



UPL O O K

MARCH 2001

JOB OPENINGS
Local church discipline
Care of the churches

JOB OPENINGS

What kind of person would even think of responding to an ad like this? Only the best.

Major investment firm seeks motivated individuals who are desiring “a good work.”¹ Such will be called on to make a major investment themselves.² Previous education in St. Mary’s College³ preferred, but rigorous on-the-job training provided. Must be prepared to work late hours on occasion, have personal plans rearranged at the last minute, and receive regular criticism, much of it unfounded. The pay scale at present is minimal (to say the least) but retirement benefits are out of this world.⁴

Applicants must have dual functioning tear ducts (in order to “weep with those that weep”⁵), a firm but gentle voice, knees that bend often, and open ears. In addition, must know how to keep mouth shut regarding confidential matters.

This position requires the heart of a lion, the hide of a rhino, the vision of an eagle, and the agility of a mountain goat. Nevertheless applicant must be a real man to qualify.

Experience in military service for the king—the use of all available armor and developed skill in swordsmanship⁶—is essential. Also having raised family well is a must.⁷ Individual applying must be willing to open his home to others, thus showing a hospitable spirit,⁸ to open his heart in honest accountability to his fellow workmates,⁹ and to open his hand to those in need.


Anyone desiring this position must know how to use an alarm clock for early rising, how to use the Owner’s Manual for his own direction and for teaching others,¹⁰ and how to use a shepherd’s crook for guiding his charges. Must not be afraid of long hours, dark nights, wild storms, grievous wolves, or the devil himself, because he has learned to implicitly trust the Managing Director in all such conditions.

Job openings are available worldwide but transfers are rarely arranged. Most successful applicants live and die at their post. Should be prepared to be unnoticed by the world, unappreciated by those being served, misunderstood and regularly taken advantage of.

The company¹¹ of those seeking to employ such applicants is composed of former blasphemers, adulterers, thieves, murderers and many other categories of such ne’er-do-wells. Those with which the applicant must work on a day-to-day basis can be amazingly like sheep in their behavior,¹² calling the respondent to know how to find green pastures and still waters,¹³ how to steer clear of perverse men and hirelings,¹⁴ and how to feed, lead, and take heed to the people in his care.

Benefits include happy fellowship with like-minded workmates, the joy of a job well done, the smile of the Chief Superintendent upon your work, and ultimately, the approbation of “the Shepherd that died for the sake of the flock.” Also promised are rich times in the Word, power in prayer, and being “workers together” with God.¹⁵

This is a limited time offer. Soon this branch office of the company will be closed, moving all involved to Out-of-this-World Headquarters, where such services will no longer be required.¹⁶ If willing and able, apply today.

Note: Even though you may not qualify under this demanding category, there are many other openings in supporting roles. In fact, there is room for every serious, hard-working person on the team. 



J. B. Nicholson

J. B. Nicholson Jr.

ENDNOTES:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. 1 Tim. 3:1 | 9. 1 Pet. 5:5 |
| 2. 1 Jn. 3:16 | 10. Acts 20:28 |
| 3. at the feet of Jesus | 11. 1 Cor. 6:10-11, for eg. |
| 4. 1 Pet. 5:4 | 12. See Isa. 53; Jn. 10 |
| 5. Rom. 12:15 | 13. Ps. 23:2 |
| 6. Eph. 6:10-18 | 14. Acts 20:30; Jn. 10:12-13 |
| 7. 1 Tim. 3:4 | 15. 2 Cor. 6:1 |
| 8. Titus 1:8 | 16. Rev. 7:16-17 |

UPLOOK

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MARCH 2001

Number 2

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UPLOOK

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FRONT LINES

SPRING CHALLENGE 2001

The second annual Spring Challenge for high schoolers and college and careers is being planned in the Dayton/Cincinnati area April 6. Lord willing, Keith Trevolt (KS) will be speaking. Come enjoy the fellowship, outdoors, and a challenge from God's Word!

Contact: Jason Graham
(937) 293-6871
jjgraham98@cs.com

TAVISTOCK, ON CONFERENCE

Tavistock and Area Assemblies Spring Conference is scheduled, Lord willing, for April 7, 2001 from 9:30 to 4:30. Wm. Burnett is expected to minister on Worship and How to Prepare for It, and Gary McBride on Repentance and Forgiveness. Meetings will be held at the Tavistock Mennonite Church in the village of Tavistock, ON.

Paul Booker
(905) 684-3748

WORD ALIVE SOUTHEAST

The final session in a series of Saturday Bible studies is scheduled for April 14. Mike Attwood will speak on Messianic Psalms, Part 2 from 8:00-12:00; Rex Trogdon will teach New Testament Church Truth from 1:00-5:00. Classes are held in the Washington Chapel (808 E. Robert Tombs Rd, Washington, GA).

Contact:
Sam Thorpe
(706) 359-6297
thorpes@sylcom.net

DALLAS AREA CONFERENCE

The Dallas Area 42nd Conference is scheduled for April 6-8. Lord willing, Arnot McIntee and Jamie Hull will be ministering the Word.

The meetings will be held at Wheatland Bible Chapel (1303 W. Wheatland Road, Duncanville, TX).
John Daniels at 972-424-9889
jandmdaniels@email.msn.com

VANCOUVER CONFERENCE

Saints from six Vancouver assemblies are expecting Roy Hill (UK) and Jamie Hull (CO) as speakers at their annual Easter conference April 13-15. Meetings will be held at Granville Chapel (5091 Granville St.). Children's programs are planned for Fri. and Sat. evenings.

Contact: Norman Chandler
(604) 271-1083

TORONTO CONFERENCE

The assemblies in Toronto plan to host their annual Easter conference on April 13 and 14 at Martingrove Collegiate, Etobicoke (Toronto). Lord willing, the speakers will be Bernard Osborne (Wales) and J. B. Nicholson (MI). Meeting times are Friday and Saturday at 2:00 & 5:30 (note new times). A special young people's meeting will be held at 8 PM on Friday. Child care for is provided.

Contact: Ted Willis
(905) 845-0584

EASTER CONFERENCE

The Christians at the Marple Christian Assembly (Media, PA) will be hosting their annual Easter conference, Lord willing, April 14 and 15. Meetings are planned for Saturday evening and all day on Sunday. The expected speakers are Donald Norbie (CO), John Bjorlie (MI), and Robert Gessner (PA).

Contact: James Martindale
(610) 273-3013
jmarti0219@aol.com

YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCES

Monthly conferences are scheduled to be held at Brandywine Bible Chapel (Wilmington, DE). The meetings run from 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM. Lord willing, the following brethren will address specific topics:
April 21 Keith Keyser
Works of Flesh vs. Fruits of Spirit
May 21 John Bjorlie
Habakkuk: Prophet of the Watchtower

Contact: Tim Bhatt
(302) 529-9073
tim_bhatt@yahoo.com

CONF. IN LOGANSPORT, IN

Believers in the Indiana area are invited to the annual spring conference at the Logansport Gospel Chapel (321 Cliff Dr., Logansport IN) on April 21. The expected speaker is Art Auld (OH). Refreshments at 9:30 with sessions at 10 and 11. Lunch will be provided. Art Auld will again speak Sunday morning, April 22.

Ralph Garver (219) 722-1012
Leeagar@Lneti.com

LADIES' MISSIONARY CONF.

The 24th Annual Ladies' Spring Missionary Conference will be held Saturday, April 21 at Turner Rd. Chapel (Windsor, ON). Expected speakers are Yvonne McCallum, Heather Peat, Nancy Cameron, and Danielle Caza.

MICHIGAN LADIES MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

This year's Michigan Ladies' Missionary Conference will be hosted by Northwest Gospel Hall on Saturday, April 21, Lord willing. Invited speakers include: Elizabeth Aiken (Other Areas), Elva Brooks (Zambia), and Marcia VanderLaan (Colombia). There will also be a number of reports from women involved in local mission work in Michigan.

Contact:
Hazel Johnson
(616) 791-4179
hazel@uplook.org

LIMON, COLORADO

The Limon Bible Chapel (385 J Ave., Limon, CO) will hold a Bible conference on April 21-22. Invited speakers are Dan Smith (IA) and Keith Trevolt (KS). Motel accommodations and meals are provided.

Contact: Paul Parmer
(719) 775-9788 or 346-8547

MINISTRY IN BALDWIN CITY

The saints that meet at the Gospel Chapel in Baldwin City, KS (Third and Chapel Sts.) extend an invitation to their conference April 21-22. Ministry meetings are planned for 2:00 and 7:00 on Saturday and 11:00 and 2:00 on Sunday. This conference is an open-platform format with multiple speakers.

Ray Jones (785) 594-3374
rmjones@idir.net

MISSIONARY BREAKFAST

The eighth annual Southern Ontario Missionary Breakfast will be held at White Oaks Inn in St. Catharines, ON on Saturday, April 28 at 8:30 AM. The buffet breakfast will be followed by reports from missionaries from various fields.

Directions are on the back of the tickets. Tickets are \$12.00 each.

H. W. Allison
3199 Sovereign Road
Burlington, ON L7M 2W1
Phone (905) 336-8101
Fax (905) 336-2881
E-mail: hw.allison@sympatico.ca

CHICAGO AREA SPRING CONF.

The Chicago Area Spring conference will be held, Lord willing, April 27-29 at the Palos Hills Christian Assembly (10600 S. 88th Ave., Palos Hills, IL). The expected speakers are Wm. Burnett (ON), Sandy McEachern (NS), and Tom Wilson (NJ). Children's meetings will be taken by Craig and Nancy Rollinger.

Robert Fiebig
(708) 448-2552

CONFERENCE AT CROSSROADS

A conference with Dr. Joe Mikhael (ON) and Harold Smith (NS) will be held, Lord willing, April 28-29 in North Dartmouth, MA at Crossroads Bible Chapel (334

Cross Rd.). Meetings will be held at 3:00 and 6:30 on Saturday and at 2:30 and 6:30 on Sunday. Meals will be served between meetings.

Ken Saunders
(401) 274-4000
ksaunders@dotplanet.net

GREENWOOD HILLS LADIES' MISSIONARY SEMINAR

"The Faithfulness of God through the Seasons of our Lives" will be the theme of the Greenwood Hills (Fayetteville, PA) ladies' missionary retreat April 27-29. They look forward to hearing messages and reports from Sylvia Amos (NY), Jennifer Burger (Other Areas), Mary June Speichinger (Zambia) and other visiting missionaries. The registration fee is \$25; the total cost for the weekend is \$80. Teens will be given a 10% discount. Send registration to:

GWH Conference
7062 Lincoln Way East
Fayetteville, PA 1722

MEN'S CONFERENCE

Horton Haven Christian Camp in Chapel Hill, TN, will be hosting a men's conference April 27-28. Dave Glock, professor at Emmaus Bible College (IA) will be the speaker. His topic will be Biblical Concepts vs. Traditions.

Kevin King
(931) 364-7656
HortonHavenChristianCamp@juno.com

LADIES' RETREAT

A ladies' retreat is planned for May 4-6, 2001, at Camp Iroquoia, in Hallstead, Pennsylvania.

Tom Freeman
(609) 585-1835
tfreeman3@juno.com

REFRESHING TIME IN FOREST

The annual Spring Conference at the Forest Gospel Hall (33 Main Street N., Forest, ON) will be held May 4-6. The meetings times are: Friday, 7:30; Saturday, 2:30-5:00;

VESSELS OF HONOR 2001

- **Memorial Day weekend, Friday, May 25 through Monday, May 28 to be held on the campus of Baker University at Baldwin City, Kansas.**
- **This year's theme will be "Vessels in the World," with an emphasis on evangelism and godly living in the home, the workplace, and on the college campus.**
- **Open to individuals and married couples in the college and career age group. Must be age 18 to attend, no real limit on maximum age.**
- **General Session speakers are Mike Attwood (GA), Art Auld (OH), and John Bjorlie (MI)**
- **Seminar Session speakers: Mike Attwood (GA), Art Auld (OH), Debbie Auld (OH), John Bjorlie (MI), John Heller (AR), Warren Henderson (IL), Jamie Hull (CO), Karen Lindamood (OK), Steve Price (KS).**



Jim Lindamood (918)663-1121
jimlindamood@juno.com
Dan Moffitt (918)744-6484
danmoffitt@juno.com

See the Vessels of Honor website at
www.vesselsofhonor.org.

6:30-8:00 ; Sunday 9:30, 11:00, lunch, 2:00-4:00. The expected speakers are J. B. Nicholson (MI) and Brian Gunning (ON).

Alex McIntosh (519) 786-5038
William Brandon (519) 786-5518

WEEKEND IN THE WORD CONFERENCE AND CONCERT

Alan Parks (SC) will be speaking at a conference May 4-6 in the will of the Lord. The location will be the Bird-in-Hand Family Inn—a deluxe conference facility in picturesque Lancaster, PA.

Included in the weekend will be

an area-wide gospel dinner concert with Alan on Saturday evening at Lancaster High School. Cost for the weekend is \$130 per person (includes meals, accommodations, and dinner concert).

Day guests are welcome and dinner concert tickets may be purchased separately. Special hotel rates are available for those wanting to extend their stay in Amish country. For more information, contact:

Mark Kolchin
P. O. Box 305
Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734
mkolchin@juno.com

ONTARIO WORKERS' AND ELDERS' CONFERENCE

The theme of the 2001 Ontario Workers' and Elders' conference is: Shepherds of God's Flock, with a burden for the local assembly and its role in bringing glory to the Lord.

Bernard Osborne (UK) will be the main speaker. Other plenary sessions will be taken by Art Auld, Brian Gunning and Ernie Sarlo. A number of seminars will be offered.

The conference will be held, Lord willing, May 9-11 at Oakwood Bible Chapel in Windsor, ON.

Patrick Long (905) 433-0808
pbl@msc.on.ca

SW WORKERS' CONFERENCE

Men and women interested in the work of the Lord are invited to the annual conference at Lakeside Bible Camp on Whidbey Island in Washington State, May 15-18 (Tuesday-Friday) 2001. This year's speaker will be Harold Summers from Vancouver, BC. The cost of the conference is \$65.

Contact: LeRoy Junker
505 Mackenzie Road S.W.
Olympia, WA 98512
whitebeard@home.com

EUROPEAN BIBLE STUDY

A one-or two-week Bible Study and outreach program is scheduled for July 28-August 11 in Zlenice (a village 40 km from Prague). Approximately 100 believers from all around Europe will attend. It will be helpful to have native English speakers in attendance.

Roger Brind
the.brinds@ouvip.com
www.philadelphia-trust.org/uk

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Pine Bush Bible Camp (NY) is planning, Lord willing, the 7th Men's Bible Seminar Aug. 26-30. Randy Amos will lead the study in

UPWARD BOUND 2001

The mission focus of Upward Bound is to encourage Christians of every age (particularly of college and career age) to get excited about studying the Word of God. The emphasis is on achieving more than just a superficial understanding of the Scriptures. In-depth seminars on fundamental Bible doctrines, as well as a detailed "How to Study the Bible" course are the subjects considered in several one-hour sessions every day. A Bible study project add a hands-on component to the week's studies and allows for a practical application of the principles being taught.

The following speakers will be presenting seminars on various topics: J. B. Nicholson (MI), Brian Russell (UK), Roy Houghton (ON) and Sandy McEachern (NS).

For those who are able, there is an opportunity the following week to be part of a canoe trip into Algonquin Park.

Prices are in Canadian funds:

- \$435 for both weeks
- \$235 for the first week only
- \$35 discount for pre-July 1 registration

All who plan to attend must submit an application along with a \$25 deposit.

Sandy McEachern
508-1044 Tower Rd.
Halifax, NS B3H 4R1
(902) 420-9489 or (902) 443-5849
sandy-mceachern@hotmail.com

Announcing a new UPLOOK Ministries Rise Up Conference

RISE UP & WORK: The Lord is Coming!

Mark your calendars. Pray for the blessing of God.

Join believers from around the world Dec. 26-29, 2001 at the new Indianapolis (Indiana) Marriott Downtown.

- Keynote Speakers include WM. MacDONALD & ROY HILL
- 40 Seminars: prophecy, family, assembly, missions, etc.
- Special Elder, Youth, and Women Tracks.

Matthew with the theme, "The King and His Kingdom," an intensive study for those who are serious about God's Word.

Charles Myers (732) 341-7669
c.speedy@gateway.net

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

Horton Haven Christian Camp will begin a Discipleship Training Program in September 2001. The program is an intensive Bible study and practical discipleship course. The young men will be mentored by elders from area assemblies.

Horton Haven Christian Camp
(931) 364-7656
HortonHavenChristianCamp@juno.com

SCHOOL OF EVANGELISM

The Ezekiel Project School of Evangelism is a nine-month program that combines Bible teaching with experiences in evangelism.

The Ezekiel Project, Inc.
PO Box 51
Armada, MI 48005
(810) 784-4142
www.tepse.org

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Camp Manager

If you've been looking to serve the Lord, an opportunity now exists

for the position of camp manager and also a position in maintenance at Camp Iroquoia. Ideally we are looking for couples but individuals would be considered. The camp is located on over 200 acres in the Endless Mountain region of Pennsylvania and has been operating for more than 28 years. Its ministry has impacted hundreds of youth and adults over the years and many have been led to the Lord there. If you would like to explore the possibility that this is where the Lord would have you to be, please contact:

Harold Neil
(609) 890-0450
hbwlnel@gateway.net

Rest Haven Homes

Rest Haven Homes, Grand Rapids, MI, is seeking committed Christians who will serve with love those in their care. There are openings for a part-time nurse, a dietary manager (certificate required), and nurse aides. Volunteers are also appreciated.

Brian Wilson, Administrator
(616) 363-6819

HOME CALLS

Harold A. Joye (Andy), 72, Palm Bay, FL went to be with his Lord on

Nov. 10. He was born in Detroit, MI on Jan. 9, 1928. He is survived by his wife, Helen (Nellie), four sons, two daughter-in-laws, and five grandchildren. He trusted the Lord Jesus as his Saviour at age 19 and attended Emmaus Bible School in Canada for the 1948-1949 school year. He served with the Gospel Pioneers and helped in the Christian Serviceman's Center in Colorado Springs. Later at the Hollywood Heights Chapel in Lincoln, NE, he served as an elder and was commended to the Lord's work. Most recently he and his wife had been living in Palm Bay, FL, where he continued to serve the Lord as an elder at the Bethany Bible Chapel by the Sea in Satellite Beach, FL.

NEW CORRESPONDENT

Wheatland Bible Chapel
(Duncanville, TX)
John Rice
3426 East Perryton
Dallas, TX 75224

COMMENDATIONS/CHANGES

The elders at Elmwood Bible Chapel (Renfrew, ON) inform us that Doug Pilgrim is no longer a commended worker from that assembly.



WHAT'S GOING ON?

MORE THAN GOLD

Once again DIME Publishers of Cupertino, CA have produced a first-rate pocket guide for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, UT. The intent is to distribute them to crowds along the Torch Run route (more than 100 cities). This full-color, 36-page booklet as well as including a complete listing of the Olympic events and reference maps, also contains testimonies of several athletes regarding their faith in God, a four-page gospel explanation and a response card which can be customized by a local assembly (for those who would like to receive a Bible, Bible study materials, or are looking for a Christian contact). Contact DIME Publishers:

P. O. Box 490
Cupertino, CA 95015
sports@DIME.org



WIFE BEATING OK?

At times, men are right to beat their wives, say more than half of the 90,000 Indian women surveyed for a health ministry study. About 56 percent said domestic violence was justified on at least one of six grounds. Because the topic is sensitive and wives may be reluctant to report abuse, the statistics probably underestimate the violence. Grounds the women gave for abuse included: neglecting the house or children, going out without telling their husbands, disrespecting in-laws, suspicion of infidelity, too small a dowry, or bad cooking. The survey found 20% of the women had been physically mistreated since age 15, most commonly by their husband. —*Pulse*

WORLDWIDE PERSECUTION

Over 200 million Christians now face intense persecution for their faith and over 250 million undergo some form of discrimination, with Communist governments and some Islamic regimes being the most flagrant offenders.

Open Doors Ministry rates countries in which persecution against Christians is the greatest—the coun-

tries where faith counts the most. The countries are ranked according to the intensity of persecution.

1. Saudi Arabia
2. Afghanistan
3. China
4. Chechnya (Russia)
5. Sudan
6. Yemen
7. Comoro Islands
8. Maldives
9. Iran
10. Morocco
11. Tunisia
12. Libya
13. Vietnam
14. Egypt
15. Turkmenistan
16. North Korea
17. Pakistan
18. Laos
19. Bhutan
20. Kuwait —*opendoorsusa.org*

HOSTAGE UPDATE from NTM

Colombian and US judicial officers interviewed the captured guerrilla commander known as “Rigoberto,” and he claimed to know nothing about New Tribes Missions’ three kidnapped missionaries and refused to cooperate with authorities.

His involvement in the kidnapping has been confirmed by a number of reliable sources, so his response to the questioning is obviously a disappointment for NTM and the family members. However, Colombian and US investigators will continue to compile evidence against Rigoberto and confront him again with more leverage to induce his cooperation. —*NTM*

NEW LEADER IN ISRAEL

Israel has a new leader that many say will halt peace talks and cause more violence. Former Israeli General Ariel Sharon’s landslide victory isn’t expected to affect evangelistic ministry by itself, but according to Friends of Israel, if violence plays a part of the mix, it could enhance their ministry because the opportunities to serve the people in that land would increase. Violence can actually be good for evangelism as people are faced with the uncertainty of life. —*MNN*

MASS EVANGELISM in NIGERIA

The banners that hung around the city of Lagos, Nigeria last November read, “Come and Receive Your Miracle.” German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke arrived in that city promising that paralyzed people would walk; the blind would see.

Christianity Today reported that the “crowd grew larger each subsequent evening. Bonnke, embracing his role as preacher, prophet, and storyteller, held an audience averaging one million with his arresting gaze and boundless energy. They listened to him in eager anticipation of a divine deliverance from their poverty-stricken, disease-infested world. This was Bonnke’s Great Millennial Crusade.”

The story repeats itself throughout Africa about ten times per year—millions come and go, never having their spiritual thirst met.

We can be thankful for, and confident in, the order of leadership which Christ has established for His Body within each local New Testament Church. From within His flock He raises up a plurality of godly men equipped by the Holy Spirit to shepherd His sheep with a firm and loving hand.

This spiritual work for the Lord and His saints can be heart-warming or heart-breaking, based on many factors, one of which is the spirit and responsiveness of the sheep. Our attitude and actions help or hinder, bring joy or grief to our elders as they labor as servant-leaders of the Body unto Christ. This principle is contained in Hebrews 13:17, *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”*

Here are seven ways you can help the elders in your local assembly. You can probably add a few of your own to the list.

1) Pray for them. Pray that they may resist the attacks of the enemy. Pray that they may remain close to the Lord in their personal walk with Christ. Pray that they may be Spirit-led and filled with God’s grace and humility. Pray that they may serve as *“faithful stewards”* accountable to the Lord, the Head of the Body.

2) Give them respect. As men raised up by God and accountable to God, they deserve our respect. Guard your tongue from critical and unprofitable talk, complaining in



public or behind their backs. However, elders must be approachable and desire the honest feelings of the flock. Do this respectfully, in a spirit of meekness and humility.

3) Submit to them. Give them room to develop under the hand of God, by submitting to their leadership. Accept them as “human instruments” in God’s hands. Allow them space to make mistakes. Undermining the leadership will harm the local Body and will bring a bitter spirit to your own soul. Submit to them as unto the Lord.

4) Become a helper. Those who seek to serve, rather than being served, become a positive blessing and help to the local elders. When a need is known, offer to meet that need, as God has gifted you to edify the church. Discover your own spiritual gift and be willing to exercise it profitably for the well-being of the

assembly fellowship.

5) Demonstrate Commitment. Be in faithful attendance at the meetings. Be on time. Follow through on responsibilities assigned to you by your elders. Put the *“assembling of the saints”* as a high priority of your time and schedule, and show that level of commitment in all of your assembly duties as a *“good and faithful servant.”*

6) Seek their advice. There is wise counsel in the plurality of godly leadership. God will often give direction and reveal His will through His undershepherds. Use your elders as valued resources on all matters of life. Become comfortable asking them questions, seeking their opinions, and praying with them over matters and decisions of life importance.

7) Accept them in the Lord. The

diversity of gift, temperament and personality among elders teaming together for God's glory is a beautiful sight to behold. Each elder is uniquely different yet divinely appointed to serve the people of God, upholding the unity of the Body of Christ. Avoid setting artificial expectations for them and accept them as from the Lord.

Overall, elders desire that each child of God be walking in close fellowship with God and the saints, growing in their Christian life of holiness, sound in understanding the truths of Scripture and practically demonstrating the love of Christ to the world. A life so lived would be of great blessing to any group of elders. Let's consider some practical ways believers can be a very real encouragement to their elders.

Thank them for serving as elders. Serving on the oversight of a local assembly is often a thankless work. Most elders don't serve to receive the praise of men, but it is encouraging to know that the saints appreciate the work being done.

Commend them for the hard decisions. Even if you don't agree with every aspect of the decision, let them know you are glad they will deal with difficult issues head on, and that they have your support.


Sponsor an Elders' Appreciation Dinner. Periodically, arrange a dinner for the elders and their

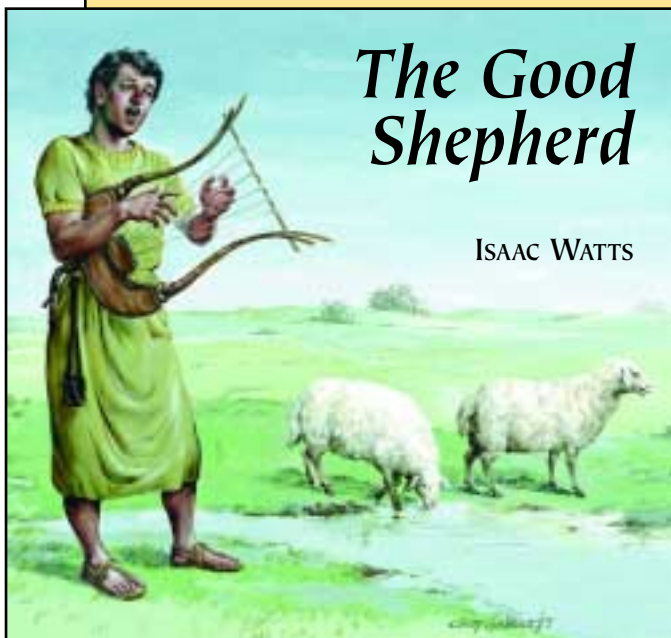
wives. This can be an activity for involvement by different classes or age groups to serve. Make it a comfortable and enjoyable evening.

Offer practical assistance. An elder laboring in the Word and the Lord's work may not have time for many of the practical chores around the house. He may not be handy with tools or mechanically gifted. This presents an opportunity for the body to serve one another.

Send a note or e-mail. Just a simple word of encouragement, a verse of Scripture, a "thank you" or thought from your heart may often be the means by which God can lift an elder's spirit and encourage him to go on, of not being "*weary in well doing.*"

Invite them home for dinner. Elders are to be given to hospitality, and so often are overlooked as candidates for hospitality from someone else. In this case, the one who gives usually receives the greater blessing. The fellowship of Christian hospitality is a priceless commodity if we use it wisely for the encouragement of one another around the Lord.

Hebrews 13 gives us a triad relating to our elders, in verses 7, 17, and 24; for further study, consider the context and admonitions of the entire chapter as that which might characterize our help and encouragement toward those who have the rule over us. 



The Good Shepherd

ISAAC WATTS

My Shepherd will supply my need; Jehovah is His name.
In pastures fresh He makes me feed beside the living stream.
He brings my wandering spirit back when I forsake His ways;
And leads me for His mercy's sake, in paths of truth and grace.
When I walk through the shades of death, Thy presence is my stay;
A word of Thy supporting breath drives all my fears away.
Thy hand, in sight of all my foes does still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows, Thy oil anoints my head.
The sure provisions of my God attend me all my days;
O make Thy house be my abode, and all my work be praise!
There would I find a settled rest, while others go and come;
No more a stranger or a guest—but like a child at home.

Finishing the course

Understanding the trials and triumphs of the shepherds of the flock

During his third missionary journey, the Apostle Paul stopped to bid a brief but poignant farewell to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38). The tearful parting on the shores of the Mediterranean was the dramatic culmination of a stirring address that he gave regarding their labors for the Master. His plan had been to sail past Ephesus in order to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost and the opportunities that it would have provided for the gospel. But being so close to the city where he had spent nearly three years establishing and strengthening the assembly, it was hard for him not to make a contact.

While at Miletus, he called for the elders of the church and gave them his own testimony of the toils and tears expended for the sake of the gospel. Testifying how he had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God, he charged them to take heed to themselves and to the solemn responsibilities entrusted to them by the Lord.

The address he gave and the example he exhibited provides elders today with a valuable blueprint for shepherding the flock. It also gives the saints a unique perspective into the arduous, yet often unappreciated, work of the oversight.

CONSISTENCY

One of the very basic credentials required by any elder is the quality of consistency—one that Paul exemplified in his own life. At no time did he vacillate in his convictions and his commitment to the truth, regardless of the situation or the

“season.” *“Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons”* (Acts 20:18). Whether he suffered or abounded, Paul never changed in his doctrine or his attitude. Later, writing from his prison cell in Rome and facing certain execution, he could write young Timothy and say unabashedly, *“I have fought a good fight...I have kept the faith...”* (2 Tim. 4:7). It was not that he kept his own faith, a matter that was in God’s hands (Jn. 10:28-29) but the faith—the whole body of New Testament truth—as it was revealed to him by the Lord.

He could exhort Timothy from experience to preach the Word and to be instant in season and out of season. He could say with authority (as he did with the Corinthians) that he had *“renounced the hidden things of dishonesty”* (2 Cor. 4:2), and to the Thessalonians that the manner of entering in that he had unto them was not one of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile (1 Thess. 2:3). Paul’s life was a model of consistency as well as transparency, as it should be with every elder.

HUMILITY

Another quality that characterized the life of the apostle Paul was humility. Despite the tears and trials that he experienced in his ministry, he persisted in faithfulness to the Lord, serving with all humility (Acts 20:19). When he was challenged many times regarding his qualification as an apostle, he exercised a humble attitude, though his religious “achievements” prior to salvation

had unquestionably exceeded those of his critics (Phil. 3:5-6). When he was misunderstood and his motives maligned even by those who he had fathered in the faith, he endured the mistreatment, though not without heartache and tears. Such was his experience, giving an example to the Ephesian elders of what would be in store for them and others who would afterwards follow in their path.

FIDELITY

Fidelity also characterized the life of the Apostle Paul. He was faithful to the Lord in proclaiming the gospel to both Jew and Greek, the message of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). He was also faithful as he taught the Word of God to them—keeping back nothing that was profitable in their lives. He proclaimed the truth to them not only in public (where it was to be expected) but also in private (*“from house to house”*) which required a greater investment of time. He was an apostle with a true shepherd’s heart, desiring the best for the Lord’s people whether they realized their need for it or not—or even appreciated it.

It helps to remind us that the work of an elder, though taxing at times and requiring the wisdom of Solomon, is nevertheless fraught with criticism and lack of respect from some within the Body of Christ. Due mainly to spiritual immaturity, ignorance, or carnality, Paul knew this reality all too well as he had to deal with critical issues in the Corinthian, Colossian and Galatian assemblies. But this did not

deter nor dissuade him from his calling, for he knew that this was one of the inherent aspects of this ministry. Confident that God's Word would ultimately triumph, his labors in the midst of his service held the future prospect of commendation at the Judgment Seat of Christ. True to the Lord in every way, the pattern of his life is the pattern for every elder.

INTENSITY

Paul's ministry for the Lord was also marked by intensity. He was aware of the dangers that awaited him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-23), but that also did not move him. He did not count his life dear to himself but placed himself fully on the altar of God's service. His desire was to finish his course with joy. Later, in writing to Timothy, possibly on the eve of his execution, he affirmed that he had achieved this goal: "*I have finished my course...*" (2 Tim. 4:7). He clearly understood that he had received his ministry from the Lord Jesus and looked to Him alone for commendation on his labors. Such should be the aim and desire of all the under-shepherds who are accountable to the Chief Shepherd. Paul's focus was to serve the Lord single-mindedly and wholeheartedly.

Upon concluding his own testimony, Paul exhorted this same group of elders to watch, taking heed both to themselves and to all the flock. He emphasized the need for personal vigilance—an absolute imperative in the work of the oversight. The moral or doctrinal defection of spiritual leaders is not only disappointing, but absolutely devastating to some.

He also urged them to take heed to *all* the flock. They were not to keep watch only on the faithful, but especially those on the outskirts whose foolish straying makes them vulnerable targets for "*wolves*" who lie in wait. Paul later warned the Galatians about these false brethren who had been ignorantly brought into the assembly (Gal. 2:4), whereas Jude warned about the false brethren who secretly crept in (Jude 4). Either way, their initial targets are those within the flock who are not grounded in the Word, drawing away disciples after themselves and causing them to rise up and create conflict. Hence the need for elders to look after the entire flock.

Linked to this watching, was the apostle's admonition to warn the flock. To simply watch was not enough. Warning was just as important. He cautioned them to remember his example during the three years that he was with them. Similarly, the elders' work is like that of a porter who guards the flock by warning of impending

danger. It would be foolish for a sheep to disregard such a warning. Yet those in the flock who have been influenced by a "watered-down" gospel or who have adopted a contaminated view of the holiness of God and the need for personal sanctification often take exception to this "negative preaching." By dissenting, they grandstand their ignorance of the Word and ignore the high view of biblical holiness. The faithful elder, in keeping true to the Lord, must exercise his responsibilities whether it is the popular thing or not.

Finally, Paul exhorted these elders (and all elders) to work in a very practical sense. Commending them to God and the word of His grace, he cited himself as an example of one who worked with his own hands providing for his necessities. He encouraged them to support the weak (Acts 20:35), and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus who said on at least one occasion that it was more blessed to give than to receive.

In other words, the work of the oversight is not done in an "ivory tower" or carried out solely in committee meetings, but is balanced by a "get-involved," "work with everyone else" attitude.

Kneeling down with them as he concluded his words, this great but humble servant of the Lord prayed with them. Unashamedly showing their affection to their co-laborer and fellow soldier in the faith, they kissed him and wept (another mark of a deep investment in the cause of Christ).

Accompanying him to the ship that awaited him for his journey to Jerusalem, they now bid a sorrowful farewell to him, cognizant that they would probably see his face no more—not in this life at least. But the example that he gave and the words that he spoke more than made up for this tearful goodbye. The pattern that he gave them—and has given to the Church through the centuries—is a pattern that delineates the key responsibilities of the work of the oversight and should deepen the respect of the saints for those involved in this very challenging work.

The pattern that Paul gave them delineates the key responsibilities of the work of the oversight and should deepen the respect of the saints for those involved in this challenging work.



Local church discipline

The Lord uses both the rod and staff.

One of the saddest moments in the life of any assembly must be when discipline of a public nature is required. Thankfully, these occasions are few in number, but when they occur, they are times of collective tears and anguish as the local body of Christ takes the necessary but painful action of excising some element that could otherwise jeopardize the life of the entire assembly.

Sadly, the grief of such occasions is often exacerbated by the fact that misunderstandings regarding the purpose of discipline and the necessity for it have divided assemblies and ruined the testimony. These misunderstandings may be partly due to the fact that this subject, because of its difficult and distasteful nature, has been largely ignored in the teaching of the Word.

It is therefore with a measure of trepidation that one approaches this subject, yet feeling it necessary to make some attempt to clarify the purpose of discipline, and to examine the various types of offense that are identified in Scripture, along with the prescribed level of discipline appropriate to each case.

DISCIPLINE'S PURPOSES

1. RESTORATION: It should be clearly understood, that all discipline has restoration ultimately in mind. We see this time and again in God's dealings with Israel. Take the book of Judges as an example. No less than seven times God used enemies to discipline His people in order to bring about repentance and eventual

recovery. Again, the Babylonian captivity was a discipline that was intended to bring God's people back to Himself, and indeed they did return to Jerusalem after the discipline had run its course.

Coming over to the New Testament, where the apostle Paul deals with the serious matter of fornication in the assembly at Corinth, he first of all instructs the assembly *"Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person"* (1 Cor. 5:13).

However, when he writes his second epistle, and after the work of repentance had been wrought in the offender's heart, he writes, *Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him* (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

Repentance had been affected. Restoration was now possible.

So we learn that while discipline may be punitive in the first instance,



So should we.

it is intended to be restorative in the final analysis.

In the same way, a surgeon takes up his scalpel and inflicts a wound which will involve pain, but his intention is the complete recovery of the person involved. So also scriptural discipline is never vindictive, but administered in the spirit of love, and in the best interests of the assembly and the person concerned.

2. PROTECTION: Leaven [yeast] is consistently used in the New Testament as a symbol of the insidious spread of evil, whether moral or doctrinal. Leaven, when introduced

to a dough mixture, begins to permeate until the whole mass is irretrievably affected. So also does evil that is allowed to fester in an assembly, without action to eliminate it. It will eventually affect the whole assembly for the worse. In 1 Corinthians 5:7, when the apostle is dealing with the serious offense of fornication in the assembly at Corinth, he likens the presence of this sin to leaven and commands them to *"purge out therefore the old leaven."* He again uses this figure of speech when writing to the Galatians about the presence of doctrinal error in that assembly. He tells them, *"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"* (Gal. 5:9). Thus, apart from the recovery of the person involved, godly discipline, when applied in accordance with scriptural teaching, will preserve the assembly from being ruined by the permeation of evil.

VARIOUS TYPES OF OFFENSE



In reading throughout the New Testament epistles, we discover that at least six types of offense are identified, and that these can be divided into two categories:

offenses which can be remedied apart from excommunication, and those where excommunication is prescribed.

OFFENSES WHICH CAN BE REMEDIED APART FROM EXCOMMUNICATION



UNPREMEDITATED OFFENSES: Paul writes *“If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”* (Gal. 6:1).

The offense being dealt with here is not of the premeditated sort which is perpetuated as a habit of life, but rather it is a one-time slip, made in a moment of weakness. In such cases, the skillful hand of restoration is the answer, rather than the exercise of discipline. Perhaps the apostle Peter would best demonstrate this type of offense and its remedy. Peter denied the Lord with oaths and curses when he was caught off-guard by the maid as he stood by the fire, but the Lord sought him out after His resurrection, tenderly restored him and recommissioned him to become the leader of the greatest moment in the history of the early church, on the Day of Pentecost. Note that the passage specifies that the persons undertaking the work of recovery must be spiritual men—men of discernment, men who know how to balance firmness with tenderness, men who can restore without depreciating the seriousness of the offense that has been committed.

DISRUPTIVE OFFENSES (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Titus 1:10-11): These are the “nuisance” types of offense which plague assemblies and cause heartache to overseers: the unruly, the disorderly, vain talkers, and deceivers.

It would appear that the main characteristic of these people is that they *“speak unadvisedly with their lips”* and create disorder and confusion among God’s people. Paul indicates that such people have to be dealt with in a salutary manner. He specifies that they have to be warned; we should not keep company with them; their mouths have to be stopped, and they have to be rebuked sharply. In this case, the offense has not yet reached the point where excommunication is prescribed, but rather, the application of severe strictures with the intent that such a brother will repent and be restored. One can

readily see however, that this offense, if persisted in, after being admonished, could deteriorate to the point where it could be classified under “railing” which is mentioned as meriting excommunication.

PERSONAL OFFENSES (1) (Mt. 18:15-17): In this case, the offense is of a personal nature between two parties. This type of offense is perhaps the most prevalent in assemblies. Most assembly troubles do not involve important doctrinal or moral issues, but rather petty personality clashes that disrupt the peace and the unity of the assembly and grieve the heart of the Lord.

In such cases, the technique is to keep the matter to as small a circle as possible. The offended party is told: *“Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone”* (Mt. 18:15). Unfortunately, the natural tendency is to immediately tell the matter to others, with a view to gathering support. When this is done, the assembly aligns itself with either of the parties and the unity of the assembly is destroyed. No, says the Lord, *“between thee and him alone.”*

If, however, this approach is unsuccessful, the offended brother is advised to take one or two more with him as witnesses, and to make a second attempt at reconciliation. Note that in both of these instances, restoration can be wrought through repentance, without further corporate action being taken.

OFFENSES WHERE EXCOMMUNICATION IS PRESCRIBED



PERSONAL OFFENSES (2) (Mt. 18:15-17): Should matters proceed beyond the second attempt at reconciliation (see above), it is to be brought to the assembly.

Presumably if the offender hears the assembly, he can be restored on the basis of his repentance. If he refuses to hear the assembly, he is to be excommunicated. The Lord says: *“Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican”* (Mt. 18:17).

DOMESTIC IRRESPONSIBILITY AND NEGLECT (1 Tim. 5:8): In this case, a brother is failing to provide the necessities of life for his family. Clearly this is not addressing conditions of hardship where a brother lacks the resources or the opportunity to support himself or his family. In such a case, the assembly would surely be responsible to assist. The condition being described here is where a brother has the ability and opportunity to provide for his family, but lacks the will to do so. He prefers a life of indolence and ease. This is viewed as one of the serious offenses, demanding excommunication. Paul writes, *“He hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Tim. 5:8).

DOCTRINAL OFFENSES (Titus 3:10-11; Gal. 1:7-9; 5:10-11): There are three of these mentioned.

Propagation of False Doctrine: Instruction is given how to proceed when doctrinal error is being propagated in the assembly. The difficulty here is to determine when the label “doctrinal error” should be applied.

It must be recognized that there are certain areas where differences of opinion are permissible and allowable, and areas where they are not. For example, if a brother holds a different view on eschatology than is popularly accepted, we might not wish to have him teach it in our assemblies, but we cannot label divergencies on prophetic interpretation as “doctrinal error.”

Also, it is important to understand whether the error is the result of ignorance, which should be remedied by corrective teaching, or whether it is entrenched and established, and thus demanding excommunication. The whole issue demands a great deal of caution before proceeding with discipline, and indeed, even the heretic is to be warned twice before extreme action is taken against him (Titus 3:10-11).

The criteria to be used is: on fundamentals—immovable; on incidentals—flexible. By “fundamentals” we mean issues such as the Deity of Christ, His sinless, impeccable humanity, His atoning death and resurrection, the doctrine of salvation through faith, apart from works, etc. These have historically been held as fundamental to the faith, and there can be no flexibility on such matters. Doctrinal error in such areas would demand the extreme action of excommunication.

Holding False Doctrine: When we come to Revelation 2, we find that the church at Pergamos was held responsible for having those who “held” false doctrine. The Lord says, *“I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam...So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate”* (Rev. 2:14-15). It would therefore appear that it is not sufficient to say that if someone holds false doctrine, discipline is not required, as long as he doesn’t teach it. These references in Revelation 2 make it clear that an assembly is intended to take proactive steps to deal with false doctrine that is being “held” as a matter of discipline, in order to prevent subsequent damage to the church.

Moral Offenses (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:4-11): The passages referred to give a listing of offenses which are to be considered serious enough for excommunication to be exercised. These are fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railing, drunkenness, and extortion. This list is clearly not intended to be exhaustive because there are other items which are of a serious nature which would

require excommunication that are not listed. For example, murder is not included but would clearly qualify for excommunication. The listing is intended therefore to be typical, and elders are required to exercise a great deal of discernment when identifying moral issues. The fact that an offense is not specifically listed does not mean that no action is required. This would be a travesty of truth. In the case of moral offense, the action is clear—putting away and denial of social contact until the discipline has run its course and brought repentance.

THE APPLICATION OF DISCIPLINE



Should an offense merit public corporate discipline, the question that must now be addressed is, “Who should exercise the discipline?” The apostle Paul gives direction on this matter when he writes, *“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus...”* (1 Cor. 5:4). He anticipates that the exercise of discipline will be an action of the church, and not only the action of the elders. This is further endorsed when he refers to the disciplinary action in Corinth as having been *“inflicted of many”* (2 Cor. 2:6). It was a corporate action of the whole church. It is the church who receives into the local fellowship, and it is the church that puts away.

The overseers in the church would typically present the case to the church with the prescribed discipline, for the affirmation of the local church. Similarly, when repentance and reconciliation have been affected, the offending party should be publicly received back into fellowship in the same manner as a new applicant would be announced and received.

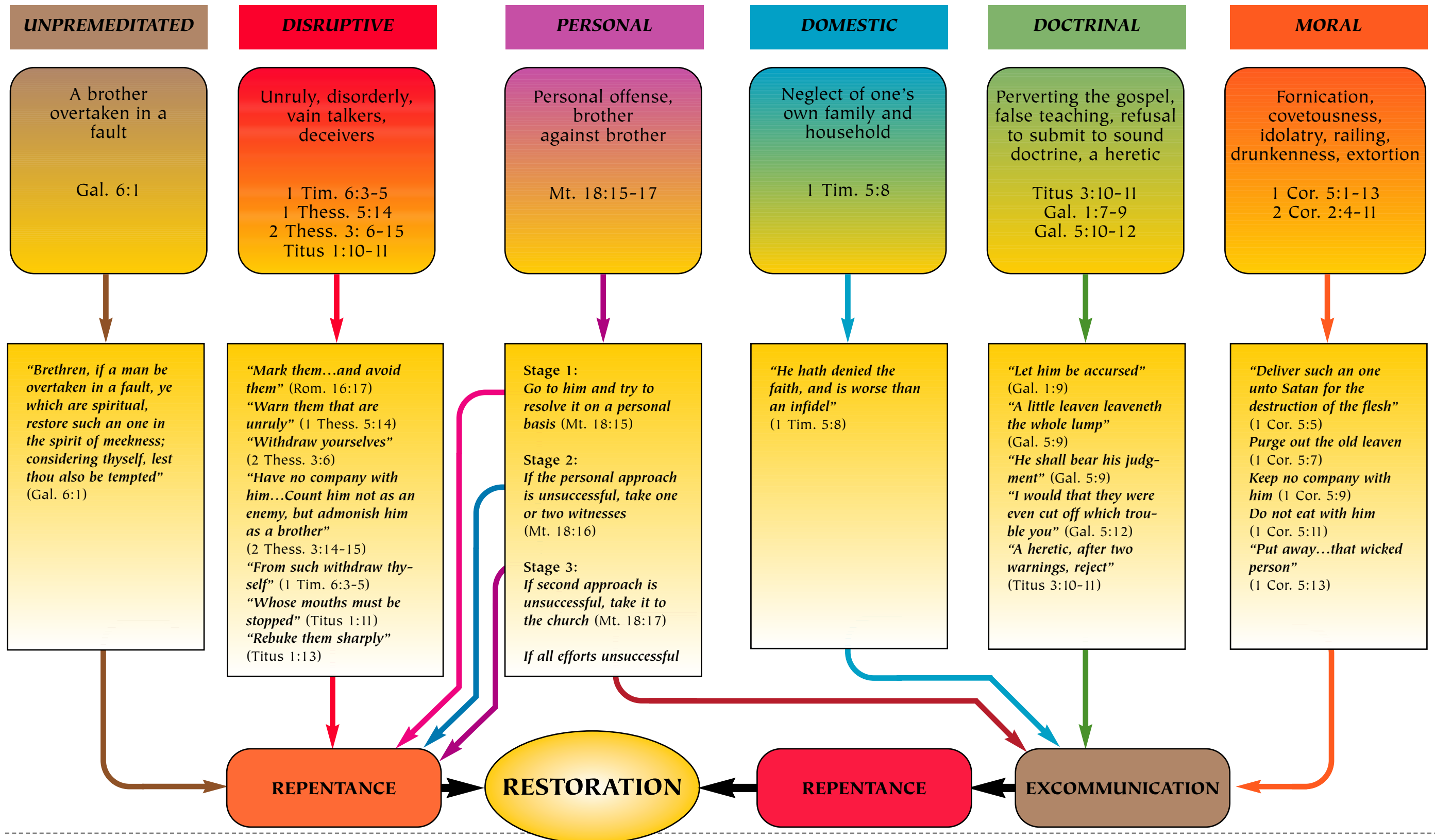
In conclusion, discipline in the local church is essential for its spiritual health and vitality. Whatever low standards might pertain in the world around, the church is the house of God, and in His house His standards must be upheld. When discipline is required, it is critically important that overseers should first correctly classify the offense. It is here that so often things go wrong, and where the offense is either exaggerated or trivialized, and the wrong measures are applied. Too often a severe discipline has been exercised, where a lesser form is prescribed by Scripture. In other cases, a serious offense has been trivialized by the application of discipline which was too light for the matter.

Finally, discipline must never be exercised in a vindictive way, but with sorrow of heart, and with longings that the offender might be fully recovered through repentance and reconciliation.



MATTERS of DISCIPLINE *in the* LOCAL CHURCH

designed by W. H. Burnett



Recognizing & appointing elders

Should we do it? If so, how?

The question sometimes arises, “Should we recognize and/or appoint elders in each local church?” Some believers argue that in Scripture elders were only appointed by apostles or their delegates, and so today we should not appoint or recognize elders.

It is true that in Scripture it would seem that elders were only appointed by apostles or their delegates. We read about the apostolic appointment in Acts 14:23 and the appointment by a delegate in Titus 1:5. However, as we examine the Scriptures more closely, we see some interesting facts. First, these two passages are the only places where we see elders or overseers being appointed. In most places in Scripture, elders are simply mentioned in the text without any reference as to how they became elders. There is no explicit instruction as to who may recognize elders.

The second fact concerning apostolic appointment is that the appointment in Acts 14:23 was by Paul and Barnabas. While Barnabas is described as an “*apostle*” in Acts 14:14, it would seem from the distinction made in Acts 9:27 that in Barnabas’ case, the word “*apostle*” might carry its normal meaning of “messenger” rather than the special ecclesiastical meaning. It is quite possible that one of the men making the appointment of an elder was not really an apostle in the strict sense of the word, but simply a messenger.

The Holy Spirit has given us a considerable amount of Scripture describing the qualities of character found in an elder. Of course we could say that 1 Timothy 3 and Titus

1 explain the qualities of character that every Christian man should have. However, the text was obviously given so that those men who were elders could be identified. These passages gave instruction to Timothy and Titus so they could recognize who was an elder and who was not. If we believe we should not recognize elders anymore, we remove the primary purpose for which these two passages are found in the Bible.

The passages we have just mentioned are interesting for an additional reason. While Titus was given a clear charge by Paul to appoint elders, Timothy was not. And yet instruction is given to Timothy on how to identify elders. Like Timothy, we have been given the instructions on how to recognize an elder without the need of an apostolic charge. We must stand on Scripture alone. When the Spirit makes a man into an elder, we will be able to identify him based on the description given in Scripture.

If there are no elders in the local church, who will lead it? Some will give the obvious answer, “The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church.” Of course, we recognize that the Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church. But if the Head of the Church saw the need of having under-shepherds appointed in each local church two thousand years ago, why would He not use them today?

Hebrews 13:17 states, “*Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account.*” Based on a false understanding of church government, a man might identify himself as a leader, take

charge of a local church, and expect implicit obedience. This is what happens with the common clergy system, where one man is given rule over a church. A plurality of recognized godly leadership will preserve us from such an unscriptural method. “*In the multitude of counselors there is safety*” (Prov. 11:14).

If we are to recognize elders, they must possess the qualities given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. If we do not recognize elders, we will still have leaders of some sort, and yet these could be men who fall short of the biblical standard.

What will we be missing if we do not recognize the elders the Lord has provided? We will not give a clear mandate to those who are given charge to shepherd us (1 Pet. 5:1-2) and protect us from the savage wolves (Acts 20:28-29). We also will be left in a very uncertain position when assembly discipline needs to be exercised. And the public ministry of the Word can become haphazard and sparse without a group of men who are responsible for this.

We place ourselves on slippery ground if we reject some of the teaching in 1 Timothy and Titus because they were apostolic delegates. Once we start rejecting some parts of 1 Timothy and Titus for this reason, we run the risk that other portions may be rejected.

Many who do not officially recognize elders in fact do appoint men to a position of “*elder*” in everything but name. Whether we call these men “responsible brothers” or “pastors,” they still occupy the place and function of an elder, and in

many cases expect the obedience that must be shown to a true elder. The only real difference between these men and true elders is that these men may feel excused from having the character traits that a real elder must have.


If we believe that elders should be recognized, how is it done? Consider the pattern in Acts 14:21-23.

And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

If some suggest that the biblical pattern is that only apostles or their delegates appointed elders, we can just as easily suggest that it is the biblical pattern that having planted new churches, it is the pioneering evangelists that later return to recognize elders. I have heard of

pioneering evangelists doing just this, and I take no exception to it because I find this in Scripture.

But what about an existing congregation that has become convinced about New Testament Church truth, and wishes to have elders? What about a small group of Christians who wish to establish a new church without the efforts of a pioneering evangelist? How might they recognize elders? We can recognize who should be an elder by the same standard Timothy and Titus used. If a man has the qualities of character described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and if he is willing to serve in the role of shepherd, then I believe he already is an elder, and we need only recognize publicly what the Holy Spirit has already done within that man.

I maintain a deep love for many who do not believe that elders should not be appointed or recognized today. And yet I believe Scripture teaches that we should have elders, and we rob ourselves of great blessing if we do not recognize them. It is the Spirit who makes men overseers, but it is our privilege to submit to them. 



Appreciate your elders!



Elders are recognized by the believers because they possess the requisite qualifications and do the work. Seven exhortations are found:

KNOW THEM (1 Thess. 5:12): These words mean to know by observation. The Greek verb is never used of formal recognition. Knowledge leading to a more open acknowledgment is signified by another word (see 1 Cor. 16:18). Elders will obtain such recognition if they serve the saints well. Christ's sheep will instinctively follow without appeal or coercion one they have learned to trust.

ESTEEM THEM (1 Thess. 5:13): Saints are to value highly these brethren on account of their work rather than from mere personal liking.

HONOR THEM (1 Tim. 5:17): In addition to paying due respect, material support should be afforded when necessary, as in the case of some who devote their full time to the work (1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Cor. 9:7). Paul's own example given at Acts 20:34-35, however, should not be disregarded.

TRUST THEM (1 Tim. 5:19): No accusation is to be accepted against an elder except on the testimony of two or three witnesses, a principle based on the Mosaic code (Deut. 19:5). Elders are exposed to misrepresentation by very reason of their work, in advising the assembly in matters of discipline, for instance. If there is ground for remonstrance, deference as to a father is to be shown; yet if sin is proved there must be public reproof (v. 20). Fellow-elders are not to condone or cloak failure in one of their number.

OBEY THEM (Heb. 13:17): This refers to express injunctions. "Be submissive" refers to known but unexpressed wishes (1 Pet. 5:5, RV; 1 Cor. 16:15-16). Loyalty to leaders is enjoined because of their responsibility before the Lord.

REMEMBER THEM (Heb. 13:7): This passage is urged in regard to leaders who had passed on, particularly perhaps to those who have suffered martyrdom. Saints are to consider the issue of their life, that is its triumphant finish, and to imitate their faithful example. The next verse reminds us that leaders may pass away but Christ ever remains as the one great Object of faith and service. Undershepherds fall asleep but the Great Shepherd remains to raise up others, Himself exercising chief supervision of the Rock (Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25).

SALUTE THEM (Heb. 13:24): Greet them with kindly wishes that they may be encouraged in their work. They meet plenty of criticism! If the believers do not always agree with their decisions resentment should not be harbored. Pray for them (Heb. 13:18; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1).

COMPENSATION (1 Pet. 5:4): What a wonderful promise to be fulfilled in the day of accounting (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1). This will surely be ample reward for the arduous and often thankless task of a true overseer!

—from *New Testament Church Principles* by Arthur G. Clarke

Eldership and spiritual vision

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18).

The Lord has placed stringent demands on those that are called to be elders. He has called them to a spiritual work and rigorous labor for the Lord. Paul charges the Thessalonian assembly that the elders were to be recognized on the basis of their “labor” in the assembly. The word translated “labor” in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 is the Greek word *kopiaio*. This is a strong word, which means to toil to the point of weariness and exhaustion. Regarding this word, G. Campbell Morgan writes, “Paul has in mind the kind of toil that has in it the red blood of sacrifice, that kind of toil that wears and weakens by the way.”¹

Eldership is not merely an important title, but rather an indispensable work. The work of the Lord in the church of God must not be neglected. Sadly, this is not the case in many New Testament churches. The shepherding of the flock is left unattended, the ministry of the Word is mishandled, and outreach to the lost is frequently forgotten. Yet, when the Word of God speaks of the work of an elder, it describes men who “watch for your souls” (Heb. 13:17), “rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God” (Heb. 13:7), “labor in the word and doctrine” (1 Tim. 5:17), and “desire a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1).

Indeed, many are carrying on this strenuous work; yet how desperately our assemblies need more committed men to labor sacrificially among the Lord’s people. Biblical eldership necessitates weariness, loneliness, criticism, sleepless nights and tears. An assembly cannot flourish without the arduous work and commitment of the elders. If the elders fail, people may resort to unbiblical methods, bringing spiritual harm to many. However, in all areas of the work of oversight in the local assembly, there is one indispensable aspect which must not be neglected, and that is spiritual vision.

Spiritual vision might be defined as that which God puts in our hearts to do when the spiritual need is great and our hearts are filled with the concerns of God. A few years ago an elder gave verbal expression to spiritual vision when he prayed, “Lord, break my heart with the concerns that break the heart of God.”

A leader with vision does not see with mere human eyes, but with transformed vision. As he passes by a hotel that is for sale, he sees the potential for a missionary training center; when he sees a storefront for rent, he envisions a future Christian bookstore; when he sees new neighborhoods, he sees thriving home Bible studies; when he see new growth in a town, he longs to see a new assembly established in that area. This was the burden of church leaders in the New Testament. The apostle Paul wrote, “Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand” (Rom. 15:20-21).

After the stoning of Stephen, a few disciples of Cyprus and Cyrene entered the city of Antioch in Syria to make Christ known through the gospel. At that time, Antioch, situated on the Orontes River, was a cosmopolitan city of 500,000 people, the third largest city of the ancient world. Antioch was renowned for its immorality and idolatry. Juvenal, the

Roman writer, rebuked the morals of Antioch by saying: “The sewage of the Orontes has for long been discharged into the Tiber.”² His point, which would not be missed on his readers, was that the immorality of Antioch was so great that it was even polluting the depraved morals of Rome, more than 1,300 miles away!

Yet these few disciples would not be deterred from preaching the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:20-21). These men were men of God with vision. These disciples, who were armed with the gospel of God and equipped with the commandment to go into all the world, served Christ valiantly.

However, not only did these few disciples have vision to see cities won for Christ, but the persecuted assembly at Jerusalem also shared this vision. “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch” (Acts 11:22). The assembly at Jerusalem sent one of their best men to help establish the new work in



Antioch. Barnabas labored there as a teacher, exhorting the believers that “*with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord*” (Acts 11:23). As the work in Antioch grew, there was need for another worker. Barnabas went to Tarsus to encourage Paul to help in the work at Antioch. He sought out a man of God—this man of vision sought a man who likewise possessed a vision for establishing New Testament churches throughout Asia Minor, Syria, and Galatia. “*When he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch...a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*” (Acts 11:26).

Those who have most powerfully impacted the world for Christ were men of vision. Spiritual vision and commitment are strands of a cord used to raise high the banner of the cross. These men of God laboring at Antioch were men of vision, of tireless zeal and unflagging commitment. Their charge was the Word of God and their commission was that it must go forth at all costs. The work of God and the assembly of God must not suffer loss. Personal loss, financial expense, physical persecution, stonings, and the whipping post were all part of the high cost of spiritual vision. New Testament leadership always exacts a toll on men and women of God. Amy Carmichael, who labored and sacrificed greatly to reach the lost masses of India wrote,

*No wound, no scar.
Yes, as the master shall the servant be,
And pierced are the feet that follow Me;
But thine are whole.
Can he have followed far—
Who has no wound? No scar?*

Harry Ironside was once told by a man, “I would give my all to have the knowledge and ability to preach the Scriptures as you do.” Ironside replied, “That is exactly what it has cost me.”

The Lord knew much of self-sacrifice in service. When speaking of the humble character of his labors for the Father, He said, “*Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Mk. 10:44-45). John writes, “*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1 Jn. 3:16).

Men of vision are also those who see with the eyes of faith fixed on the power and glory of God. These men have usually seen more clearly the importance of the work of God and have seen farther concerning the

glory of God than most others. This was true of many of God’s choicest servants in the Bible. The Scriptures tell us regarding Moses that he “*endured as seeing Him who was invisible*” (Heb. 11:27). Moses was able to see what the crowds could not see. He saw more fully, more deeply, more powerfully than many around him the ways and desires of God.

Spiritual vision encompasses not only insight, but also godly foresight. Vision is the spiritual ability to anticipate what lies ahead. These godly leaders can envision the results of inappropriate methods or the rash decisions of others. They see the dire consequences and the withering effects of unwise personal choices, petty theological squabbles, and ill-advised assembly decisions, and seek to avoid them. A leader of spiritual vision sees difficulties ahead, but also possibilities and opportunities that lie in the future. Faith, boldness, and wisdom are all ready weapons in his arsenal.

The bold vision of godly elders and spiritual leaders within the local assembly is the great need of today. The church needs men of God who possess wisdom, insight, foresight, and a heart for the glory of God; men who work hard and esteem the work of Christ in the local church worth the cost; men who step out in faith, seeing God first, and also that which God desires to accomplish through the church. May there be more like the “*And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do...*” (1 Chron. 12:32).

Harry Ironside sets forth the necessity of vision,

By vision is meant spiritual enlightenment and insight into divine things...when this ministry is lacking among the people of God and the assemblies of His saints, they soon become lawless, substituting for the Spirit’s energy the mere busy meddling of nature, and the opening the door to what is simply of man in the flesh...but the anointed eye is needed to discern what has been therein revealed...lack of vision will be manifested in a cold, dry, theological or philosophical treatment of Scripture, as though given to exercise the intellect, rather than the heart and conscience.³

David Dunlap

David Dunlap

ENDNOTES

- 1 G. Campbell Morgan, *The Corinthian Letters*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1946), p. 207
- 2 F. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 141
- 3 H. A. Ironside, *Proverbs*, (New York, NY: Loizeaux Brothers, 1977) pp. 425-426

John William Bramhall

April 23, 1899–February 8, 2001



To “remember them which... have spoken unto you the word of God” Hebrews 13:7 tells us, is essential to our spiritual progress. To remember someone that has been a “father in the faith,” mentor, counselor, and close friend, like brother Bramhall, is a joy for which I thank my God upon every remembrance.

Philippians 1:21 expresses in one sentence the life of this man of God. “To live is Christ...to die is gain.”

TO LIVE

Brother Bramhall lived in three centuries and two millennia. Very few will experience this. And he *lived* life. By this I mean, he enjoyed life. He had a wonderful sense of humor and joy that was contagious.

Born in Sheffield, England, on April 23, 1899, he moved to Rochester, New York with his parents in 1911. He was saved at the age of 14 and began preaching at 16. He ministered itinerantly throughout North America and the West Indies and had a radio ministry in the southern part of the U. S. He preached until he was 101 years old.

He authored many booklets and several books. *Living His Life*, a wonderful book on the fundamentals of the Christian life, has also been translated into Spanish and other languages. *I Am My Beloved's* and *My Beloved Is Mine* are compilations of monthly ministry letters that many of us enjoyed over the years. He also contributed to *Counsel*, *Uplook*, and the *Choice Gleanings*.

On our last visit together, his repeated testimony was, “Not by works of righteousness...but accord-

ing to His mercy He saved us!” He really enjoyed *living His life!*

IS CHRIST

Some people preach a sermon; others live a sermon. Brother Bramhall did both! He was occupied with Christ and practiced the presence of God along life's way. His conversation, like his ministry, was always Christ-centered. He would exhort brethren to fill their messages with more of Him.

To young children and seasoned saints alike, spending time with brother Bramhall made us think of Christ. The children knew he carried candy in his pocket for them and some were bold enough to reach right in with no fear of retribution. We, who were older, knew there was a blessing for us, too, through our visits with him.

He often quoted “It Shows In Your Face.” The last stanza says:

*If your life is unselfish, if for others you live,
For not what you get, but how much you
give;*

*If you live close to God in His infinite grace,
You don't have to tell it, it shows in your face.*

TO DIE

He was ready and longing to be with Christ! On one occasion, he was asked which way he would rather go to be with the Lord, by death or by rapture. Many were surprised to hear him say he would be glad to go by way of death. He went on to explain that only then could he experience the Lord's comfort in death and he would not miss the rapture. “You see,” he responded, “the dead in Christ shall rise first!”

IS GAIN

In his message on Psalm 84, brother Bramhall explained the phrase, “the Lord will give grace and glory” saying, “There is *grace* for each step of the journey, and at the end there is *glory*.” The apostle Paul expressed it this way, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith...there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:7-8). We rejoice for our beloved brother who has experienced *grace* for every step of his journey and is now with the Lord he loved in *glory*.

Brother Bramhall's ministry was extensive. Everywhere I've traveled I've met people that remember him and his Christ-filled ministry. On one occasion, reminiscing with some who knew of his ministry, a sister recalled the first time she heard him in a conference at Greenwood Hills, PA. She couldn't remember his name but described him as “the happy preacher.” Her friends responded, “Oh, you mean brother Bramhall!” “Happy is the man who trusts in You!” That's brother Bramhall!

May these remembrances bring glory to the Lord Jesus and challenge us to go on to know the Lord better and serve Him with all our heart. The exhortation in Hebrews 13:7 concludes with the application that we'd do well to heed, “whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”



The headship of Christ

One key aspect of elder rule is “holding the Head.”

Every true believer in the Lord Jesus has a deep appreciation for the Saviour’s death, burial, and resurrection. We value, too, His promised return; but what is our understanding of His present position and ministry in glory?

Seven pictures are given to us in the New Testament to describe Christ’s labors of love for His own between the time of His ascension and ours:

1. He is *the Good Shepherd*, tending the sheep of His pasture (Jn. 10);

2. He is *the Captain of our Salvation*, leading us to victory, whether in life or in death (Rom. 8:37; Heb. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:57);

3. He is *the True Vine*, sustaining the branches and bearing fruit through them (Jn. 15);

4. He is *the Chief Cornerstone*, bringing security and an absolute standard of measurement to the building (1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:4-8);

5. He is *our Great High Priest*, interceding for His people and teaching us the holy art of worship (Heb. 10:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5-9);

6. He is *the heavenly Bridegroom*, preparing a place for us in the Father’s House while He prepares us for the place (Jn. 14:1-3; Eph. 5:25-27);

7. He is *the Head of the Body*, the Church, nurturing and directing His saints for their mutual benefit and for the glory of God (Col. 1:18).

It is, perhaps, in this last figure that the vital intimacy of the relationship between Christ and the Church is most expressively presented. It is, as well, a critical attack area for the enemy.

The Headship of Christ is true for the whole Body, the Church universal. Paul writes in Ephesians 1:22-23: *“(God) hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”*

The practical acknowledging of this Headship, however, is expressed in the local assembly of believers. In both the Corinthian and the Colossian epistles, Paul warns of the danger of losing touch with their risen Head. In commenting on the First Corinthian epistle, J. R. Caldwell says,

...I wish you to observe how very often the word ‘Lord’ occurs in this epistle. It is found about sixty-eight times...i.e., more than double the number of times it occurs in the Epistle to the Romans or any other epistle applied to Christ. There is a divine purpose in this...Paul, writing by the Spirit, thus insists upon the Lordship of Christ; for all the evil that then existed, and all the sectarianism that subsequently developed, sprang from the self-same root...the setting aside of the authority of the Lord Jesus, and allowing man (in his supposed wisdom, his pride and self-will) to usurp His place. He is the Head whom God has appointed to preside over the “household of faith.”¹

Earlier, in commenting on 1

**“He is the head
of the body,
the Church”**



Colossians 1:18

Corinthians 1:5, *“That in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge”* Mr. Caldwell writes:

Mark it! *“Enriched by Him.”* Not enriched by this world’s endowments, or by the learning of the schools. All the wisdom of Athens and Corinth could not enrich the Church. They were enriched by the Man at God’s right hand...enriched as members of the body from the Head. Paul had labored among them and instructed them, but he does not say they were enriched by him...it was all from Christ the Head. Whatever we have of grace, knowledge, or utterance in the things of God, it has been got from Christ! We are very prone to look too much to man, and to promote him out of his true place. The most talented, gifted, or spiritual one who ministers in our midst is nothing more than the channel through which blessing flows to us from Christ.²

In writing to the Colossian believers, Paul warns: *“Let no man beguile you of your reward...vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands have nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God”* (Col. 2:18-19). The spiritual diagnoses at both Colosse and Corinth remind one of the St. Vitus’ Dance (Chorea), a disease whose symptoms include the erratic jerking of the limbs due to a lack of control from the brain. Both the divisions at Corinth and the doctrinal problems at Colosse flowed from the same source—a failure to *“hold the Head.”*

The most extreme illustration of this is Laodicea. Outside the Master stands, not as the rejected Saviour, but as the Lord ignored. The Laodiceans no longer come to Him for their need to be met, for they imagine themselves to be spiritually prosperous. They are not listening for His voice, though He calls to any who will hear. The body twitches with spasmodic activity, but the Head is outside the door. The biblical solution is given: *“I counsel thee to buy of Me...” “Be zealous, therefore, and repent.” “If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in...”* (Rev. 3:18-20). We must recognize our need and His provision; we must turn from our self-satisfaction to Him; we must, by invitation, welcome Him back to His rightful place as Lord.

In Revelation 1, John sees the Lord standing in the middle of seven golden lampstands. Each lamp rests on its own base. Unlike the menorah which was Israelitish in character, each lamp of testimony is independent of the others, responsible only to the One in the midst. To each He speaks; from each He requires a response. The misunderstanding of this principle leads gatherings of God’s people into another serious problem concerning the Headship of Christ. By acknowledging a confederacy, or circle of fellowship, for whatever reason, through internal or external pressure, we are rendering to men what rightfully belongs to the Lord.

Let it be noted that when we speak of autonomous (self-governed) local churches it does not mean independent of the Head, but independent of outside interference, or confederacy.

A paper penned by F. F. Bruce, and read at a conference held in September of 1954 at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, England, includes the following:

Each city church in New Testament times appears to have been administratively independent of any other city church, equally independent of any grouping of churches. To be sure, they were encouraged to practice the fullest fellowship with each other, and all were bound to submit to the authority of the Lord and His apostles. Some ele-

ments in the Jerusalem church would, no doubt, have liked to assert their authority over the Gentile churches of Antioch and elsewhere, but no apostolic countenance was given to any such metropolitan jurisdiction and nothing of the sort is implied in the account of the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15... This combination of the utmost Christian fellowship and mutual help with the administrative independence of the several local churches is not always easy to maintain, but it is a barrier against sectarianism (which is inevitably involved whenever a formal or even informal circle of local churches is recognized) and also against State control, which can be much more effectively exercised over a centrally organized federation of churches than over a multiplicity of independent congregations. (We need hardly say, of course, that the idea that the State, as such, has any voice in the affairs of the church is completely foreign to the New Testament.)³

The danger is two-fold. There is the real possibility that an attempt, well-intentioned or not, will be made from within (as has happened so many times in history) to centralize and consolidate such autonomous gatherings of believers in order to “increase effectiveness” for some other specious reason. The gnarled roots of such unscriptural church government are deeply implanted in Church history, and not always through the selfish power struggles of men such as Diotrephes. A Syrian from Antioch, Ignatius (an “Apostolic Father”) was apprehended by the Roman authorities in c.110 AD. On his way to Rome and ultimately to martyrdom, he wrote letters to various churches. Unity, he told them, was to be accomplished on the one hand by rooting out heresies relative to the person of Christ, and on the other hand by the subjection of the leaders in local congregations to a ruling bishop. As this trend continued, it was not long until the most influential bishop, in any locale, had gained authority over that region; and this, in turn, led ultimately to the rise of the papacy.

It is a difficult thing to have no official name as far as the world is concerned because it does not recognize the Name in which we meet. (This Name is not the particular right of any group of Christians but is the authority by which any gathering of believers may meet.) It is not easy to explain oneself in a day of tags and labels, taken by people of God, which declare to the world the shame of a fractious Christendom. It is not easy, but it is right to hold the Head and to stand for the truth of the *“one body”* (Eph. 4:4).

Another danger is from without. The State may find it helpful, whether for administration purposes or for oppression, to call on gatherings of believers to be officially registered. One of the older books in my library

(dated 1702) is entitled: “The Case of the Regale concerning the Independency of the Church, upon any Power on Earth, In the Exercise of Her Purely Spiritual Power and Authority.” We ought to be grateful for the endeavors of such men as the book’s author to deliver us from the bondage of the State over the Church. Yet, sadly it is true that those who fought so valiantly to be free from the yoke of governmental oppression made for themselves chains of ecclesiastical control.

Whether one finds it is either expedient or comfortable to make such attempts at centralized human government whether officially or casually, or submits to such endeavors, it cannot be fairly argued that this is the New Testament pattern.

In his book, *The Church and the Churches*, W. E. Vine confirms this:

The Apostles did not establish an earthly system, an organization of churches centralized in ecclesiastical headquarters. Such a policy is significantly absent both from their methods and from their doctrine...One will search in vain in the Acts and the Epistles for even an intimation of the establishment of such an institution...There is no such thing as external unity by way of federation, affiliation or amalgamation, either of churches in any given locality or of all the churches together.⁴

Circles of fellowship, central planning committees, mission boards, official lists and the like, may have rational bases and find acceptance with many. They may give one a feeling of significance in an increasingly impersonal world; but for those who endeavor to follow the blueprint of Scripture, holding the Head will be sufficient.

What are some practical applications of the Headship of Christ in the local assembly?

1. Care should be taken by the assembly in general and the elders in particular to acknowledge practically in their personal lives the Lordship of Christ every day. The Headship of Christ is largely a corporate expression of the Lordship of Christ in our individual lives.

2. The elders are not primarily a decision-making body; they are to be a discerning body. They are not called upon to “make up their minds” but to discover the mind of God in all matters. No mention is made of organizational skills, or of business acumen in the qualifications of an elder. Such skills do not disqualify a man from oversight in the local church, but he must have more than mere natural ability. He must be able to compare “*spiritual things with spiritual*” (1 Cor. 2:13).

3. There should be a conscious effort “...to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:31).

May God bless the repairers of rifts in the local fellowship. “*Is Christ divided?*” Any schism in the body causes grief to the risen Head. The apostle Paul first learned this lesson on the Damascus turnpike, by the statement: “*Why persecutest thou Me?*” (Acts 9:4). Paul never forgot it. Neither should we.

4. The development and exercise of gift in the local gathering should be of paramount concern to all. It has pleased the Head to minister to the body through the body. His purpose was that we may, “*grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love*” (Eph. 4:15-16). J. R. Caldwell comments on this verse:

Satan has his eye upon this truth. He knows that the body can only be effectually edified as it receives through the ministry of every member, and the effective working of every part that which is supplied for its nourishment from the Head.⁵

Mr. Caldwell goes on to speak of the almost universally adopted method in Christendom of entrusting to one, or at the most a few, the whole burden of ministry. “Thus,” writes Mr. Caldwell, “the body is starved. Satan will not object to the Church being rich and increased with goods or with human learning and influence if only he can deprive the members of the body of their appropriate nourishment.”

This, of course, does not assume that every member is gifted in every way. There is diversity of gift, but there must be development of every gift in the assembly if the entire body of believers is to be built up.

Just as there is but one body, so there is only one Head. His right to our unswerving allegiance is undisputed. Let us then “hold the Head” in loyal devotion, remembering that it is the Head who holds us. 🕒

Endnotes:

1. Caldwell, J. R. *The Charter of the Church*, vol. 2 (Pickering & Inglis) p. 132
2. Caldwell, J. R. *The Charter of the Church*, vol. 1 (Pickering & Inglis) pp. 20-21
3. Ruoff, P. O., editor *The New Testament Church in the Present Day* (published privately) pp. 29-30
4. Vine, W. E. *The Church and the Churches* (John Ritchie) pp.10-11
5. Caldwell, J. R. *The Charter of the Church*, vol. 1 (Pickering & Inglis) p. 22

Three books for serious elders

Stimulate your thinking about local church life.

The *Role of Women in the Local Church* by David Gilliland is a cautious little book. Brother Gilliland has two objectives: to refute current feminist influences, and to be a wise encourager to Christian women in their God-given roles. Reading it, no one can say that among conservative Christians the extent of legitimate ministry for women is limited to preparing the tea, so that the big men can sit and discuss the real issues of the day.

Gilliland gives a few brief examples; he is not exhaustive. We could stand more of this sort of teaching. We would welcome hearing a bit more about the speaking of Anna in the temple to all those who looked

for redemption in Israel, or the query of the Samaritan woman to the men of the city, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is this not the Christ?" or the teaching of Priscilla and Aquilla to Apollos. How do these passages size up with 1 Timothy 2:11-12? Evidently Anna, the Samaritan woman and Priscilla were not usurping authority. Rather they appear to be speaking as oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

To charge the New Testament as biased against women is false. The gospel has been the greatest women's liberation movement the world has ever seen. Remove the gospel and mankind is led in a downward spiral ending in perversion and loss of dignity.

The Role of Women in the Local Church by David Gilliland (John Richie, 32 pp.).

Loizeaux has issued *Understanding the Church*, compiled and edited by Joseph M. Vogl and John H. Fish III, a symposium of messages delivered in St. Louis, MO in 1997. David MacLeod has a vital opening chapter on the Primacy of Scripture and the Church.

I found most helpful Jack Spender's chapter on The Autonomy of Local Churches and Alexander Strauch's balancing final chapter on The Interdependence of Local Churches. Spender and Strauch's articles could be issued as a booklet. A better understanding of Scripture on this issue of relationships between nearby assemblies could help cool off many a hot potato.

One unfortunate remark in this book is Charles T. Grant's statement on page 70. In his message Grant takes several pages to discuss the identity of the rock on which the Church is built (Mt. 16:18). As he sums up the varying views, he says, "Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic view is surely correct in identifying Peter as the rock in verse 18 upon which the church is built." Is that surely correct? I wish that was a typo, not what Mr. Grant really said.

We know one Greek student who arrived at a different conclusion. His name was Peter, and he tells us how he understood Jesus' words when he wrote his first epistle (1 Pet. 2:4-8).

Understanding the Church: The Biblical Ideal for the 21st Century, compiled and edited by Joseph M. Vogl and John H. Fish III (Loizeaux, 235 pp.).

Church Symbols for Today is a thoughtful book. It is readable, and thorough. Brother Gourlay refers to the obvious NT symbols and then focuses in a sustained way on baptism, the headcovering, and the bread and wine. *Church Symbols* will not displace A. P. Gibbs' classic books on *Christian Baptism* and *The Lord's Supper*, but it deserves to be read.

Elders who have often hashed over practical issues related to these ordinances will enjoy Gourlay's conversational writing style. The author states his opinions but is not dogmatic on matters that are not so plainly stated in Scripture. You will enjoy his honesty. He does not write a book to bolster the party line. It was refreshing to me to see the dust blown off some old notions.

Gourlay does not always state his proof texts (perhaps in the next edition). He writes for the Christian familiar with the pertinent passages.

The book is not parochial. It is the kind of book you can recommend. Joseph Hewitt of the *Evangelical Times* says about *Church Symbols for Today*, "I warmly welcome this book. I applaud the author's aims and thank God for his 'fresh' approach, which is not sectarian but scriptural. I urge all churches to buy a copy to pass around the members. In that way perhaps the matter of headcovering and headship will cease to be the 'Cinderella' subject of the New Testament."

Church Symbols for Today, by Norman J. Gourlay, MD, (Walterick, 313 pp.).



The care of the churches

We need men raised up and equipped by God at the helm.

The New Testament gives a constant and uniform testimony of the mind of God concerning the provision and work of those to whom is committed the care of local churches. The various passages relating to this subject are not merely the records of facts; what is written is the divine will for all churches, not only in apostolic times but throughout the present era. As in other matters, the Word of God not only is sufficient for all, it is binding upon all, and those who desire to be conformed to His will and to act in loyalty to Christ will adhere to the teaching in subjection to Him.

The instruction given does not admit to human additions. The devices of men, however plausible, fail to accomplish the designs of the Lord, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. The teaching, unvarying as it is throughout the canon of the New Testament and the apostolic ministry which it records, should have been heeded and followed throughout subsequent centuries, instead of being modified to suit human opinions and convenience.

If we hope to receive the approval of the Head of the Church hereafter, let us submit to the claims of the Word of God, and follow it at all costs, in devotedness to Him whom we recognize as Lord.

BISHOPS IN EVERY CHURCH

It requires no laborious scrutiny to observe from Acts 10 that elders are bishops (or overseers), that there are more than one exercising the care of a single church, and that they



receive their function from the Holy Spirit. From Miletus the apostle Paul "sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church" (v. 17), obviously the elders of the church in that city (Rev. 1:2). In his address he says, "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops" (v. 28, RV). The word "overseer" is a literal translation of *episkopos*, from whence also the word "bishop" is derived. Not only, then, are the elders bishops, but they are figuratively regarded as shepherds, for the local church is spoken of as a flock, and their duty is to "tend it." The word in the original denotes not simply "to feed," but to do all that devolves upon a shepherd. They are therefore to exercise pastoral care, acting together as pastors over the local company.

The case of the church at Ephesus is illustrative and not exceptional. In the churches previously formed in Lycaonia "elders in every church" had been "appointed" (14:23, RV).

The word *cheirotoneo*, rendered "appointed" (A.V. "ordained"), is the same used in 2 Corinthians 8:19 (the only other place where it is found in the New Testament). At Corinth, men were to be "chosen" to take a monetary gift to Judea.

Here in Acts 14:23, a formal ecclesiastical ordination is not in view. The apostles chose men who were already evidently fitted for the work. The churches did not choose their leaders. The context makes that clear. Sheep do not choose their shepherds.

Again, the Epistle to the Philippians is addressed to the saints there "with the bishops and deacons"—bishops acting in one church. Later, in the island of Crete, Titus is enjoined to "set in order things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5)—never a single elder or bishop over one church, much less over a number.

This passage, again, shows that an elder is a bishop; for, in describing the character requisite for an elder, the Apostle immediately says, "for the bishop must be blameless" (v. 7). The definite article here obviously does not point to a particular individual, but represents a type (1 Cor. 12:12). The passage clearly provides no ground for the functioning of a single bishop. The postscript printed in the Authorized Version at the end of the Epistle, to the effect that it was "written to Titus, ordained the first bishop of the church of the Cretians," is false in two respects, to say nothing of the wrong implication that he was to be resident there.

First, Titus was not a bishop, and, second, there was not “a church of the Cretians”; there were churches in Crete.

That a number of elders were exercising pastoral care of the church at Thessalonica is clear from the exhortation to that church, “*But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work’s sake*” (1 Thess. 5:12-13). This passage is very instructive. That the recognition of the elders is urged shows that the well-being of the church could not be maintained without them.

On the other hand, it is clear that their authority was based, not on human appointment, whether of an individual or by the election of the church, but upon the relation of all to the Lord. When the qualifications of overseers had been put on record, to guide the saints in the recognition of those who had been put over them in the Lord, apostolic appointment became unnecessary. That the elders “*are over*” them (lit. “*stand before,*” and so lead and care for “*in the Lord*”) limits the scope of their authority to matters spiritual. See also Hebrews 13:7, 17.

TENDING THE KLEROS

Elders are to “*tend the flock of God...exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God, nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock*” (1 Pet. 5:2-3). The three characteristics of church leaders are again intimated here, namely, that the same persons are elders (men of experience), bishops (exercising the oversight), and shepherds (with a pastoral care of the flock). It is highly significant, too, that the word *kleros*, from whence the word “clergy” is chiefly derived, and which is here rendered “charge allotted,” stands not for the church leaders but for members who are cared for by them! How glaringly Christendom, owing to the force of unscriptural influences and the bias of human opinion and tradition, has reversed the situation! The mediæval and modern ecclesiastical systems of clerisy in its various forms, so far from being founded upon the Word of God, are contraventions of it.

THE RISE OF CLERISY

The course of departure from apostolic teaching and precept is easily traceable. Human pride and rivalry, a

struggle for ascendancy and power, early produced a class of ecclesiastical officials, who obtained their position in a manner very different from what is set forth in Scripture. The case of Diotrephes (3 John 9) provides an illustration.

The method was adopted, too, of electing church officials by vote. Hence the popular or the strong man obtained the coveted position. Dependence on the Spirit of God and the recognition of the evidences of His operation gave place to officialism and formality. The evil spread gradually but surely, and eventually became general.

False teachers represented that the Christian faith was simply a development of Judaism. Hence church leaders came to be regarded as priests in contradistinction to the laity, a flagrant contradiction of apostolic doctrine, which declares that all believers are priests they are “*a holy priesthood*” (1 Pet. 2:5), “*a royal priesthood*” (v. 9); Christ has made us “*priests unto God and His Father*” (Rev. 1:6).

We can hardly be surprised that church ecclesiastics were to the fore in furthering carnal ambition and in supporting and promulgating clericalism. Writing to the church at Ephesus in 109 A. D. Ignatius says, “We ought to look upon the bishop even as we do upon the Lord Himself.” In his epistle to the church at Tralles (also in Asia), he says, “Ye are subject to your bishop as to Jesus Christ.” In his epistle to the Magnesians, he says, “I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a Divine concord your bishops presiding in the place of God; your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles.” Again, to the church in Philadelphia, “Give diligence to be established in the doctrine of our Lord and the apostles, together with your most worthy bishop, and the well-woven spiritual crown of your presbytery.”

The marked departure from the principles of the New Testament and apostolic precept and practice has received candid admission by many. Dean Alford’s comment on the perversion of Acts 20:17-28 by Irenæus (who states that Paul called together the “bishop; and elders (!) who were from Ephesus and from the rest of

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the adjoining states (!)" is as follows: "So early did interested and disingenuous interpretation begin to cloud the light which Scripture might have thrown on ecclesiastical questions." He points out, too, that verse 28 shows that elders and bishops were apostolically synonymous, and remarks that the AV "overseers" instead of "bishops" conceals the identification.


Again, in Philippians 1:1, he says, "The simple juxtaposition of the officers with the members of the church, and their being placed after those members, shows the absence of hierarchical views such as those in the epistles of the apostolic Fathers."

Jerome, who died in AD 420, commenting on the Epistle to Titus, and with reference to the times of the Apostles, says, "Elders were the same as bishops, but by degrees, that the plants of dissension might be rooted up, all responsibility was transferred to one person."

THE CORRECTIVE POWER

The remedy for evils is not to be found in human devices. To substitute clericalism for the principles and instruction of the Word of God was a gross departure from the faith. Nor did the humanly devised system remove the evil of dissension. It existed, and still exists, even in the greatest religious systems, notwithstanding an outward semblance of unification.

The religious systems of Christendom are hastening to their appointed destruction. The anti-clerical forces are already fulfilling Scripture. If we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, let us follow its teachings. Let us beware of professing one thing and following another. Let us obey God rather than men.

Faithfulness to His truth may mean suffering here, but it means peace and joy withal, and an eternal reward hereafter. Let us recognize and honor the prerogatives of the Holy Spirit in the churches, and the principles inculcated by Him in the Holy Scriptures. 

—from *The Church & the Churches*

He Loves Me



He loved me ere one ray of light
Had flashed itself across the boundless sky
When all was solitude and starless night,
He loved me then! And shall it ever die?

Ah, no, that love shall onward, onward roll,
Increasing in its flow, 'til like the sea
It breaks in thrills of rapture on the soul
And spends itself through all eternity.

He loves me. O does not Calvary tell
His love so deep, unmeasured, full and free,
When on that spotless One the lightning fell
Of withering wrath that else had smitten me.

He loves me. O blessed truth that now
He loves me and He says, "All Mine is thine."
And though in heaven, His hands and wounded brow
Are the sweet tokens of His love divine.

He loves me. His hand will hold me fast,
'Tis sweet the pressure of that hand to me;
The storm and tempest—they will soon be past—
And then I shall be satisfied with Thee.

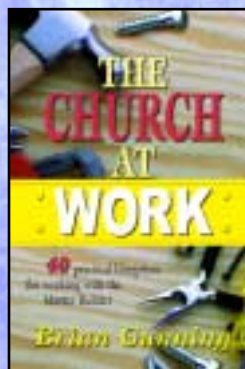
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Brian Gunning

B-CAW



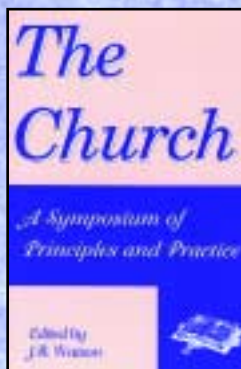
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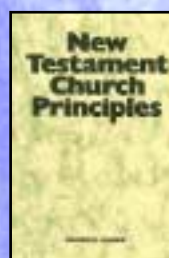


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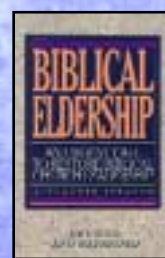


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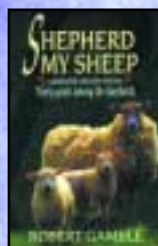


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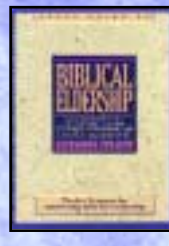


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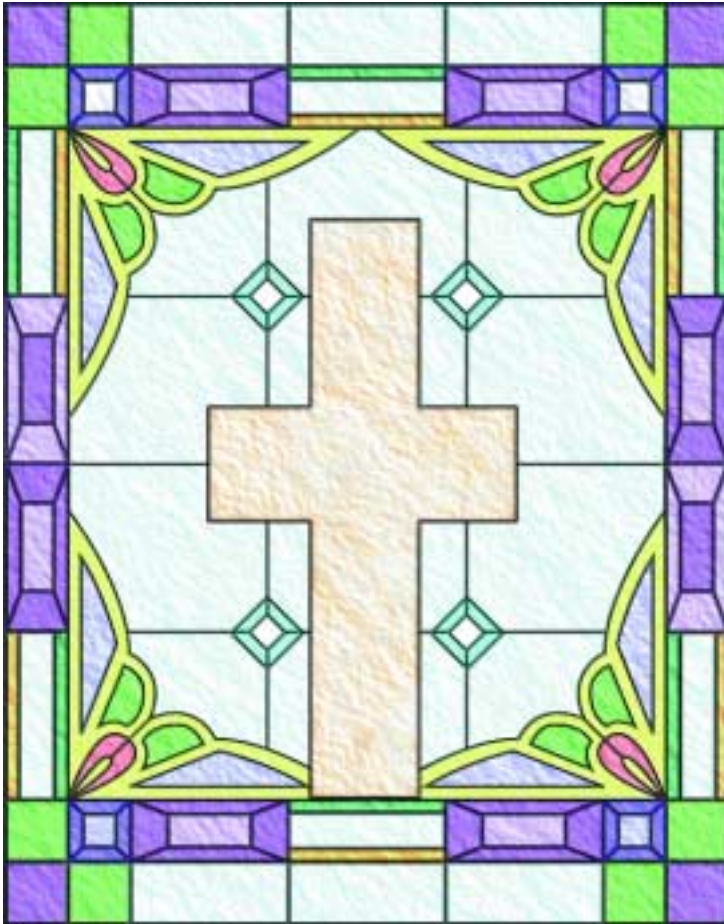


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The Man who died for ME

After all I have said, preached, and written for upwards of forty-five years, I wish it to be distinctly understood that the ground of the hope that is within me (which hope is full of immortality and eternal glory) is not repentance towards God, although it is written, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”* Nor is it faith, although it is written, *“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”* Nor is it in becoming a new creature, although it is written,

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nor is it in holiness, although it is written, *“Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”* They are indeed great and glorious gifts, all purchased by blood divine, for which I adore and praise a triune God. Still none of them atone for my sins. Repentance did not die for me; faith did not die for me; the new creature did not die for me; holiness did not die for me. My confidence is not in the gifts, but in the Giver, the eternal Son of God, who became Man and as my Substitute atoned for my sins. On His finished work alone does my soul rely for pardon, holiness and heaven; and He only is made of God unto me, *“wisdom, righteous, sanctification and redemption.”*

A wealthy and consecrated Christian, the late Henry Reed of England, finding that his home-going was near at hand, called for pen, paper and ink, and calmly wrote the above.