

THE REFORMATION

**THE ONE THAT TOOK PLACE
ALMOST 1600 YEARS BEFORE
MARTIN LUTHER**

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PREFACE

“If the salt has no savour it is fit for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot”

Every branch of the present religious system is in damage control. It seems to have lost its sense of mission, which was to be light and salt in the earth. Its leaders are resentful of any who challenge its beliefs and practices. Many who once graced their ranks have moved out, (but not away from Christ) because they can no longer support religious systems that say one thing and practice another. Preaching a mix of grace and law they place people back under a covenant, which Christ came to abolish.

For this reason there is a cleavage between the man who regards obedience to the truth as the only reality in life, and the man who regards his particular religious tradition as having more authority than the word of God. It is dangerous to have and to practise a standard other than the accepted standard of religious institutions.

The world suspects people who are different. That is born out in the simplest things. One of the most common items in the world nowadays is an umbrella; but when Jonas Hanway tried to introduce the umbrella into England, and walked down the street beneath one, he was pelted with stones and dirt. He was in fact persecuted. Anyone who is different; who has other ideas is automatically suspect. He may be regarded as an eccentric or worse still dangerous; but life will not be comfortable for him.

Men killed Socrates was because he was always compelling them to think and to examine themselves, and so they hated him to the point that they killed him. History shows it has always been dangerous for a Christian to have ideas that in any way challenge the status quo.

The church acutely dislikes people whose lives are a condemnation of it. It is in fact dangerous to be good. Irrefutable evidence of that

is the fate that befell Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. When Pilate asked its citizens what should be done with him, they cried crucify Him.

To put it bluntly men always suspect nonconformity. Present religious systems love patterns; they want to be able to label persons, classify them, and then put them in a pigeonhole. Anyone who does not conform to these patterns will certainly run into trouble. It is said that if a hen with different markings is put into a hen run where all the other hens are identical, they will peck her to death.

The basic demand on the Christian is that he should have the courage to cry out and spare not when it comes to serious issues affecting belief and practice. It is to these issues that this modest effort is directed. To be different is dangerous, but no man can be a Christian unless he accepts that risk.

INTRODUCTION

In choosing a title for this book my desire was to have one that would draw attention to the ongoing and liberating effect Emmanuel's advent has had for all mankind; and the profound consequences it had for the Jewish nation? Messiah came, and by the sacrifice of Himself He fulfilled the Law, and thereby abolished all that had gone before. We now have a new covenant, based upon better promises. The old order of shadows and types, with its priesthood and ordinances has gone forever.

Not only did Emmanuel divide time as we know it, but in particular He fulfilled His mission to reform the faults and weaknesses of the Law of Moses by the abolishment of it in His death, and substituted it with a more perfect covenant which meets every human need wherein the law failed.

“It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances **imposed** until the time of reformation”. Heb 9: 9-10 (NKJ)

This reformation occurred almost sixteen Centuries before Luther.

This reformation abolished the old priesthood and introduced a new order. Not one that was passed on through natural birth, but one that came via the new birth; being born from above. Although the Temple veil was rent from top to bottom, thus signifying that the old order had come to an end, the Jewish priests continued as though nothing had happened. Then in AD 70 the temple was destroyed and the sacrifices ceased.

In like manner enemies of the new covenant as early as the latter part of the first century were stoutly resisting many of its liberating aspects. Slowly over the centuries the freedom that Christ paid for was put aside in favour of a set of carnal commandments, which

were gradually imposed upon God's people by a new ***priest class***, which had no scriptural foundation. It is so deeply entrenched today that the consequences that obedience would have upon the personal ambitions of this professional class, is a higher price than they are willing to pay.

“If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come-- one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?” Heb 7:11-13 NIV

God's people were no longer to be a kingdom with priests, but a kingdom of priests; they were not to be a congregation with ministers, but a congregation of ministers.

“If the Jewish priests and their laws had been able to save us, why then did God need to send Christ as a priest with the rank of Melchizedek, instead of someone with the rank of Aaron-- the same rank all other priests had? And when God sends a new kind of priest, his law must be changed to permit it.” Heb 7:11-19

Christ our Prophet, High Priest, King; and we are complete in Him.

BE PREPARED

All spheres of public life are under constant scrutiny, whether it's politics, business, education, or sport. Lawsuits are commonplace in every field. Make one rash statement, and you will be quickly pulled into line, and possibly ridiculed. We have recently had an example of this in Australia concerning the appointment of the Governor General. Nobody escapes the critical attention of the media whether they are President, Prime Minister, King, or Commoner. The media is the self-appointed watchdog of the modern era. With ruthless efficiency it censors the statements of individuals in the public arena as well as their behaviour. These critics want proof of the claims public figures make. The lesson is; you had better get your facts right if you don't want your comments to be scrutinised. Promising careers have been seriously affected, and in some cases completely ruined. When someone commits a "faux pas" such as *President George Bush 1992* in the "Read my lips" episode; they will be constantly reminded of their folly, and never allowed to live it down. Yet when it comes to Church leaders some think these rules shouldn't apply. In Charismatic and Pentecostal circles if any of their members questions what is preached publicly they are accused of "judging". The clergy seek to muzzle the laity with clichés such as, "you mustn't judge", or "you're not showing a loving attitude", thus all are made to feel uncharitable because they dared to question their accuracy and thus integrity in matters of faith and morals. In turn this gives these professionals great boldness to continue preaching adulterated and poorly researched material. Added to this they promote carnal programs for which their flocks have to foot the bill; in some cases it has run into millions. This type of reckless spending and unrestrained carnal ambition needs to stop.

Insulate fools from their follies and they will never learn.

Many Church leaders have hidden behind this facade for so long, that they actually believe, they are not answerable to the rank and file in their congregations because after all, they are mere laity. Confidently these professionals deliver their Sunday morning

monologues, safe in the knowledge that they are unlikely to be challenged, but if a challenge is forthcoming it usually leads to the preacher taking offence and the inquirer being frozen out of fellowship.

When clergy make statements that are a matter of public record then they must accept that everyone is not going to agree with everything they say. I believe in the fundamental right to freedom of speech, and that anyone who chooses too has the right to disagree with anything I say.

Responding to an opposition member in the House of Parliament Winston Churchill replied, “Sir, I vehemently oppose what you are saying, but at same time I will to my last breath defend your right to say it” When we lose that right we are no longer free.

THE REFORMATION

By W Carl Ketchenerside 1908-89.

“According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation” Heb 9:9,10.

The apostle recognized that the ordinances of the Mosaic economy were only temporary. They constituted restrictions and restraints to hold a people in line until a better covenant based upon better promises could be introduced. That change which then took place involved “a change in the priesthood” and of necessity, “a change in the law as well” Heb 7:12.

God had given ample warning that such a reformation was coming. Jeremiah had declared, “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt”.

The coming age was to provide new leadership. Ezekiel was told to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, who were accused of feeding themselves and neglecting the sheep. God declared, “I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them; he shall feed them and be their shepherd” Ezek 34:22-23.

There are numerous allusions in this highly figurative portrayal, which should not be overlooked. The exploitation of God’s people by their leaders was not to be tolerated. The flock was not created to provide food for those who fed them. God said, “Behold, I am against the shepherds; I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they be not food for them” Ezek. 34:10. The shepherds condemned in Ezekiel are “the priests who teach for hire and the prophets who divine for money” as mentioned in Micah 3:11.

Nothing can be clearer than the fact that God intended to wrest his flock from the grasp of mercenaries and hirelings.

This new regime was to be inaugurated when one shepherd was set up over them. The prophet identifies that shepherd as “my servant David.” Since David was asleep with his fathers and his sepulchre was with them (Acts 2:29), when Ezekiel spoke, it is evident that the prophecy pertained to our Lord. Following this, Isaiah gives the declaration of the coming Christ, which Jesus personally read to the synagogue assembled in his home city of Nazareth, and of which he said, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:4:16-21). Then the prophet affirms that those who receive the “good tidings” are destined for a work of restoration (Isaiah 61:4), and they shall “be called the priests of the Lord, men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God” (Isaiah 61:6).

Nothing is clearer than the fact that God’s purpose was to make ministry and priesthood co-operative in “the time of reformation.” Every person who accepted the good tidings was to be a priest; every such person was to be a minister. In priesthood and ministry all were to be of equal rank insofar as liberty, privilege and relationship to God are concerned.

God promised Israel that if they would obey his voice and keep his covenant they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to him. They never realized the fruition of the magnificent promise because they failed to meet the conditions, but God’s purpose was not defeated. He created a new Israel of God (Gal. 6:16), made up of those who are Christ’s by substituting those who are the children of Abraham by faith for those who were his children by flesh, God at last made every spiritual son of Abraham a priest. Every real Jew is a priest (Rom. 2:28-29).

The creation of any system which sets up a special class of priestly functionaries to minister in behalf of their fellows in things pertaining to God not only usurps the rights of the remainder of God’s priests, but of even greater consequence, it does despite to the Spirit of grace, by introducing again a limited priesthood which

can never produce perfection. Such a system has no more right under a faultless covenant, than the burning of incense or animal sacrifices. Yet the ambition of men's hearts for power and prestige is so prevalent, that a constant battle must be waged to keep an indifferent, indolent membership from surrendering their privileges and responsibilities to a group of professional worship directors who sell their talents and abilities for filthy lucre.

Even under the law one priest could not hire another. The priests were ordained to serve. Since every Christian is now a priest, it is certainly a travesty upon God's plan for a congregation of priests to hire another priest to minister in their behalf in things pertaining to God. Such a procedure produces two evils. In the first place, it defeats the very purpose of God as to priesthood by creating a sense of helplessness and dependency upon the part of the greater majority of his priests, and in the second place it creates a professional cast who serve for wages or hire.

There is no priesthood in God's program now but that which is common to all Christians. That which makes one a Christian, also makes him a priest yet a special clergy has captivated the religious world. Name it what you will, this it is but a limited priesthood, arrogantly taking to itself, those rights, which belong to all. Nothing is more certain than the fact that the average religionist believes that this special group of ministerial functionaries is a product of New Testament teaching. Yet it is apparent that the system that produces them is a denial of the very essence of the New Covenant, and an espousal of the program of the Old Covenant.

The first reformation began when Christ came and brought with it certain changes. Those changes must be recognized and acted upon; to deny them is to disobey God's purpose.

1. There has been a change of sacrifice. The animal sacrifices once required are no longer demanded. To offer such sacrifices now

would be to crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.

2. There has been a change of law. No longer are we subject to the “regulations for worship in the earthly sanctuary” (Hebrews 9:1). The law had “but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of those realities” (Hebrews 10:1). The man who chooses to be justified by the law shows a preference for the shadow rather than the reality.

3. There has been a change of priesthood. The limited has given way to the universal. With the introduction of the priesthood of all believers, no particular class or caste has an exclusive right “to perform ritual duties.” Indeed it is one of the absolute essentials to priesthood that each person who is a priest must “have something to offer” Hebrews 8:3. The change in the priesthood has conferred upon all God’s priests the right to minister unto God subject to the restrictions of the Great King.

This great truth was recognized in the primitive church: The devotional exercises of the Christian assemblies, like those of the Jewish synagogues, consisted principally of prayers, singing of hymns, and sacred discourses, founded upon portions of the Old Testament. Apostolic epistles were read in the congregation, to which they had been generally directed, but after a single reading they were generally laid aside. Everyone who had power and the inclination to speak in public was allowed to do so with freedom (A History of the Christian Church, Dr. Charles Hase, pp. 40-41). The mystery of iniquity, which began to work even during apostolic days, soon changed this state of affairs, and wrested the rights from the many and gave them into the hands of the powerful few. This was done by recourse to the limited priesthood of the law as a pattern. Writing about conditions in the second century, Dr Chase, who was Professor of Theology in the University of Jena, says: “In all things relating to the business of the congregation, the principal care and authority devolved upon the clergy, but this power was generally exercised mildly and with a true regard for the public good, since those who possessed it could use no external means of coercion. The clergy, being generally without fixed

salaries, were dependent upon the voluntary contributions of the people. Their authority was often much straitened by the influence of the confessors, and the idea was not yet removed of a priesthood embracing all true Christians". (Ibid pp. 57-58).

From the foregoing it is apparent that one of the first steps to the formation of a special clergy was the denial of the freedom to every one who had the power and inclination to speak in public. The surrender of the freedom to address the brethren by those who had the ability and desire to do it, into the hands of a special group of ministrants, was the seed from which the clergy sprung, and soon the guaranteed wage for serving God in behalf of men was introduced, and with it passed away the real function of the priesthood of all believers, and a limited priesthood once more came into vogue. It is not amiss to state that the clergy system and the financial guarantee always go hand in hand.

When people demand professional ministers, then professionals will arise to meet the demand. However, a system of universal priesthood cannot co-exist with a system of limited priesthood. We cannot (serve two masters) be under the reign of grace and Mosaic Law at the same time. The professional ministry with its contracts to men cannot exist side by side with the mutual ministry growing out of a covenant with God.

We are living in "the time of reformation" of which the prophet spoke. The "end of the ages" has come. God's great ideal must reach its culmination in our lives. It is not for us to question whether his plan will work. It is but for us to work his plan. The speaker's platform is no longer a stand in which humble farmers, mechanics or carpenters may exhort their fellow Christians to endure trials, overcome temptations and grow in grace, but it has become a carpeted stage on which a polished performer presents a perfected oration for which he has been personally prepared. We are more concerned about what our worldly friends think of "our minister" than we are as to what they think of God's Son. God's time of reformation is here; it is now time that our reformation begin.

IN A DIALOGUE “ONLY ONE SPEAKS”

By Jon Zens Searching together Box 377 Taylors Falls MN 55084.

It is fascinating how Christians often presume that the only faithful perspective on an issue is their own. They believe only their vantage point does justice to a particular biblical teaching. This would seem to be the case in a report from the London Theological Seminary. It states in part:

“The New Testament uses the word “dialogue” as a verb to describe true preaching. By this is meant that, though only one speaks, he so speaks that a real engagement is made between him and his hearers and interaction occurs by means of his message with their thoughts, questions, doubts and even denials, together with their fears, anxieties and longings.”

Seminaries, in particular, have a position to defend. Their entire existence is often predicated on the assumption that a single person; that is an ordained “minister”, should do most, if not all of the “speaking.” But this is an assumption that begs for a closer New Testament scrutiny. First, *if* the verb *dialegomai* (to reason, dispute, speak) should be defined as “true preaching,” is it not significant that this activity usually occurred in evangelistic contexts *outside* of believers’ gatherings (Acts 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8-9; 24:12, 25)? With but few exceptions, the prevailing NT example presents “preaching” as an activity directed toward unbelievers.

On what grounds, do we make one man’s “sermon” the central focus of the weekly Christian gatherings?

In addition, while Paul’s “dialogue” in Acts 20:7,9 indeed took place at a meeting of disciples, the text also specifically states that the reason for the meeting was that “the disciples came together to break bread.” This was Paul’s last opportunity to fellowship with these believers. The text admittedly states that he “kept talking until midnight” (7), but it is difficult to conclude that this proves the “Centrality of preaching.” Paul may have gone on for hours, but are we to assume that it was without interruption? I doubt it.

This was a unique event. It is more reasonable to suppose that while Paul's parting words certainly contributed to the length of the meeting, others present also verbally interacted with the beloved apostle.

This probability is further confirmed by what we know of synagogue meetings. Whenever Paul "dialogued" in a Jewish synagogue, his intent was to show how the Old Testament spoke of Christ. It is inconceivable to think that Paul was the only "speaker" on these occasions. Assuredly when Paul set forth some Christ-centred perspective from the Torah there would be verbal reactions from those who heard. Can you conceive of Jews, particularly Rabbis and "teachers of the law", hearing Paul proclaim Christ in **their** synagogue just sitting there passively? I am convinced there would have been some very lively interchange! Here is my point: the concept of "dialogue" in the New Testament seems to clearly encompass interaction between the speaker and the hearer. Thus while one person's speech can, and often may provide the core of the content, a verbal response on the part of the listeners is also assumed. It is unnatural, contrived, and out of character with the historical situations in Acts to assume that in "dialogue" only one can speak while all others are expected to keep their thoughts to themselves.

Believers' Gatherings were Not One-Person Oriented. Can we truly handle New Testament truth responsibly and still suggest that it is Christ's revealed will for the **same man's sermons** to be the central focus of **every** weekly gathering? Every glimpse we have of those early assembly times points to an informal, participatory format. Exegetes uniformly admit to this fact. Paul's most detailed remarks on Christian gatherings, such as in 1 Cor. 14, encourage various forms of participation with the possibility of multiple speakers who humbly subject themselves to a free and open evaluation by the rest. It is a model that assumes a many-member involvement, not just a one-man show 1 Cor 12:7, 14.

While some people would attempt to escape the implications of 1 Cor. 14 by telling us that the circumstances were peculiar to the first century and have little practical relevance for us now. In my experience, however, most of those who promote such a view

manifest a serious inconsistency. While they are quick to **play down** the participatory elements of 14:26 on cultural grounds, they are just as quick to ignore the cultural background to the teaching about the “silence” of women in 14:34-35 and **literally apply** the restriction as an unbreakable absolute.

In Eph 4:11-13 it is clear that Christ bestows special abilities on some of his saints so that they can help “prepare” the rest for “works of service.” He uses elders (plural), for example, to “feed” his flock (cf. Acts 20:28), and the sound teaching they are to provide is certainly an important part of assembly life. The dominant role that tradition assigns to one specially ordained “minister” (singular), however, is totally without a New Testament foundation.

David Brown (c.1898) made the following observations when dealing with 1 Cor 14: 26. The Christian church in assembly, on the same occasion, might have several speakers to address them. If this be so:

1. Should Christian teaching be regarded as a profession? It certainly is now. Men are brought up in it, trained for it, and live by it, in the same manner as architects, lawyers, and doctors.

2. Is the Christian church justified in confining its attention to the ministry of one man? In most modern congregations there are some Christian men who, by natural ability, by experimental knowledge and inspiration, are far more qualified to instruct and comfort the people than their professional and acknowledged minister. Surely official preaching has no authority, either in Scripture, reason, or experience, and it must come to an end sooner or later. Were the half-hour allotted in church services for the sermon to be occupied by three or four Christly men with the capability of expression withal, it would not only be far more interesting, but more profitably spent than now. (The Pulpit Commentary, p.459).

3. Assemblies everywhere would do well to take another look at the traditional way of doing things. To stubbornly defend historical patterns that lack New Testament warrant actually stifle the intended goal of body growth unfolded in Eph. 4:7-16.

A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

The ideal of God for a kingdom composed entirely of priests is achieved in the relationship created by the new covenant. That which could not be accomplished at Mount Sinai has been accomplished at Mount Zion, where we received a kingdom, which cannot be moved or shaken. Every child of God is a priest; every one is now a minister.

Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10. The word “priest” in the New Testament is never once applied to a special ministry or caste in the congregation of our Lord. No gospel preacher, bishop, or deacon, was ever referred to as a priest in any distinctive sense; no such individual was a priest by right of office.

Nothing is clearer than the fact that in the primitive Christian community there was no priesthood other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ and every one of his followers, who were to “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.” The special priesthood so prevalent in our day has no scriptural precedent under the rule of Jesus. It has been created by men and has arisen without divine warrant. God’s magnificent plan for the ages culminates in every saint recognized as a real priest. Any attempt to promote a special priesthood clothed with special powers to minister in things pertaining to God thwarts the divine purpose. It is an affront to the Great King and his humble and loyal subjects. In spite of this we are faced with the fact that in our day the idea of a special priesthood to minister for and in behalf of other saints is so prevalent that a majority of believers have no concept of the people of God functioning in any other manner.

The danger of this lies in the fact that the kingdom of heaven is designed to be a kingdom of priests. It derives its nature from a citizenry composed of priests. If we create a wholly different order in which the citizens disclaim any relationship as priests, there is a question as to whether it can be regarded as the kingdom of heaven or not. To what extent can we alter the fundamental constituency of the kingdom of heaven and still regard ourselves as composing

it? Perhaps nothing is more important for our generation than a recapture of the royal priesthood.

This brings us to the place where we may well investigate another word, “clergy.” It is from the Greek *kleero*, which means “a lot, an inheritance.” In the original it occurs 13 times in the Scriptures. It is rendered “heritage” one time, “inheritance” two times, “lot” three times, “lots” five times, and “part” two times. The word is never used in the new covenant scriptures to mark off a segment or portion of God’s people from the rest. All who have been redeemed and have entered into Christ constitute the heritage of God. He has not selected a special group to serve as his lot or inheritance.

This was not true under the legalistic regime created by the old covenant. Then God had a special inheritance, a clergy to act as his special functionaries. Observe that here a special group was set apart (Deut. 10:8,9), or ordained to minister unto God and to pronounce a blessing or benediction upon the remainder of the congregation in God’s name. Under Judaism there was a distinction between the clergy and the laity. The people were not permitted to enter the sacred areas or to engage in the clerical functions.

Nothing is clearer than the fact that under “the ministration of death” which was written and engraved in stones, God created a clergy with certain ruthless functions. Those who composed it wore distinctive robes and stood between the people and God. But all such distinctions were rendered invalid by the cross of Christ. Under the reign of grace God no longer has a special tribe ordained as clergymen. Every Christian is a clergyman in the only scriptural usage of the term. To create a special clergy is to lapse back into Judaism. It is easier to live under law than under grace. Law creates its special interpreters and judges, and the community can rest in their judgment and be relieved of personal responsibility. When problems arise men can “go up to the priest,” and his clerical interpretation becomes the authorized guide. Yet it was

from this very system Jesus died to deliver us. He freed us from all priestly and hierarchical domination.

The great difference under the new covenant is illustrated in one important verse. It affirms the priesthood of all believers and uses the term “Laos” to designate the same group. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people [laity], that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

This passage is significant because it identifies the royal priesthood with God’s laity. Every priest of God is one of his laity; every member of God’s laity is a priest. Every child of God has his lot or inheritance through the blood of Jesus. Therefore, all of God’s children constitute his “clergy”. Since they also constitute his “laity” there can be no distinction between clergy and laity in the kingdom of Christ.

It is going to be very difficult to recover the abandoned ideal of the universal priesthood of believers. To abandon the clergy-oriented modern institution for the Spirit-filled community of saints in the first century is the last thing most people will consider. It is probable that the primitive community was more adapted to meaningful meetings in small homes, third floor walk-up tenements (as at Troas), or in catacombs and caves. Here those who were fighting for survival of a cause could come and bind up their wounds, share their experiences and exhort one another to shoulder the cross again.

We must be realistic enough to recognize that we live in a modern world. Religion has been institutionalised for many centuries; we are resigned to being spectators rather than participants. The action is to be carried out by trained professionals. Our tragedy is that we have been betrayed into going back to before the cross and reinstating the concept of priesthood, which was a part of Judaism. We have again created a professional priesthood to minister in our behalf. We think of the pulpit as “a holy place” in “the sanctuary” where only those with ordination or anointing may officiate.

In many cases those who enter the pulpit wear robes to distinguish them from other saints. They regard the speaker's stand as "sacred" and pronouncements from it may be uttered in a special "religious voice" adopted for the occasion. The minister may develop a sense of importance as to his position and speak about "my elders," "my church," "my laymen." If he ever regards the body of believers as constituting priesthood, he regards himself as a sort of local high priest whose task is to correlate and be responsible for a ritual or liturgy by which men approach God through his leading or direction. This has tended to institutionalise the church and to eliminate the family feeling so essential to the maintenance of brotherly love under the Fatherhood of God.

Unfortunately, we have been betrayed into erecting temples and tabernacles in which we dedicate sanctuaries, and we tend to think of what we do in such special places as service to God. But all of this is pre-Christian and Judaist in origin. It actually nullifies the power of the cross, while pampering our pride and salving the conscience. Temples require special priests, vestments, liturgies, orders of service, and a great many other things wholly unknown to the new covenant. One of the major differences between Judaism and the Christian community is that under the former the important thing was the place where the sacrifice was offered, while under the latter, place has lost significance. The true worshipper no longer thinks in terms of a particular site or city as "the place where men ought to worship" but in terms of spirit and reality.

Priesthood And Ministry: The Roman Catholic Church has built up a system of special priesthood on a hierarchical basis, [and in] approximation to this the Protestant world generally has adopted a clergy system, which relegates the members to what is referred to as "lay status," and which effectively negates the new covenant ideal of universal priesthood

The community of believers in our day suffers from a confusion of tongues. The terms used in the scriptures are often applied to those things that are foreign or alien to their original meaning, and new

words have been coined to describe Biblical concepts that serve only to warp or distort them. General terms are given only a specific meaning, and vice versa....

A good illustration of what we mean is found in the words “minister” and “ministry.” These appear as translations of Greek terms, but they have been given such limitations in our day that the majesty and breadth originally attached to them has been all but lost.

“Minister” is from the Latin *ministro*, which means “to serve, to attend, and to wait on.” A minister is one who serves, and any service rendered is ministry. The word “minister” designates one as a servant but never, of itself, expresses or suggests the kind of service rendered. One simply cannot tell by looking at the word the nature of the service. To use the word “ministry” in such a manner as to apply it exclusively to one branch or field of service is to do an injustice to the language of the Spirit. In spite of this, to speak of “the minister” in our day is to refer to only one functionary. In justification for this it is urged that Paul declared that he was “made a minister” (Eph. 3:7), that Tychicus was “a faithful minister in the Lord” (Eph. 6:21), that Epaphras was “a faithful minister of Christ” (Col 1:7), and that Timothy was told how to become “a good minister” (1 Tim. 4:6). What does this mean? Simply that these men were good servants, faithful in whatever relationship they were called upon to sustain to God, Christ and the congregation.

“Minister” is from *diakonos*, which occurs 30 times. It is rendered “minister” 20 times, “deacon” 3 times, and “servant” 7 times. It is translated “deacon” in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8, 12. To employ it to designate a special type of labour in a congregation, exclusive of that done by the deacons would be absurd in light of God’s revelation. Yet when one asks a friend to come and hear “the new minister” he is not inviting him to listen to a speech by a newly appointed deacon. Nor does the term “associate minister” refer to an assistant to the deacons. One who decides to “study for the

ministry” is not planning to train for the diaconate. Yet the word “deacon” is a transliteration of the Greek word for “minister”.

Phoebe is called “a minister of the church which is at Cenchrea” (Rom. 16:1), but we would hardly surmise that she was sent forth by the congregation as an evangelist. Those religious bodies, which claim to oppose “women ministers”, find themselves in difficulty with Phoebe, whom the apostle Paul commended as a minister of a local congregation. Only one man’s name appears upon the signboard with the caption— Minister. The same name appears upon the letterheads and stationery, and upon the bulletins and mailing pieces. By the very designation of one as the minister, we have successfully convinced all of the others that they are not ministers. They do not even think of themselves in that category.

If you address a group of members with the question, “Are you gentlemen ministers of the congregation?” the laughing reply will be, “No, the minister is in the office.” Even more ridiculous in light of the scriptures is for one to reply, “I’m not a minister, and I’m just a deacon.” This is the equivalent of saying, “I am not a minister, I am just a minister.” It is little wonder that the church is confused.

It is not too much to say that the life of the saint is expressed in the word “ministry,” or service. Jesus came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He declared that he was among people as one who served. Those who follow him must come to minister, not to be ministered unto. The community of believers should have as a goal the providing of an opportunity for every member to share in constructive fashion his thinking and gifts. Any system that commits the edification of the body to one person hired for the role, and reduces the rest to mere spectators is contrary to the plan and purpose of God.

There is no question but that the gatherings of the saints in apostolic times were in the nature of family reunions. The spontaneity and unrehearsed participation was of the type you might expect to find in our day when a Christian family sits down

at the Thanksgiving table. Even the least one is heard with special appreciation, and those who are less forward are gently urged to share in the occasion.

The “local minister” is the front man for the congregation in our day. He is the key to its popularity, or its waning influence. So much is this a part of the institutional religious life of our day that it comes as a shock of surprise when one points out that it is utterly foreign to the concept enunciated by the holy apostles. The “local minister” or “one-man pastor” is unknown in new covenant scriptures. The community of saints was edified and strengthened by the use of every gift. The believers never gathered to hear a “sermon.” The word is not even found in the sacred scriptures. Origen was called “the father of the sermon.” Of course this meant that the public expression of worship was so arranged as to provide for this exercise, since it would be ridiculous to urge all to seek the ability to edify and then relegate the function to one imported for a fee. And to this fact the scholarship of the world gives ready agreement. Read carefully the following statements from eminent historians.

“The form of worship of the primitive church was also exceedingly simple” (Andrew C. Zenas). “The major premise of every true conclusion as to the ministry of the Apostolic Age must be the outpouring of the Spirit, hailed by Peter at Pentecost as the mark of Messianic times. In it Moses’ ideal that all of the Lord’s people should be prophets was in substance fulfilled. Accordingly in their worship, as we see from 1 Corinthians 14, each believer was free to edify his fellows by psalm, teaching, revelation, tongue, interpretation, as well as prayer or Eucharist” (James V Bartlet).

The system into which the religious world has fallen has created the greatest “brain drain” in history. It is directly responsible for the accumulation of a tremendous mass of unused talent. In many congregations there are brilliant men who are never allowed to share their thinking with the rest of the saints and faithful brethren simply because they are not regarded as being in the clerical caste....

Why should a congregation not be allowed to share in all the helpful insights of all its members? That many are growing weary with the

sterility, which has resulted, is obvious. A reaction is setting in which takes the form of a revolution. In many areas “an underground church” is forming. This phenomenon is observable when people become tired of meaningless and monotonous ritual, of form and ceremonies. Small groups begin to meet in homes without benefit of clergy, and in these cell meetings all are free to speak their honest sentiments and convictions. No one lords it over the others. There is no clergy-laity division in God’s mind. The royal priesthood should be made to realize that divine rights have been surrendered to, or captured by, a special caste, and incipient clergy. These rights must be returned to the saints, or God’s plan for the ages will be nullified as it pertains to our responsibility. God has placed no pulpit as a throne in the midst of the congregation, to which one man has an exclusive right. The freedom of the speaker’s platform for every loyal capable subject must be asserted.

A Sincere Appeal.

The sectarian spirit of today can never achieve the ideal of God. It can never answer the prayer for unity of Him “whom having not seen we love.” The clergy perpetuates 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 thinking for themselves. The early Christians belonged to no sect. They had no other creed than Christ. They were not fractured into divers 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 coronated King of kings.

If this generation is to see any rapid strides toward restoration of New Testament order, 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 humble and 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.”

But how shall we rid ourselves of the burden of an unscriptural clergy system? The task will be difficult, let no one doubt. The first step must be a firm resolution to examine the sacred Scriptures by each child of God for himself. Everyone who loves God must not only seek to derive spiritual food for his own growth, but he must then have a compelling urge to share his learning with his brethren for their good. Let anything, which will steal that liberty and bring us into bondage be so obnoxious to us that we will not countenance even the faintest hint of it.

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

All must be made to realize that the task of bringing the world to Christ belongs to every saint. The first truly literary assailant of Christianity was Celsus, who about the beginning of the second century taunted God’s congregation with the fact that “wool-workers, cobblers, leather-dressers, the most illiterate and vulgar of mankind, were zealous preachers of the gospel.” In the primitive church the saints met to worship and scattered to preach. The bench of the cobbler, the plough handles of the farmer, the desk of the tax collector; these were the only pulpits known. The Christians took the good news to the world; they did not build houses and tell the world to come.

Christians then did not speak of “entering the ministry.” They were already in it. Everyone entered the ministry at baptism. To be in Christ was to be in ministry. Nobody went away to study for “the Ministry.”

Each week these priests gathered about a table. They spoke to each other to build up, stir up and cheer up. Their talks were not formal or stilted sermons. A number of brethren participated, speaking one by one, that all might be edified and all might be comforted.

The pattern of religious worship in the early church was designed by God to meet the needs of the church in all ages. It requires no alteration, needs no amendment, and demands no improvement. The church of today can only be healthy if it follows this prototype.

The call to a brighter and better day goes forth to all who are of a broken and contrite spirit. The way to liberty in Christ Jesus is the way of the cross. Men who plead for a complete restoration of the New Testament church must endure persecution and misrepresentation. There is no hope of reforming a decadent movement as a body. The only hope is that men will arise who see the need to call forth those whose trust is stayed on God and once more start a move toward Jerusalem’s broken down walls.

Our plea is to everyone who has a good and honest heart. Only on such fertile soil will the seed of the kingdom produce a bountiful yield. Regardless of religious affiliation, of parental instruction, ecclesiastical tradition, or priestly doctrine, let us throw off the yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. Let us recapture the fountain of life so that its waters can once more flow freely, and restore to this earth the congregation as our great high priest at the right hand of God gave it. Remember, “You also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” May God bless the royal priesthood of all believers is our very humble and sincere prayer.

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THE LAMENTABLE CONDITION OF THE LAND

The lamentable condition of God's people in Jeremiah's day is being repeated in our day. But I said, "Ah, Sovereign LORD, the prophets keep telling them, you will not see the sword or suffer famine. Indeed, I will give you lasting peace in this place." Then the Lord said to me, "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds (Jeremiah 14:13-16).

Therefore, this is what the LORD says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name: I did not send them, yet they are saying, 'No sword or famine will touch this land.' Those same prophets will perish by sword and famine. And the people they are prophesying to will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and sword. There will be no one to bury them, their wives, their sons or their daughters. I will pour out on them the calamity they deserve.

Today as then the land is full of those who hide the truth under a cloud or words. They insinuate that outward ritual and attending services designed by them to help their people to get a fix by listening to a sermon and to tithe is sufficient. Many are beginning to recognize how falsely they have been taught. This is a grievous sin that God is surely going to address before too long.

“As Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was”. 2 Timothy 3: 8-9.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more

ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who has strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past overthrowing the faith of some” 2 Timothy 2:15-20.

There is no fate as terrible as that of those who have not only erred themselves, but have caused men to err by placing a stumbling block in the way of God’s people.

Better to be dumb, than speak words that may destroy the faith of any. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity, but in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Judas’s are always to be found among disciples”.

These days Christians have to walk through a minefield of error. Corrupt men have crept in unawares says Jude. The doom of these false prophets will be terrible. Their fate will be the more awful because they have run without being sent: and prophesied without having heard or seen a vision. There has been no Divine force energizing their words. Position, prosperity and power are the incentives of their office. Yet the people are culpable in this matter also because they have loved to have it so. Their corrupt morals have produced a corrupt priesthood, and a crop of false prophets. The men of whom we complain are a product of the stifling corruption of the age in which we live. They have produced a crop that cannot endure the simple truth of Divine word. Until therefore these leaders themselves put away their sin, and return to the Lord in penitence and consecration they must be held guilty before Him and suffer the consequences of their sin. “I will make them pay for their wickedness said the Lord” Jeremiah 14:17.

THE PROPHETS

The prophets were a large and influential class. Dating from the days of Samuel their schools had produced a succession of men, who occupied a unique position in the land. In the degenerate days of which we are referring to, the kingdom of Judah was rapidly falling, they seem to have been deeply infected by the prevailing vices of their times as Isaiah says; "His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs, which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for personal gain. "Come," one says, "I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant" Isaiah 56:10-12.

"They have lied about the LORD, and said, "It is not He. Neither will evil come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine. For the prophets have become wind, for the word is not in them." Jeremiah 5:12-13.

It must have been very painful for Jeremiah to oppose them, but he had no choice, there was no alternative because of the influence they were having on the people. His heart was broken, and he was in shock. Listen to these terrible words, spoken by the prophet.

"My heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, because of the Lord, and because of His holy words. The land is full of adulterers, for because of a curse the land mourns. The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up. Their course of life is evil, and their might is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yes, in My house I have found their wickedness," says the Lord. "Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery ways; in the darkness they shall be driven on and fall

in them; for I will bring disaster on them, the year of their punishment,” says the Lord. “And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria: they prophesied by Baal and caused My people Israel to err. Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah” Jeremiah 23:9-14.

HOW GOD SPOKE TO MEN BEFORE CHRIST?

“Long ago God spoke in many different ways to our fathers through the prophets in visions and dreams and even face to face, but now in these last days He has spoken unto us through His Son to whom He has given everything” Hebrews 1:1-3.

He spoke to our Fathers in visions and dreams and even face to face. He spoke to Israel’s Kings through the Prophets. Under the Law an individual could only approach God with an approved sacrifice offered by a priest on his behalf. He speaks to us today through His Son who dwells within.

God gave the Law to Moses at Sinai. It was made up of two parts. In one part was a civil code for their physical day-to-day well-being. In the second part He gave priesthood for the purpose of administering the moral law, and to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people to Him. From the time that this covenant came into force all approach to God must be through the priesthood that He had appointed to mediate on behalf of the people.

Prior to this, during the days of the Patriarchs, God spoke to them in an assortment of ways and through various manifestations. Some were hardly aware of who they were entertaining. Hebrews 13:1-2.

Many of the Patriarchs had angelic encounters with the Lord such as Noah Hebrews 11: 7; and Abraham Genesis 18; and Jacob Genesis 32: 1, 24; Psalm 34:7; Hebrews 1: 14; but none of them ever enjoyed His enduring presence. He never took up permanent residence within any of them. No not even the three fathers Abram, Isaac, and Jacob enjoyed this aspect of God. We could go into detail over the tremendous encounters men and women of the Old Testament had with God, and as incredible as they certainly were, not one of them could say, “I am indwelt by the Spirit of the living God.” Or the Holy Spirit lives inside me.

**GOD WAS APPROACHABLE
ONLY ONCE A YEAR UNDER THE LAW**

The Day of Atonement:

This most solemn day was observed during the Feast of Tabernacles. On this day, by a special sacrifice a whole year's sins were covered. This day did not take the place of the Passover or make the Passover of less value. In point of fact, it was an aspect of it. The day was unique inasmuch as, apart from this day, there could be no continual fellowship with the Lord because of an accumulation of unconfessed and unforgiven sin throughout the year; and the inadequacy of the blood of bulls and goats.

This day revealed with its ceremonies, how holy God was and how distant man was. There was no immediate access to God under the Old Covenant. God was on one side of the veil and man was on the other side, — the outside. Access to God was limited to one man, once a year, and that under unique precautionary measures. To ignore these restrictions was to invite immediate death, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu.

That veil, which separated God and man, was a fabric of fine twined linen worked in blue, purple, and scarlet, though fragile in itself it was formidable in its purpose. Neither the Levitical priesthood nor the Levitical sacrifices could produce perfection. Infirmary was stamped on the former, and insufficiency was stamped on the latter; imperfection on both. An imperfect man could not be a perfect priest, nor could an imperfect sacrifice give a perfect conscience.

Aaron was neither competent nor entitled to take his seat within the veil, nor could the sacrifices, which he offered, rend that veil. This was the day of At-one-ment. The claims of God that man could not meet and the needs of man that could not be satisfied were both settled on this day, creating an oneness. However, this still remained a temporary provision that was only for the time being and had to be performed every year until Christ came Himself to die. It was atonement, it was a temporary covering for

sin, and it was incapable of removing sin. For these reasons it must always keep in mind that the insufficiency of the Atonement brought the Lord into the world. Reference is so often made to Christ's Atonement. This statement is incorrect. If Atonement had been sufficient, Christ need not have died. Atonement only covered sin.

Redemption removes sin and leaves man justified.

It was a Day of humiliation.

There were a number of things God required of both the high Priest and the people that day. On this one day of the year, the tenth day of the seventh month, the High Priest had to lay aside all his garments of glory, the Breastplate and Ephod, the Curious Girdle, and the Robe with its golden bells and pomegranates, also the Holy Crown.

“Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place. He shall put on the holy linen coat, he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: These are holy garments; therefore he shall wash his flesh in water, and so put them on” Lev 15:3-4.

In this day the High Priest was dressed in the same way as all the priests. He had nothing of which he could boast. Outwardly he looked no different to all the priests although inwardly he still remained the High Priest. Once in the end of the age, the Great High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, laid aside all the glory that He had with the Father from before the foundation of the earth, put upon Himself the robe of humanity and, becoming like one of us He humbled Himself? That was, outwardly and actually Jesus became man, but essentially He remained the Divine Son of God because His Divinity is something He cannot and will not forfeit.

It was a Day of guilt.

Two goats were taken to become one offering; one was for God and the other for man. There were also a young bullock and a ram. These were an offering for the priest for he too, like the people, was imperfect and needed his offering. This is where the High Priest differed from the Great High Priest, where man is different

from him who became a man. Jesus needed no offering for Himself and, therefore, Himself became our Offering.

A casting of lots took place for the two goats. The animal that fell out to the Lord became the sacrificial one and had to die. The other became the scapegoat. The people confessed their sins, as Aaron laid his hands heavily on the head of the goat. This was an act of identification and accusation. The sins of the people had passed to the animal, it was then taken into the wilderness and lost, and as the goat became lost so, likewise, were the sins that it had carried. Jesus paid the price of our sin, which is death—and He also removed our sins as far as the east is from the west to be remembered against us no more.

This was substitution; one taking the place of another. “The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” Isa 53: 6. “For he made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21).

He walked the wine press of God’s wrath alone.

“And there shall he no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, until he comes out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel” (Lev 15: 17).

No man was allowed to enter into the Tabernacle on that day, save the High priest alone. He went in a solitary figure taking in the blood of the bullock, firstly for himself, and then entering again with the blood of the goat, which was for the people. How significant that none of the priests, nor yet the sons of Levi could he within the Tabernacle. Jesus trod the winepress alone, forsaken of God and rejected of man. God had nothing to do with the making of man’s first covering (aprons of fig leaves), as man had nothing to do with the making of the second covering.

This day was a Day of favourable reception.

On this day alone, with shed blood, the High priest was allowed to pass beyond the veil, while the whole congregation waited anxiously

outside. Before passing beyond the veil, the High priest would put incense upon the censer, and then hold the censer at arm's length within the veil. When the fragrant smoke from the incense had filled the place and dimmed the sight of the Mercy Seat and the Glory Cloud, then the High Priest entered with the blood. This blood he sprinkled seven times upon the Mercy Seat, signifying a perfect acceptance with God through applied blood. Then, taking a step backwards, he sprinkled the blood seven times before the Ark, meaning a perfect standing before God through shed blood.

Jesus, having accomplished His work of redemption upon the Cross by His own Blood He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" Hebrews 9: 12. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" Hebrews 9:24.

It was a day of concern and accountability. "This shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it is one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourned among you" (Lev. 15: 29).

This meant a day of sorrow, repentance, confession of sin, and of a broken and a contrite spirit. It was a day of rest. "Ye shall do no work in that same day" Lev 15: 38 "It shall be unto you a Sabbath of rest" Lev 23:32.

We need to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. We do nothing because we are nothing. It is when we rest from struggling, striving, and all the works of the flesh that we can appreciate and appropriate His work on our behalf.

Finally, it was a Day of completion.

Such a day must have results. "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" Leviticus: 30. Coming out from the Tabernacle to the great concourse of people that waited outside, the High Priest lifted his hands in blessing over the

assembly, and cried: “Ye are clean from all your sins”, and so the day concluded. Jesus has accomplished the same work, and made the same pronouncement to all who are washed in his precious Blood. “Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you” John 15: 3.

Antitype. Israel has been at odds with God through many years and many apostasies. There has been no relationship since they rejected Christ as their Messiah, and their King. The nation has been scattered; a veil has been over their faces and darkness in their minds. Paul says, “But their minds were blinded: for until this day the same veil remains in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even to this day when Moses is read, the veil is on their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away” 2 Cor 3:14 -16.

The evidence is that the nation is in need of an at-one-ment. It is for this purpose that God has brought them back to the land where in Jacob’s time of trouble they shall recognize Him as their Messiah, and He will acknowledge them as His people. But for now the world is in turmoil, the Church is lukewarm, and Christians are indifferent. We are undoubtedly living in the Laodicean age concerning which Jesus declared that we are neither hot nor cold. Paul outlined the conditions to Timothy: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” 2 Tim 3: 1,5,13.

There is not a statement here that is not fully apparent. Satan is having his harvest. Evil is dominating our world, and righteousness is suppressed on every hand. Instead of the Church leading the world by precept and example its pulpits are full of worldly men.

BY A NEW AND LIVING WAY

“For all the law and the prophets **prophesied** until John.”

It pointed to a time in the future when one would come to take up His abode in the hearts of His people, in a temple not made with hands, but a temple built out of living stones redeemed from destruction. The law was **imposed** on them because of the extent of sin. They were perpetually kept under guard, bound to the Law, waiting for the grace that was destined to be revealed by the gospel Matt 11:13.

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. Heb 10:1.

“The first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. Now when these things had been prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. **It was symbolic** for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience, concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation” Heb 9:1, 7-10.

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” Heb 4:14-16.

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” Heb 7:25.

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” Heb 10:19-22.

“For through Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father” Eph 2:18-19.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” Rom 5:1-2.

HIS PERFECT WORK

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him” Eph 3:10-12.

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” Hebrews 9:12.

He ransomed us, paying for our redemption in full with His precious blood once and for all, forever. He did more than atone for us. Atonement would have only covered sin. Redemption forgave and remitted our sins, sending them away, never to be charged to our account again, thus leaving us justified. For these reasons we must always keep in mind that the insufficiency of the Atonement brought the Lord into the world. Reference is often made to Christ’s Atonement. This statement is incorrect. If Atonement had been sufficient, Christ need not have died.

If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come-- one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? Heb 7:11.

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that

time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching Heb 10:9-25.

OUR GLORIOUS STANDING

The nature of our relationship with Jesus Christ is totally different in character to that which Simon Peter and the other disciples enjoyed with Him before the cross. They knew Him after the flesh. Their relationship was of a natural and physical nature. They travelled with Him; ate together with Him sharing the human experience with Him, but they never knew Him after the Spirit until he arose. Now we may know Him after the Spirit. In truth there is no other way that He can be known since the cross.

“Now we know no man after the flesh, not even Christ” 2 Cor 5:16.

This is our glorious privilege, to know Christ after the spirit. The woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well when enquiring about where to worship received this most profound answer, “true worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father seeks such to worship Him” John 4:5-14.

“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer” 2 Cor 5:16.

About himself Paul said, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood” Gal 1:15-16.

It is quite possible that Paul may have never seen Christ after the flesh, as did the other disciples. Yet it was to him that the great responsibility of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles was given. And again Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in Christ, who loved me and gave Himself for me” Gal 2:20.

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” Phil 3:3.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” Rom 8:1.

“For through Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father” Eph 2:18-19.

“That which we’ve seen and heard we declare to you that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and these things we write to you that your joy may be full” I John 1:3-4.

HAVING EYES TO SEE, THEY SEE NOT

The special function of the Holy Spirit was to inspire and open the eyes of Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Seeing into the world of the Spirit they had visions of God and future things in an amazing way. In our case it is no different in most respects; yes men may still be seers. A case in point is Paul; “Perceiving he had faith to be healed” Acts 14:9.

Two men can sit together, hear the same thing, and the eyes of one will be enlightened, while the eyes of the other remain unconscious to Divine revelation.

Flesh and blood cannot reveal such things but only the Spirit of God. These things are hidden from the wise and prudent but revealed to babes.

How wonderful it is to know the hope of our calling and the inheritance that awaits those who look for His appearing. And what is the greatness of His power toward those who believe. It is imperative that all Christians be alive to the realization that God wants us to possess the power of vision. It’s deeper than intellect, since it is spiritual. It cannot be earned, learned, or acquired by natural means. It is the gift of Him who alone can open the eyes of the blind and remove the veil that shuts out the unseen and unknowable world. If you lack it seek Jesus for it. Be willing to do His will and you shall know John 7:17.

If wicked fathers see to it that their children get what they ask to the fullest extent of their ability, how **much more** will the heavenly Father do for His children that ask Him. Luke 11:13 adds, “Give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.”

It is related of the great Ampere who was short-sighted, without being aware of it, that when he became conscious of his defective vision through the casual use of the eye glass of a friend, he burst into tears as he realized how much throughout his life he had

missed of the wonderful beauty and interest in the world around him. We have more reason to weep over our untold loss through our spiritual near-sightedness, which so many do not realize they are afflicted with. May the eyes of our spiritual understanding be enlightened that we may be able to say with that one of old? "Whereas once I was blind, now I can see."

LOOK CLOSELY AT WHAT PAUL IS SAYING HERE?

Dear brothers, even when I first came to you I didn't use lofty words and brilliant ideas to tell you God's message. For I decided that I would speak only of Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. I came to you in weakness-- timid and trembling. And my preaching was very plain, not with a lot of oratory and human wisdom, but the Holy Spirit's power was in my words, proving to those who heard them that the message was from God. I did this because I wanted your faith to stand firmly upon God, not on man's great ideas.

Yet when I am among mature Christians I do speak with words of great wisdom, but not the kind that comes from here on earth, and not the kind that appeals to the great men of this world, who are doomed to fall.

Our words are wise because they are from God, telling of God's wise plan to bring us into the glories of heaven. This plan was hidden in former times, though it was made for our benefit before the world began.

But the great men of the world have not understood it; if they had, they never would have crucified the Lord of Glory. That is what is meant by the Scriptures which say that no mere man has ever seen, heard, or even imagined what wonderful things God has ready for those who love the Lord.

But we know about these things because God has sent his Spirit to tell us, and his Spirit searches out and shows us all of God's deepest secrets. No one can really know what anyone else is thinking or what he is really like except that person himself. And no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) to tell us about the wonderful free gifts of grace and blessing that God has given us.

In telling you about these gifts we have even used the very words given to us by the Holy Spirit, not words that we as men might choose. So we use the Holy Spirit's words to explain the Holy Spirit's facts. But the man who isn't a Christian can't understand and can't accept these thoughts from God, which the Holy Spirit teaches us. They sound foolish to him because only those who have the Holy Spirit within them can understand what the Holy Spirit means. Others just can't take it in. But the spiritual man has insight into everything, and that bothers and baffles the man of the world, who can't understand him at all. How could he? For, certainly he has never been one to know the Lord's thoughts, or to discuss them with him, or to move the hands of God by prayer. But, strange as it seems, we Christians actually do have within us a portion of the very thoughts and mind of Christ.” 1 Cor 2:1-16.

WE NEED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT GOD'S PURPOSE

In the beginning was the Word. In the dateless past the Word already was. God who is pure Spirit became incarnate, embodied in man. The first man was of the earth 'earthy'. The second was the Lord from heaven a quickening spirit'.

John 17:3 "And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." To know is not just to know about. We can know about great men such as Shakespeare, Churchill, and Julius Caesar, because volumes have been written on their lives; much of it by eyewitnesses, but yet you can never know them, because they are DEAD, and in some cases have been so for hundreds of years. But Christianity is not to 'know about'; but to know the living God personally and intimately, even as a mother knows the child of her womb.

Acts 1:8, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." They were witnesses to many things, but the most remarkable one of all was His resurrection. As true witnesses they declared what they knew. The resurrection to them was not a subject, but a reality. On 10 different occasions He showed Himself alive. Their testimony was; He's alive! We saw Him, touched Him, ate with Him and we talked to Him for 49 days as He mingled with us. Witnessing is to have a good look and to tell someone else what YOU have seen.

Immediately after Sept 11 churches were full. People were looking for spiritual fulfilment. Many were asking what is meaning of life, is this all we have to look forward to? Thousands went to church hungry and came away hungrier. Then a new poll showed that church attendance went back down again because they couldn't find what they were looking for in the church? A National poll quoted people as saying, "church was such an unpleasant experience I never went back"; "there was nothing happening there", "it was a waste of my time." How come? It's because the church has lost its authority to speak for God. It seemed so lifeless and irrelevant. People have turned a deaf ear to an institution that's

in damage control. It's become the butt of many jokes. The present state of the church is devoid of the character of God. Many want nothing to do with it because they see it as an immoral and hypocritical two-faced money-grabbing institution that has turned away multiplied thousands of 'might have been earnest seekers'.

The revelations of the past few years are mind-boggling, and so far we have only seen the tip of the iceberg. If the leaders of these systems have are in damage control and deception, what hope is there for their subjects? Within the church many people feel they have been betrayed. They have become disillusioned, despondent, discouraged and disgusted. Others have been deceived into believing that they must depend upon their minister for their spiritual food. Yet when Paul was about to leave Ephesus he never suggested that they send back to Antioch to get a pastor for the church, but he prayed for the elders and all the saints, commending them all to God.

Ministers of the new covenant were not given to be mediators as was Moses, the Law, and the Priesthood. There is only one mediator between God and man, and that's Christ. The ministry of human mediation has no place under the new covenant. God's servants like gardeners may till the soil; sow the seed He has provided, and water the growing plants, and they may participate in reaping the harvest, but the increase belongs to God.

Many servants have tampered with and modified the DNA of the seed of God's word by introducing genetic material of their own choosing. The resultant hybrid is the offspring of two different forms of life; one from a divine source and another one of human origin. The creation is sterile; it cannot reproduce. Suppliers warn people in third world countries not to eat genetically modified seed because it will make them ill or worse still kill them.

Well meaning people are always trying to reform the church by exchanging one form for another, but the true church, which is His body, doesn't need to be changed, it needs to grow up into Him in all things. However when church leaders talk about growth they are invariably referring to numbers, but the kind that God is interested

in is spiritual, and it's not happening Eph 4:15. His body doesn't need renewing, reforming, or reviving, His body is not half dead, it's alive and its genetic DNA is perfect. There's a grave danger in accepting change for progress, and knowledge for wisdom.

Religious programs have a "use by date"; they eventually they run their course and come to an end (peter out). Cases in point are Toronto and Pensacola; they weren't immoral or wicked, they were simply hype, and innuendo churned out by spin-doctors. The Rodney Howard Brown saga was plain nonsense, as were the brain dead performers who participated in those meetings. It was a lot of fun at the time, but in hindsight one feels embarrassed to even think about all the religious hocus-pocus associated with it as it careered around the world. People will eat anything when they are desperately hungry. This kind of behaviour reflects badly on preachers whose people flocked to these meetings because they wanted a change from the diet they had been dying on. Every substitute for the real eventually is seen for what it actually is.

The script for what most religious institutions believe and practice is written with no reference to the scriptures for its authority. The engines that drive the gurus of the present day religious system are; the total supremacy of the clergy; pride and ambition; forms of godliness that are powerless; financial greed for the acquisition of property; (buildings give them a sense of permanence); paranormal experiences to attract numbers who will then fill their war chests. Question what they say, you should keep asking yourself, is this what Jesus taught?

Do we need pastors to mediate for us?
What does the priesthood of all believers mean?
Can the Holy Spirit be trusted to teach us?
Will He do what Jesus said He would do?
Is He really capable of leading us into all truth?
Can we pew warmers really expect to hear His voice?
Or does He only speak to us through the clergy?
Are we just a bunch of dumb sheep that He can't get through to?

Why must we tithe; is it because we are still under the Law, or because the pastor wants it?

How can we be under Law and Grace at the same time?

Is the clergy hindering personal communion with the Lord?

Why do we need their permission to practice our faith outside the regular meeting place?

Why won't they allow us to invite others into our homes to pray, study the word, and break bread without one of their unpaid lackeys present? Why do we need permission to practice our faith our own homes? Surely a man's home is his castle!

Here are samples of the kind of questions we should be asking ourselves.

It makes interesting reading don't you think? Then maybe you just don't bother to think but let the pastor do your thinking for you!

"Awake from the dead thou that sleepest and Christ shall give thee light" Eph 5:14.

This article was featured in the Christian Magazine "Charisma".

Don't let your Pastor become another statistic.

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 since they entered the ministry.
- 40% report a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
- 70% don't have someone they consider a friend. *(Source National Day of Prayer Task Force.)*

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

President Truman.

You don't really expect a man with so many problems to be able to help you do you?

THE TOXIC SOCIETY

Toxic is a poison especially one secreted by a microbe causing some particular disease. (Oxford dictionary).

One in two marriages fail, and where children are involved the consequences are inestimable. Presently Fifty million children go to bed every night in America in a home where only one natural parent is present, and that number is rising. In Australia it is over one million.

A large number of these homes are unable to function normally because of substance abuses such as alcohol, gambling and drugs. Prescription drugs are taken for all kinds of depression because without them millions cannot function; most will never be able to come off them; they are hooked for life. Millions have an addiction to illegal drugs that is uncontrollable. The consequences of these lifestyles are incalculable as they drive many into dire poverty and suicide, or an early grave. These problems include unwanted pregnancies, child abuse, violence and murder. In Australia we are constantly hearing reports of mothers and fathers spitefully murdering their own children. This is a sign of the last days, where Paul said people would be without natural affection.

As it takes several auxiliary bodies such as doctors, lawyers, ministers, parents and police, to try and prop up each condition the situation is hopeless. Besides this there are just not enough helpers, or money to support them to go around. As the state of affairs reaches critical mass govt agencies are at wits end searching for answers that elude them, and will continue to do so until we have a national moral revolution. That is most unlikely to ever happen.

Countless young children live in extremely dangerous homes in neighbourhoods all around us. Yes, that's right, their homes are a war zone, and they are always the victims. The suffering and abuse that many of them endure is horrendous. After living the first years of their lives in homes such as these, their brains and emotions have been wired for every kind of violent, social and moral malfunction imaginable.

Then we must ask ourselves, that if these statistics for broken marriages is the same among Christians, what percentage of the other stats might also apply? The answer is they are much higher than we are ready to admit. A physician friend told me that 20% of those that come into his surgery for consultation are suffering from life threatening ailments; and that percentage is rising. We may be living longer, but what is the quality of these lives? He went on to say that Christian patients were coming to his practice wanting prescription drugs for what was essentially a spiritual disorder. You can mask spiritual problems, but you can't cure them with chemicals.

A best selling author who is also medical practitioner writes:

“I believe that the doctor of the future must not only be a physician but also a teacher. His true task will be to teach people how to live a healthy life. And physicians will not have less to do because of this; to the contrary, they will be busier than they are today, because it is much more difficult to keep people healthy than to cure them of any illness.”

First the natural and then the spiritual; now let us apply this principle to the way these new millennium preachers (spin doctors) treat their patients?

RESTORATION OF THE FALLEN

The casualty rate among the ministry is unquestionably high. The system creates its own problems because it functions outside the boundaries of God's grace. The consequential outcome that these fallen men create is tragic for all concerned. One can almost feel the pain that spouses and their immediate families suffer. Added to their spiritual shame is the psychological and financial stress. These can be very considerable. Our prayers go up to the throne of grace for victims who have to suffer consequences caused by the unbridled passion of the perpetrator.

The original state of the offender was one of living union with the head. Often the fall is the result of a relationship built on service and not on separation to holiness.

The way back though always difficult is not impossible.
"The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanses us from all sin."

Let us see the process of restoration from a bible perspective.
Restore (V). To bring back to its original condition.
Restorer. N. Someone who restores.

Restorative a process to restoring health and vigour by good treatment.
Restoration N. The act of restoring.

Restitution. Returning something or someone to its lawful owner.
Reconcile V. To re-establish a relationship after an estrangement.
Reconciliation N. The settlement of an estrangement for the purpose of peace.

1 Tim 5:20 "Those that sin rebuke before all that others may fear."
John 16: 8 "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement".

Reprove. *Elegcho gr.* Appears 17 times in New Testament and means to rebuke; to bring to shame the person reprovved; to convince; to tell one's fault.

Open sin must be dealt with openly. Elders are to be rebuked before all. The reason being there is less excuse for them than any other man. If the sinner remains unrepentant then fellowship must be denied because he will contaminate other members. A little leaven will leaven the whole lump.

**The purpose of disciplinary action is
to restore the offender to the Lord**

The means by which this is accomplished is, confession, repentance, forsaking the sin, and where possible restitution. The outcome of this action will result in the offender being completely forgiven and returned to the fold. The order is as follows. People must first be restored to the Lord. God restores people to Himself, not back to a position or pulpit, the place from whence they fell.

The goal of most clergy who fall morally is to get into another pulpit ASAP. The problem can always be traced to a relationship built on the wrong foundation; service instead of holiness. True restoration is to a Holy God against whom we have sinned. The consequences of moral failure bear their own reward. The wages of sin is death.

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine, instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” 2 Tim 4:1-4.

If leaders claim they are worthy of double honour then they must in turn accept rebuke for public moral failure and seek forgiveness from that section of the body they have betrayed; then the body must lovingly receive them back into fellowship.

The following incident took place during a conference I attended with 400 ministers who were part of a particular grouping when I was living in the USA. During a break between sessions a brother drew to my attention that the minister sitting next me was a very high profile person who had been stood down for moral failure a few months earlier. Nobody seemed to know whether the situation had been resolved satisfactorily or not apart from a handful of senior pastors. The problem was this, that if the individual had repented we needed to know so that he could be received back into fellowship once again? The situation never was addressed, and the senior brethren never did discuss it. That is absolutely unacceptable; not only for the other ministers, but for the person concerned. What should have happened then? A word of cleansing should have been pronounced so we could respond accordingly.

God forgives the truly repentant absolutely, but He cannot alter the consequences of their actions. The root cause of much of what we see is the unscriptural religious systems that allow one man to have charge over a group of God's people. It is a recipe for every kind of corrupt moral deviation.

The clergy, to protect their system will try to supervise and deal with immoral behaviour of their own members behind closed doors if at all possible. Many times the sin of a particular member of the clergy is covered up, keeping the saints in their communion in the dark. Should it become public, they will stand the offender down in most cases for a few months; give them a slap on the wrist and the next thing you know they are back in a pulpit again. If the wrongdoer had a successful pulpit ministry he will soon be snapped up by any one of a number of denominations. Often offenders will actively set about looking for another opening. They will not rest, even if it means going abroad, until they find what they want. Its because they are addicted to a position rather than being restored to a person; the Lord.

“And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus, who someday will judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his Kingdom--to preach the Word of God urgently at all times, whenever you get the chance, in season and out, when it is convenient and when it is not. Correct and rebuke your people when they need it, encourage them to do right, and all the time be feeding them patiently with God's Word. For there is going to come a time when people won't listen to the truth but will go about looking for teachers who will tell them just what they want to hear. They won't listen to what the Bible has to say, but blithely follow their own misguided ideas” 2 Tim 4:1-4.

As most of these preachers remarry, the embarrassment their families suffer is almost unbearable. Former spouses are humiliated and devastated, children backslide, saints are stumbled, and the name of Christianity defamed. What is the final answer to this? The only righteous one is to hand the reigns of the church back to Christ. How is that done? Read on.

HOW WE LIVE OUR CHRISTIANITY NEEDS TO HANGE

And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians. So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign. 2 Chronicles 16:12-13.

“I believe that the servant of the future must be a minister of righteousness and not just a religious physician. His true task will be to teach people how to live healthy and godly lives. If the “Benny Hinns” of this world majored on majors, instead of minors, they could make a more valid contribution than they are today, because it is more important to keep people holy than to keep them healthy.”

Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" Luke 5:31

Job in 13:3-4 made this comment to his so-called comforters. “My dispute is with God and not with you; I want to argue my case with Him. You cover up your ignorance with lies; you are like doctors who can’t heal anyone.”

The extremely low percentage of people who are healed in these meetings is enough to make a thinking person realise that something is missing in our approach to these problems.

The church is like the woman in Mark 5:26-28 has suffered many things at the hands of the **Clergy**. She had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. This has a familiar ring to it doesn’t it? Many saints could say amen to this. But when she went to Jesus her problem got resolved.

When she had heard that Jesus was passing through she came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, if I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. As the old hymn says, “To get a touch from the Lord is so real”.

For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black;
astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is
there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the
daughter of my people recovered? Jeremiah 8:21-22 KJV.

Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is
the daughter of my people not healed? Jeremiah 8:22.

OUR WHOLE APPROACH TO MINISTRY MUST CHANGE

Luke 16:16 “The law and the prophets were until John, and since that time the Kingdom of Heaven is preached unto you.” Because of all that has been, and is now passed away, our whole approach to God has been put on a new footing; it has changed forever. No longer do we need a human being to approach God on our behalf. The order of Aaron has been abolished. We have a High Priest and mediator who ever lives to make intercession for His people. He is the risen ascended Lord who has been given by the Father to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body. Regardless of this fact religion has by a carnal commandment kept the priestly class alive by instituting another order of their own invention.

The practice of clergy who claim the right to mediate and direct the lives of Christ’s people, instead of referring them back to Him, the one and only true source of all spiritual counsel, is an insult of unparalleled arrogance. In many cases they wear bizarre apparel not unlike to the Aaronic order, while all accept titles to signify their rank and importance in their system. As one politician commented about Clerics, “they are like administrators running around in fancy dress”.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil 2:5-8 KJV).

He made himself of no reputation, but they can’t seem to get enough. Honour to whom honour is due is proper, but to seize control and overthrow the constitution of God is rebellion. The lack of enthusiasm among the clergy to encourage their people to go directly to the Holy Spirit, whom the Father in His infinite wisdom sent to indwell us for the purpose of comforting, teaching, and guiding us into all truth, is harmful to every believer.

Teachers and shepherds should be sending their brethren to the Lord and stop trying to play God. Slowly but surely the clergy in Pentecostal and charismatic circles have made their followers dependant upon services they provide which are totally inadequate for the maintenance of their spiritual well-being. In addition they insist that their people get committed to their programs, and do nothing without their express permission. Telling us they have delegated authority on earth for the purpose of leading and guiding us, (the prerogative of the Spirit of God) they stunt the growth of those under their control. Jesus said, "All power in Heaven and in earth is given unto me." And on the day of Pentecost He returned to the church, which is His body to take His rightful place as the Head over "All things"

Christ spent more time talking about the advent of the Holy Spirit than about His second coming. His discourses during the last hours that He was with the disciples are recorded in John's gospel chapters 13 to 17. He said "I have many things to say to you that you are not ready for just yet, but when He the Spirit of truth is come He will take the things of mine and show them to you." Among many other things, He said, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." (John 14:18)

The failure of church leaders to trust the Holy Spirit to lead and guide His people is to question the wisdom of God. There is only one mediator between God and man and it is not a fallible human being, with just as many problems, and in many cases more, than most other men. It has become only too apparent over the years just how many self-appointed men and women have feet of clay. This approach to ministry service has produced weak and timid saints who have to be propped up at every sign of adversity lest they faint spiritually and drift back into the world. Proverbs 24:10, "If we faint in the day of adversity, it's because we are weak." Sooner or later we all must stand up and learn to take responsibility for our own lives, and not shirk our responsibility in this matter.

MAKING ROOM FOR JESUS

The Master saith, "Where is my guest chamber that I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?" Mark 14:12-16. It was a meal with a spiritual significance that Christ was about to share with them. "And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them, and they made ready the Passover".

At the original Passover kept by Israel in Egypt there was much preparation before the feast began. The lamb was taken on the tenth day, set apart until it was slain on the evening of the fourteenth day. Inside the house the table was to be prepared, and the unleavened bread baked. The hyssop used for applying the blood upon the doorposts and lintel of the house was made ready with bitter herbs to be eaten with the lamb. When all was prepared then the household was ready to eat the Passover. When Jesus came to fulfil the feast of Passover He directed the disciples to a man who had a large furnished upper room, a guest chamber. There they prepared the Passover. That night Jesus established the Lord's Supper, which now replaces the Jewish Passover. If the disciples needed to prepare the guest chamber for the Passover Supper, how much more should we prepare the guest chamber of our hearts to sup with Him?

The Lord is particular about proper preparation for fellowship with Him. Explicit instructions are found throughout the Old Testament with regard to the offerings of the Lord (Numbers 15:5, 6, 12). Forty-five chapters full of instructions were given to Moses for the Tabernacle of witness, God's habitation among them (Exodus 15:2). The Shewbread was prepared every Sabbath day; David prepared a place for the Ark in Zion. Solomon prepared a final resting-place for the Ark of the Covenant of God in the Temple (2 Chronicles 3:1). The Lord spoke to Israel many times of their need to prepare their hearts before Him. In coming to the Lord's Table, Paul calls us to prepare our hearts (1 Cor 11:28). We are told to examine ourselves so that we do not eat and drink unworthily of the body and blood of the Lord and thereby bring judgment upon

ourselves. And so we must with diligence prepare our hearts as we come to His Supper Table.

- By confession of all known sin.
- By resolving wherever possible all conflict between us and any other brother.
- By coming with a pure heart in a spirit of love and adoration, remembering all that the Saviour has done for us.
- By coming in a spirit of expectation because He is just as surely here as He was on that first night with His disciples.

What a blessed privilege we have to come in this manner, and to be able to come often with our brothers and sisters in sweet communion with our blessed Saviour.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” No man can vouch for the character of another Christian, and as such the apostolic rule must always apply. In hindsight we can all look back over the years and mark how many who once broke bread with us were guilty of grievous sins of which we were not aware. That as they say, is ‘only the tip of the iceberg’ 1 Corinthians 11:28.

WHAT WE SHOULD EXPECT TO SEE IN TRUE KOINONIA?

Our communities are overflowing with saints not currently involved. These are people who love God but can't find what they are looking for (and never will find it) in a religious system. Many are looking for another model; a pattern they can feel comfortable with, thinking they will find it there, but because New Testament church life is lived by principles and not patterns will that ever happen? Body life is built on relationships, with the Father, the Son, and with each other 1 John 1:1-3.

Here are some patterns the House church planting designers tell us that we should be involved in.

Restoration church.

Christian Community.

House church.

Open church.

Cell churches.

A good yardstick by which to measure things is; do these contribute to, or detract from koinonia? This is a true litmus test. We must ask ourselves is it service oriented, purpose driven; or relationship based.

Does it foster true koinonia; does it network with other believers that are living in unhindered fellowship?

Does it fellowship with the Father and the Son around the memorial supper He instituted the night He was betrayed?

Does the environment stimulate and encourage community prayer?

Do the things Jesus taught, and the disciples did and saw, and the letters Paul wrote play an important roll in the midst?

Is it accountable to the Lord?

Are your leaders besotted with a particular task such as, "saturation house church planting"?

Are the leaders compulsive about their mission as a church?

Does it have a martyr complex regarding its particular doctrinal emphasis?

There is the real danger of drifting

Surveys are beginning to show that many who once ran well are beginning to shy away from all forms of collectiveness. Because of disappointment and abuse many saints are reluctant to trust anyone again, even Christ.

We have been put on notice in Hebrews 4:1 to give earnest heed to the things we have been told lest we should begin to drift along listlessly in our experience. To maintain a spiritual relationship with Christ is the responsibility of every believer, lest we begin to adversely affect, and even defile many others. Religious systems insist that they alone are called of God to provide this support for the maintenance of their members. Methods include providing ‘services’ that revolve around a monologue called ‘the sermon’ delivered by a cleric; and programs designed to keep the faithful inside the ghetto busily employed in religious activities in order that they don’t stray. Maintaining control over the flock is the name of the game. The fruit this type of approach produces is weak, demoralised, dissatisfied, and disgruntled, because they are dependent upon human systems for spiritual sustenance and maintenance instead of the Lord. God has brought us into His family for the purpose of personal growth, “growing up into Him in all things.

“If the word spoken through angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”
“Therefore we ought to give more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest we drift away from them” Hebrews 2:2.

The danger to which we are most exposed is drifting. For every one that definitely turns his back on Christ, there are hundreds who just drift away from Him. Life’s ocean is full of currents, anyone of which will sweep us up and carry us far out to sea, if we neglect our personal relationship with Him.

The drift of old bad habits and associations, which in the case of these Hebrew Christians from where our text is taken, was setting so strongly towards Judaism; bearing them back to the religious

system from which they had come out. The drift of ones own evil nature, always resisting the tide of the Spirit as it tries to set our course away from God to that which is earthly and sensuous. The drift of the religious world ruins many men.

The young man that comes from a godly home does not distinctly and deliberately say, "I renounce my father's God." But finding himself in an association with those who have no care for Christ, after a brief struggle relaxes and begins to drift, until it's doubtful if he ever really had an experience with the Saviour. Then we have the professing Christian who now scarcely pretends to open the Bible or pray. Nobody arrives at this position in a single leap, but does so by yielding to the pressure of the ways of the old nature, where he is likely to perish unless rescued by the love of God. It is so easy and so much pleasanter to drift. All one has to do, is to just lie back, and renounce effort, and let the waters take you where they will.

Are you drifting? You can easily tell. Are you conscious of spiritual effort? Do you thirst after Him like cool waters in a dry and thirsty land? If not you're drifting.

The Rhetorical question: "How shall we escape, if we neglect?" To neglect is to reject. Did the Israelite escape that refused to sprinkle blood upon the doorposts of his house? Did Moses and Aaron escape, though they were leaders in Israel? No! None of them escaped. Shall we escape if every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense of reward? Is it likely we shall escape if we have neglected the only name given under heaven among men by which we are saved?

What are the new millennium leaders saying?

It depends on which group you're tuned in to. If we listen to current crop of Apostles and Prophets in Colorado Springs they are telling us that to be part of the true end time church, and catch this present wave, we must come under the covering of apostles and prophets. They claim that these gifts have been appointed to lay the foundation of the church that will take us forward in the new millennium.

At the time of writing House2House is experiencing financial difficulties and are appealing to the body at large to assist them to propagate the house church planting movement; which is the particular trumpet they are blowing. Their website is liberally sprinkled with articles on giving, some support, or at best give a garbled view on tithing, but all appeal to Christians to give. We are encouraged by Tony Dale to read the feature article on the House2House website entitled, "Sacrificial Giving" By Maurice Smith.

Quote "Not too long ago I heard Wolfgang Simson say there are three issues facing the church today:

1. Restoring what is church.
2. How Christians can work together, and
3. How Christians handle money. (Some things never change!)

I heard a pastor recently of a large seeker-friendly church relate the following statistics regarding Christian giving: 80% of all giving in the church is done by 20% of attendees. The remaining 20% of all money is given by the next 30% of attendees. If you're following the math, this means that 100% of all giving is done by 50% of church attendees.

The remaining 50% of church attendees give NOTHING. Ouch! So it should come as no surprise, (a disappointment, yes, but no surprise) that reliable studies show that only 8 to 12 out of 100 born-again believers tithe. Let me be as clear as I know how to be. I do not think that "tithing" is really the issue when it comes to Christian giving. Why do I say that? Because I'm convinced that the New Testament standard and model for giving is not tithing, but radical sacrificial giving out of a transformed life. Now, I don't really want to engage in a "debate" over tithing, but I would challenge anyone to produce a single New Testament passage where tithing is demonstrated in practice in the life of the New Testament church. I can't find one. But I can find many examples of radical, sacrificial giving out of a transformed life, which went far beyond tithing. And so the article went." *End of quote.*

While there is much to commend in the article, it does raise some questions. Are we to assume that believers who attend religious buildings on Sunday mornings to listen to a monologue given by the same man week after week are the only Christians who give? If such a low percentage is giving could it be that the people are sick to death of seeing money wasted on salaries and ambitious programs?

To say that only 8-12% of born again believers tithe may be true, but since when was tithing a requirement under the new covenant as Wolfgang so rightly says? But the statement that 100% of all giving is done by 50% of church attendees is a rash and insupportable claim; and I believe it is definitely not true. Because institutions strapped for cash for their planned programs are always complaining, does not necessarily mean that what they are saying is true. I personally know scores of believers who do not attend religious centres that give most generously because they love the Lord.

“As many as are led by the Spirit. They are the sons of God.” Shouldn’t we all be seeking God to direct us in our giving as well as in every other area of our Christian lives, and not be swayed by individuals who usually have an angle whenever they talk about money?

The wheel that squeaks the loudest gets the most oil is the principle by which these organizations operate. There are three things the Lord has encouraged us to do in **secret**; pray; fast; and give. And when we do, all is to be directed towards God asking Him to meet our needs. No man goes to war of his own charges, if we are not prepared to let God take responsibility for financing our efforts then the question arises, are they born of God? Or born of our desires?

Never mind what God is saying to you, just get committed to Tony and Felicitas program. Bob Fitts, and Wolfgang Simson of “Houses that change the world” fame, believes we must return to the true biblical pattern and give ourselves to the task of planting “Home churches.” We have no problem with meeting in homes, but to get involved in house church planting is another matter entirely. Inside Wolfgang’s book are reviews by 35 church leaders from around the world warmly commending it, but shouldn’t we be

asking ourselves, if ministers in religious systems think it is really that good, then there must be something radically wrong with it. So let's ask some questions with regards to this program we are being urged to support financially and drafted into physically by those who claim they have a mandate from God to reach our communities for Christ via their disciples.

But first let us begin with Paul's attitude towards support and money. "Finally, brothers and sisters, pray that we spread the Lord's word rapidly and that it will be honoured the way it was among you. Also pray that we may be rescued from worthless and evil people, since not everyone shares our faith. But the Lord is faithful and will strengthen you and protect you against the evil one. The Lord gives us confidence that you are doing, and will continue to do what we ordered you to do. May the Lord direct your lives as you show God's love and Christ's endurance?"

Brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ don't associate with any believer who doesn't live a disciplined life and doesn't follow the tradition you received from us. You know what you must do to imitate us. We lived a disciplined life among you. We didn't eat anyone's food without paying for it; instead, we worked hard and struggled night and day in order not to be a burden to any of you. It's not as though we didn't have a right to receive support. Rather, we wanted to set an example for you to follow. While we were with you, we gave the order: Whoever doesn't want to work shouldn't be allowed to eat. We hear that some of you are not living disciplined lives. You're not working, so you go around interfering in other people's lives. We order and encourage such people by the Lord Jesus Christ to pay attention to their own work so they can support themselves.

Brothers and sisters, we can't allow ourselves to get tired of doing what is right. It may be that some people will not listen to what we say in this letter. Take note of them and don't associate with them so that they will feel ashamed. Yet don't treat them like enemies but instruct them like brothers and sisters, Farewell". (2 Thessalonians 1-14)

Do the following claims have a reliable source?

We must continually be asking ourselves these kinds of questions.

Is house church planting a valid exercise?

What do the scriptures have to say about what we are being urged to do?

Is there any order of priority for believers to follow?

Are the goalposts of this movement in the right place?

Are they on the right playing field?

So often the script for what a group believes and practices is written with little reference to the whole body of scripture on the subject other than quotes from their favourite proof texts.

The New Testament church is a church of principles not patterns.

Does the environment stimulate prayer and thanksgiving to God?

Is it open to mobile ministry sent by God?

Does the work of redemption play a central role in their gatherings? Or are they just transitioning the saved from one wine skin to another?

Do they come to the table regularly for self-examination and confession? And if required, to receive forgiveness and to ask for grace to make any adjustments that might be necessary? If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us according to 1 John 1:8. Should we be just blindly following the recommendations suggested by “House Church Coach” John White, or the Dales? They say that “breaking bread” is just fellowship around a meal that nourishes the natural man with brothers and sisters in a religious setting. But that seems to miss the whole point for which it was instituted. Jews ate religious meals for hundreds of years, but they still crucified Him.

The Lord’s Table is to memorialise His death, and we should never lose sight of this fact. The purpose of that death was to bring us into fellowship with the Father and the Son. It has great spiritual significance and implications. We shall very soon begin to drift into apostasy as a substitute for holy fellowship with Him if we ignore this means of grace.

Spurgeon said, “As we cannot guarantee the Christian character of any man among us, therefore THE APOSTOLIC RULE MUST APPLY, and so let a man examine himself.” “How often must he do this?” “As often as we come together to break bread!”

It’s time to look at some serious statistics. It is claimed that 20% of those that gather for any type of Christian gathering are involved in sins to vile to mention. The percentage is unchanged whether they are lay members, or a gathering of the clergy. As we cannot guarantee the Christian character of other people, the apostolic rule must remain: “Let a man examine himself.” We should all look well to the state of our own soul and say as David did, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Who are we to examine?

Let a man examine himself. We cannot examine the heart of another; we cannot infallibly judge their life. How very often have we been deceived in these matters! If anyone were to suppose that his position excuses him from the duty of personal self-examination, he is grievously mistaken. No friend, only you know what your secret thoughts are, and what your private actions are; and so it is to yourself, and for the safety of the rest of that part of the body that you congregate with that this duty is committed. “Examine yourself” before you eat.

So what did this fellowship around the table imply? It implied, first of all, mutual fidelity and trust. This solemn eating and drinking together was a pledge to one another. This must have been clearly understood, or otherwise there would have been no weight in the statement, “He that ate bread with me hath lifted up His heel against me.” Did not this mean that, because Judas had eaten bread with his Lord he was bound not to betray Him, or to lift up his heel against Him? This was the seal of an implied covenant; having eaten together, they were under bond to be faithful to one another.

There is no other place on earth where true unity can be displayed like it should be, except among saints who have gathered with one another in Holy Communion to meet with their Lord.

The Master never plays the Judas. Judas is among the disciples. Sadly there's many a Judas among our ranks in the modern church. There is nothing traitorous in the Lord. He is not only able to keep that, which we have committed to Him, but He will be faithful, not only as to the great matter of His death, but also to every promise He has made. Know of a certainty that our Master would not have asked us to His table to eat bread with Him if He intended to desert us.

A Psalm of Communion: "I will take the cup of Salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." (Psalm 116:13).

"And He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins" Matthew 26: 27, 28.

F.B.Meyer said, "Every disciple of Christ should partake of the Lord's Supper regularly. In the days of the Roman republic, the youths were brought to the altar and sworn to serve their country to the death. At the table we renew our oath of allegiance to our King. It is a proclamation, or confession, of our faith. We bear witness to the death of Christ as our only hope of forgiveness and salvation. We testify our desire to put His cross and grave between us and the world. It is also a bond of Christian union. It is a Pledge of the Covenant that was ratified by His precious blood. The Death of Christ on the Cross was God's sign and seal to the new covenant, the provisions of which are recorded in Heb 8. When we drink the wine it is as though we said, "Remember thy Covenant." Let me appeal to all, and especially to the young disciple, to draw near and take the bread and wine, and to meditate deeply and reverently on that supreme Gift which demands our all".

"What shall I render unto the Lord? I will take the cup...I will pay my vows." (Psalm 16: 13, 14). The expression in this Psalm is remarkable: "I will take the cup of salvation." When we enquire

what salvation, we read: “Thou hast loosed my bonds” (v. 16), and we are reminded of Rev 1:5, “Unto Him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood.” We are tied and bound by our sins; and our sinful habits bind us fast. But our Lord looses us by His cross.

Notice how triumphantly the Psalmist avows his loyalty to his Heavenly Master. Again, and yet again he avows: “O Lord, truly I am thy servant.” And truly we are the servants or bond-slaves of Jesus. When we are asked what “the sacrifices of thanksgiving” are, we may reply: First, the sacrifice of ourselves, Rom 12:1. What follows next is the sacrifice of our praise and gifts, Heb 13: 15, 16. Not grudgingly or thoughtlessly, but let us come to the altar of God eagerly, with cheerfulness. Let us never cease to live and serve, to give our praise to Him for all we owe Him. *End of quote.*

PUT THE GOAL POSTS BACK WHERE THEY BELONG

Most church leaders are obsessed with the task of saving the world. Bombarding us with information and appeals they compete for dollars for their particular programs to complete the task of world evangelism. The target was “Year 2000”, now it’s “Beyond 2000.” Should we be listening to their voices, or to His?

Proverbs 8:34. “Blessed is the man that hears me, watching at my gates, waiting at my doorposts.” Over a hundred times where it says to wait upon the Lord, never once does that mean to do anything other than wait. Waiting for what; Waiting for our instructions of course?

There are courses for would be house church planters where they will be taught the mechanics of how and what to do, to start a church. What on earth is wrong with the one that’s been going for the last almost 2000 years?

Who is the Lord of the harvest? What exactly does that actually mean? Who owns the harvest field? Who besides Christ has the right to hire and fire labourers? Who is responsible for thrusting these labourers into the field? Jesus sent twelve and then seventy, and not without instructions which were “repent for the Kingdom is at hand.” Do men have the authority to start missionary societies to enlist and train impressionable young men and women in their peculiar ways, and then send them forth with their particular religious bias to foreign lands, or anywhere for that fact? Shouldn’t the Holy Spirit in these matters lead us? Does anybody apart from God have the right to raise an army to work in His vineyard? Would God really tell you to do something and leave you with the bill?

Where does the term, “The Great Commission” come from anyway? Because I can’t find it in the Bible? He gave a command to those that were present shortly before He ascended saying, “go and preach the gospel of the kingdom in every nation, to every ethos”. How does that apply to us? Are we all to go? Do we need to

be sent, or should we just go? Are we being disobedient if we don't go? Or should we go to Him personally for direction as to what part He wants us to play in His harvest?

Jesus the great evangelist was led by the Spirit; driven by the Spirit; and came out of the wilderness in the power of the Spirit.

Acts 8:29, "Then the Spirit said unto Phillip."

Acts 10:19, "While Peter thought on the vision the Spirit said, behold, three men seek thee."

Acts 11:12; "And the Spirit bade me go with them." Acts 16:7; "The Spirit suffered them not."

In Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate Barnabas and Saul unto me for the work whereunto I have called them."

Rom 8:14 "As many as are led by the Spirit they are the sons of God."

2 Corinthians 3:6, "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

When did Jesus ever say anything about church planting to the disciples? Didn't He say, "I will build my church?" If He paid for it, then He owns it, but hold on, isn't He also the architect?

Shouldn't we be following His plans, and using the materials He has provided for building new members into it? Aren't we putting the cart before the horse? Is the church a cause or an effect? Aren't we just meant to be as salt and light in the world about us witnessing for Christ? Or are we free to take matters into our own hands and just go ahead and ask others for money and do whatever we feel an inclination about?

Many who do go were clearly never sent. I've travelled extensively around the world and not infrequently met people who were quite destitute without support or the money to get back home it's not enough to be called; one must know they are being sent before they go.

The following is about a young man who ran without a message.

2 Samuel 18:21-33. Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen. The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off. Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, Come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite. But Joab replied, My son,

why do you want to go? You don't have any news that will bring you a reward.

He said, "Come what may, I want to run." So Joab said, "Run!" Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite.

While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked he saw a man running alone. The watchman called out to the king and reported it. The king said, "If he is alone, he must have good news." And the man came closer and closer. Then the watchman saw another man running, and he called down to the gatekeeper, "Look, another man running alone!" The king said, "He must be bringing good news, too." The watchman said, "It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok." "He's a good man," the king said. "He comes with good news."

Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, "All is well!" He bowed down before the king with his face to the ground and said, "Praise be to the LORD your God! He has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king." The king asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "I saw great confusion just as Joab was about to send the king's servant and me (that was a lie) your servant, but I don't know what it was The king said, "Stand aside and wait here." So he stepped aside and stood there. Then the Cushite arrived and said, "My lord the king, hear the good news! The LORD has delivered you today from all who rose up against you."

The king asked the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The Cushite replied, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man."

The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you-- O Absalom, my son, my son!"

In all sincerity, who gave these proponents of 'saturation house church planting' their commission? By whose authority do they

enlist people to their cause? Should we be doing anything that these compulsive self-appointed leaders want of us? Is church planting of any variety a legitimate term? Why do they keep appealing for *your* money, to carry their task out, if God's behind it? Does He have a cash flow problem?

Jesus came preaching the Kingdom instead He got house churches

C.S.Lewis in *'Reflections on the Psalms'* explains: "It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence and mind to men".

Without contradiction the Antioch church's greatest ministry was its ministry to the Lord. In Acts 13:2 it tells us, that while they were fasting and worshipping the Lord, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate Barnabas and Saul unto me for the work to which that I have called them." Note that it was while they were worshipping that the Holy Spirit manifested His presence; spoke to the gathering to separate and to send two men that had received a call many years earlier for the evangelisation of the Gentile world.

This was not the personal revelation of a couple of individuals who were looking for financial support to carry out their dream. It was in the act of worship, to a company of seasoned, faithful, and chosen servants. Spiritual history was being written when the Holy Spirit gave that word.

What of Barnabas?

We do not know anything about his call, we only know, by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, that he had been called. **But when, and** where that took place we don't know. It is never mentioned in any of the ancient records. He was probably called in Jerusalem during the time he became aware that God wanted a higher expression of the church than Jerusalem. It may even have been that Barnabas at first did not recognize his call as a call. Sometimes it takes the passing of years and a look back to understand these things clearly.

WHAT ABOUT SAUL?

Saul was converted to Christ on a trip to Damascus. He was also called that very same day! Many, many men today have been called. There are thousands of men God has called to minister in His Kingdom. But God never sends men who have been called until they are ready to be sent.

A sent man is a man who has been sent by the Master to do His bidding. That's his only job. Come what may, nothing else interests him; it will be his whole life. Why? Because he has heard Christ, and he knows he has been sent. That sending is too real to ever be distracted by lesser things. The sent man lives only for the Masters will. He is blind to all else. You can judge for yourself about how many of the Lord's servants have been sent.

This call upon the lives of these two men had been there for many years but they never went until God sent them. Acts 9:15. Acts 22:21. **To be called is not a license to go and serve.**

Paul's particular calling was as an Apostle to the Gentiles. He preached also to the Jews, but to preach and write the revelation to the Gentiles was his great work. To this end we find him travelling in Judea, Samaria, Syria, Phoenicia, Arabia, Galatia, and Asia Minor, Islands of the Mediterranean, Greece, Italy and Spain. No other apostle preached, travelled, and laboured as much as Paul. The epistles of all the others were mainly Jewish in which many of the revelations of God to Christians are not found except in a minor way. Next to Jesus Christ Paul is the great founder of the Christianity in many lands. Jesus Christ is the foundation---Paul the master builder was entrusted with laying the foundation.

Our ministry to the Lord has the highest priority; it comes before our ministry to one another and certainly before our ministry to the world. This is our highest calling because here is the source of our revelation and strength. But alas it is our greatest weakness.

“Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hid from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth never faints, or grows weary, and his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” Isaiah 40:27-31.

WHAT GOD REQUIRES.

A Summary of Micah written in Palestine about 772-722 B.C.

God had warned Israel many times regarding what would befall them if they continued in sin and rebellion; but they were becoming more openly rebellious and backslidden in heart and life. God was becoming less tolerant of their mock worship, ritualism, and sins; and finding it necessary to invoke the judgment terms of the Mosaic covenant He had to formulate a plan of action that would eventually bring them back to repentance and yet do so on the grounds of fulfilling righteousness.

Micah was a true prophet and knew that one thing only could save his country, and that was a deep and widespread revival of true repentance. To the inquiry of the people as to whether Jehovah desired the sacrifice of animals, or young children, such as the heathen sacrificed to their Gods in order to rid their consciences from sin, the answer came back that God required something far more heart searching than that. I wonder what He will say through the prophet. Some pastors think that if they could have had Rodney Howard Browne, or John Arnott that would have done the do the trick.

The Lord’s response is as applicable today As it was to whom it was first addressed.

“He hath shown thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” Micah 6:8.

To do justly, giving not a fraction less than can be rightly claimed from us. Every one of us must acknowledge the righteous claims of our true brethren, and of our neighbours, and we must address these claims, giving each his due. We must not swear deceitfully, but be absolutely transparent and sincere, for only the true can stand in the presence of the King of Truth.

We must not lift up our soul to vanity, we must not allow ourselves to be puffed up with the applause of men or the rewards of the world. Many, who have sold their souls for success, will in the end awaken to discover how worthless it was.

Let us love mercy. There are some who have perhaps forfeited all claims on our mercy—the traitor, those who have born false witness, the unfaithful, former friends who became our enemies—we must help all these not grudgingly, but cheerfully and willingly.

Don't try to love mercy until you begin to show it. Dare to step out into a life of unrestrained mercy, and as you do so, you will come to love it. James insists that pure religion consists as much in visiting the widow and fatherless in their affliction as in keeping oneself unspotted from the world.

Let us also walk humbly with God—not lagging behind, nor running before, but walking with Him, hand in hand. All down the ages, from Enoch onward, there have been those who walked with God in purity.

It is not in sacrifices or service, but true humility, that true hearts are seen.

In Psalm 24 there are two themes; one is the account of our Saviour's triumphant entrance into the presence of God. The other is our ascent into the heavenlies. The ascension of our Lord proceeds our own; but in the days of the Psalmist that order was reversed. Our Lord's Ascension was accompanied by an eruption of triumphant praise. In an outburst the Psalmist anticipates the coming of the King of Glory to the doors of the Eternal City, the one that beckoned Abraham forward and which in Rev. 21: is seen descending down from heaven to earth. It was as though the gates of glory barred His entrance. They had opened to God, but never before to "God manifest in the flesh." It was a new thing that He was doing as He took our nature with Him

into the realm of God in the unseen and eternal world. He leads captivity captive now to His purposes.

The soul's ascension vs.-6 In Christ we have ascended and are seated at God's right hand. Neither feelings nor being overtaken by a fault can alter that, but we have to make our calling sure. The entrance that He has made for us through His flesh must be claimed and appropriated in our daily experience. Certain characteristics are indispensable to those who would be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man, not just in the hereafter, but here and now. (Luke 21:36)

We must have clean hands. The money that we earn must be clean money. If we are writers, artists, mechanics, professional or commercial men or women, we must never produce anything, which would defile the imagination or heart.

We must-have pure hearts. In Isaiah 33:14-17 we have a parallel passage, where the Holy Spirit is compared to a devouring fire, in the presence of which no evil thing can live. Let us ask Him so to possess us, and to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by His inspiration. Is that all? No! What is to be done for those who have tried and failed, who are conscious of guilt and sin? In the closing chapters of this book is the answer. There we learn that God will not only forgive, but will subdue our iniquities. He will turn again and have compassion upon us, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. He delights in mercy!

“But God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus” Eph 2: 4-6.

In mercy you led forth your people whom you redeemed, and guided them in your strength into your holy habitation Exodus 15:11-13.

OUT OF THE HEART

The only person apart from God who can really know what anyone else is thinking, and what he is really like is that person himself. And no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. Who knows what is in the heart of man except his own spirit, which is in him? There have been times that all of us have wondered as we were talking to somebody who kept hedging, and beating about the bush, "What is going on in this guys mind." Or we may have thought, I wonder what was in the back of his mind when he made that remark; or a penny for your thoughts. Human agencies attempt to regulate human behaviour by rules and regulations, which when they are violated the offender must pay the penalty for their misconduct. But rules cannot control the heart of an individual. God's intention for His people was that they would live in a self-regulating society. God has put us on trust. As trustees of our destiny we are exhorted to "Keep our heart with all diligence" because out of it issues are born. Integrity of heart is only be maintained by those who walk after the spirit and not after the flesh. Few there are who have not suffered at the hands of another.

There is many a Judas in the ranks of the saints. Like moles in the secret service they have crept in unawares. Judas's are only found in the fellowship of the saints.

Jude 1:12-22 "These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm-- shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted-- twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for which blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These men are

grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires. These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt.

THE SECRET OF HIS PRESENCE

God is always near us. He is not an Absentee owner who needs to be coaxed down from heaven, or called out to from the deep. He is nigh at hand. His Being pervades all. Sadly we don't always realize it. We often let days and weeks pass by forgetting this fact. We sometimes engage in seasons of prayer where He seems afar off, like a shadow, as we dream of brighter former days.

“Oh that I knew where I might find Him; that I might come even to His seat. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him” Job 23:3, 8, 9. Job's dilemma is the lot of so many in the middle of adversity. He wants us all to realize this experience of “nearness” can always be ours.

Listen to Jacob at Bethel where he finally awoke to this fact, saying, “Surely God is in this place”? And I knew it not. The failure to realise He is always there is often our sorry state. In point of fact God is as much in the world as He was that night with Jacob, or when Enoch walked with Him, and Moses communed with Him face to face. He is as willing to be a living reality to us as He was to them. The fault is ours. If our eyes are not anointed it's because our hearts are not right. The pure in heart still see God; and to those who love Him, and do His commandments, He still manifests Himself. We need to put an end to making excuses and blaming the times in which we live; but rather blame ourselves. We need to remember that “All the omnis” belong to God. He is Omnipotent; He is Omniscient; As well He is Omnipresent. None of these characteristics can be said of Satan.

Let us never forget that this consciousness of the Presence of God can only come through Jesus. None know the Father but the Son and those to whom the Son reveals Him. And none can come to the Father but by Him. Apart from Jesus the Presence of God is impossible to know.

“What part of the Lord’s work is most closely connected with this blessed sense of the presence of God?” It is through the blood of His cross that sinners are made nigh. It was in His death that He not only revealed the love of God, but also put away our sins. Remember His words to Moses, “I will commune with thee from off the mercy-seat.” The throne upon which Aaron sprinkled blood whenever he entered the most Holy Place was a type of Jesus. He is the true mercy seat. It is when you live most constantly in the spirit of His memorial supper, that you shall realize most deeply His nearness. As at Emmaus, He loves to make Himself known in the breaking of bread.

Endeavour to learn the blessed secret of abiding ever in the secret of His Presence and of being hidden in His pavilion Ps. 31:20. His Father’s promise to us of the Holy Spirit was that He should bring into our hearts the very Presence of God. Understand that since you are Christ’s, the blessed Comforter is yours. He is within you as He was within your Lord, and in proportion as you live in the Spirit, and walk in the spirit, and open your entire nature to Him, you will find your heart becoming a chamber for His presence. And as you realize that He is in you, you will begin to realize that you are in Him. Paul the Apostle wrote, “Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit”.

We fail to realize this wonderful fact because so much of what we know is only head knowledge. Don’t be in such a hurry. Take time enough for meditation and prayer. The Spirit of God within you and the Presence of God without you cannot be appreciated when our minds are occupied with other things. When cloudy water stands it soon becomes clear revealing its contents. Be still, and know that God is in you, and all around! In quietness and confidence shall be your strength, said the Lord to Israel, but they would not (Isaiah 30). Don’t let a day go by without a season of silent waiting before God.

“Are there any other conditions which I should fulfil, so that I may abide in the secret of His Presence?” Be pure in heart. In the power

of the Holy Spirit deny self, give no quarter to sin, resist the devil, and you will see God.

Continue in the spirit of prayer. Sometimes the vision will tarry to test our earnestness. At other times His presence will steal over us even before we are aware, you will find yourself conscious that He is near. Remember how He came unheralded, into the midst of His disciples through unopened doors.

Cultivate the habit of speaking aloud to God. Not perhaps always, but it is a good habit to acquire when speaking to God while sitting in the house or walking by the way. Get into the habit of talking over with God, your plans, your hopes, your sorrows and sins. Things look very differently when brought into the calm light of His presence.

God is with us, the Psalmist knew this, and so should we. "Thou hast set me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me." He never leads us into a place too narrow for Him to pass as well; we can never be lonely again, never for a single moment; He could not be nearer to us, even if we were in Heaven itself. No wonder that the saints of old waxed valiant in fight as they heard Him say, "I am with thee; I will never leave nor forsake thee." Be gone all fear and dread for! "Thou shalt hide me in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep me secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues".

The Church's problems are not external but internal. We need to come to His table and take a hard look at ourselves. And ask for mercy, and find grace, special assistance in times of need.

The system is like a festering suppurating sore that could be cured but it doesn't have the heart to want to. The only remedy for pride is destruction. "Pride cometh before destruction and haughty spirit before a fall."

THE DOULOS

A challenging note to end on.

“But which of you having a slave ploughing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come from the field ‘come immediately and sit down to eat’? But will he not say to him, prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you will eat and drink’? He does not thank the slave because he did the things, which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things, which are commanded you, say, ‘we are unworthy slaves, and we have done only that which we ought to have done’. (Luke 17:5-10)

The Greek word for “slave.” is “doulos”.
“Who owns a slave?” “His master,”

Translators of the New Testament have sought to soften the term by translating “**doulos**” as “bond-servant.” However, to the Greeks, the term meant, “slave.” The free Greeks saw the role of “**doulos**” as something to scorn. For example, one reason they scorned the Persians was because they were not free, but after the manner of “**doulos**” - they were subject to **despotai**, - those who own slaves.

The writers of the New Testament used the term four times to describe themselves in introducing their epistles (Rom 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Phil 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1). In the Revelation, the Lord uses this term to describe those to whom the book is written, to show to His ‘**doulos**’ the things which must shortly take place; and he sent and communicated it by His angel to His ‘**doulos**’ John” Rev 1:1. Of course, the Revelation is written to all of us.

When we study further we come to learn that the word, “**despotes**, is “one who owns slaves”. It is used four times for Jesus (II Timothy 2:21; II Peter 2:1; Jude 4; Revelation 6:10) and once for God the Father (Acts 4:24). This means God as a slave owner. I came to realize that though the subject of “**lordship**” is being taught with increasing frequency, no one could fully understand or fully experience lordship, without grasping the principle of the **doulos**.
“You are not your own; for you have been bought with a price”

The doulos principle means that the choice of life circumstances and the fruit of our labour are not determined by us, but by Our Master.

“He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? And he said to Him, Lord you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.’ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, follow Me.” Peter turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His breast at the supper, and said, ‘Lord, who is the one who betrays you?’ Peter therefore, seeing him said to Jesus, ‘Lord, and what about this man?’ Jesus said to him, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me.” John 21: 1 7-22. It is important to remember that a slave has only those rights granted to him by the Master.

MINISTRY PROFILE OF SHAUN T KEARNEY

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 small but growing body of believers miraculously acquired a tract of land where a Convention Centre and facilities for a Bible College and Christian Campground were established.

This beautiful location became the scene of many wonderful events. It was the venue for many conferences sponsored by the church. 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 many parts of the world as far away as India, South East Asia and the South Pacific. Ministers also attended these gatherings from every mainline denomination to be challenged and blessed.

During Brother Kearney's six-year tenure as chairman of the Pentecostal Ministers' Fraternal in Auckland, a milestone was reached. For the first time, a conference for every stream in Pentecost, both classical and independent, was held at the convention centre. Accepting an invitation from Brother Kearney Jack Hayford Pastor from "Church on the Way" to be the guest speaker. All the leaders in the nation, without exception attended. As they lived together for five glorious days, the Spirit of God broke down barriers, allayed suspicions, thus paving the way for the formation of the Associated Pentecostal Churches of New Zealand.

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 their possessions and went back to the US. Then in 1989 they moved to Australia from whence they continued to travel to the US, Canada, Asia, Middle East and Europe extensively. In 2006 they settle back in New Zealand. He has written many books on the 'Unstructured Church life'.

THE END

A LIST OF AVAILABLE BOOKS

Some books have been audio streamed on our website.

THE LORDS SUPPER

Do this in remembrance of me.

THE COUNTERFEIT CHURCH

An in-depth look at practices that have no scriptural foundation, but are nothing more than traditions and customs

Many saints suffer from anorexia they seem to have lost their appetite

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

Things to avoid getting bogged down in a religious ghetto.

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

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

A WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE AROUND THE LORD'S TABLE.

An inspirational study that exalts the work of Christ at Calvary.

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

For Christians who have a desire not to become just another statistic.

PROPHETS PROPHECY AND THE PROPHETIC

An insight into an area of great importance for the church in this hour.

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