching on how to bind the strong man, intercede for the nations, or go to a training program for leaders for the new millennium. Perhaps we might learn how to get some prophetic insights into taking strongholds by discerning territorial spirits. You could learn how to mix oils and sharpen stakes.

There's a prominent ministry who could arrange some reconciliation meetings with indigenous peoples for you, while another would be happy to show you how to take your city for God. Another high profile individual is a must to get you started on discerning territorial spirits and doing some spiritual mapping. And we mustn't forget Bill, cause he will help us fill those empty seats in our churches by being "seeker friendly". If he can't come some of his ardent disciples will help you with that. But one thing's for sure they're not going to talk to you about dying. They wouldn't dream of that, they know you can't grow a church preaching about that. Besides people won't pay to come to conferences and listen to that stuff - it's too morbid.

However make no mistake; God is making all the necessary arrangements to blow upon all our plans to bring them to naught. And because He loves you He might even use some of your brethren to help Him. And although it may often seem that after death there's no life, just the opposite is true. For it's right at that point and not before that God will revive us, and give us the privilege of becoming co-labourers with Him in His Fathers work.

Over the years I've had the dubious pleasure of knowing many saints who have been crucified. Some came through their experiences with death looking radiant. But sad to say I know others who are still decomposing; though crucified they just won't die but keep arguing with God. They're not very pleasant people to be around, believe me. Christ went to the garden before He went to Calvary, but for most it's the other way around. Having gone to the cross some go back to the garden to contend with God telling Him, "If you really loved me how could you have allowed these things to happen to me?" Others have some good advice to offer Him about how He should deal with their enemies, while some just flat out blame Him for everything. After the master came forth from the tomb He never again referred to His pre-crucifixion experiences. He never wrote a book about them, and His friends could never get Him to talk about them. He left that for others to do.

Look, what's all this stuff about dying? I thought we had to go and save the world. Well think again. But the hour is late and the King's business requires haste. All that's very true but we have to die first. You see, except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies it abides alone, but if it dies it brings forth much fruit. There's no harvest without death. But I thought that was referring to Jesus? It is dear brother and sister, but it refers to us also. You see, what's true of the first grain is true of the harvest. Before you can have any fruit in your life you have to die first.

Please tell me then, how can I die? Dear brother and sister the answer is simple but the doing of it is very difficult. In fact none of us seem to be able to manage without His help but praise be to God He'll see that we get it.

A good place to start is to take up your cross and follow Him. What that means is to do His will and not our own.

*From subtle love of softening things,
From easy choices weakening,
Not thus are spirits fortified'
Not this way went the crucified,
From all that dims Thy Calvary,
O Lamb of God deliver me.
Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur.*

There's only one way to be successful in God's eyes and that's to be obedient.

MY BELOVED ENEMY

This next section is taken from a tract written by Bill Britton, a brother I had the joy of knowing.

A word to my enemies. “You’re not really my enemies at all. In reality you are some of the best friends I have. You who have lied about me, and about this ministry, you have tried to destroy people’s faith and confidence in me, you have spread false and damaging rumours about my life and teachings.... Through your efforts there has been a work of grace wrought in this heart of mine that could never have happened without you.

My friends have been many, and loyal, and faithful to stand with me in many hours of trial and need. They have been strength in my weakness, added joy to my heart in time of sorrow, and have girded up my faith amidst raging doubts. They have brought me before the throne of grace innumerable times in their seasons of prayer. I could not have continued long in this spiritual conflict without these wonderful friends.

But, believe me, I speak in sincerity and truth, there can be no perfection in the lives of God’s elect without the chastising work of a real enemy. For when a bitter vicious person begins to do all they can to destroy me and my work for God, then there is a work done that brings out all the wrong and evil attitudes and spirits that lie hidden and deeply rooted in my heart. When a friend extols all my good virtues and praises me from their heart of true friendship, I can feel nothing but love for them. But, when I hear of an enemy who has unjustly brought shame upon me, there rises up a spirit of defending myself, and a spirit of “righteous indignation” to refute the enemy. It is then that the precious Holy Spirit does His office work and reveals to me the wrongs of my own spirit. I see in me then, the things I did not know were there before. With repenting and sorrow of heart I cry to God, and He delivers me from that which I have seen in my life. It was hidden, lying dormant, until you, my beloved enemy brought it to light with your crucifying process. The prophets of old would never have had the glory of being stoned for the Word

of God — and the early Christians without real enemies could never have won a martyr's crown.

You see I cannot crucify myself, and my real friends won't do it. So it takes you, my enemy, to bring me to the cross. And to the cross I must come, if ever I am to come to the glory of perfection. But I have much progress yet to make before coming to the image of my lovely Jesus. There is so much I must yet learn. And, my enemy, you are teaching me. I have learned that the road to glory is by way of the cross. Without you I would not have found the way. Someone had to crucify my Jesus.

His friends and disciples wouldn't, nor could He do it to Himself. So Satan and the princes of this world stirred up hatred in the hearts of His enemies, and the work was done. Had they known that they were bringing Him into His glory, and bringing about the salvation of lost mankind, they would not have done it. And I'm sure that if you knew the good your efforts are working out in my life, you would not want to help me so much. But the work is being done, and I have learned to love you because of it. "Love thy enemies", He said, and I wondered how I could do it. But you have taught me. For because of you I have grown in God, increased in His Grace, and partaken of His divine nature.

Also because of you many have been turned away and refused to hear the truths imparted unto this vessel. Their ears have been filled with lies, and no doubt have thought, "no good thing could possibly come from such a one." But even here I have seen the hand of God. For those who have had ears to hear the voice of the Spirit have not believed the lies you have told them, and they have opened their hearts to the message for these last days. Thus, God has weeded out the chaff from the wheat, and is in the process of separating His own unto Him. All things are working together.

So, my friends, for in reality I have no enemies in flesh and blood, your work has been sharp and cutting, and many times I was hurt and wounded deeply. But out of these trying experiences I have come forth a better Christian, and further on my way to being an

overcomer. I doubt that you will receive any rewards for your lies and your efforts to destroy me, for “Woe unto them through whom these offences come.” But I want you to know that though your loss may be great in the Day of Judgment, I love you and appreciate the ministry you have had in perfecting this life of mine.”

Now just a word to those that have read this.

“I trust that you have understood that this word has not been applicable to me only, but should apply as well to all of God’s dear children. May the Spirit speak to your heart and open your eyes to this great truth. That without chastisement and the work of enemies we can never come into full sonship. And when we see how much our persecutions and afflictions mean to us in maturing our spirits and bringing us into His image, then we can truly “Love our enemies”, and “bless them that curse us.” Praise God for His marvellous plan! And remember.... All the enemy can destroy in the fires of persecution is “hay, wood and stubble”, and all they will melt and bring into His image is the “gold, silver and precious stones.” So let us be willing to burn that which will burn, that those things which will not burn may stand forever!”

Bill Britton. P.O. Box 707. Springfield, Mo.

THE ANOINTED ONES

Just who are these ones? Where were they anointed? When were they anointed? Who anointed them? For what purpose were they anointed? Is this status the exclusive domain of a select group of individuals called clergy? Is the mere laity not anointed? Lets take a look into the Divine Oracle and see what it has to say.

Dear Pastor, when did God Almighty the Father of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ make you “His anointed” giving you charge to exercise authority over His brethren whom He purchased with His own blood? I thought the title “The Lord’s Anointed” belonged to only one, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Father’s anointed one? Do you really dare to take His glory and position to claim it for yourself? That’s been tried before with disastrous results.

I’m extremely curious, tell me was it when you completed your theological degree? Or was it when you were given credentials by your franchise? Perhaps you anointed yourself and set about to prove to others that you’ve got what it takes to become “a successful man of God”, “a pastor.” So now you can go and get some people saved and gather them together to listen to you present your slant on Christianity via a couple of monologues every week.

“Touch not mine anointed.” Oh how pastors love to take refuge in that verse. The untouchables: Consoling and reinforcing one another within their clerical meetings. And why shouldn’t they? After all aren’t they the Lord’s anointed, ordained to corral, control, and rule over His people claiming they have a mandate from God to be guiding lights in His church?

Obviously they are not talking about the “anointing” as the whole of Scripture portrays it, or as John the Apostle explains it in **1 John 2:19-29**. What is this anointing that these pastors keep talking about? Nowhere in the New Testament is there any idea of anyone being specially anointed other than Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The words “anointing”, “Christ”, “Messiah”, is derived from the same root. There is the sense in which we all have an anointing that gives us our relationship with our blessed Saviour and empowers us to discern between truth and error. But it never sets up one brother above another, more privileged, more powerful or important than the rest.

This heresy is part of the “mystique” developed by religious systems to preserve the special status of their ministers and leaders, and thus silence all criticism and frustrate their critics. If you’re smart “you will try the spirits” (1 John 4); “Judging righteously” (John 7:24); Discern spirits.” (1 Corinthians 12:10).

“Let the prophets speak two or three and let the others judge” (1 Cor 14:29); “Proving all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21); that’s how normal Christians should behave, (Acts 17:11). It’s impossible for you to blaspheme the Holy Ghost or be in rebellion, just because you judge a matter; in spite of what some pastor might say. God forbid that some mere mortal brother or sister would dare to question their masters on matters of faith and morals, although the latter doesn’t seem to have a high priority in this enlightened age.

The untouchables, it sounds like a movie title doesn’t it? Safe in the knowledge that their ignorant flock is oblivious to the truth that pastors in the first century church were rarer than ‘Hen’s teeth,’ they ply their trade religiously, following their calling with reckless enthusiasm. To be fair the majority of these budding pastors are victims of ambitious men higher up the corporate ladder. But we hasten to add that in most cases they have become prey to the same mindset and are driven by the same spirit as their superiors, which is to make their personal mark in the Kingdom of God.

**There is no greater problem in the church today
Than personal ambition in the ministry**

We have these songs about the anointing, and preachers talking about the anointing as if it’s an instrument to be used for the

manipulation of situations to their advantage. Ministers dazzle their less charismatic colleagues with mystical gobbley-goop about moving in the anointing, and drawing the anointing down from some ethereal spirit-like place. They talk about releasing the anointing in a meeting; moving in the power of the anointing; using it to 'grow' a church. We have seen this supposed anointing that they promote to cause people to act in the most bizarre fashion.

I have attended conferences where I have listened to some of the most manipulative hog wash imaginable and watched pathetic and gullible supposedly spirit filled ministers meekly acquiesce to this mind bending rubbish as it pours forth from their gurus mouths. The Pentecostal mindset is "egotistical" and "self" centred. It revolves around, "My ministry;" "My church," "My gifts" and what I'm doing. It is unbalanced and off centre as it ignores the centrality of Christ and the Cross.

It's performance based, orbiting around programs that are going fill churches and help to get the world saved by year so and so. Saved from what we might ask? Saved from 'self, definitely not unfortunately.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

First century Saints experienced the effect and worshipped the Cause, while today we preach about the cause with no (or ill) effect.

The Apostles and church planters of the first century always moved on, entrusting the work of God to the Holy Ghost and **never** just to one man called “the pastor.” The living personal intercourse of God the Holy Ghost with these sheep of God, who were otherwise without a shepherd, is almost startling these days when we are apt to look to human teachers and human books as imperative.

It should not surprise us that the Lord condescended to teach them from time to time by dreams and visions as vivid pictures presented to the mind. Such methods of teaching are still not uncommon among the ignorant and illiterate and the Lord has used them more or less in all ages. It is difficult to attempt to explain in words that which has been frequently the experience of lovers of God. We accept without reservation the existence of evil spirits who seek to deceive and further corrupt the minds of fallen men. And not only sinners need to be beware but saints also, because men can be possessed and become tools of Satan as is clearly demonstrated in the case of Peter. How easily we believe in the ability of the evil one to wield his influence, to corrupt and delude the mind of fallen man. Yet we ignore the fact that a real, true and supernatural intercourse with God is not only possible but also promised as the privilege of every child of God.

This has been the experience of multitudes that loved and believed in Jesus Christ since the day of Pentecost. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost in the upper room was the fulfilment of the great promises of John 14, 15, and 16. We, who believe, ought to be humbled by the fact that we know so little of it in this so-called enlightened age. These are days of greater light and lesser love where we claim to have so much more than medieval Christians ever had. But what do we have more of? We have more books, more theology, more preachers, more seminars propagating a mass of information, more freedom and more money, to proclaim the gospel,

yet how much ignorance marks 21st century Christianity in relation to these matters. We have relegated the ministry of the Holy Ghost to a show time extravaganza choreographed by slick Penecostal Evangelists who woo people to their meetings by claiming that miracle stake place in the services.

The childlike communication with God granted to so many saints down through time to this present day, stands as testimony to the fact that Christ is a revelation to our hearts that cannot be obtained any other way. There are countless verifiable reports and testimonies of men and women who have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus without a human agency of any kind.

We cannot deny that God through His grace has given light through the free circulation of His Word, which believers of the middle ages never had, and we are ever grateful for this precious privilege. But we need to ask ourselves what did the apostles to the uncircumcision leave with their converts when they left? **They certainly never left them “a pastor.”**

Paul and his co-labourers planted many churches but never stayed behind to pastor any of them, nor did they place or leave one man in charge but commended them to God the Holy Ghost. Read the account! It's a fact. You say it can't be done! What do you mean? They did it! It's in the record! Is the history of the first century church as recorded in the book of acts unreliable, just a myth, or worse still a pack of lies? Have you ever taken the time to read it? You should.

In due course they went back and appointed elders but never a pastor. Those appointed were undoubtedly first chosen by the local church and presented to the apostles. The sheep of His pasture are dumb, or all stupid. They know better than any outsider who they can trust and who they can't. They knew them that faithfully laboured among them, and those that didn't.

And shall we ignore and demean the work of the promise of the Father the Blessed Holy Ghost to whom was entrusted the task of leading us into all truth by the revelation of Jesus Christ to our hearts?

Some day we may know better than we know now and realize how much ignorance marks present day Christianity.

CHARISMATIC INDULGENCES

Indulge: To gratify, to give free course too, to pamper and to spoil.
Indulgence: extravagance.

Several American Evangelists own their own personal Jets. To show you how expensive these aircraft are, take a look at these figures; and this is just to hire one.

Rent a Jet. A clever new ownership scheme is making private jets more accessible to our average millionaire. Executive Jet is the brainchild of Richard Santulli, 54, a former leasing specialist from Goldman Sachs who still runs the company. What Santulli figured out is this: How many jets and how many owners do you need to ensure that each owner can be guaranteed a jet with as little as four hours' notice, anytime? Customers do not buy a particular plane so much as the right to fly on a jet of the class they have purchased. Net-Jets owners can purchase a fraction of a plane up to the whole thing and get a proportional share of its airtime. A one-eighth share of a "Cessna Citation V Ultra" goes for \$835,000. And each hour of occupied flight will cost you \$1,242. Management and other fees are around \$7,600 a month. *Time Sept 1999.*

Golfer Greg Norman owns one. But at least he didn't scam the money; he paid for it with money he personally earned.

Micah 3:9-12.

"Please hear this, heads of the house of Jacob, and magistrates of the house of Israel, you who abhor justice and pervert all equity. Those building up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity: Her leaders' judge for a bribe and her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for silver; yet they will lean on Jehovah, saying, is not Jehovah among us? No evil shall come on us! Therefore, on account of you, Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps.

**The last thing religious movements do before
they die is to build monuments to themselves.**

LEADERSHIP SEMINARS

One is hard pressed to find where the first century church ever emphasized our western concept of leadership to any great extent. But it is filled with examples of how those that served God operated and lived. They knew that they were bond slaves, and without any fanfare worked willingly and endured for the cause of the one whom they loved so dearly.

The scene today is very different when compared to the first century church. Today leadership seminars abound. We have seminars for Sunday school leaders, for youth pastors, for junior pastors, and senior pastors. I get shivers down my spine whenever I think about what they are being taught. They are told how to make an altar call; what to do when you get them to come forward; where to place your hands on them; How to move in the power of the anointing whenever you choose. Or when you think you have a word of knowledge never, ever, say, "I think", but boldly speak it out, be positive without wavering, and watch God **back you up**. Such is the arrogance of these men.

These seminars are designed to enhance your ministry, motivate you to great achievements, equip you to move in the Spirit, and to arise to new heights of self-confidence so you can successfully grow your church. Yes that's the word, successfully. And that can only be measured one way, and that's by the numbers that submit to your covering. Oops! I nearly forgot; having a healthy cash flow is a distinctly enviable position to be in.

Triumphal: Ascendancy; achievement; conquest; mastery and success. Bombastic loud and pushy preachers full of braggadocio are the marks of strong leadership. We are told these are true men of faith, worthy to be listened to, followed and emulated.

To be sure there have been some very charismatic individuals in history who have headed up organizations and nations; speakers who had the ability to motivate and bend the minds of men and woman with their brilliant rhetoric. In certain settings it can be very

desirable. Churchill was such a man, so was Lincoln, while in other cases the outcome of their leadership was disastrous, e.g. Adolf Hitler; Karl Marks; Nimrod and Herod. I can think of many preachers who would not be out of place in this unenviable list.

Just as we have had individuals who were influential for good and evil throughout history, we find in this day and age, they have their counterpart in the church in large numbers. Through the power of oratory these gifted men and women are able to dazzle their followers, and move them to financially commit themselves to their causes, but this is not the picture we see in the first century church.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 “But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children: being so affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.”

How does a nurse cherish the children under her care? She does it willingly, affectionately, and ready to lay down her life if necessary. But the instant she crosses the line to where she is no longer serving her wards but rather serving herself, her charges are in grave danger. Where did this belief come from that a man called “The Pastor” with his hand picked associates is bigger than the Church? Is the local “ecclesia” the pillar and ground of truth not fit to judge every matter? If that isn’t so, then Jesus was just confused when he said “tell it to the church.” Paul says we are going to judge angels, then surely the corporate body under the headship of Christ is sufficient for all eventualities no matter how serious a problem may be. I Corinthians 6:2-3.

I Timothy 5:20. “Rebuke before **all**”. It is abundantly clear that the final authority in all matters temporal and spiritual is the assembly of all the saints under Christ in each location, and not the Pastor and his cronies, but the whole body of believers, brothers and sisters. There’s no precedent for exclusive elders’ meetings to decide behind closed doors the future of the church. That may be the way the world operates, but it’s not the Christian way.

Who are these people who have set themselves up to exercise authority over the flock; whose interpretation is final on all matters of faith and morals? Do they really have the gift of infallibility? They clump together in their pastoral gatherings reinforcing one another in the belief that because they have attended some theological seminary or have had some religious training for which they were given credentials that this gives them the authority to control God's people and order their lives. This deplorable state of affairs that we find ourselves in is due in no small part to the leaven of the Nicolaitans. It's the spirit of Rome make no mistake. They have a "them" and "us" mentality. It's that unsupportable clergy and the laity dogma that keeps rearing its ugly head. They go from seminar to seminar reinforcing one another in their unscriptural position looking for something to help them succeed in their quest. The bulk of them feel like miserable failures, and so they should because that's what they are. The attrition rate is high. Most are failing miserably in what they are attempting to do. Frustrated they struggle on, dreaming of a day that for 99% will never come; a day when they will have enough people with money who will help them to make an impact for the kingdom of God. They are the victims of a carnal mindset, working with an unscriptural model.

2 Timothy 2:5-7, 24.

"And if a man also strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."

Most are bound by ritualistic habits, such as a futuristic prayer life, forever praying for success but never achieving. But there's always the chance that you might get a futuristic prophecy from "the man of God" that will help you knuckle down and struggle on until the next seminar. Hard words you say? Yes, but not as sad as the wasted lives of men and women and their families where it's like trying to find a mythical pot of gold at the end of a rainbow pursuing the pastoral myth. To further consolidate their position, the motivational techniques of the business world have been adopted, and are now well entrenched in the Christian psyche. Motivators are being used more and more to speak to Pastors who are prepared to pay big bucks to attend high priced luncheons (paid for with your

tithes and offerings) to hear pep talks by leaders from the world of commerce.

Some of the clichés go like this:

Get a passion for excellence.

Be a peak performer.

Do your thing boldly.

Learn to take intelligent risks.

Have a pioneer spirit.

The psychology of risk taking.

Take a risk, if you're wrong so what? Try again.

The man that never made a mistake, never made anything.

The purpose-driven pastor.

It's always another "it," but it's never a passion for Christ.

All the above come straight out of the business world. Pastors must think that we are ignorant fools as we sit there listening to their pep talks imported straight out of the corporate world. Then from their platforms they try impress us with their loquacious quotes pretending that they got them from God. Psychology, New Age philosophy, and in fact anything that will help them to get ahead and become successful, is legitimate. After all aren't we doing it for the Kingdom of God? These approaches may be well and good for business, but the church is not a business, it's a body, Christ's body, and one that he purchased with his precious blood.

When pastors get together it seems they haven't got anything better to speak about than what they are doing. They talk about the programs they are involved in or are about to embark upon. Then there's the latest seminar they went to, or are planning to attend. Most are of the opinion of the last big name speaker that came to town.

They talk ceaselessly about their churches and their ministries but rarely do they ever talk about Jesus. They love to speak about the unity they have among themselves; and how they are all cooperating in a big ballyhoo to take their city for God, but they never talk about Jesus. They want to know how many people you

have attending your church so they can measure themselves alongside of you, but they never talk about Jesus.

Unlike his critics, Paul took care of (or minded) his own business. 2 Corinthians 10:12 “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

They arrive at attendance figures by counting the total number they had out at every service for the past week, even though they count the same people two and three times. And of course every pregnant woman is three. The guys with the big churches hang out together while the plebs sort themselves out to see where they fit in the pecking order. They all walk around with rear vision mirrors on their ploughs because you really have to watch your back in this profession. This business of being a pastor is a dangerous occupation and can be bad for your health.

Until a man has laid his Isaac on the altar and received it back again he's useless to the Lord, and a menace to everyone else.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if every pastor resigned next week and got a job? It would certainly free up a lot of money. “It won't happen”, you say, and you're absolutely right, because the “traditional” Christian mind is inflexible, set in concrete and not open to change, whereas the “normal” Christian mind is “the mind of Jesus Christ.” Unfortunately that's something very rare now.

Church splits are as common as colds. If you haven't had one yet cheer up pastor, because yours will split all in good time? It's not much different to politics, no that's incorrect; it is politics, religious politics. It's the same spirit and can be really nasty or even worse. You have no one to blame but yourself pastor, because your occupation is unscriptural. I'm sorry to say but I have personally seen pastor's families torn apart because their parents had become the victims of a coup. Many devastated teenagers have become bitter and then walked away from church as a result of having to stand by

and watch their parents assassinated and cast aside by carnal religious leaders and their spineless lackeys. It is particularly evident when there is property involved. Regardless of who was right or who was wrong, the consequences are often spiritually fatal.

The fact is that the one-man model is unscriptural. We need to have elders to help as guides for the young of the flock, who are caring. The qualifications for an elder are so basic that most men on reaching maturity should qualify. In addition they were certainly not projected as being the spiritual heavyweights to the exclusion of the whole body of believers in the first century. As needs arose they were handled by those who were mature and stable. But the whole church came together when major decisions were made.

Eleven of Paul's epistles are written to the "ecclesia," the corporate body of believers, and not to individuals. Look at the plurals as he speaks to "us" and "we" and "our" and the church in the location, "all the brothers and sisters," almost to the exclusion of the individual. In addition the word "Ye" is not just old King James English for "you". It is never used in reference to an individual, but literally means "You all".

MEETING UNDER THE PASTORAL MODEL

Most leaders have a one-track mind, its called self-centredness. That is the exclusive consideration by a person of his own interests. Failure by pastors to consider the interests of others especially those that aspire to leadership is a major cause of splits in the church. Most Clergy view their members (perhaps unconsciously) as serfs that God has provided to help them to make their mark. They have coined all kinds of names for them such as; the pastor's armour bearer (how pathetic) church planters, deacons and blah, blah, blah. The pastor is the pebble in the centre of the pool making a splash, while the rest are just a ripple around him. He is central to everything. He is the Star in his own production. You are going to have to serve him and his every whim or you'll get nowhere. Pleasing him is far more important than pleasing God. Wake up brothers and sisters. There is only so much room on any one platform. You're kidding yourself if you think he's going to give you an opportunity more than once every blue moon.

It wouldn't surprise me if he doesn't even know where you live, let alone come to your home for a cup of coffee and some fellowship. When you first get saved you feel for the first time in your life you're going somewhere and your enthusiasm knows no bounds. To begin with that's right but that will all change. Because one day you wake up to the fact you're going around in circles and if you don't get out soon you'll die. Hope deferred makes the heart sick. That's why the attrition rate is so high among men in their 30's and 40's because it's then that they realize even if they don't say it out loud, **they've been had**. Many only go for the sake of their wife and children, certainly not for the sermon.

The US Marine Corps love to get their recruits young because these teenagers believe they are invincible and can't be killed. The average age of the thousands of Australian infantry recruits who served in Vietnam was 19. That's just criminal. The pastor loves to surround himself with these young undiscerning inexperienced, impressionable hopefuls. The smart pastor will use their enthusiasm to be the engine for driving his work for him. They walk like him,

talk like him, and even dress like him. And if one of them ever gets on staff, they need to beware, because the pay for a non-commissioned officer is very poor. Its part-time pay for long hours of work; a 168-hour week is standard. Apart from the man at the top their salary scale is worse than the dole.

The pastor finds his satisfaction in doing his own thing and if that doesn't include you, too bad. And if he's an extrovert with plenty of brass (push) the rewards can be great as he carves out for himself a wider following. Any man that makes a success of this career (and few do) is considered an achiever worthy of emulation.

Of recent years nepotism has been widely practiced. Older ministers have been handing over their churches to their sons as one would hand over a business or a hereditary title. In most cases these young men are upbeat and ambitious. They have never been allowed to learn obedience through suffering but in most cases have been sheltered by their fathers. Many like the children of royalty have enjoyed privileged lifestyles. Some of them have been given a position of power with many people under their authority; in this they have been done a great disservice. So now these sons have to prove their metal by expanding their inherited empire and thus become a spiritual "Heavy-weight in the Kingdom. Sour grapes you say? Wrong, I've had much, and a lot more than most. Read my profile, I never made it up. I was a product of the system and never knew anything else. But let me add that the carnal carry on we see today was unheard of 25 years ago. The organized church has become a corporate animal. It's an alligator with a voracious appetite for money.

Proverbs 6:16-19.

"These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among brethren."

Unresolved problems have ruined marriages, broken up families, split churches, started wars and destroyed nations. Two of

the greatest causes of division in the church are carnal Government and uncrucified flesh. Problems don't go away, they only get worse. No one is immune, not even pastors and their wives. All problems can be traced to faulty relationships between God and their fellowman. Denominations are the result of faulty relationships between man and God. The problem arises over who is going to get to run the show and who isn't. The first man Adam determined to have his way and so violated the trust God placed in him, and then blamed his wife.

Most Go-getters abuse of any point of view other than their own.

Philippians 2:4. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Wanting our own way is the basic cause of all problems. Obstacles in relationships occur as a result of individuals being so committed to their own opinions and ideas that they ignore, run roughshod over, and even abuse anyone who holds a different point of view to their own. Four of the Ten Commandments deal with our relationship with God. The remaining six deal with our relationship with others. All deal with the same thing, namely relationships.

THE PATHWAY TO GREATNESS

Mark 10:35-45.

“And there come near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, Teacher, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee. And he said unto them, what would ye that I should do for you? And they said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory.

But Jesus said unto them, ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?

And they said unto him, we are able. And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptised withal shall ye be baptised: but to sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John. And Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you: but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all. For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

In the judgement of Scripture it is undeniably clear that the love of position, admiration and praise, is basically corrupt. For it tends to exalt and inflate self; to take pride in our natural or acquired endowments; to assume credit and merit for our own qualities. It chooses self esteem instead of ascribing all honour and glory where they are due. It's false, because it exalts that which we should demean. It's criminal, because it intrudes upon the domain of God. And we all do it at times.

Here are some things people believe is the way to greatness.

The Pulpit: There is no place where “**pulpit mania**” is more contagious than Pentecost. Pastors are in an elite class. So young singles and couples make it a goal to go to Bible College and become pastors. It may not be said so openly but the message soon begins to sink in, that the only way to become anybody is to become a pastor. In Pentecost, as soon as some high profile individual is saved he is adjudged clergy material. Paraded as a trophy of grace, although he may be a novice, he’s promoted around the branches of the particular franchise attracting new members.

“I know of large churches whose numbers are made up of people who had transferred there primarily to go to Bible School in the hope of having a ‘Power ministry’ or becoming a Pastor.” Then when the pulpit they thought they were going to get didn’t eventuate, they just found a partner got married and settled down to become another member or casualty, depending on how they reacted to their disappointment.

The church is full of disillusioned believers who never recover from feelings of mediocrity because they never made it by becoming a Pastor. It’s a cruel hoax, but don’t feel too bad, it’s really a blessing. I’m not opposed to Bible College education, but I’m not much in favour of it either. Because there’s this subtle inference, that you cannot serve God completely, unless you are in a full time (living on someone else’s income) position. The senior Pastor becomes the model to emulate. There is a “Pastor at all costs” mentality where one starts to feel that he can only fulfil his dreams and aspirations through the pulpit. Of course some do make the grade and then set about sacrificing the congregation upon the altar of their aspirations of greatness.

I asked a young pastor with a small congregation what his goal was, without hesitation he told me it was to have a church of a 1000 people. No doubt he felt this was the way to get ahead, I felt exactly the same at his age. This would generate the finance to enable him to do all that was on his heart. In “Death of a Salesman” Arthur Miller says of Willie Loman:

"He's writing his name in a block of ice on a hot day"

That really sums it up. We forget that we are all too soon forgotten. Where is the servant spirit found in Mark 10? It has been replaced by a total commitment to our own personal wants and a complete lack of concern for the needs of the other person.

I have observed over the years that those who have been pasturing for a number of years eventually begin to dream of becoming an itinerant preacher. This of course is the next step up the ladder.

Climbing the corporate ladder, as opposed to Jacob's.

Statements like "He's being released to the body" in reality, means he is going to travel among the branches of the franchise of which he is a servant. To these ministers, "the body" is their denomination or movement. Many choose for themselves the title of Evangelist, or Prophet, and in recent times we have been getting quite a few Apostles. I am not being facetious but stating the truth.

NOTHING EVER CHANGES

Jesus came but Judaism never changed. They crucified Him. Martin Luther came and went but the Catholic Church never changed. Instead they excommunicated him. Every religious tradition that exists came out of the previous one because they couldn't change it. The previous revival has always used lies and innuendo to discredit and destabilize what God is doing in times of restoration. They would rather try and patch up the old garment, but that won't work.

Luke 5:36. “No man puts a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.”

It's hard to put a new patch in an old garment without it looking the worse for wear. It's almost impossible to alter the foundation of a building after it has been erected. It's difficult to build on a couple of extra rooms to an existing structure. It never looks quite right, and you usually end up with something you really didn't want. Sometimes it's easier and cheaper to just pull it all down and start again. The big problem is we all seem to have an in-built resistance to change. That is, unless it's someone else who is being changed?

Luke 5:39. “No man having drunk old wine straightaway desires the new, he says, the old is better.”

We certainly don't want change just for the sake of change: but we're not perfect yet, so then change is inevitable regardless of whether we like it or not. While visiting a church a few years ago, the Pastor made this comment to me saying “the only thing permanent around here is change”. Then he added, we tell our people “Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be broken.” Change the government, change my wife, change my husband, change the children, but leave me as I am. The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth. You would think the older we get in Christ, the more flexible we would become, but for many the opposite seems to be true. They

become more arthritic and inflexible, instead of pliable: Concrete Christians, all mixed up and thoroughly hardened.

Acts 3:19. “Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”

Since the turn of this century the church has experienced several times of refreshing and restoration, such as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, divine healing, laying of hands, the charismatic movement and the Jesus revolution. But we are not just living in days of restoration and renewal, but also in days of visitation. A visitation is something that has never happened before. That is why visitation brings confrontation. You can't ignore it. You have to decide how you are going to deal with it.

Luke 19:43-44.

“For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and encompass thee around, and keep thee on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground and thy children with thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” Confronted with the claims of Christ upon their life, most people vehemently resist before giving in. Whether it is over salvation, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, divine healing, or equipping the saints, they go down fighting. Some manage to fight for years before surrendering. But we are talking about something much bigger than that.

The church is soon to experience a visitation of such magnitude as to pale into insignificance anything ever seen before. It was the inflexibility of the Pharisees that caused them to miss the day of their visitation. They simply could not adjust to the way Jesus came so they set about to kill him. What we are about to experience has never happened before. It is foretold in prophecy, shadows and types, in the same manner that the first advent of Christ was. We see it foreshadowed in the feasts of the Jews. Two are past and one still remains to be fulfilled in the church - “The Feast of Tabernacles.”

Don't judge the new by the old, judge it by the word.

HUMAN RESISTANCE TO DIVINE INTERVENTION

The Anabaptists are an example of a people who were persecuted by religious bigots. The name was applied to certain religious sects that arose in Europe, particularly in Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, during the Reformation. The name means “one who baptizes again”; it refers to the Anabaptists' practice of adult baptism, even of persons who had been baptised in infancy.

Orthodox reformers, such as Huldreich Zwingli of Zürich and Martin Luther and their followers often used the name Anabaptist as an opprobrious, (shameful and reproachful) designation for any radical or unorthodox Protestant sect. Yes, they tortured them, imprisoned them, burned them at the stake and even drowned them, all in the name of God. They became a byword for everything that was detestable.

It was the same for the early church and it has never changed.

Acts 28:22-23.

“But we desire to hear of thee what thou think concerning *this sect*, we know that every where it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God.”

Acts 24:5-6.

“For we have found this man a **pestilent** fellow, and a **mover of sedition** among all the Jews throughout the world, and a **ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes** who also hath gone about **to profane the temple**: whom we took and would have judged according to our law.”

Ephesians 5:36-39.

Though we may speak out against the practices of truth denying traditions of our day we don't expect them to change any more than our fathers did. However as we do speak out we can expect to see a trickle become a stream that will eventually become a mighty river of God's people exiting Babylon in all its various shapes and forms.

It never ceases to amaze that in one breath we are being told Jesus might come at any moment, and with the next they are asking for millions to build lavish complexes.

Babylon has the heart of a beast; the Word makes that plain. That it contains many of God's people is clearly indicated in Holy writ. That God is calling them out is evident by the undeniable fact that the honest leaders of the self-proclaimed cutting edge are admitting they are losing more than they are winning.

MEETING UNDER THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

Whose headship are you meeting under? Whose headship should you be meeting under? Do we need to support a man who's been appointed by an institution and under their umbrella to manage and run our spiritual lives? Hebrews 12:15. Paul tells us we are to watch out for one another. In the multitude of counsellors there is safety and wisdom. Outside of the local "ecclesia" what authority over the church is there? What makes one man in the midst more qualified than all the saints assembled? Who gave this man or group of men greater authority than that given to whole local church under the headship of Christ? Where do they get their authority to do such a thing?

We are not saying that there is no necessity for oversight

Please don't say to me that he's given to us for our protection, he's got just as many problems as his flock and perhaps more. There have been scores of preachers with credentials issued by some ecclesiastical organization that ran away with their secretary, or an elder's wife. You might as well put your name on a sausage roll as put it on a church roll for all the protection it will give you. There's far less oversight under institutionalised and organized religion than among a body of caring saints functioning as Christ intended. It's what's in the heart that matters. It's what comes out of a man, not how many credentials he carries in his pocket. The doctrine of covering is designed to make the saints docile and submissive. It's just another subtle form spiritual bondage.

Gathering together with the saints.

There is a strong counterculture in Christendom that is moving away from established forms, and organizations. Included in this "coming away from" we have a "coming out from under" the power of clerical control. Pastor dominance is that system of the Nicolaitans, which God hates. Nicolaitanism has not only to do with the ministry exalting itself, but also with compromise with the world, mixing religious and worldly activities. The division between the world and the church is no longer clearly defined but blurred.

It is so very subtle that those who are controlling deny that they are doing it, but claim that they are rather guiding lights. However, it takes no stretch of the imagination to see that their guiding is strongly dogmatic. If you don't agree or submit, then you are outside the blessings of the Lord or so they claim. Should you stand up for another point of view they will ignore you, and then label you behind your back as subversive or a heretic even! Strong language, but it's true nevertheless. It is obvious from scriptures that the word 'church' is not the word we should use, but 'ecclesia', which means 'the called out ones,' but everyday practices are difficult to break.

In Revelation we are called to come out of 'her'. The religious system is a woman by type, and of course this system is not submissive to her husband! If indeed we are hearing the Holy Spirit say 'come out of her' then we need to obey. The question then arises, what do we go into? The answer is we are already "in" something; we are "in Christ." Jesus said, 'Come unto me' and, 'Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.' Our main problem down through the ages has been unto whom or what are we gathering? Many gather around a philosophy, a doctrine, a system, a man, a pastor, a teacher, or merely gather to conform having no understanding as to why they gather! In truth many people today do certain things in meetings just because others do them or because the pastor told them to. That ought to be sufficient to gauge their spiritual intelligence and warn you off their gatherings. Not that we become dissenters for the sole purpose of being contrary, or just to draw attention to our favourite doctrines, or ourselves but unless you conform to a satisfactory degree you will become ostracized. All the practices of church denominations are founded on Law and not the law of the spirit of life in Christ, but the Laws of their movement. Another way of saying it would be to call their laws, "traditions". Jesus faced the same problem 2,000 years ago when He warned the disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees.

But the question then arises, how do we gather together, and how do we organize a 'meeting' or exercise discipline, or receive tithes and offerings etc? We freely admit that we who have been

caught up in the religious system find it rather difficult to deal with such questions and find ourselves struggling for answers. Habits diehard and are not willing to go voluntarily, but instead keep poking up their heads. Thus, we who would 'come out' also bring with us certain practices and attitudes, not forgetting that we also find 'comfort' and 'security' when we have every 'i' dotted and 't' crossed so that we know where we are going; that is, from the natural sense of things. But aren't we supposed to be led of the Spirit and not man?

It is a problem to the natural mind, and because we cannot reason it out we either struggle with change for change sake, or make substitutions just to be different to what we formerly practiced. It's so easy to fall back into the old systems and securities of the carnal mind. So how can we order things among the 'come outers'? When it becomes clear to our understanding that we have come out of the world; then it also becomes clear that we came out 'to come to Christ'. Hebrews 12:22-29 tells us what else we are come to and apart from these things there is nothing else to come to. The scriptures are plain on this fact.

We assemble under His headship and do nothing to formalize another structured system. Just come together in someone's home, or in the open air or wherever you feel led, it doesn't matter. If it's in a home whoever is the head of that house is responsible for the natural setting of that particular gathering. This is what the Holy Spirit has come to do. In the multitude of counsellors there is safety and wisdom under the headship of Christ and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

It is obvious from scriptures that the early saints gathered together. It was a voluntary getting together for they shared the same 'Head.' Every member of our natural body is gathered together under one head, so too is the spiritual body of Christ. It is obvious that people living in different locations were called by the name of that location, such as the ecclesia at Ephesus, the ecclesia at Pergamos, etc, etc. So the groupings of saints were identified by the locality they lived in. Thus they gathered under the one headship,

that of Jesus Christ. Where in that location did they gather? In homes as recorded in Acts 2:46. They spontaneously responded to the Spirit of God. Forget the Temple bit, as they were Jews who still had to break with that system. However, it wasn't long before the Lord dealt with the problem by obliterating it, thus removing the legal bondage.

Don't waste your hard earned cash by giving it to a fallible man called 'Pastor' to teach you how to meet.

Soon Paul and Barnabas were seeing congregations being raised up among the Gentiles in Galatia who had no affinity with the temple or Jewish synagogues. There were no synagogues in Rome because Jews were banished by Emperor Claudius. There were none in Philippi for the same reason. Paul literally scoured the city and could find neither Jew nor synagogue. The first Christians in Rome met in homes. You didn't advertise the gatherings unless you wanted Nero to throw you to the lions. Many Jews were converted and came to Christ throughout the Empire but in many places they had to meet in secret because of persecution. This persecution came not just from the Romans but also from Christ rejecting Jews.

When you begin to think these things through, this whole notion we have that you can't have church without a building is false. Meeting in buildings was totally foreign to the first century church gatherings. It wasn't until the conversion (so called) of Constantine that persecution ceased and buildings for gathering became established, a black day for the church to be sure. There is little evidence in the Bible about '**the attending**' of meetings. The church isn't built on meetings in any case but 'Koinonia,' although there is mention that the saints did gather together. True worship is in the Spirit, not in a place, as most would have it. Yet some still have the impudence to demand that we must only worship in the designated place, one that's been authorized by the clergy. It is certain that people gathered to hear Paul preach and teach and wherever a man with a message from God appeared, the people gathered to hear him.

Religious organizations plan our activities from the cradle to the grave, or as some put it, from the grave to the cradle. They stifle the new Christian and then having extinguished the flame of life, they keep him in spiritual diapers the rest of his life. Religious people are so controlling when it comes to meetings. It must be in a building, preferably one that they own. They decide how often we should meet and for how long. And then we are appointed unto certain practices about how we are to worship, again in conformity. This in no way suggests for a minute that we are to become anything we like, or do anything we want to whenever we wish. Rather are we to consider each other in the matters pertaining to gathering together. It is a spiritual thing and we are to be considerate of what the Spirit of Christ is saying or doing and also to consider one another in our words and actions. Gatherings of the saints do not have to be in one particular place, but they may be if it's more convenient. We are not under law or constraint. Saints may frequently or occasionally meet together, circumstances may arrange this, but again we are not under a legal obligation but rather to walk in the Spirit. When some do not appear then we allow them to be and to do whatever they may do unto the Lord. They are responsible unto Him.

The hour we meet should be a guide, not an arbitrary bondage. Some may make it early, others for good reasons may not be able to, but again we stand before God as to why or why not, and not before men. Whatever the situation may be we are to consider one another, that means each person or family is to respect and honour the other person/s or family/families.

With regard to children let us encourage them to participate as much as possible in the fellowship, to share in the spirit of the meeting and if some are unable because of tiredness or age then let us again be considerate to others. That means parents should make every effort not to disturb anyone else when caring for their children. It's not someone else's responsibility; it's for them to take care of and as much as possible see to it that their family is under control and ordered aright. The thing we do not want to do is to deny the children their place to learn the things that pertain to the Lord's

kingdom, even if they sleep through the fellowship they partake of the Spirit.

Offerings present little difficulty if there are no buildings to maintain or pastors to support. With no advertising and no rents it makes life a little easier and also takes from the saints the burdens that are associated with building programs. Most of the money extracted by institutions goes for overheads like salaries, rent, or loan payments and a percentage to head office first. Then if there's anything left over (and there rarely is) they pass it on to missions' maybe. Scriptures tell us to know them that minister among you, in other words, be a good steward. Looking at the situation in the New Testament we find that Paul exhorted the saints in the letters to the Corinthians to lay aside for the saints. It is obvious from reading these Scriptures that this was special relief for the saints in Jerusalem who were living under famine conditions. **And they were a year in putting it together.** Have you ever wondered why? It's because most of it came out of the annual harvest, which was then sold for money.

2 Corinthians 8:10. Free Inter.

“I want to suggest that you finish what you said you would do a year ago. Remember you were not only the first to propose this idea, but also the first to begin doing something about it. So having started so enthusiastically, carry on until you complete what you joyfully started, **giving whatever you can afford out of what you have.** Let your wholehearted idea at the start be equalled by your practical action now. If you are really eager to give, then it isn't important how much you have to give. God wants you to give what you have, **not what you don't have.**”

It is apparent there was no constraint upon the people as Paul wrote that you gave what you have, not what you didn't have. 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:12; 2 Corinthians 9:7. Yet there is **no mention of tithes** in these passages. Strange isn't it? If we meet in our houses then there are no costs incurred. What if numbers increase? Then the number of houses will increase so that solves that problem!

Scriptures tell us to care for the widow and the fatherless, and that is those who are widows indeed, not just parasites. What we are here talking of are those who have no headship. The widow has no husband, the fatherless has no father; we need to oversee them, not by constraint but by the spirit of love to help them in their particular need or distress. That brings us to the different functions in the body of Christ. We function according to the calling or gifting of the Lord. Not by trying to prove by activity that we have something that others need to take note of.

Elders are what the term implies. They didn't suddenly appear for the first time in the New Testament. They were always a part of the life of Israel. They sat in the gates and saw to it that everyone was having their needs met. They are not some exclusive group having secret meetings behind closed doors to plan programs. Neither are they rigid rulers running the show. They are just older members of a family taking responsibility to see that nobody is neglected while others are having their needs met, **both spiritual and temporal.**

The saints know better than anyone does who they can trust and who they can't. Who really are elders and who aren't? The people are happiest when they can have respect and confidence in the men they have chosen, true elders who have proven themselves.

Each member of the body has a function and a part to play. They should be permitted to operate and indeed assisted to do so. This part to play should not be limited to fellowship meetings but rather the body should function in the community at large and express Christ to all. Much that happens in structured meetings is choreographed and staged anyway.

Those who do have ministry gifting are to be accepted as such by the body, recognition coming as a result of being proven by grace and not by force or striving. A man's gifting makes room for him. Again it is by the Spirit of Christ, which Spirit is meek, gentle, easy to be entreated, kind, long-suffering etc.

There will always be certain men, who, spying out your liberty, will try to come and take control. Be vigilant and discerning, and don't be frightened to sit them down. If they have a controlling spirit, and they can't get what they want, they will soon leave. But don't let that stop you gathering. Get together with those of like mind in homes. The four cardinal activities of New Testament Christianity are fellowship, breaking of bread, the apostle's doctrine, and prayer. Recognize that Christ has some special servants in the body for feeding His people, but don't let them take over. Let the teachers teach, let the musicians make music, let the exhorters exhort, and let those who prophesy do so, not allowing any one individual to dominate a gathering. Always remember, that everything we do has one end in view, and that's to edify and build each other up in the Lord.

Finally, I would like to share my own experience as a young Christian during the late 1950's and early 60s when we fellowshiped homes. Then later, as numbers increased, we met in a hired hall. We had teachers, and later evangelists, but no pastors. Neither did anyone ever refer to himself by that title. We sat around in a semi circle with a solitary pianist, without the need of multiple song leaders who looked like they had just eaten sour grapes. We sang unto God and praised and worshipped Him. We functioned as a body, where anyone with something to say could share. Offerings were never taken up, but we did tithe, and then without any coercion from the senior brethren. It wasn't perfect, but it was precious. The evangelist and teacher were the most prominent ministries in that day. And because of body ministry, pastors were unnecessary as we watched out and cared for one another. We rejoiced in the truths of a powerful visitation that began in the late forties, labelled by some as "latter rain". The Pentecostal movement stoutly resisted the truths we experienced and enjoyed. In fact they fought what God was doing tooth and nail, because they feared what they never understood. As time went by some began to accept much of what they once resisted.

Then, some years later, our leaders held consultations with

some pastors of a classical Pentecostal denomination. Members of the fellowship were never given the opportunity to participate in talks that took place behind closed doors. Then in true political fashion, we found ourselves in an amalgamation with this denominational church that promoted and practiced the very things our leaders, a few years earlier, warned against. Like the action of leaven, it wasn't long before, we adopted pastors, and were walking ignorantly down the same path. It was only a small step, but it was a backward one.

Those fellowships, which once were true to God's word, quickly began to compromise just as every other denomination before them has done. A Centralised form of Government was set up by people who knew better. Each church came under a pastor who was answerable to the hierarchy. Thank God a clear note is beginning to sound forth once more, and His people are once again hearing the voice of the Lord crying out, "Let My people go and set them free, that they might keep a feast unto me in the wilderness." Rev 12:14-16.

**The will of God will never send us
Where the grace of God can't sustain us.**

THE END

MINISTRY PROFILE OF SHAUN T KEARNEY

After ministering extensively throughout Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America during 1967 the Lord led the Kearney's and their five children, (four sons and one daughter) to the North side of Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand. There they began to pioneer a church that was to have a significant impact on the whole church nationally and the community at large. In 1972 this growing body of believers known as "New Life Fellowship" miraculously acquired a tract of land where a Convention Centre and facilities for a Bible College and Christian Campground were established.

This beautiful location with its own private beach became the scene of many wonderful events accomplished by God. It was the venue for many conferences sponsored by the church for Christian leaders. Speakers from many parts of the world came there to minister to God's servants as they gathered from all over New Zealand, Australia, and from as far away as India, South East Asia and the South Pacific. Ministers attended these gatherings from every mainline denomination to be challenged and blessed.

This association of churches and ministers went from strength to strength for a season until vested interests eventually won control. In 1979 the Kearney's travelled to the United States for a Sabbatical along with their family. Returning to New Zealand in 1980, they sold all their possessions and went back to the US in 1981. They lived there until they moved to Australia in 1987. Since then Brother Kearney has travelled in Asia, US, Canada, and Europe extensively. He has authored many books on the 'Unstructured Church life'.

Harald Bredesen: Founding Board member of CBN & 700 Club. Shaun Kearney does not have to go back to the original source he walks with Him. He is His confidante. That's why he's one of the most original men I have ever known. If you want to bless your people out of their socks, make them want to bring their friends, and get blessed yourself, Shaun Kearney is your man.

A LIST OF AVAILABLE BOOKS

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Do this in remembrance of me.

DUMBING DOWN THE SAINTS

A Birdseye view of the pulpit from the pew.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS AROUND THE LORDS TABLE

A 52 week meditation and devotional guide around the Lord's Table

FROM ASHES TO BEAUTY

A message of blessed hope for all those suffering from the consequences of wrong decisions made in haste on life's journey.

THY KINGDOM COME

Jesus came preaching the Kingdom and we gave Him institutions

WHERE OH WHERE CAN WE GO

For all those that are looking for something better than what's on offer.

LET US GO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

Think before getting bogged down in a religious ghetto.

I LOVE THE CHURCH BUT I HATE WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO IT

The pastor's antics behind the pulpit holds most churches together.

THE REFORMATION 1600 YRS BEFORE MARTIN LUTHER'S

One that took place almost 1600 years before Martin Luther's.

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK YOU'RE ALL YOU'VE GOT

For Christians who have been living under the laws of the clergy.

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In New Zealand

shaunkearney@xtra.co.nz

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