

THE ORGANISATION OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

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PREFACE.

Some church members in the Hebrides refused to accept that the Hebrides had experienced a remarkable revival, because it had missed their churches. The majority of the religious leaders of Christ's time also refused to accept that Jesus had brought a spiritual revival to the nation, because they were not part of it, they went so far as to say that Christ was moved by the Devil. The same blind, tradition-bound obstinacy can affect us today. I ask the readers of this book to study prayerfully, and with open minds, what I have written. I appeal, "Let not tradition, but the Scriptures, be our court of appeal." It is so easy to boast that we are fulfilling the Word of God, and yet at the same time, we can resist the Spirit of God, the religious leaders of Israel who crucified Christ did this very thing. They boasted that they carried out the Word of God to the minutest detail, even to tithing the herbs of the garden, but they omitted the things in God's Word that really mattered, such as justice, mercy and truth, and a heart love for God and people. Mt.9v12,13. 23v23. Jesus was the God and author of the Scriptures, but they committed the unforgivable sin of ascribing His works to Satan, and they hated and murdered Him. Mt.3v22-29. Jn.15v22-26. They had the shell without the kernel, or as Paul said, they had the "morphosin" instead of the "morphe," they had a limited intellectual perception and doctrinal outline of the Divine truth in God's Word, without the inner reality and full experience of that truth, and indeed, they had replaced much of Divine truth with their false traditions. Rom.2v20. 2Tim.3v5. We should be careful lest we imitate them and bring upon ourselves the judgement and condemnation spoken of in Mt.23v1-39. and Lk.11v39-54..

It is very difficult to convince people that their cherished tradition is not of God, it took a vision of the risen Christ to deliver Paul from man-made tradition, and our Lord was crucified for challenging the false traditions of the Jews. I am quite sure that this book is certain to bring criticism and opposition, and that some will misquote my written words upon Church government, even as they have distorted and misquoted my spoken words upon this subject. **For this reason I will state here, that I believe that there is a very definite place in God's work for denominational buildings and ministers, and I also recognise that God is using many ministers in denominational churches. Traditional churches have an immense and priceless treasury of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, which express praise, prayer and worship on the very highest level. This hymnology will feed the soul of a mature Christian even in churches, which have no real spiritual life, and will bring the very breath of Heaven into churches that are spiritually alive.**

I pray that God will burn away the partitions that separate Christians, and that Christians will experience the oneness, love and beautiful fellowship of the early Church, as seen in the first few chapters of Acts. I pray that this study will help in this respect. Since I finished the first edition of this book on July 21st. 1972, there has been a widespread move of the Holy Spirit in the historic churches, and many churches are allowing the Holy Spirit freedom to operate, and are encouraging the development of spiritual gifts and body ministry. This has brought a freshness, warmth and love into churches, which had not known a move of God for several generations. **Fellowship with these Christians has been among the best that I have ever known. The beautiful worship and adoration of the Trinity, the overwhelming sense of the presence of God, and the "agape" love between the Christians in these groups, has been the crowning seal and certification that the work has been of God. Long may this continue.** W. H. Turner. October 3rd. 2000.

Rewritten again, and added to. April 26th. 2005.

INTRODUCTION.

How binding tradition can be!

We all tend to be imprisoned by the traditions of the Christians that we fellowship with without even realising it, and these traditions become part of our personality, thinking and way of life. Young Christians usually accept what they are taught by older Christians without really thinking through the doctrines that they have been taught, and do not seriously examine their beliefs, practices, and traditions in the light of the Scriptures. They say, just as I did, "My Christian leaders are godly men of long experience, they must be right, I'll accept what they say." Then as we grow in knowledge of God and His Word, we begin to realise that some, or even many, of the traditions that we have accepted, have little or no Scriptural basis. Most people, unfortunately, still doggedly, and even wilfully, cling to many traditions and doctrines of men that make void the Word of God. Mt.15v1-9. Mk.7v1-13. N.B. v13. "Many things like this you are constantly doing."

People have found it almost impossible to escape from the mighty prisons and practices of tradition into the fullness and liberty of God's Word. It is all the more difficult if one has become part of an organisation that has preached these traditions for many years; there are few who are willing to humble themselves and admit that they were wrong. It took a vision of Christ to deliver Paul from his sincerely held man-made traditions. A prolonged prayerful study of the organisation of the early Church made me realise that my own practice of Church organisation was not fully in accord with New Testament principles, and so I have changed my practice to conform with them. This has already cost me a great deal, and could be even more costly in the long run. This study will be as real a challenge to the reader as it has been to me, and it will really test their spirituality,

sincerity, honesty and desire to obey and follow God's Word on all things. I am quite aware that many will not be willing to pay the price for conformity to God's plans for His Church, and the accompanying revival.

A study of Church government is vitally necessary and inevitably controversial.

There is a real need for unbiased study and straight talking about church government. My aim in these studies is not to be critical, negative or controversial. I speak strongly because I have seen people who have been bowed down with appalling burdens and sicknesses, fail to find any help, even in so called Pentecostal churches. Pentecostal formalism is just as powerless as any other kind of formalism, and it arises out of the failure to earnestly seek God out for His power to meet people's needs. The ministration of God's power and love to needy mankind is the more excellent way that Paul directed us to follow, and I am making a heart-felt plea for a return to this divine highway.

Some will object to what I have written and say, "God can work through any form, it is not necessary to follow New Testament practices on Church government to have revival. Who ever heard of Church government bringing revival?" Others say, "It does not matter what form of Church government we have, God is God, no forms can hinder Him." There is certainly some truth in this, however, we should ask ourselves what is the best means and structure to produce revival, not how far we can get away from the Divine order, practices and principles before God gives us up. Let us remember that wrong tradition can even limit God. Psalm.78v41.

Following the scriptural pattern of local churches under the guidance of elders and deacons will not in itself produce revival; we must also experience the pouring of the life of God into the churches through the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Revival can only come as Christians abide in Christ and earnestly seek God for his blessing. This is why a full study of New Testament Church organisation, not only covers the structure and offices of the New Testament Church, but also the practices of the early Church at Jerusalem, in prayer, worship, evangelism, the "agape" love between the members, and the Divine manifestations of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit to spiritually hungry disciples. When the early Church believed God's word and followed his directions, they had revival. If we follow the divinely ordained spiritual practices of the early Church, we shall also have revival. If we replace God's order with the traditions of men, we shall experience spiritual barrenness. Is God's Word of none-effect? Are his promises fruitless? Of course not! If we fulfil his conditions, He will fulfil His Word and promises; for it is impossible for God to lie, He cannot deny Himself. 2Tim.2v13. Heb.6v12-20. N. B. v12,18.

We should seek God's maximum means of blessing not his minimum permissive will.

The Scriptures reveal that God used heathen kings to fulfil His will at times, and a Christ-rejecting high priest to prophesy, but they were certainly not the highest expressions of God's will, or ideal channels of His power and purposes; God used them in spite of their wickedness, not because of their righteousness. Isa.10v5-27. John.11v47-53. It is not a question of how far we can get away from the God's pattern before God gives us up, we must ask ourselves, "Which pattern of Church organisation that God can work through best? What is the ideal channel of his power and will? The answer must be, "God's original pattern of Church organisation." Powerful ministry gifts, and a truly Spirit-led, "agape" love-dominated, body ministry in local churches, is the perfect channel of God's life and power. Churches that follow this New Testament pattern are mighty in evangelism, and blessed in fellowship and spiritual growth.

Men have replaced the wonderful liberty, power, and love of a Christ-directed Church, by the cast iron prisons of their own traditions, constitutions and organisations. The Church organisation that Christ initiated is quite easy to understand and imitate, those who say otherwise, only do so because they prefer their own traditions to God's order. If you shut God out of His Church with man-made structures and traditions you can't expect revival. Stephen said these man-made structures and traditions always resist the Holy Spirit and hinder revival. Acts.7v51-53. Satan and carnality have inspired God-resisting traditions. The further churches have got away from the source of the river of divine truth, the more polluted those waters have become with man-made and Satan-inspired false traditions.

The conflict between God-inspired leadership and God-resisting tradition.

The elders in Christ's day had embraced a God-resisting oral law, which had been handed down to them from their fathers. This oral Torah was supposed to show people how to apply the general commands of the Law. It was supposed to have been given to Moses, but much of it was in reality a man-made legal fiction, and it had become ridiculous and spiritually meaningless. This oral tradition was one of the greatest obstacles that Jesus had to overcome. Jesus rejected this oral law and warned Israel's religious leaders that their worship was in vain when they made, followed and taught doctrines and traditions that made void the Word of God. Mt.15v1-9. Mk.7v1-13. N.B. v13. "Many things like this you are constantly doing." Jesus said the substitution of divine truth for man-made tradition is a sin and produces vain worship. Jesus could criticise these false man-made doctrines and traditions, because they had never corrupted him. His victory over the heavy constraining pressures of tradition, from His youth upwards, is truly remarkable; and, like all His victories over sin and evil, is breathtaking and cannot be over-exaggerated; it should cause us to worship in wonder, love and praise. Let us follow Him.

The Greek word for "tradition," is "paradosis," which means either the act of handing down, on, or over; or the material handed down, on, or over. There are Christian traditions, which were received from God and handed down to the Church. 1Cor.11v2. 2Thes.2v15. 3v6. See "Received," "paralambano," 1Cor.11v23. 15v1,3. Gal.1v9, 12. Phil.4v9. See "delivered," "paradidomai," Acts.16v4. Rom.6v17. 1Cor.11v2, 23. 15v3. 2Pet.2v21. Jude.v3.

Christ and his early church carefully distinguished between tradition that arose from man's perversion of God's truth, and the tradition that is God's truth revealed in the Scriptures, and we must do the same. Col.2v8. Gal.1v14.

In 1Pet.1v18,19., Peter informs us that unscriptural traditions, whether they be Jewish or Gentile traditions, are futile and fruitless. The Greek word for "handed down from your fathers," is "patroparadotos," and it only occurs here in the New Testament, and could apply equally to the traditions handed down from Jews, Gentiles, or Christians. We really need to watch the traditions handed down to us by our natural and spiritual fathers, it is so easy to get into traditional ruts and routines which are not of God, and from which we cannot escape, and which resist the workings of the Holy Spirit. There is often a clear choice between our church traditions, routines and organisations, and revival. We will not experience revival if our churches are riddled with men's traditions, and we do not recognise the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the Lordship of Christ, and unless God ministers through the local church and the ministries of the Church as a body.

A plea and prayer for openness and Christian love and unity.

I pray that this study will help to unite Christ's Church in love and practice. The last thing I want to do is to give ambitious people, who are seeking a group of followers, an excuse for causing division. Acts 20v28-32. I realise that some godly men will object strongly to what I have written and will reject much of what I say. But it was godly, genuinely converted men who began to lead the Church away from its original pattern, within one hundred years of Calvary. Good king Asa thought that he knew better than God, when he rejected God's Word, and put His prophet in prison; this offended God and brought divine discipline upon Asa. 2Chron.16v7-12. Let us be careful how we deal with God's Word no matter who proclaims it, God once spoke very powerfully through a donkey! Numb.22v20-33. with 2Pet.2v15,16.

It is a fact that the early Church was full of love, life and power when Jesus was recognised as Lord and was allowed to direct and empower His Church. This divine structure can take place within the structures of denominational churches, and many have put it into practice already and experienced great blessing as a result. Wise Christian leaders, as I am sure God expects, have used wisdom in their denominational set-up, and have avoided offending the Christians who like traditional services, and have created anointed worship within the structure of these services. They have, at the same time, encouraged the workings of the Holy Spirit and body ministry in their informal fellowships within their churches. Time has wisely been given to allow people to taste and adjust to the new wine.

CHAPTER 1. THE CHURCH WAS PLANNED AND ORDAINED BY GOD, NOT MEN.

A. CHRIST GAVE US THE FULL AND PERMANENT TEACHING ON CHURCH ORGANISATION.

Our submission to the Lordship of Christ is proved by our submission to His will and truth, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Jn.7v17. The doctrine on Church government is as inspired and permanent a part of the foundation of Scripture truth as any other truth. Eph.2v20. 3v5. Jn.15v16. 16v13. When Christ founded the Church, He instituted its doctrine on organisation as well as its other doctrine. God conceived and planned the Church before Creation; it is not a man-made institution. Eph.1v4,5,11. Col.1v26,27. Rom.8v28-30. 1 Cor.2v7. The New Testament Scriptures are our only basis for doctrine on Church organisation as well as the other Christian doctrine. Our standard of Church organisation is not even early post-apostolic Church organisation, for the traditions of even this early period can lead us astray. **The Scriptures alone are the sole rule of faith and conduct.** 2Tim.3v14-17. 1Cor.14v37. 2Pet.3v2,15,16. Rev.22v18,18. God was not negligent of the organisation of the Church; He did not leave it to the discretion or ingenuity of its leaders, or to the customs of the people, district, or land where the Gospel was preached. Before creation the Trinity had ordained, planned and predestined all things in relation to the Church and its organisation. They considered what was the best method of Church organisation to encourage spiritual growth and evangelistic success, and at the same time be suited to every age, nation and circumstance, and would survive best in persecution. When Christ founded the Church, He built it to his own specifications, design, plan and order. Mt.16v18.

God did not leave Church organisation to human ingenuity.

The same ingenuity of man, that has produced many different systems of worldly government, has been applied to Church government. This has inevitably resulted in a departure from New Testament organisation, doctrine and practice; and a consequent loss of the spiritual life and power that the early Church experienced. God did not leave the pattern of Israel's worship to the ingenuity of godly Moses. Indeed, God warned Moses to follow the exact pattern of organisation and worship that He had given him. Heb.8v5. 1Chron.28v19. God did not leave the structure of Church organisation to men's desire, ingenuity, discretion, accommodation or expediency, He has given clear details of how His Church should be organised and run. Unfortunately, Christian leaders throughout Church history have followed the example of Israel's religious leaders and built religious power structures, and replaced the divinely ordained organisation of the Church with their own traditions. This has resulted in the frustration of the Divine purposes and the disappearance of the manifestations of Divine love, life and power that were so apparent in the early Church. If it were not for the godly praying hearts in many churches, all that would be left is a dead form, which brings disillusionment and discouragement to needy souls desperately seeking God's power and blessing.

B. UNSCRIPTURAL CHURCH ORGANISATIONS OFTEN VIOLATE CHRIST'S LORDSHIP.

Church history reveals that men have arrogantly and presumptuously altered the structure of Christ's Church; they felt that they could improve upon Christ's form of Church organisation. Ps.19v13,14. Col.1v18-20. 2v6-10. If we lay aside His truth for our own ideas, we can end up with a religion, which though called Christianity, has really little to do with it. Gal.1v6-10. 2Cor.11v1-6. The Church is Christ's Church; converts are born at God's will, not at the will of men; the Church is God's flock; it is bought with Christ's blood, and it is under the superintendence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. John.1v12,13. Is.53v11. Acts.20v28. Titus.3v5. 1Pet.1v3,23. God can, and does, overlook genuine ignorance, but he cannot overlook wilful ignorance and rebellion. Acts.17v30. 1Sam.15v23.

The unity of Christ's Church cannot take place around the constitutions of men, it can only take place when the Church is subordinate to the Lordship of Jesus and the Holy Spirit and follows their directions. The true Christian finds no appeal in the organic unity of church federations; he looks and longs for a true fellowship and unity of the Spirit, and a genuine body ministry of believers, who own Jesus as Lord. If we refuse to accept the Lordship and leadership of Christ, there is always barrenness in our organisations and constitutions no matter how doctrinally correct or adequate they may seem to be. When the Church lost its first love and began to get away from God, men began to usurp God's authority and build their own religious kingdoms, while claiming that they were building God's kingdom.

The Church as God's "Ecclesia," is under His direction and control.

When God used the Greek word "Ecclesia" to describe His followers, it signified an assembly or congregation to the Jews. "Ecclesia" had been used by Israel for many years to signify a united group of people under God's control. In the Old Testament the Hebrew words for the gathering together of the Israelites are "edhah," which means "congregation;" and "qahal," which means "assembly." In the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Old Testament), "edhah" is almost always translated as "synagogue", and "qahal" usually as "ecclesia." Young states that "edhah" is "an appointed meeting," and "qahal" is "an assembly called together, a called and invited gathering."

To the Greeks, "ecclesia," meant the gathering together of the citizens of a town by an heralds trumpet, and according to Numb.10v1-3., the Israelites were gathered together in this way. So when God used the word "ecclesia," it signified an assembly to His hearers. The Hebrew equivalents had been used by Israel to signify a united group of people under God's control. God intended the Church, like Israel, to be under His permanent control, supervision and guidance. In the Gospels Jesus only spoke twice of the "ecclesia;" in Mt.16v18., He speaks of the universal and complete Church; in Mt.18v17., He speaks of the local Church which can consist of as few as two or three Christians. We see from Mt.16v18., that there is a close connection between "the Kingdom of Heaven" and the "ecclesia." The "ecclesia" are not only God's assembly, they are the visible representatives of God on earth, and under His direct control and guidance. The direction and guidance of the Church should come from God, not from organisations, committees, or conferences directed and guided by men.

God's all-embracing Church compared with Judaism and the Jewish Synagogue.

The Christian Church, "ecclesia," was no longer only Jewish, it included every person of every nation who accepted Christ as his or her Saviour. Gal.3v26-29. God's worldwide Church fully embraced Gentiles which the Jews did not do. The use of the word "ecclesia" would distinguish Christ's people from the Jews in their synagogues; synagogue is from "syn," which means "together," and "ago," which means, "to bring." Though synagogue is used of a Christian meeting in James.2v2., Christ's words in Mt.16v18., give a strong hint of separation from the Jewish synagogue, for Jesus speaks of "My Church," as distinct from the Jewish synagogues. Christians gathered together and recognised Christ as their Lord, which the Jews certainly did not do. In Acts.19v32,39,41., the citizens of Ephesus formed an "ecclesia," that is, an assembly; the citizens of the kingdom of heaven should form an assembly in the locality where they live. The Church is not the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, it is part of that kingdom, and its visible representative upon earth, and it preaches the coming of that kingdom on earth. Let us never forget that the headquarters of the Church of Christ is in heaven, not upon earth.

C. CHURCH ORGANISATION IS NOT A PROGRESSIVE REVELATION.

Some would say that there is no systematic explanation of Church government in the Scriptures, and that Church government is a progressive revelation, which varies according the varying circumstance or need. There may be no systematic and logical explanation of Church government in the Scriptures, but neither is there systematic teaching on other Christian doctrines and theology. There are general principals and incidental references to Church government in the Scriptures, and these combined together give a clear picture of the early Church teaching on Church organisation It is very difficult for many Christians to follow the formal prolonged doctrinal treatises and systematic theologies on Christian doctrine, as good and necessary as these may be. God, in His great wisdom, gave the basic truths of Christian doctrine simply, so that all can understand, and the Scriptural teaching on Church organisation is no exception.

The New Testament Scriptures give no support to the idea of organisational development. Indeed, these Scriptures condemn any deviation from their revelation. Gal.1v6-12. Jude.v3,4. To believe in progressive revelation outside of the Scriptures, is a most dangerous doctrine, and it has led to many soul-destroying heresies, and a denial of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2Pet.2v1. 3v16. There are many cults today that have been founded on the claim of extra revelation outside of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the only foundation for

Christian doctrine and practice. These Scriptures are the revelations of God to His Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles and prophets, and the accounts of His dealings with mankind. Eph.2v20.3v5. A church organisation that defies God's pattern cannot preserve the purity and power of the Church. The statement that progressive organisational development of the Church was necessary to preserve the Church from heresy and fanaticism, has no support from Scripture or Christian experience. Church federation has nearly always led to persecution of godly Christians, and has caused far greater evils than it has cured. Jn.16v1-4. 2Tim.3v12.

Do we experience the essential heart of living truth, or do we have an empty outline of truth?

Paul uses the word "morphosin," in Rom.2v20. and 2Tim.3v5., to speak of "an outline of truth without the substance," the "morphosin" without the "morphe." In Rom.2v20., Paul says that it was folly for Jews to be proud of being chosen recipients of divine truth, when they did not obey that truth, or experience God and His truth. In 2Tim.3v5., Paul tells us to turn away from Christian forms which lack the reality and power of God. Though Scriptural constitutions and fundamental beliefs may give us a necessary outline and code of faith, they will not on their own preserve the purity of the Church. We need a heart cry for mercy, earnest prayer, and a return to early Church practices, if we are to be preserved from error. We can have correct rules of faith and conduct and resist the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that we could only preserve our spiritual life only by abiding in Him and obeying His words. The impartation of God's life comes from seeking God, and not from church constitutions, or even from a correct doctrinal outline of truth, as valuable and necessary as this can be.

It is a disturbing fact that the constitutions of men often deny, reject some vital Scripture truths, and their teaching on Church government. It is not so spiritually demanding to depend on an organisation, or follow a formal Church order and service. To recognise and follow our heavenly Father's directions and plans, and to have His love and power operating in our churches demands real humility, prayerfulness, and a close walk with God. This is directly opposite to man's carnal nature, for flesh dominated people love their own ways, and seek for power, position, prestige, influence and wealth. The unconsecrated carnal mind loves to build its own kingdom and say, "Is this not great Babylon that I have built?" and, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing." Dan.4v30. Rev.3v17. Many have decided against seeking God for a manifestation of His love and power, and have chosen instead, power, popularity, and influence within a religious structure. It can be difficult and frustrating for earnest Christians to operate or manifest the love and power of God through His spiritual gifts, in churches where the leadership manifests these wrong motives, and resists the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

Are we God's "Ecclesia," or are we only His "kuriakon?"

Our English word "church," like the Scottish "Kirk" and the German "quirt," is derived from the Greek "kuriakon," which means, "belonging to the Lord," or simply, "the Lord's." The adjective "kuriakon," only occurs twice in the New Testament, where it speaks of "the Lord's supper," and "the Lord's day." 1Cor.11v20. Rev1v10. In the New Testament the word "kuriakon" is not used in reference to Christian believers, instead it uses "ecclesia," which, as we have already seen, conveys not only the thought of a people belonging to God, but also a people under His direction and control. Church federation can take the control of the Church out of the hands of God and put it in the hands of men. Christians in such churches belong to God, but as they are so often under men's control instead of God's, it is more correct to call them by the word "kuriakon," than by the word "ecclesia." The belief in the progressive revelation of Church government, and the consequent development of church organisations, has proved to be an unmitigated disaster for Christ's Church. The evils that have come as a result of a departure from New Testament organisation, and the resultant affiliation and federation of churches, cannot be over-emphasised or exaggerated. The blood of the millions of Christian dead, who have been killed in the name of God, cry out against the religious kingdoms of men that have committed the sin of Cain. Gen.4v10,11. Jude.v11.

CHAPTER 2. THE CHURCHES MUST OBEY JESUS AS LORD.

A. THE EARLY CHURCH OWNED CHRIST'S LORDSHIP IN EVANGELISM AND WORSHIP.

The Scriptures insist that Jesus is the Head of our churches, and so we should seek His will, plans and guidance, and not depend on our plans or programmes. Mt.18v18-20. 28v18-20. Eph.1v20-23. 4v7-16. 5v21-23. Phil.2v9-11. Col.1v18,19. 2v19. 3v9-11. Rev.19v16. The early Church at Jerusalem enjoyed the liberty, flexibility and power of the Holy Spirit in both fellowship and evangelism; this resulted in a great number of converts, and a considerable variety of content and great blessing in their fellowships meetings. It was not like so many modern Churches who extol Jesus as Lord, but do not obey Him, and please themselves in what they do. Peter learned by bitter personal experience that it was wise to obey his Lord; God cleansed him of his bigotry, and made him a great blessing. Acts.10v1-48.

Paul states that the Holy Spirit should direct our Church gatherings, and the person who is moved by the Holy Spirit has the right to minister. All rights in a church fellowship gathering should depend upon the direction and blessing of Christ, and rigid control of a meeting by one person should be unknown. The early church Pastors guided and taught each local church, but they certainly did not monopolise the ministry in a church, several believers could minister on a theme as the Lord led them, and other Christians ministered in "psalm, doctrine, tongue, revelation, or interpretation." 1Cor.14v26. Even the most spiritual and capable were not allowed to monopolise a meeting, they had to give way to others who had something from God, "Let the first hold his peace." 1Cor.12v29-31. The domination of ministry by one person denies Christ's Lordship over His Church. It is not till post-apostolic times and literature that we read of a presiding officer in the worship and fellowship meetings of the local churches. It is true that Paul as an evangelist had a preaching hall and took the lead there

as the principle speaker and debater, and he could and did take the major part in a special meeting for ministry, but he did not monopolise the local Church fellowships. Paul said that in the local Church fellowships, the Christians were to act as a body, and to minister to one another under the direction of the Holy Spirit and Christ. Acts.19v8-10. 20v6-12. 1Cor.12v4-27.

The presence of God through communion with Him is the secret of blessing and victory.

Moses was quite unwilling to lead Israel and fight her enemies without the presence, blessing and guidance of God, he had the sense to realise that it was only God's overshadowing providence that made Israel different from the surrounding nations. Exod.33v11-20. N.B.v14. 34v5-9. It was the presence and power of God that gave the early Church victory. The acid test of our dependence upon God, is the amount of time that we give to prayer and waiting upon God, as groups or individuals. True prayer is not the ability to say long prayers in public, God condemns this. Mt.6v5-15. 23v14. Mk.12v40. Luke.20v47. If we fail to earnestly seek God we shall be in the same lamentable spiritual state as the church at Laodicea. They were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;" but they did not know it. They said they had need of nothing, when they needed to seek Jesus and humbly ask Him to open their eyes and heal their pitiful spiritual condition. Rev.3v17-19. Those who really love God love His presence. Heb.11v5,6. Ps.27 all, N.B. v4,8. Earnest and prolonged seeking of God is a searching test of ones spirituality and love of God. See how the early Church practised prayer and waiting upon God.

The verb "deomai." Lk.10v2. 21v36. 22v32. Acts.4v31. 10v2. 2Cor.8v4. The verb "erotao." Lk.16v27. John.14v16. 16v26. 17v9,15,20.

The verb "euchomai." Rom.9v3. 2Cor.13v7,9. James.5v16. 3Jn.v2. Acts.26v29. 27v29.

The verb "proseuchomai." Lk.3v21. 5v16. 6v12,28. 9v28,29. 11v1,2. 18v1,10,11. 22v46. Acts.1v24. 6v6. 8v15. 9v11,40. 10v9,30. 11v5. 12v12. 13v3. 14v23. 16v25. 20v36. 21v5. 22v17. 28v8. Eph.6v18. Col.1v3,9. 4v3. 1Cor.14v13,14,15. 1Thes.5v17,25. 2Thes.1v11. 3v1. 1Tim.2v8. James.5v13,14,18. Jude.v20.

The noun "deesis." Lk.1v13. 2v37. 5v33. Rom.10v1. 2Cor.1v11. 9v14. Phil.1v4,19. 2Tim.1v3. Heb.5v7. Jas.5v16. 1Pet.3v12.

The noun "enteuxis." (Intercession) 1Tim.4v5. plural in 2v1. **The noun "entugchano."** Rom.8v26,27,34. Heb.7v25.

The noun "proseuche." Mt.21v13,22. Luke.6v12. Acts.1v14. 2v42. 3v1. 6v4. 10v4,31. 12v5. 16v13,16. Rom.1v9. 12v12. 15v30. 1Cor.7v5. Eph.1v16. 6v18. Phil.4v6. Col.4v2,12. 1Thes.1v2. 5v5. Philemon.v4,22. 1Pet.3v7. 4v7.

B. THE VARIETY AND FLEXIBILITY OF A FELLOWSHIP LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In the early Church there was flexibility under the guidance of God, in many modern churches the services are in a cast iron rut and routine, with a resultant spiritual deadness and bondage. Paul's preaching in the Hall of Tyrannus was to non-Christians, here he preached and defended the Gospel; the Christian fellowship meetings took place in the homes of Christians. We need to clearly see the difference between an evangelistic mission and a Christian fellowship, where Christians are gathered together to build each other up in God.

a. Informal Christian Fellowship Gatherings.

This consisted of prayer, praise and worship, conversational sharing of experience, discussion of problems and prayer for them, the manifestation of spiritual gifts, the study of the Scriptures, with all being able to comment, and a meal at which the Lord's Supper took place. In Cor.11v1 to 14v40., Paul is correcting disorders at the Lord's Supper, and showing them the correct way to conduct their gatherings for fellowship, prayer and worship. The Last Supper conducted by Jesus gives us the divine order for Christian fellowship, as well as the celebration of the Lord's Supper. We shall consider this in greater detail later when we consider the body ministry of the early Church. However, we will now note the great blessing produced by the open and flexible informal fellowship meetings, which were under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. Nowadays, religious leaders exclude almost all ministry or participation from their flocks, and do not allow God to inspire Christians to give a contribution and to develop their ministries, and so ministries are often strangled at birth. The ministries that do develop, do so in spite of these religious systems, and not because of them. No matter how competent a minister may be in preaching and pastoral work, he is a failure if he does not practice informal body ministry and develop ministries in the local church. God desires His children to develop ministries, not remain in permanent spiritual babyhood. Some will object to this participation in ministry by all Christians and say, "You open the door to fanatics and encourage the immature to make mistakes by your informal body ministry." To this I answer, "Informal body ministry is God's order, not mine."

Godly, wise, spiritual and gracious elders will preserve churches from the dangers of fanaticism, and gently correct the mistakes of the immature and inspire them to further effort. We should not restrain profitable ministries, but unprofitable ministries should be restrained. Jesus has set ministries in the Church, but He has not relinquished the control of the Church to them, He is the Head of the Church. The substitution of Christ's Lordship over His Church and informal body ministry, with one-man ministry, cannot help but produce frustration, barrenness and division. Formal, spiritually lifeless services are as great an abuse of God's order as fanaticism, and are just as great an offence to God. There can only be real growth and blessing when the Holy Spirit is given His rightful place and ministry.

b. An informal evangelistic meeting.

This could take place in synagogues, the open air, hired building, or home; to large groups, or even to one person, like our Lord's conversation with the woman at the well. There are instances of Jesus and Paul preaching sermons, however, the practice of informal discussion in synagogue, hall, home, or open-air, and the confirmation of the truth by miracles, was the usual Divine pattern for apostolic evangelism. Rom.15v18-21. This informal evangelism was attractive to the outsider, and was anything but boring, which certainly cannot be said of many modern services, which often have to be endured rather than enjoyed. I am not thinking only of some traditional churches; the lightness and frivolity, spoken of in the King James Version of Jer.23v32., has afflicted many Pentecostal churches. "Lightness," is "pachazuwth," 6350, frivolity, from 6348, "pachaz," to bubble up or froth. See 2Cor.1v17. "elaphria," 1644, levity. God wants us to enjoy His presence and the fellowship of other Christians in profound depth; this will fill us with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1Pet.1v8.

Jesus and His apostles expected to be questioned or interrupted while preaching, and they experienced this regularly, indeed, it was the norm. In their proclaiming the gospel as an herald, "kerusso," Acts.8v5. 9v26. 10v37,42. 15v21. 19v13. 20v25. 28v36.; or telling and announcing good news, "euangelizo," Acts.5v42. 8v4,12,35,40. 10v36. 11v20.14v15. 15v35. 17v18.; they "talked and discoursed, "laleo", Acts.8v25. 11v19. 13v42. 14v25. 16v6.; they told thoroughly, "katangelo," Acts.4v2. 13v5,38. 15v36. 17v3,13. 1Cor.9v14.; they often did this in a conversational style by reasoning, questions and even heated debate, "suzeteo," Mk.8v11. 12v28. Lk.24v15,32. Acts.6v9. 9v29.; and dialogue, "dialegomai," Acts.17v2,17. 18v4,19. 19v8,9. 20v7,9. 24v12,25. (also occurs Mk.9v34. Heb.12v5. Jude.v9). See also "peitho," to persuade." Acts.13v43. 14v19. 18v4.19v8,26. 26v28. 28v23. 2Cor.5v11. The best method of evangelism, preaching and teaching is by informal discussion, dialogue and persuasion in friendly and amiable conversations with people.

The early Church Christians did not invite people to hear the Gospel and sit passively and mutely until an appeal was made; they preached the Gospel in the open air, in their daily contacts, and from house to house, and those who were converted joined their Christian fellowships. Acts.5v42. 8v4. Inviting unbelievers to meetings is not normal New Testament evangelism, the early Church went out to preach the Gospel. **The miraculous was the cutting edge of New Testament evangelism**, in Rom.15v18,19., Paul said that he made the Gentiles receive and obey the Gospel "by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." Formal Church services will certainly not meet the needs of this modern generation, we need the greater apostolic and evangelistic ministries to win converts and break the ground for the witness of the ordinary church members. The informal New Testament meetings for fellowship, under the blessing and guidance of the Holy Spirit, will sustain those who come to know Jesus as their Saviour. This Divine pattern is suitable, and will be successful, with every age and nation. When Jesus is owned as Lord, the Church is victorious in both evangelism and worship.

C. THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY GIFTS ARE APPOINTED BY GOD, NOT BY MEN.

The ministries that God sets in the Church, are based on His spiritual gifting and not on natural talent or ability. The early Church turned the world upside down by spiritual ministry gifts from God, not by their natural talents, and it is these ministry gifts that the Church needs so badly today, not more money, machinery, or better education. These ministry gifts are the result of divine sovereignty, not human desire, or ordination. God sets these gifts and ministries in the Church, and Jesus directs them. Mt.9v38. 1Cor.12v28. Eph.4v8-11.

Ordination, is it from Heaven, or from men? Mt.21v25. Mk.11v30. Lk.20v4.

Some object to the statement that ordination to ministry comes from heaven, and not from men, and state that elders, deacons, and even apostles, had hands laid upon them to appoint them to a ministry. This was undoubtedly true, however, this appointment to God's work, was really the recognition of the gift and call already received from God, and which was already manifested in their ministries. The laying on of hands by men is an empty formality without the divine ordination and gifting of God. The religious leaders who killed Jesus were certainly not ordained by God, they resisted God. Acts.7v51-53. In God's eyes a person has authority in Christ's Church, not because men will it, or because a person has received ecclesiastical training or ordination, but because He Himself has given them a ministry.

The modern term "ordination" has come to have a technical significance not found in the New Testament. The Greek words translated as "ordain" in the Authorised Version simply mean, "to appoint, choose and set apart." Acts.6v5,6. 13v2,3. 14v23. 1Tim.2v7.4v14. 5v22. 2Tim.1v6. Modern denominations have replaced God's ordination and Christ's commission, with their ordaining councils. I recognise that ordaining councils do choose people who have had a call from God. However, it is also true that many people are ordained to lead in God's work, who have no call or right to do so, and many others who have received a definite commission from Christ are excluded and rejected. Very few of our modern denominations would have ordained any of the twelve apostles, even though they are so highly regarded by religious leaders today. Many Church leaders today reject the miraculous powers that the apostles experienced, and oppose those who manifest the same spiritual gifts. These religious leaders, as in Christ's day, extol the prophets of the past, but oppose the same kind of ministries in the present. Mt.23v29-39. The apostles of Christ's day were looked upon as deluded, undesirable, unlearned and ignorant men, by the religious leaders of Israel. Christ's apostles had not been taught in the schools of the Rabbis, but they were certainly not unlearned or ignorant in regard to hearing and obeying the voice of God. The apostles were lacking in men's ecclesiastical training, but God Himself had trained them in the essentials of true religion.

Systematic traditional training often disqualifies one from divine ordination.

God did not choose any of the learned Rabbis that men had ordained, the systematic training in men's traditions had made them entirely unsuitable for leadership in Christ's Church. Christ's apostles had the essentials of true religion, faith, hope, love, humility, a love for Jesus, and a thirst for God, and so God chose these simple, earnest, and spiritual young men to lead His Church. Young men, who have received spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries from God, have an important part to play in Christ's Church today. The apostles were chosen by God, and not by men, or by themselves, even Jesus did not appoint Himself. 1Cor.12v18,28. Heb.5v1-10. It was ordination from heaven that counted.

Giving people the names of the New Testament offices will not give them that ministry, a person has to have a ministry from God, or they are an empty pretender. In the New Testament it was the actual ministry of a person that decided what they were called. They were not just called apostles, prophets, pastor-teachers, and evangelists, they possessed and manifested these ministries, and they were clearly seen and recognised by the members of the churches. You can label "treacle," as "best quality jam," but it is still "treacle;" an empty claim to New Testament ministry gifts is even more foolish and wrong.

Denominational closed-shop ministries often oppose divinely given ministries.

The early Church ministry was not a closed denominational shop. The ministerial certificate of the early Church was a ministry gift from Christ, which was accredited by signs, wonders and miracles. It is sad that ecclesiastical machinery has replaced God's empowerment in many denominations, and this is a major reason for the lack of revival.

The elders who pastored and taught the local churches, were ordained by Paul, not by his own feelings, it was because they were seen to possess a ministry gift from Christ. The Holy Spirit had given these ministries and made them overseers in their churches. Their ministries were actually in operation in the local churches before Paul appointed them; it was purely a matter of recognising these divinely given ministries. Acts.20v28-32. The seven deacons at Jerusalem were chosen by the people for their spiritual ministry as well as their wisdom and godly character. They were well-known and well-trusted by all the Christians, not only on the grounds of their wisdom, graciousness, godly character, and ability to "show mercy;" they were also "full of the Holy Spirit," and possessed a definite spiritual ministry. Deacons should not only be gentle and kind, and good people of "good reputation," they must be "full of faith and the Holy Ghost." Acts.6v3,5,8.

The early Church recognised and appointed local people to Church leadership.

When the local church was founded and the elders appointed, the local church recognised and appointed other ministries that the Holy Spirit had given and developed in the church. The local church appointed Timothy, and the elders laid hands on him and asked God to bless him. They recognised that his ministry had developed sufficiently for Timothy to take his place among the ministries of the local church. 1Tim.4v12-16. 2Tim.1v6. When Paul wrote his letters to Timothy, he was between 35 and 40 years of age. Local elders did not resent developing ministries in their churches, they glorified God for them; and if God gave some younger Christian in the local church a greater ministry than any one else in it, the elders particularly rejoiced, because this was the fruit of their oversight and proof that their ministry was a success. It is a bitter, sour, Saul-like spirit of jealousy that looks upon developing ministries in the local church as a threat to one's authority. 1Sam.18v6-14. Love greatly rejoices when others are blessed more than themselves, and heartily thanks God for the part that He has given them in developing these ministries, and the part that they have to play in God's work. 1Cor.13v4-7.

Paul appointed local people as leaders whose life and ministry gift were recognised, appreciated and loved by the people in the local church. The question seems to have been, "Who do you have confidence in to lead you?" After Paul had appointed the first elders in the local church, the appointment of other elders was left in the hands of the local elders and Christians; they knew the spiritual qualifications that were necessary for a man to be an elder or deacon, because Paul had instructed them in this matter. 1Tim.3v1-16. Titus.1v4-16. Paul and the other itinerant ministries exercised a spiritual oversight and moral authority over the local churches, but they did not take the control of the churches out of the hands of the elders, or interfere with their decisions, each church was responsible to God for its own work. The apostles exercised the oversight of love and fellowship, not of official position, their work was to start churches, and then to instruct and inspire the flocks and develop their ministries, not to dominate, or dictate to them. Eph.4v8-14. 1Pet.5v1-7.

D. THE MINISTRIES GOD GIVES CAN ONLY BE SUSTAINED BY COMMUNION WITH GOD.

We must follow the glory cloud.

The New Testament ministries can only be sustained by communion with God. We see in the Scriptures that God gave His authority to those who followed His leadings and commands. Moses was Israel's leader, but he did not lead them in his way and will, he obeyed God's orders. God led Israel through His glory cloud, Moses had the good sense to obey God's directions, and follow His glory cloud. This same is true of the New Testament ministries, only those who have a ministry of divine life and follow the glory cloud, who have the right of leadership and authority in Christ's Church. 1Cor.12v28. Acts.10v38.

We can be channels of God's love and power.

Jesus earnestly desires us to be channels of His love and power, He longs to pour His mercy, tenderness, truth, delivering power, and deep affection through us to others, but this can only happen when we abide in Christ. Jn.15v1-17. No one is a true minister of Christ who does not minister His love, mercy and power to others. It is not enough to preach truth; truth must minister God's power, life and love to needy souls and bodies. 1Pet.1v12. All the ministry gifts are intended to minister the love, power and grace of God to God's flock and to knit it together in love. The ministry of elders is particularly pastoral; however, the Lord Jesus told the young apostle Peter, that pastoral ministry was included in his apostolic ministry. John.21v15-19. The ministry gifts should reveal Christ and the Father to people. Gal.1v15,16. A spiritual ministry does not just teach doctrine, it brings people into a living experience of God.

The development, extension, and interdependence of spiritual ministries.

The ministry gifts Jesus gives are capable of development and extension. Stephen and Philip were ordained to be deacons, because the church recognised that their spirituality, godliness and love for people, proved that they had a ministry from Christ to fulfil that work. Jesus also ordained them to be fervent evangelists, and they had a double ministry. We read in Acts.13v1,2., that Paul and Barnabus possessed teaching ministries in the church at Antioch, then God made them apostles. They had received a previous call to this work, "Separate me Barnabus and Saul for the work to which I have called them." They had faithfully prepared for this work by fulfilling a pastoral and teaching ministry, and so the call became a reality, and God sent them out on an apostolic mission. They were not sent out at their own desire, or man's direction, they were sent out by the Holy Spirit, God confirmed the reality of their call through other prophets and teachers.

In Acts.13v1,2., we see that the ministry gifts were directed by God, but they were not independent of other Christians, they worked together, as should all the parts of the body of Christ. Even apostles needed helpers, and the comfort and spiritual help of other Christians, a striking example of this is in 2Cor.2v12-14., where Paul states that he was incapacitated because Titus was not there, and so was not able to take advantage of God's door of opportunity. See also Acts.12v11,12. 21v4,11,12. 28v12-15. 1Cor.8v6. 2Cor.8v16-80. Eph.6v21,22. Phil.2v25. 1Thes.3v1,2. 2Tim.4v9-13,20. 21. Titus.1v5. 3v12,13. We read in Acts.15v32., that Silas was a prophet, but when he went with Paul, God gave him the additional authority and ministry of an apostle. 1Thes.1v1 with 2v6. Peter was an apostle, but Jesus also gave him the office of Pastor and Elder as well. John.21v15-19. 1Pet.5v1-5. So we can see that one person can have several ministries given to them by Christ. God usually founded local churches through apostolic or evangelistic ministry, and then He developed ministries in this church. Every ministry working together and operating under the guidance of Christ the Lord.

E. GOD STILL SETS THESE MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH TODAY.

God has "set" spiritual ministries and their accompanying spiritual gifts in the Church all through this age of grace, and He still sets them in the Church today, when He can find those who love God and people enough, to desire to be channels of His power and love. The word for "set" in 1Cor.12v28., is "etheto" the third person singular aorist indicative of "tithemi," it is the same word that is used in Jn.15v16., which is translated "ordained." It simply means, "to put, place, or appoint." See Acts.5v25. Mt.5v15. 1Tim.1v12. 2v7. 2Tim.1v11. Heb.1v2. etc.. God has permanently placed these gifts in His Church during this age. Those who say that these miraculous ministries of the Church no longer exist, resist this ordination and gifting by God. The truth is that they do not have the spiritual qualifications to manifest these ministries, and are unwilling to expend the spiritual effort necessary to receive these qualifications, and to keep these ministries. They fear the opposition that comes against such ministries. It is spiritually demanding to seek God for His plans and power, but there is little spiritual effort required to rely upon oratory, good music, and a pleasant program of services, and so men have replaced God's abilities and ministries with their own standards, abilities and ministries. This unwillingness to follow the example of the early church, and obey God's command to desire spiritual gifts, is a grave sin, " For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." 1Sam.15v23. It is certainly not Scriptural to say that spiritual gifts ceased after the apostolic age, as the following facts prove.

1. Peter said that spiritual gifts would continue to the end of this age.

In Acts.2v16-21., Peter confirmed the prophecy of Joel that spiritual gifts would continue right up to the great and terrible day of the Lord, the day of Christ's return. Rev.16v14-16. 6v12-17. Mt.24v29-31. Peter insists that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts.2v38,39. There is no Scripture to contradict or limit the prophecy of Joel; indeed, both Scripture and Christian experience confirm this prophecy. Those who deny that spiritual gifts are for today have looked in vain for one clear Scriptural statement that spiritual gifts were withdrawn after the apostolic age. They have wrested and distorted 1Cor.13v8-13. in an attempt to justify their unbelief, and have made the quite unwarranted assumption that the, "that which is perfect," at which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to pass away, was the completion of the canon of Scripture. Honest theologians state that there is no justification for this interpretation. Ellicott says of the "that which is perfect," "This verse shows, by the emphatic "then," that the time when the gifts shall cease is at the end of this dispensation. The imperfect shall not cease until the perfect is brought in."

"A New Testament Commentary," edited by Howley, Bruce and Ellison, states on 1Cor.13v10., that there is no support in the Biblical usage of "perfect," or its cognate forms, for the suggestion that "the perfect" refers to the completion of the Scripture canon, and that the interpretation of "that which is perfect" as the Scripture canon, has been made to explain away the absence of certain spiritual gifts from their churches. How illuminating! An

examination of 1Cor.13v10., proves that it is totally untrue to say that "that which is perfect" is the Scripture canon.

a. The subject under discussion in 1Cor.13. is love in relation to the whole of Christian experience.

Paul includes giving, martyrdom and knowledge, as well as spiritual gifts; there is no mention of the Scriptural canon. Paul's theme is love, he does not close 1Cor.13. with the greatest of these is the Scriptural canon," he says, "the greatest of these is love." "That which is perfect," occurs at the coming of the kingdom of God, when we have a face-to-face vision of the God of love. 1Cor.13v12. The Christian enjoys this kingdom at death, 2Cor.5v6-8. Phil.1v21-23. Heb.12v22-24. Rev.6v9-11., but this endless kingdom of love will not come to earth until the return of Jesus on the great "day of the Lord," at the end of this age.

b. How can it be the Scripture canon if "full knowledge" has not been given and perfected?

It is certainly inconsistent and dishonest to say that 1Cor.13v8. informs us that spiritual gifts have passed away, and yet admit that our present partial knowledge has not yet been replaced by the full knowledge of God's kingdom. This verse makes it quite clear that the "perfect day," when "that which is perfect" comes, is when God's kingdom comes to earth. It is only then that we shall have the full knowledge of ourselves and others, and "we shall fully know as we are fully known." This "full knowledge" occurs at the judgement seat of Christ, when our works and character are revealed. 1Cor.3v11-15.

The time when the gifts "pass away," is when the Church of Christ on earth exchanges its present partial spiritual power and knowledge, for the complete and perfect "face to face" experience of God and the "full knowledge" of His power, truth and love. What 1Cor.13v8., is really teaching, is that the Church on earth can expect its spiritual gifts and limited knowledge to continue, until they are superseded by, and swallowed up in the experience and knowledge of God's kingdom. When 1Cor.13v8. is really fulfilled, the Church will be glorified in Heaven and enjoying God's glory, power, truth and love to the full.

c. Paul compares his own Christian experience on earth with that of the perfect day.

Paul compares his experience of God on earth with that in heaven to a non-speaking baby's experience with that of an intelligent man. This certainly does away with the idea that Paul is referring to the Scripture canon, when he speaks of the perfect day, for Paul even knew truth outside of the New Testament canon, truth he was not permitted to utter. 2Cor.12v1-4. Paul knew by revelation much, if not all, of the truth contained in the book of Revelation, for he speaks of the trumpets, 1Cor.15v51-53.; of the evil career of Antichrist and his judgement, 2Thes.2v1-12.; of the two resurrections and the last judgement. 1Cor.15v21-28. The lack of the future knowledge of the condition of the churches in Revelation did not make Paul "a none speaking babe," he knew the vast preponderance of New Testament truth. Indeed, Paul knew more of God's truth in theory and experience than any person who has ever lived, except the Lord Jesus. 1Cor.15v10.

Having the full New Testament canon does not make us superior in knowledge to Paul, indeed, in comparison to Paul, we are the babes. The illustrations that Paul used of a non-speaking babe compared with a man, and a dull reflection in contrast with a face-to-face vision, only makes sense if they are interpreted in the clear sense of the context, as a comparison of our present earthly experience of God now, compared with our experience of God in His kingdom. The only things that will bear any comparison with Heaven, and are the same in Heaven as on earth, are faith, hope and love; our present knowledge is nothing compared to the knowledge of Heaven. Paul said that his partial knowledge was to cease and pass away when the complete came, so it cannot be the canon of Scripture, for we still need all of it until Jesus comes. Those who insist on interpreting, "that which is perfect," as the Scripture canon, end up with a great many contradictions and difficulties, a proof of wrong exposition.

d. Notice how Paul tells the Corinthians after 1Cor.13., to desire spiritual gifts.

Paul does not say that they did not need to bother with spiritual gifts any more because they were soon to finish; he gives them the correct teaching on the gifts, and tells them to seek them for their spiritual welfare. 1Cor.14v1-3,12,18,39. Spiritual gifts profit and built up Christians, they carry on the ministry of Christ, and meet great needs in the body of Christ. 1Cor.12v7,18-31. Both Israel and the Church have always needed God's power, as well as God's truth, to meet the needs placed before them.

e. In 1Cor.13., Paul considers spiritual gifts and the other principal aspects of our experience in relation to love.

Paul speaks of "ALL sacred secrets and ALL knowledge," the ultimate in sacrificial giving, and martyrdom for God's sake, as well as spiritual gifts. The knowledge mentioned is not just supernatural knowledge; it is "all knowledge" and includes Scriptural knowledge. Even divinely inspired truth will be nothing compared with the face-to-face meeting with God its author. There is no Scripture that gives stronger evidence that spiritual gifts will continue right up to the end of this age, than Paul's statement in 1Cor.13., that spiritual gifts will continue right up to this face to face meeting with God.

2. Spiritual gifts occurred throughout the Old Testament dispensations in periods of revival.

This was usually when there were people willing to receive them and seek God for them. If spiritual gifts were manifested throughout the age of Law, should they not be manifested throughout the age of grace, during which the spirit of God is said to work in greater measure and with greater manifestations, than he did in the age of

Law. Heb.8v10-13. 2Cor.3v6-18. The Scriptures tell us that the new covenant was to be more glorious and more full of the Holy Spirit's workings throughout all its duration, than the age of the Law.

There is no Scriptural justification for the statement that signs, wonders and miracles could only be expected at the start of the age of grace. Acts.2v16-21,38,39. To say that we could not expect miracles after the apostles finished their ministries, would mean that the age of grace was less spiritually powerful than the age of Law, a statement the Scripture absolutely refutes. The cause of the lack of spiritual gifts in this age of grace, is the same as it was in the previous age of Law, spiritual apathy, backsliding, low or non-existent faith, and the lack of love for needy mankind. Gideon had the sense to realise that when God was with you, miracles took place. Judges.6v13. The Jews required a sign of spiritual authority from any prophet; they knew that if God commissioned anyone, He gave them the spiritual power and authority to manifest spiritual gifts. 1Cor.1v22. All New Testament ministries, including elders, were expected to manifest spiritual gifts. 1Cor.12v28. James.5v13-19. If God manifested spiritual gifts throughout "the ministration of death," that is, the Law, how much more will He do it during, "the ministration of the Spirit?" 2Cor.3v6-11. The New Testament dispensation is promised, and possesses, more gifts from God than the Law, not less. All thirsty believers in Christ can receive the Holy Spirit's power and fullness. Jn.7v37-39.

3. All spiritual gifts must be here if all have not gone.

Those who insist that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are not for today, must insist that God has removed them all, not just some, if they are to be consistent. If they believe that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are not for today, then they must not pray for divine healing, this is a gift of healing; they must not pray for guidance or illumination upon a problem, this is a word of wisdom; they must not pray for God's anointing upon ministry or for Satan's power to be lifted from people's lives or minds, or for people to be blessed, this is a gift of faith; they must not pray for material needs to be met, this is a working of miracles; they must not pray for a revelation of God to the soul, this is a discerning of spirits; they must not pray for an inspired utterance from God, this is a prophecy; they must not pray for inspired praying, this is the prime use of the gift of tongues.

Those who say that spiritual gifts have ceased, often actually pray for the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Christians who say that spiritual gifts are not for today are really unwilling to seek God for those gifts; they refuse to submit to the experience that God desires to give them. They are not prepared to accept the full Scriptural standard, or the Lordship or wisdom of Christ over these spiritual gifts. Those who reject spiritual gifts completely, would in reality totally remove God's influence from His Church. If God only works through His word today, as some insist, there is no point in the ministries of the Holy Spirit at all. Paul clearly states in 1Cor.12v21., that we cannot say that we have no need of these ministries and gifts, they are all essential, if Christ's body is to function as He intends. It is only difficult for Christians to witness effectively if God's gifts and ministries are missing.

Some would say, "I believe in God's power and influence, but how can you be sure that you will get the Holy Spirit and not some evil spirit?" We answer that true Christians believe the promise of Christ, that they cannot receive any false spirit or gift, if they are seeking God for His gifts and blessing. Indeed, the Scriptures emphatically state that it only by seeking God for His power and gifts that we can be spiritually safe, and successfully resist the Devil, we certainly can't outwit or defeat Satan on our own. Ps.24v3-6. 27v1-14. 42v1-11. 46v10. 62v1,2. Acts.1v14. 2v42. 3v1. 4v29-33. 6v2-4. 8v14-17. 9v11,12. 10v2,9-20. 12v5,12. 13v1-4. etc. Eph.6v10-20. James.4v7-10. 1Pet.5v5-11. etc. Those who refuse to seek God's power for fear of receiving some false spirit, have in reality already been defeated by Satan, and have shown a lack of faith in God's ability to care for His children. Satan kept Israel out of Canaan through fear and unbelief; they could not trust God to look after them. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that it has always been those who have failed to seek God for His blessing and spiritual gifts, who have been influenced by evil spirits. Heb.3 and 4. Let us see, then:

F. THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S SPIRIT-FILLED CHILDREN.

a. God's children believe God's promise of blessing for them.

God has given many "exceeding great and precious promises" that tell us that He will give us spiritual blessing and spiritual gifts, those who deny that the miraculous is for today, don't have a Scriptural leg to stand on. All the promises of God are still "yea" and "Amen" in Christ Jesus, and we can still experience God's love, gifts and power today. 2Cor.1v17-20. It is certainly not honest or consistent to believe in a Christianity that has none of the New Testament love, life, and power. Just as the body is dead without the spirit, so is an intellectual Christianity that is devoid of the movings of the Holy Spirit. James.2v26. Christianity is not a doctrinal exercise; it is an experience of God. Those who refuse to accept that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are for today, make Christianity an intellectual exercise over God's dealings in the past, instead of a living experience of God and His gifts in the present. God's children should accept God's promises to them, not try to find an excuse for not seeking or receiving them, by wresting the Scriptures.

b. God's children earnestly seek and love God's presence.

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts love to seek God, " this is the generation of them that seek Him," Ps.24v3-6. True Christians, like David, love to wait upon and seek God. Ps.40v1. 62v1,5. Their hearts pant for Him. Ps.42v1-3. The last thing that heretics and apostates want to experience is the overwhelming presence of God, but true Christians long for it. The early Church loved to seek God and spent hours and days doing it. There is a vast difference between a short prayer aimed at the hearers, and the prolonged and earnest seeking of God

that we see in the New Testament. False cults may say short prayers, but they will not spend time in prolonged seeking of God, for the evil spirits that influence them, will not allow them to do this. False cults are under the influence of evil spirits, and in Deut.18v9-19., we see that seeking God, and true and full recognition of Christ is diametrically opposite to seeking or pursuing evil spirits. Lev.19v31. 20v6. Is.8v19-20. Prolonged, earnest seeking of God, is an acid test of one's source of inspiration. Heb.11v6. 1Jn.4v1-6.

c. God's children manifest God's character and love in their lives.

Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Mt.17v15-23. This does not mean the size or growth of a church organisation. True Christianity does not consist of statistics or empty talk, but rather of consecration to God, purity of life, and love of people. Paul warned those of the Corinthians, who were living deplorable lives, that they had no knowledge of God. 1Cor.15v34. It is true that even godly men, like David or Peter, may fail God badly under heavy temptation, but this is totally different from the sinful wallowing in the mire spoken of in 2Pet.2v1-22. Jude.v3-25. and Rev.2v13-16,20-24.. Christian love and purity cannot be truly counterfeited or imitated by Satan's children. Hypocrites may pretend and play-act, but "agape" love is inimitable and incomparable. Christians will not only die for their brethren, but also for their enemies. 1Jn.5v1,2. 2v1-22. Mt.5v43-48.

d. God's children believe the truths in God's Word.

Another acid test of a person's source of inspiration is whether they conform to the fundamental doctrines of Scripture. If the Holy Spirit moves a person, their doctrines and practices will be the same as those of the early Church. When a person is taken over by an evil spirit, their doctrine is corrupted and bears no resemblance to New Testament truth. John said that those who are inspired of God believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah, and that He has come in human flesh, whereas those who are inspired by Satan reject this. The Messiah of the Old Testament is "the mighty God," Hebrew, "El Gibbor," an exclusive title of Jehovah. Is.9v6. 10v21. Jer.32v18. He is "God with us." Is.7v14. with Mt.1v23. Many Scriptures state that Jesus is the eternal Creator God of the Old Testament.

A person's source of inspiration is revealed by their attitude to Jesus, those who reject His deity, humanity, atonement, and teaching, are moved by Satan, those who accept them are inspired by God. The personal appropriation of Christ's sacrifice for sin is always the cleavage point between Divine and Satanic doctrine. Rev.12v10-12. We know and rejoice in the experience of redemption by Jesus from the penalty and power of sin. False cults reject the Christian teaching about sin and judgement, and state that personal redemption by Christ's blood is unnecessary. False cults either reject completely the idea of a personal God, or so pervert the idea of God that He is unrecognisable as the Christian's God. Many false prophets address prayers to God and Christ, but they distort the doctrine of Christ, and preach "another Jesus, ---and another gospel," and are "accursed." 2Cor.11v3,4. 1Jn.4v1-5,15. 2v11,23. 5v1. Mt.7v15-29. Gal.1v8,9.

e. God's children desire to answer Satan's lying wonders with God's miracles.

How illogical and inconsistent it is to say that the Almighty God no longer does any miracles, and only Satan does miracles today. God is a God that only does wonders, and His children should do the same by His power. Exod.3v20. 15v11. Job.9v10. Ps.77v11,14. 136v4. Is.8v18. Acts.4v22,43. Rom.4v2,3. Heb.2v4. God has not left all the miracle-working to Satan during this age, God has promised miracles throughout this age, and that this age will close with the greatest show of spiritual power the world has ever seen, God's two witnesses have amazing spiritual gifts given to them to answer Satan's lying wonders through the Antichrist. Rev.11v1-12. 2Thes.2v7-12. None of the prophets or apostles vindicated God merely by talk; God confirmed the truth of their words through signs, wonders and miracles.

G. THE FINANCIALLY UNDEMANDING STRUCTURE OF THE EARLY CHURCH MINISTRIES.

The itinerant ministries enjoyed some measure of support from the churches, but the churches did not direct them, nor did they control the churches. Acts.13v1-4. 16v6,16. Phil.4v10-19. 3Jn.v5-11. In the early churches there was no local church buildings, or centrally governed denomination into which funds were sent, and which kept the preachers of the Gospel with a fixed income. In the Bible we see individual faith in God, not faith in an organisation. Ministers in a modern church organisation can expect some measure of security without trusting and depending on God. Few modern ministers would be prepared to accept the financial insecurity and poverty of Christ and His early Church ministries. Mt.8v19,20. Lk.9v57,58. Acts.3v6. 2Cor.8v9. A sacrificial cross was an essential part of New Testament ministry. Mt.10v38. 16v24. The Lord Jesus chose men who were prepared to trust God over their finances, the idea of a group of Christians building a church building, and supporting their minister, was unknown in the early Church. The pastor-elders of the early Church usually worked and kept themselves, those who had devoted themselves to study and Church responsibilities, and were financially embarrassed as a result, received gifts from the local church, but usually on the level of financial aid given to the poorest in the church. 1Tim.5v17,18. 1Pet.5v1,2. The itinerant ministries also received gifts and hospitality to meet their needs, or like Paul they worked to meet their own essential needs. 1Cor.9v1-19. 2Cor.11v8,9. Phil.4v10-19. The vast majority of the finances collected by the early churches was for the poor, and these collections for the poor are totally different from the disgraceful and corrupt appeals for money that we often see in our day from some so-called Christian ministries. Jn.12v5,6,8. 13v29. Acts.2v44,45. 4v32-37. 2Cor.8v1-9. Rom.16v17,18.

Hatch writes on page 147 and 148 of his Bampton Lectures on "The Organisation of the Early Christian Churches:"

"The funds of the primitive communities had consisted entirely of voluntary offerings. Of these offerings those officers whose circumstances required it were entitled to a share. They received such a share only on the grounds of poverty. They were, so far, in the position of the widows and orphans and helpless poor. Like soldiers in the Roman army, or slaves in a Roman household, they were entitled to a monthly allowance. The amount of that allowance was variable. When the Montanists proposed to pay their clergy a fixed salary the proposal was condemned as a heretical innovation, alien to Catholic practice. (Eusebius H.E.5.18.2.: 5.28.10:) Those who could supplemented their allowances by farming or by trade. There was no sense of incongruity in their doing so. The Apostolical Constitutions repeat with emphasis the apostolic injunction, 'If any man would not work, neither should he eat.' (Const. Apost.2.62. 2Thes.3v10,12. 1Thes.4v11.) Those who could supplemented their allowances by farming or trade. There is no early trace of the later idea that buying and selling, handicraft and farming, were inconsistent with the office of a Christian minister. The bishops and presbyters of those early days kept banks, practised medicine, wrought as silversmiths, tended sheep, or sold their goods in open market. They were like the non-juring bishops a century and a half ago (about 1730), or like the early preachers of the Wesleyan Methodists. They were men of the world taking part in the ordinary business of life. The point about which the Christian communities were anxious was, not that their officers should cease to trade, but that in this as in other respects, they should be examples to the flock." End of quote.

Hatch continues in his notes at the bottom of page 148, to tell how the leaders of the primitive Church usually worked, he states: - "Among the latter are the case of Spiridion who tended sheep in Cyprus, ---of a bishop who was a weaver at Maiuma, ---of one who was a shipbuilder in Campania---one who practised in the law courts, ---of a presbyter who was a silversmith at Ancyra. --- Basil, Epist.198 (263), vol.4 p.290 speaks of the majority of his clergy as earning their living by sedentary handicrafts, and Epiphanius, ---speaks of others doing it in order to earn money for the poor." End of quote.

All Christians are priests in the eyes of God. 1Pet.2v5,9. Rev.1v6. 5v10. 20v6.

The early Church Christian ministry was not looked upon as a priesthood, in the sense of ministers alone having a priestly authority and power. God has made all Christians members of "a royal priesthood," and "kings and priests unto God." When two or three Christians gather together, they make up a church, even if no church ministries are present. There is only one High Priest of Christianity, our Lord Jesus. The early church at Jerusalem shows us that God intended His Church to be a voluntary fellowship of Christians, who are united by love for Christ and one another, and free from priest craft, despotism, or dictatorship.

Authority or Insubordination?

The Scribes and Pharisees challenged both John Baptist and Christ as to the source of their authority; they looked upon them as insubordinate rebels, and divisive troublemakers. The Church of Jesus has always had the same problem; Christ's heaven-sent ministries have always been looked upon as "insubordinate" and "divisive," by people who are determined to preserve their religious power structure and position. The apostles were insubordinate to men, but obedient to God; the Scribes and Pharisees were obedient to men but insubordinate to God. Dissension always comes between those who seek influence from men, and those who seek authority from heaven. Authority from Heaven is not decided by human opinion; it is proved by Divine gifting and conformity to Biblical teaching and experience. The people who murdered Jesus claimed that they had been given authority from God to kill Him; this false claim to Divine authority has been repeated again and again in Church history, by those who have murdered many dear children of God, who had received a definite authority from God. Indeed, it almost seems impossible not to be called a heretic by men, when you have God's authority, and we should certainly doubt if our calling and ministry is from God, when all men speak well of us. Mt.5v10-12. 23v19-39. Lk.6v26.

CHAPTER 3. THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRIES, THEIR GIFTS AND WORK. Eph.4v11.

In 1Cor.12v18,28., we read that God has "set" the members in the body according to His will and plan, "kathos ethelesen." "Set" is "etheto," the aorist indicative middle of "tithemi," the middle voice indicates that God did it for His own use, and "kathos ethelesen," for His own will, plans and purposes. In 1Cor.12v28., Paul again uses the aorist indicative middle "etheto," to emphasise that God has "set" the ministries in the body for His purposes. It is, therefore, essential for the Church members and ministries to find out what God desires them to do, and not just try to fulfil their own plans. Theologians who state that God no longer places miraculous ministries in the Church, resist God's will, and refuse to accept His Divine appointments, and persecute His ministries. The Divine "Woe," is upon them. Lk.11v46-52. Rom.9v20.

We will limit our discussion to the ministry gifts mentioned both in 1Cor.12v28. and Eph.4v11., that is, apostles, prophets, teachers who are pastors as well, and evangelists. We must remember that people with the same ministry gift can vary very considerably in their spiritual authority and power. Gal.2v6-9. 2Cor.11v5. 12v11. A Christian can have a prophetic or teaching ministry that is only for the local church, whereas others, like Barnabus, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen and Saul, Acts.13v1., had such great ministries that they were called of God to establish infant churches in the faith. In the same way an evangelist may have such a great and conspicuous ministry that he travels outside of his local area, at the direction of God, to evangelise and establish churches. We also need to note that all the higher ministries possess, in greater or less measure, the lower ministries,

indeed, one could not be an apostle unless they had some prophetic, teaching and evangelistic gift above the normal standard expected in a local ministry.

In Acts.13v1-4., we see Paul and Barnabus, both of whom had prophetic and teaching ministries, given an apostolic mission after their tender and faithful oversight of the infant church at Antioch and other places. Unless the local church gives pride of place to developing prophetic ministries, it will never see genuine New Testament apostolic ministry. The local church, not a theological institute, good as some of these may be, is God's supreme choice for the development of His ministry gifts, and this development can only take place where there is a genuine New Testament body ministry. This is why Paul urged Christians to seek after prophecy and the revelation gifts and to act as a complete body. 1Cor.12v1 to 14v40.

A. "FIRSTLY APOSTLES."

We read in 1Cor.12v28., that apostles are "placed, appointed, and set in the Church by God," and as long as the Church exists God will exercise His prerogative. Apostles, like all the other ministries, are permanently set in the Church, "en tei ecclesia," by God during this age. It is only rank unbelief and a resistance to God's Word and Spirit that makes Christians say that God has amended this Scripture, and now only appoints non-miraculous ministries. God looks upon apostolic ministry as the most important ministry of the Church. Who are we to resist His will?

In the New Testament we see the chief apostle, our Lord Jesus Christ, Heb.1v2.; then there are the twelve apostles who had a unique position, and were chosen by Christ after a night of prayer. Mk.3v13-19. Lk.6v12-16. Mt.10v1-5. Acts.1v13,26. After the apostasy of Judas, the remaining eleven apostles taught others their hallowed memories of Christ's life, glory, and His public and private teaching, they also enjoyed additional special revelation and outstanding personal spiritual experiences. See Acts.1v1-4., for Christ's 40 days of ministry to them after His resurrection. It is interesting to note how many brothers were in the twelve, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew; James and his brother John; Philip seems to have been Bartholomew's brother, otherwise known as Nathanael, Lk.6v14. with Jn.1v43-51.; James the son of Alphaeus could have been the brother of Matthew as well as the brother of Judas, not Iscariot. Tradition says that James the son of Alphaeus was brother to Matthew, Simon Zealotes, and Judas, not Iscariot. Lk.6v16. Families, who have learned to live together and love one another, can be really used by God; they are a strong unit for God, if they keep close to Him.

There are other apostles besides the original twelve mentioned in the New Testament, Matthias, Acts.1v26.; Paul and Barnabus, 1Cor.9v5,6. Acts.14v4,14. Gal.2v9.; Apollos, 1Cor.4v6-9.; Timothy and Silas, 1Thes.1v1. 2v6.. "Messengers" in Greek can sometimes mean "apostles," Epaphroditus and Titus could have been apostles, the word for "messenger" in Phil.2v23. is "apostolos," and "messengers" in 2Cor.8v23 is "apostoloi," it could mean that Titus and Epaphroditus were "sent-ones" of the churches as distinct from the "sent-ones" of God, but they could have been apostles for God as well as men. James the Lord's half brother, also became an apostle. Gal.1v19. 2v6. James1v1. It is also possible that Andronicus and Junia were apostles, they had been Christians before Paul, and had suffered imprisonment with him it seems from the words "fellow-prisoners." Rom.16v7. "Of note among the apostles" could mean "highly esteemed among the apostles," but it probably more likely that they were "distinguished among the apostles," or literally, "stamped, marked, bearing a mark, among the apostles." They had by their suffering for Christ certainly fulfilled an essential qualification for apostleship. 1Cor.4v9-13. If Junia was an apostle, it could mean that there was one woman apostle. Church leaders of the first few centuries have written that Junia was a woman, and that she was also an apostle. Leaving all conjecture aside, we see around 20 apostles in the New Testament Scriptures.

"Apostle" was used by the Greeks to speak of any responsible person "sent" by someone who did a job for them. There were throughout the Middle East thousands of people called "apostles" in the business and political world, who were sent to do work for their master or ruler. "Apostle" means literally "one sent forth," from "apo" meaning "from," and "stello" meaning "to send." Apostles in the Church are, and were, the messengers, workers and "sent-ones" of God, with "a mission," "apostolee," from God. Acts.1v25. Rom.1v5. 1Cor.9v2. Gal.2v8. The ministries of prophet, teacher and evangelist may be "sent" on a mission by God, as were the ministries of Acts.13v1., and Agabus and Philip, but this does not mean that they had the ministry or authority of apostles. Apostles were Christians who were sent by God with His full-delegated authority, and fully equipped by God to found and care for churches. The New Testament shows the ministry of apostles consisted of the following qualities and gifts.

1. "The most eminent Apostles" had great spiritual power and spiritual revelation from Christ. 2Cor.11v5. 12v11.

A miraculous ministry was an essential part of apostolic ministry, whether a person was a major or minor apostle. Apostles had a heavenly power and commission that manifested itself in miracles, it was not a formal title, it was a ministry and commission from Christ. Gal.1v1. 2Cor.12v12. 1Cor.9v1,2. Col.1v11. The miracles that God performed through apostles gave them great ability to win converts and found churches. The "chiefest apostles" also had a great prophetic revelation from God, and it seems that it was this difference in degree of revelation ministry that made the difference between major and minor apostles. 1Cor.9v1,2. 2Cor.11v5. 12v11,12. It is only those who have had this kind of tremendous revelation of God, and from God, who can stand true in the malicious persecution that comes against those who have a truly apostolic ministry. Apostles

had Christ's truth and mighty gifts and keys of authority to open doors of blessing and healing, but it was all because of God's grace. Mt.16v19. 18v18,19. Jn.20v23. Jesus alone has the keys to eternal life, or death. Rev.1v18. Rev.3v7. Is.22v22.

2. Apostles had a God-given ability to pastor churches.

What the young apostles of Christ lacked in age they received through contact with their Lord, and through His gifts. They later exercised a pastoral care of the flock, as we see from Christ's instructions to Peter. Jn.21v15-17. Once a church was founded the work of an apostle was pastoral, so apostles needed great fruits of character and a real love for their converts. They had to be spiritual fathers to the flock, not just teachers; Paul said that the Corinthians had many teachers, but not many fathers. 1Cor.4v15. Paul speaks of "all patience," and "much patience." 2Cor.6v4. 12v12. Great power demands great grace, and the need for tenderness towards God's babes. Acts.4v33. Gal.4v19. 1Cor.9v1. We see from 1Thes.2v5-13., the tender feelings that Paul and his associates had towards their converts, it is an example that every ministry should imitate. There was no flattery, covetousness, or self-seeking, by Paul and his companions; they were gentle and affectionate to their converts. The whole aim of the apostolic ministries was to bring people into living contact with God, and to establish Christian fellowships that were dominated by "agape" love. Paul totally rejected any thought of glorifying himself, or of increasing his sphere of influence, or of establishing a personal kingdom or denomination. He recognised that apostolic ministry demanded a tender love for people, and a willingness to give his all for the welfare and blessing of people, just as his Lord had done. 1Thes.2v8.

3. Apostles were responsible for the foundation of Christian doctrine.

Apostles laid the necessary foundation of faith, we read in Acts.2v42., that the converts at Jerusalem "continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine." Eph.3v5. God fully equipped His Church with the doctrine for this age, at the start of this age, so no one can now lay claim to new doctrine outside of the Scriptures. Anyone who does so charges God with folly, because they suggest that God allowed His Church to carry on without vital truth for nearly 2,000 years. The Scriptures are the only foundation for doctrine and practice; any claim to vital new revelation on doctrine should be treated as heretical. New doctrinal revelation is not given today, even to people with a genuine apostolic ministry. Eph.2v20. 3v5. Rev.22v18,19. Acts.15v28. 1Cor.2v13. 1Thes.4v15. 1Jn.5v9-13. We can receive personal guidance from God, but not new doctrinal revelation.

The apostles were inspired in their doctrine, because they received it directly from Jesus, but they were not infallible in other things. Peter denied his Lord, and on another occasion had to be corrected by Paul. Lk.22v54-62. Gal.2v6,11-14. Acts.14v15. From Acts.17v10-12., we see that the Bereans carefully examined Paul's apostolic teaching in the light of the Scriptures, and they were said to be "noble-minded" because of this. These sincere people believed Paul's teaching, when they found that it was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and was wholly in agreement with God's previous revelations to His children. 1Thes.5v21. 1Jn.4v1-5. Heb.8v5. 10v1. The vague shadows of the Old Testament were illuminated by divine revelation. Eph.3v1-11. The apostles taught eternal Old Testament moral truth with the new Christian truth, this truth was passed on to other Christians with a teaching ministry. We see Timothy teaching local elders in 2Tim.2v2.. Paul had valuable helpers who were able to assist him in the foundation and care of churches. Acts.17v10-15. Col.4v7. etc.

4. Apostles had a God-given ability to develop spiritual ministry in their converts.

Apostles experienced in some measure certain aspects of prophetic ministry, particularly in the impartation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to Christians. Paul wanted to visit the Roman church in order to share and impart some "spiritual grace-gift," "charisma pneumatikon," to them. Rom.1v10,11. The first essential was to get the converts baptised in the Holy Spirit and manifesting spiritual gifts, so that they could edify themselves and minister Christ's power and love to others. Acts.1v4-8. 2v4. 8v15-18. 9v17. 10v44-48. 19v1-6. Paul did not just give intellectual teaching on doctrine, essential as this is, he brought his converts into a living experience of God, His gifts, and His truth. Paul, like Moses of old, had the power and authority to impart spiritual gifts and spiritual ministry. Deut.34v9.

We see from Col.2v1-5., that Paul watched over the condition of churches by the revelation gifts of the Holy Spirit, and exercised the gift of faith in prayer to transform the lives of Christians he had never met in the flesh. Gal.4v19. In Cor.5v1-5., we see that Paul was present in spirit in the Corinthian Church, when the man who had committed incest with his father's wife was being disciplined, and he exercised spiritual power in that discipline. We need to remember that Paul did not only rely upon spiritual revelation for knowledge about the churches under his care, he also wrote letters, and relied on the reports of others about the spiritual progress of his converts.

5. Apostles were responsible for appointing elders in the churches they founded.

The New Testament states that Paul ordained elders in all the churches that he founded, and instructed Titus and Timothy to do the same and told them the qualifications that an elder must have. Titus.1v5-10. 1Tim.3v1-7. Acts.14v23. However, their choice was not autocratic or arbitrary, they chose those who the local Christians had confidence in. The popular will of the local Christians was prayerfully considered, for they knew which leaders were trustworthy, godly, wise and spiritual, and to whom the Holy Spirit had given a definite ministry. The advice and agreement of the local people was sought, and they nominated those who had the necessary qualifications of character and spirituality to perform this ministry.

The local church, then, had an important say in the ordination of both elders and deacons. Acts.1v25,26. 6v2-6. 14v23. Elders were chosen by the popular vote, and ordained by elders as well as apostles, in the will of the Holy Spirit. Acts.20v28. 14v23. 1Tim.3v2-13. 4v14. In Acts.14v23., "appointed," is "cheirotoneo," the aorist active participle of "cheirotoneo" from "cheirotoneo," which means "extending the hand," it is derived from "cheir," "hand," and "teino," "to stretch." It means "to vote and elect by a show of hands," and as in 2Cor.8v18,19., to appoint with the approval of an assembly of people. Ellicott says of Acts.14v23.: "The word for ordained occurs in the New Testament here and in 2Cor 8v19., where it is translated 'chosen' and certainly seems to imply popular election (election by a show of hands), which is, indeed, the natural meaning of the word." Quote ends. The seven deacons of Acts.6v1-6., were first selected by the Jerusalem church, and then chosen, "eklego, and appointed, "kathistemi," by the apostles, this was almost certainly what Paul did in Acts.14v23., and what he advised Titus to do in Titus.1v5..

Paul appointed the elders of local churches in the churches that he had founded; modern prelates, who have never founded a church and never manifested spiritual gifts, cannot claim the right to ordain elders, never mind the exclusive right of apostolic succession. There is no such thing as humanly ordained apostolic succession, it is only a miraculous ministry of the most conspicuous kind that proves a person has apostolic ministry. From Acts.13v1-4., we see that the leaders of the church at Antioch gave themselves to prayer and fasting for guidance in their work for God, and when God revealed His will for Paul and Barnabus, they earnestly prayed for their ministries, and sent them on their divinely appointed work. In like manner, Paul and the local church, not only appointed spiritual and godly men; they prayed earnestly for them, that God might impart further blessing and ministry to them. 1Tim.4v14. 5v22. Acts.6v6. 13v1-3. 14v23. 2Tim.1v6.

N.B. 1. The time lapse before elders were appointed by apostles.

We see from Acts.14v23., and the instructions to Timothy and Titus, that there was a definite time lapse between a church being founded and ministries being appointed in that church. Time was given for ministry in the local church to develop, there was no premature ordination and so mistakes were cut out.

In Acts.13v1-3. we see the Christians at Antioch were guided by prophets and teachers from outside for about three years before their own local ministries had developed enough for God to send Paul and Barnabus on their way to other work. From Acts.14v23., we see that Paul ordained elders within about two years of churches being founded. It appears that up to this time the Christians had gathered together for Bible study, prayer, the Lord's supper and fellowship, and the baptism of new converts, without any formally appointed elders or deacons. Christ Himself made leaders in these churches by giving His ministry gifts to some of them, and when these divinely given ministries manifested themselves, they were accepted and recognised by the people, and then appointed by Paul. Ministries were proved before they were appointed. 1Tim.3v10. God Himself sets ministries in the Church, men's ordination does not mean a thing if God is not in it, the churches should recognise those who God has ordained and given a ministry gift. Acts.20v28.

N.B. 2. Apostles were not despotic; they exercised the superintendence of love.

A prolonged apostolic mission in a city did not hinder the body ministry of the local church, or the development of ministries, it encouraged both. Paul did not stay in a place to be the permanent pastor of the flock, he always appointed local elders to guide and care for the local church. Paul followed our Lord's direction in Mt.20v25-28., and never "lorded it over" or dictated to the local Christians. He had the humility to look upon himself as, "the least of the apostles," and "less than the least of all saints," and even as "the chief of sinners," and this genuine humility won people's hearts to him, and accomplished far more than autocratic, bombastic claims could ever have done. 1Cor.15v9. Eph.3v8. 1Tim.1v15.

Paul founded and established churches and moved on, and then returned to confirm and give spiritual guidance and oversight to the churches, but he never took over the rule of the local church from the local elders. Paul stayed in Ephesus almost 3 years, and at Corinth for about 18 months to evangelise these strategic areas, not just to pastor the flocks formed by his evangelism. At Ephesus he had a mission in the hall of Tyrannus to reach all the district. Acts.19v8,9. This was the place for Paul's daily evangelism, and seekers came to him there. The Codex Beza adds "from the fifth hour to the tenth," that is, from just before midday and the noon meal to the close of the afternoon. What a Challenge! Paul had at least five hours evangelism a day in a public building or lecture hall. Paul needed quite a time to fully evangelise these strategic areas of evangelism, with their constant change of population. The local Christians would doubtless gather to listen to Paul's superlative theological discussions, and they would learn much from them. However, Christian fellowship and body ministry could not take place in a public meeting place for evangelism, so the Christians gathered in homes like that of Priscilla and Aquila. 1Cor.16v19. Acts.18v26. The Christian fellowship had plenty of scope at night, and Paul would do his very best to inspire body ministry and develop spiritual ministries, he was not in agreement with one-man ministry in Christian fellowship groups. 1Cor.12. etc. One-man ministry in a local church is wrong, even if, like the apostle Paul, a man has all the ministry gifts; body ministry is God's way for developing spiritual ministries and healthy Christians.

The elders were local men, the apostles itinerant men.

Through their itinerant ministries the apostles cemented fellowship between the churches, but they did not constitute either central government, or even an organisational fellowship of churches. Apostles, prophets and elders had the work of overseeing the flock of God, but they were not to dominate it, their work was the

superintendence of love. Apostles were not to lord it over God's Church, "all ye are brethren and one is your Master, even Christ." Mt.23v8,10. Indeed, they were to humble themselves as little children, otherwise they would not even enter the kingdom of God. Mt.18v3. They were to be the servants of God's people, not their lords. Mt.20v20-28. Jn.13v4-17. They were not to be put upon a pedestal and called Rabbi. Mt.23v1-8. The aim of these ministries was to bring people into a living experience of God and develop ministries among them; they helped God's babes to grow into mature Christians. They showed the same grace to young Christians in developing their ministries, as God had shown to them in developing their ministries.

After Paul had appointed the first elders in a local church, it was the responsibility of the local church and local elders to appoint other elders, as it became necessary or desirable. As long as a person had the necessary qualifications, they could be an elder; there is no restriction as to numbers in the New Testament. It is only when men follow worldly principles of government and one-man ministry that a plurality of elders becomes inconvenient, in spiritual oversight a plurality is a blessing not a hindrance. Prov.11v14. 24v6.

If a person has an apostolic ministry they manifest signs, wonders and miracles, and are also able to found, establish and care for churches. The office is proved by results, not by hollow claims. Paul had to refute the false claims of false apostles ("pseudapostoloi") in his day. 1Cor.11v13. Paul also speaks not only of the power, gifts and revelations, but also the sufferings and persecutions that are the essential characteristics of true apostolic ministry. 2Cor.11v1. to 12v21. 1Cor.9v1-27. Christians need to pray continually that God will raise up truly apostolic ministries in these dark days, so that the fullness of Christ's ministry can shine out to the world. Mt.9v35-38.

B. "SECONDARILY PROPHETS." 1Cor.12v28.

A prophetic ministry is distinct from a ministry of preaching or teaching, even though prophets may exhort, preach and teach, as did Judas and Silas, both of whom were prophets. Acts.15v32. Prophetic ministries are also not to be confused with Christians who possess the simple gift of prophecy, which is for edification, exhortation and comfort. 1Cor.14v3. A prophetic ministry possesses not only the simple gift of prophecy, but also a continual manifestation of gifts of revelation from God. A Christian in a local church may have the simple gift of prophecy and occasional manifestations of gifts of revelation, but it does not mean that they have a prophetic ministry. This difference in gifting will become clear as we consider the essentials of prophetic ministry.

Under the New Covenant there was a significant change in the function of prophetic ministry. The Old Testament prophet and priest came between the people and God, but in the New Testament all children of God can have personal guidance direct from their heavenly Father. Rom.8v14-17. Heb.8v13. We have the right, and duty, to reject any "guidance" from another person about which God has not personally told us. Prophets may be, and are, used by God to confirm guidance, but never to guide us against our own revelations from the Lord.

1. A New Testament prophet can warn of dangers and needs ahead.

A person with a prophetic ministry may predict major events in the world, or future events in the Church, as Agabus did in the case of the famine, and of Paul's imprisonment. Acts.11v27-30. 21v4,10-14. However, as we have said. prophets in the New Testament are not intended to give direction to order, Christians are intended to seek God for themselves.

The Scriptures reveal that prophets were sent by God to warn of divine judgement, or natural catastrophe. Gen.6v18-22. 18v17-33. 19v12,13. 41v1-44. 2Kings.4v8-17. with 8v1-6. Acts.17v9-11,21-25. 30v34,44. God can warn of war and persecution. 1Sam.23v9-12. 25v5,6. 2Kings.3v4-27. 6v8-12. Mt.16v21-24. Lk.22v31-34,54-62. A prophet can reveal spies and traitors in God's flock, 1Kings.14v5,6. Jn.6v70,71., and the evil thoughts and plans in the minds of opponents before they are spoken. Lk.14v1-6. Mk.2v5-8. Lk.5v22. Mt.22v15-22. God reveals people's hearts and exposes a hypocritical veneer. 1Sam.16v6,7.

2. Prophetic ministry can keep God's Church clean and in victory.

By the revelation of sin in the churches. Acts.5v1-12. 2Kings.5v20-27. Joshua.7v1-26. The apostle John had the spiritual condition of the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia revealed to him, the bad as well as the good. Rev.2 and 3. The New Testament apostles on occasions had judgement ministries similar to the Old Testament prophets; they had the authority to discipline by God's power. This is a rare but real New Testament occurrence. Mt.16v18,19. 18v15-19. Jn.20v21-23. Lk.10v19. Acts.5v1-11. 13v6-12. 1Tim.1v20. 1Cor.5v1-5.

By the restoration of the wounded and spiritually sick. Jesus desires restoration, not judgement, and prophetic ministry can reveal those with deep spiritual needs and meet their needs by divine power and grace. Gal.6v1,2. Phil.2v1,2. Heb.12v12-29.

3. Prophetic ministry can greatly help and comfort people, and inspire them trust God.

Prophetic ministry can inspire discouraged people. Christ came to heal the crushed and broken in heart, the revelation of the secrets of people's hearts can inspire them to seek and trust God. Jn.1v48,49. Lk.13v12-16. Is.61v1-3. Lk.4v18,19.

God can expose the unconverted sinner's heart and bring them to Himself. 1Cor.14v24,25. 2Sam.12v1-9. John.1v40-51. 4v16-19,29. The very day I wrote this I saw a person amazed and challenged through the secrets

of her heart being revealed, and she found Christ as her Saviour as a result. Prophetic ministry of this kind has a mighty evangelistic ministry, as we clearly see in John.4., from our Lord's conversation with the woman at the well. Also see Acts.9v10-18. and 10v48. etc.

4. Prophetic ministry can reveal God's strategic plans and confirm God's call.

A prophetic revelation from God guided Paul and his party to evangelise Macedonia, with great results. Acts.16v1-15. The Church needs to know God's strategic plans. Acts.8v26,29. 10v1-48. 13v2. 2v5. 4v4. Samuel confirmed his prophecy of God's call to Saul through many words of knowledge about future events. 1Sam.9v19. 10v1-16. Paul's conversion and call to God's work was confirmed by Ananias, who told Paul of his experience on the Damascus Road, and also ministered divine healing to him. Acts.9v17-25. 13v2.

5. Prophetic ministry is not limited by time or space in its ministrations.

Since the Holy Spirit is not limited by time or space, His ministrations to us, and through us, are not limited either. We can have the revelation of things to come, and minister to God's people at distance by His mighty power. Col.2v5. Gal.4v19. The Holy Spirit can take us through the time barrier to behold and live in the past, as He did with Moses to see the creation being made, and possibly with Ezekiel to see the sins which brought about the captivity, or see far distant events in the future as He did with Daniel and other prophets. Gen.1v1 to 2v25. Ezek.8v1-3. Dan. 7all. Is.53.all. Rev. all. The gift of faith can enable prophets to minister the powers of the age to come to needy people whether they are present or absent. All Christians can expect this to take place, but it occurs more regularly and at a greater level of authority with prophetic ministry.

6. Prophetic ministry is intended to develop spiritual ministry in Christians.

Prophetic ministry has an important place in the local church in the development of spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries. It is very sad to see the majority of Christians without spiritual gifts or spiritual ministry, because prophetic ministries have been absent, despised, stifled and opposed. Prophets have a delegated authority and power, and can be the channel of God in the impartation of spiritual gifts, even as Moses was to Joshua, Deut.34v9.; and Elijah to Elisha. 1Kings.19v16,19-21. 2Kings.2v9-14. N. B. v9. "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." Jesus imparted spiritual gifts to His apostles and the 70, Lk.9v1,2. 10v1-9., Paul ministered spiritual gifts to the Ephesians and Romans, Acts.19v1-6. Rom.1v10,11., and Paul and the elders to Timothy. 2Tim.1v6. 1Tim.4v14. Prophets, like apostles, have the responsibility to develop spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries, but they usually do not have a commission to found churches like apostles, unless like Silas, they are sent on an apostolic mission, then they become apostles, Silas was both a prophet and an apostle. Paul was a teacher with a prophetic voice, who became an apostle. Acts.15v32. 13v1-4.

Few will be led into a manifestation of the greater gifts, and spiritual ministry through formal ministry and formal meetings. Christians cannot be led into a deep spiritual experience of God and His gifts merely by preaching doctrine, you have to have to spend considerable time with them in prayer and ministry. A pulpit can be a means of real self-deception, it is not pretty sermons but spiritual power ministered in love that counts with God. It is only as we minister directly with needy people that the depth of our ministry is revealed. A pulpit ministry that never directly ministers to people's needs, is an unscriptural delusion. Love came down from heaven to minister even to death, and we should come down from our pulpits to minister and care. Where possible, every sermon should be followed by informal ministry to those in need. Christ's love can never be ministered at a safe distance. True prophetic ministry requires real prayer, caring love and sacrifice, and perhaps the demands and exacting qualifications for this ministry are one reason why there is a lack of prophets in the Church.

The Relation Between the Growth of a Christians Spirit to Spiritual and Prophetic Ministry.

N.B. BOTH JOHN AND JESUS "WAXED STRONG IN SPIRIT." Lk.1v80. 2v40._

As Christians our spirits can, and should grow, and give us not only a greater appreciation of spiritual things, but also a greater ability to minister spiritual life to others. The Majority Text uses the identical Greek words to state that John Baptist and Jesus and not only grew physically strong, but spiritually strong as well as God prepared them for their ministries. We read in Luke.1v80., of John Baptist, "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit," this strong growth continued during his years in the wilderness. And in the Majority Text of Luke 2v40., we read that Jesus, "grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." God the Father educated our Lord for thirty years at Nazareth, to prepare Him for His ministry. Is.49v1-3. 50v3-7. "Waxed strong," is "ekrataiouto," the imperfect passive of "krataioo," 2901, to strengthen, to make strong, the passive means to be strengthened, to grow strong, to be made strong. The Father and Holy Spirit made Jesus strong for ministry. "krataioo," only occurs in Lk.1v80. 2v40. 1Cor.16v13. and Eph.3v16.

The words "in spirit," in Lk.2v40., are omitted from most modern translations, the Jamieson, Fausett and Brown commentary states that they are left out without sufficient reason and evidence. "In spirit" is "pneumati," it is omitted from Aleph and B from the fourth century, D and W from the fifth century, L from the eighth century, N from the sixth century; some Latin manuscripts, p eighth century, and C twelfth century; the Coptic (Egyptian) versions, third and fourth centuries; the Sinaitic Syriac, fourth century; and Origen, who died 254.

However, the evidence that "en pneumati" is in the original texts is extremely strong, for it is found in all the remaining uncials including, A, Theta, Psi, 053, etc; every known cursive copy and the massive Byzantine

evidence includes it; so do the f1 and f13 codex compilation of important manuscripts by Kirsop Lake; all the Lectionaries; some Latin manuscripts (aur, f, q), Aureus 7th century (aur), the Brixianus 6th century (p), the Monacensis 7th century (q); the Syriac Peshitto, second century; the Syriac Harklean, the seventh century; and the Gothic version, from the fourth century. Many early Church fathers quote or discuss "pneumati" and accept it as correct; Leontius of Cyprus, 6th century; Theodoret, died 466; Epiphanius, died 403; Cyril of Alexandria, died 444; Theodore of Mopsuestia, died 428; and others.

Dean John W. Burgon, states in his book, "The Causes of Corruption of the New Testament Text. (In unholy hands on the Bible page B-95,96.) that "en pneumati," "in spirit," was deliberately removed from Lk.2v40. in some manuscripts by orthodox Christians, because they feared that those who denied our Lord's deity would use this text to say, "How could Jesus be perfect God, if it says that His spirit waxed strong." Burgon records that Epiphanius states (2:36) that some of the orthodox, out of jealousy for our Lord's divinity, eliminated from Luke.19v41. the record that the Saviour wept.

Burgon goes on, "Codexes B Aleph D may be regarded as specimens of Codexes which have been once and again passed through the hands of such a corrector. S. Luke.2v40. records concerning the infant Saviour, that 'the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.' By repeating the same expression, which already had been applied to the childhood of John the Baptist (1:80), it was clearly the design of the Author of Scripture to teach that the Word 'made flesh' submitted to the same laws of growth as every other man. The body grew; the spiritual part waxed strong. The consequence might have been foreseen. Certain of the orthodox were ill advised enough to erase the word 'pneumati' (spirit) from the copies of Lk.2v40. And, lo, at the end of 1500 years four 'corrected' copies, two versions, one Greek father, survive to witness to this ancient fraud. And because it is Aleph, B,D,L, Origen, and the Latin, the Egyptian, and the Lewis versions, which are without the word 'pneumati,' Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf, and the revisers jump to the conclusion that it is a spurious accretion to the Text. They ought to reverse the proceeding, and to recognise in the evidence that this is one more indication of the untrustworthiness of certain witnesses. How can it be supposed that this word 'pneumati' ever obtained its footing in the Gospel? We are assured by them that it was imported from St. Luke 1v80. We answer, How does the phrase 'ekrataiouto pneumati' in 1v80. explain that 'pneumati' now can be found in every known copy of the Gospels except four, if in these 996 places out of a thousand it is an interpolation? Is it credible that all the remaining uncials, and every known cursive copy, besides all the Lectionaries, should have been corrupted in this way? Is it credible to suppose that the truth should survive exclusively at this time in only four uncials, B, Aleph from the fourth century, D from the sixth, and L from the eighth?" End of quote.

God the Father knew that both John Baptist and our Lord needed thirty years of "waxing strong in spirit," before they were ready for their ministries." Lk.1v80. 2v40. God will give us time to grow, for He is a thoughtful Father who will not overburden us, and "much more" than any earthly parent will wait for, and watch over, our spiritual development, and will graciously and kindly recognise and make allowances for our immaturity. Even in our immaturity we can know our Heavenly Father's "much more" generous giving, and His outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Lk.11v9-13. It is a great pity that the Church is emphasising intellectual growth, but neglecting growth in spiritual strength and power, strength of spirit is an essential part of prophetic ministry. However, we must always remember that God's spiritual gifts and ministry gifts are not products of our own personality, they are "charismata," grace gifts from our Heavenly Father.

The need to know the Christian ABC of theology to grow as Christian babes.

In 1Pet.2v2., Peter tells us to "Intensely yearn for the unadulterated milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." All Christians need food for the mind, soul and spirit, God's babes need God's milk, "gala," of the Word, the foundation truths Paul mentioned in Heb.6v1-3.; mature Christians need the solid food, ("broma," 1Cor.3v2., "stereas trophes," Heb.5v12-14.) of the Word of God. The foundation truths of Heb.6v1-3. are, repentance from dead works, faith towards God, doctrine about baptisms, (baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit), the laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement.

The word that Peter uses for "intensely yearn" is "epipotheo," it occurs nine times in the New Testament, and on each occasion it is used to describe intense yearning. In Rom.1v11., Paul states his intense longing to see the Romans to impart some spiritual grace gift to them. Paul uses "epipotheo" in 2Cor.9v14. to speak of the intense longing of the Jews at Jerusalem for the Gentile Corinthian Christians, and their appreciation of their generous gifts. In Phil.1v8,26., Paul said that both he and Epaphroditus greatly longed for renewed fellowship with the Philippians. In 1Thes.3v6. Timothy brought the news of the great desire of the Christians at Thessalonica to see Paul and his helpers, and Paul tells them that he greatly longed to see them too. In 2Tim.1v2-4., Paul said that he longed to see Timothy, his beloved son in the faith. In 2Cor.5v2., Paul speaks of his great longing to be clothed with his new heavenly body at the Christ's return. There are several possible translations for James.4v5.; Alford feels that, "The Spirit that He placed in us jealously desires us," is the best one, and quotes, Deut.32v10. Num.35v34. and Ezek.36v27., to show God's jealous caring love. The choice is between the human spirit, and

the Holy Spirit, who takes up His dwelling in us. Finally, in 1Pet.2v2., Peter exhorts the babes in Christ to earnestly desire the genuine milk of God's Word, so that they can become spiritually strong. All Christians can and should grow spiritually strong in this way.

"Waxing strong in spirit" is an essential prerequisite for the operation of a powerful prophetic ministry, the divinely given gift of prophetic ministry is developed by divine education, through continuous manifestations of revelation wisdom and knowledge, and acts of divine power. The human response to this education should be submission to God, prayer and fasting, and a deep study of the Word of God, for even the greatest prophets can err if they do not know the correct meaning of the Scriptures, just as John Baptist did when he asked the Lord Jesus, "Art thou He that should come? or look we for another." Jesus asked John to consider the wisdom and knowledge imparted in His preaching to the poor, and the signs, wonders and miracles that He did, all of which fulfilled prophecy and proved that He was the promised Messiah. Mk.12v24,27. Lk.7v19-23. N.B. v22 with Is.8v18. 11v1-3. 29v18,19. 35v3-10. 42v1-7. 60v1-3. 61v1-3.

N. B. It is essential to grasp what the Scriptures say about the make-up of the human personality.

The Bible states that we are a soul that possesses a body and spirit; the body puts us in contact with earth, and the spirit puts us in contact with heaven. 1Thes.5v23. Heb.4v12. Rev.1v10. 4v2. Many Christians are so ignorant about spiritual things and spiritual gifts, that the mere mention of the word "spirit," makes them suspicious and they think it is "spiritualism." We should remember the " God is a Spirit," Jn.4v24., and His good angels are spirits, Heb.1v13,14., and everybody, including Christians, have an organ called their spirit. The Bible condemns the seeking of evil spirits via Spiritualism and Witchcraft, not spiritual experience from God. We need to know the following facts.

1. Our spirit was renewed at conversion.

When we became Christians, our spirit, which was dead to God because of our sins, was "quicken," or "born again," and we received the spirit of adopted sons, which enables us to contact God and cry "Abba," that is, "Father." Christians can, and should, experience sitting in heavenly places in Christ through their renewed spirit. Eph.2v1-6. 6v10-20. Jn.1v12,13. 3v3-13. Rom.8v14-19. Col.3v1-3. Peter tells us in 2Pet.1v4., that we are partakers, "koinonoi," that is, "sharers," of the divine nature. Our spiritual rebirth at conversion enables us to receive the life of Jesus through our renewed spirit, and to share His life with others, and minister to those in need of spiritual and physical help. The needy world is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Jesus earnestly desires us to communicate His life to them.

2. Our spirit is our means of contact with God and our worship of God.

In Prov.20v27., Solomon said, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," it is the means whereby God lights the human personality, and lights the world through that personality. The spiritual blessings that come to Christians from God come upon their spirits. Eph.1v3. 5v19. Col.1v9. 3v16. 1Pet.2v5. God intends Christians to experience spiritual blessings and manifest spiritual gifts, and sing divinely inspired spiritual songs. 1Cor.12v1. 14v1,37. Eph.1v3. 5v19. Col.3v16. However, Christians can be carnal, "sarkikos," instead of spiritual, "pneumatikos." 1Cor.2v13-15. 3v1-4. The spiritual Christian can, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, discern things through their spirit, whereas a carnal Christian may have great difficulty in doing the same. Sowing to the flesh ends in corruption and spiritual death, whereas sowing to the spirit, that is, obeying God and living in communion with God in the spirit, results in eternal blessedness. Gal.6v1,7,8.

God desires His Church to be a spiritual house, spiritually equipped to fight the evil spiritual forces that come against it. 1Pet.2v5. Eph.6v12. Jesus said that only worship in spirit and truth is acceptable to God, and that unless a person's spirit is in touch with God, their worship is in vain. Intellectual knowledge of the truth is not sufficient, there has to be a living contact with God in spirit. Mt.15v8. Mk.7v6. Jn.4v21-24. The people who opposed Christ prayed regularly, but their worship and prayer was in vain. True spiritual worship is not lip worship, it is heart worship linked to God by vital spiritual contact.

Paul warns us in 2Tim.3v1,5., that one of the great perils of this day will be, a form of godliness without the power. "Form," is "morphosin," which means a shadowy pencilled outline without any reality, it is religion without contact with God. People can go through a Christian form and yet have no contact with God. God intends that prophetic ministry should bring people from intellectual knowledge of spiritual gifts and spiritual ministry, to a vital experience of God and His gifts.

3. Our spirit is the means of fellowship between Christians.

Because our spirits are "born again" and renewed we cannot only contact God, we can have fellowship with other Christians in the spirit. We need the spiritual help and companionship of other Christians otherwise we grow spiritually lonely and ineffective, even Paul found that his ministry was limited without the right kind of spiritual fellowship. 2Cor.2v12,13. We are intended to draw spiritual strength from one another as well as directly from the Lord, and this brings a real sense of dependence upon one another and a growth together in Christian love. 1Cor.12v21-26. Eph.4v11-16. The New Testament speaks of an incredibly beautiful "fellowship of the spirit," Phil.2v1-5. Philemon v6. Christianity consists of much more than an intellectual sharing of doctrinal truth, there is a fellowship and sharing of spiritual life and love in Christ, that is heaven upon earth. 1Jn.1v3,6,7. United

together with God and Christ, we can experience a heavenly oneness that is indescribably holy and beautiful. Jn.17v22-26. In the world there is a terrible spirit of competition, "the rat race," which is a by-product of sin and selfishness. People build up barriers inside themselves to protect their emotions from an evil and unloving world, and become lonely and starved within. In formal services people seldom get to really know each other, and often never experience a real sharing and fellowship of the Spirit. God desires to break down the inner barriers within us and He wants us to know, trust and love each other, and prophetic ministry is intended to facilitate this.

4. Our spirit is God's channel for giving us spiritual gifts and spiritual ministry.

The Holy Spirit communicates His spiritual gifts to us through our spirits, when He uses us to be the channel of His power, love and tenderness. He graciously gives us part of His unlimited abilities; this was the secret of Paul's ministry. Rom.7v6. 8v1,2,4,5,9-16,26,27. 15v19. 1Cor.2v4,10-14. Eph.2v18,22. Paul knew what it was to be "strengthened with might by His spirit, in the inner man," and the reality of a strong faith and a transforming experience of Christ's love because of it, and he prayed for the Ephesians to have the same experience. Paul said that the Spirit's power can do more for us than we can ask or think. Eph.3v16-21. In Rom1v9., Paul writes that he served God with his spirit. Exercise of the spirit is not exercise of the mind, notice the difference between mind and spirit in Heb.4v12,13., many preachers exercise their minds when they preach and pray, but the spiritual deadness of their preaching and praying shows that they do not exercise their spirits. Christ could say that His words were spirit and life, and so people were greatly affected by them. Jn.6v63. 7v45,46. We too should not rely on oratory, but should preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. 1Pet.1v12. James.3v1.

Jesus told His townspeople at Nazareth that He was anointed "to preach good news to the poor," "ptochois," the penniless beggars who would feel and admit their need. Jesus was anointed "to preach as an herald, deliverance to the captives." The Greek word for captives is "aichmalotois," which means "captured prisoners at spear point;" Christ was "sent," "apestalken me," to deliver these captives of sin, sickness and Satan, He was also anointed and sent to bring recovery of sight to the blind.

Jesus turned the roll of Scripture back from Is.61v1. to Is.58v6., and quoted, "to set at liberty them that are bruised," or better, "to send forth the crushed in liberty." Hallelujah! "Bruised," is "tethrausmenous," from "thrauo," it means, "to break in pieces." Praise be to God, Jesus can heal the broken in heart and body, and put all the pieces together and send them forth in liberty. All texts omit "heal the broken hearted," however this idea is included in "sending forth the crushed in liberty."

Jesus was sent and anointed "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," the year of Jubilee, the year when all captives and slaves were released, all debts were cancelled, and all lost inheritances were restored. Lev.25v8-17. This Scripture was fulfilled through the strong and loving soul of Jesus. Lk.4v21. Divine life and power poured through Him to needy people and delivered them. We see apostolic and prophetic ministry in its most perfect manifestation in our Lord's ministry.

By quoting from Is.58v6., Jesus emphasised that He was not just sent to talk, or be an out of touch holy man, He was deeply involved with peoples needs, and sent to deliver them and send them forth in liberty. We read in Is.58v5-8.: "When you fast, you make yourselves suffer; you bow your heads low like a blade of grass and spread out sackcloth and ashes to lie on. Is that what you call fasting? Do you think I will be pleased with that? v6. The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice (stop oppressing those who work for you and treat them fairly), and let the oppressed go free. v7. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives. v8. Then my favour will shine on you like the morning sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed. I will always be with you to save you; my presence will protect you on every side. v9. When you pray, I will answer you. When you call to me, I will respond. "If you put an end to oppression, to every gesture of contempt, and to every evil word; v10. if you feed the hungry and satisfy those who are in need (help those in trouble), then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon. v11. And I will always guide you and satisfy you with good things. I will keep you strong and well. You will be like a garden that has plenty of water, like a spring of water that never goes dry." (TEV etc)

From Is.58v1-14., we see that God rejects fasting and prayer, when it is formal, empty and lacking in love, and does not meet people's real needs. God informs us that the thing that energises faith and prevailing prayer is practical caring love. Gal.5v6. Our Lord's ministry enshrined the desire of God in Is.58., we read in Luke.4v18,19. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives ("aichmalotois" 164, prisoners of war at spearpoint will be released), and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, v19. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

We read in Ps.69v8,9., that Christ's love for people had driven Him to a life of fasting and prayer, so that He could be the perfect channel of His Fathers love and mercy, and He manifested the ultimate in mercy and healing gifts, and met the deep needs of all who came to Him. Jesus came to make people whole, and release them from physical, emotional and spiritual problems, and the evil forces that injure, oppress and destroy mankind. Lk.4v16-21. Jesus warned the Jews in Lk.21v24., that rejection of God's mercy would open them to Satan's merciless attacks, and result in them being taken captive at spearpoint (the future passive of "aichmalotizo"

163) and dispersed among the nations. Our Lord's broken hearted sobbing in Lk19v41-44., shows that the horrific events which took place at the destruction of Jerusalem were the very last thing that Jesus and His Father desired.

Paul tells us the secret of his powerful ministry in 2Cor.10v4,5., "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; v5. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity (the present active participle of "aichmalotizo" 163, a captive at spearpoint in war) every thought to the obedience of Christ." (KJV) Paul writes in 2Cor.10v4,5., that the weapons of our warfare and campaign, "strateias," are not of the flesh, "sarkika," that is, fleshly ability such as craft, worldly power, wisdom, and oratory. Paul states that we fight with Divine weapons, which are "mighty before God." God's spiritual gifts "tear down fortresses," and "cast down reasonings and imaginations." Even the most entrenched and seemingly impregnable citadels of Satan, that keep people from a knowledge of God, can be destroyed by the mighty gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit. Paul recognised that the battle for people's souls was in their minds and thoughts, but he did not fight with carnal reasonings, but with God's power and gifts. By these he could bring into captivity (the present active participle of "aichmalotizo" 163, take captive at spearpoint) every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Both Lk.4v18. and 2Cor.10v5., inform us, that by the power of God, Satan's dominion over people's thoughts and minds, can be broken and brought as a captive in war to Christ. God can completely heal people with broken hearts, minds and spirits, through spiritual gifts, which outpour the love, faith and power of God. A spiritual ministry is never mere talk, a person can say exactly the same words and prayers, but without a living contact with God, they will minister no spiritual blessing, and no bring no blessing, healing and release to people. 1Cor.2v4. 4v20. 1Thes.1v5. Bringing people into a living, transforming, and liberating relationship with God, is the most important function of prophetic ministry.

In the Old Testament God gave prophetic ministries to young men, like Jeremiah, Daniel, Samuel, and the young prophets of 2Kings.2v3,5., to mention but a few. The apostles of Christ, developed and manifested some of the miraculous aspects of prophetic ministry under the guidance of Christ, and these were young men. We are told in Acts.2v17,18., that God has promised to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that He will give prophecy and visions to His dear sons and daughters. Through prophetic ministry God can reveal when a timid Christian has a prophecy, and even the details of that prophecy, to encourage them to manifest spiritual gifts. If this kind of prophetic ministry is lacking in churches, the manifestation and development of spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries will be hindered.

N. B. Prophetic ministry in the last days.

In this age of grace the emphasis has been upon mercy, not Law or judgement, and so we see few acts of judgement by God through spiritual gifts, however, as this age nears its end, we will see a great increase in wickedness, and as a result more acts of judgement by spiritual gifts. We read in Rev.11v5,6., that the two witnesses at Jerusalem will have the authority and power to destroy their enemies with fire, and to smite the earth with plagues, "AS OFT AS THEY DESIRE." Prophetic ministries like Moses and Elijah will be again restored to certain chosen and anointed children of God. 2Kings1v1-18. It needs gifts like these to evangelise the militant godless countries of today, in a truly effective way. In 2Kings.13v14-19., we see that we get what we believe for, a statement which is confirmed by our Saviour in Mk.11v22-24., so let us set our faith as high and wide as the Scriptures, and we will see God do wonderful things. We already have some reliable reports of miraculous transportation as in 1Kings.18v12. and Acts.8v38-40., and miraculous protection as in Lk.4v29,30. Jn.8v59. 10v39.. Let us look to God in these last dark days to show forth His glory through mighty prophetic ministry. Mt.11v25,26. Lk.10v21.

C. "THIRDLY TEACHERS," "SOME PASTOR-TEACHERS," "ELDERS," "BISHOPS."

Unbiased authorities state with Dr. Hort, that "poimen," shepherd or pastor; "episkopos," bishop, or more accurately, overseer; "didaskalos," teacher; and "presbuteros" elder; are all speaking of the same office. The elders of the early Church were its pastors, overseers and teachers. Paul said that the elders of Ephesus had the oversight, "episkopein," of their church, that is, they were its overseers; and he charged them as shepherds, pastors and teachers to feed and care lovingly for God's flock. Acts.20v17,28-32. In 1Pet.5v1-3., Peter states that elders have to shepherd, teach and feed God's flock, in taking their oversight, "episkopountes," of His Church. In Titus.1v5-7., elders and bishops are looked upon as the same office. In Eph.4v11., the office of pastors and teachers are linked together by the construction of the Greek, "tous de poimenas kai didaskalous." The "tous de," "some as," is lacking before "didaskalous," which indicates that they were not two distinct offices. All the elders of the early Church had to be "apt to teach," and were "to feed the flock of God" with truth, so they were "teachers." The teachers mentioned third in the list in 1Cor.12v28., are undoubtedly the elders, who were to teach and lead each local church by their godly example as well as by their words. Heb.13v7. In 1Pet.5v1-5., "examples," means "patterns" of the flock.

New Testament elders were certainly not either "helpers" or "governments," which are sixth and seventh in the list in 1Cor.12v28., which obviously refer to the work of deacons. Elders had a very high authority and were very highly regarded, as can be seen from the place and regard, which the apostles gave to the elders of Jerusalem. Acts.15v4,6,22,23. Feeding and guiding the flock of God into an experience of spiritual truth, not just an

intellectual knowledge of the truth, is a truly great and important work for God, and this is why elders who pastor and teach are third in the list of the ministries of the Church.

Leaders of Christian meetings are not to be any ambitious, or ill equipped person; they should be pastor-elders with the qualifications laid down in 1Tim.3v1-7. Titus.1v5-9. and James.5v14-16.. Elders with these qualifications are to be highly esteemed, and their Scriptural teaching, experience and wisdom are to be recognised and followed. Elders, not Youngsters, should shepherd and guide our churches. God appointed wise, godly, spiritual, and mature grey-haired elders with a proven heaven-blessed spiritual ministry to shepherd and guide His sheep. Lev.19v32. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God, I am the Lord." True elders aim to bless and build up the body of Christ, not draw disciples after themselves, or cause division. They protect the flock of God not divide it, Robertson tells us that the word "poimen," shepherd, is from a root meaning to protect. Jesus said that He was the Good Shepherd who would lay down His life for His sheep. In Heb.13v25., Jesus is called "the Great Shepherd of the sheep." In 1Pet.2v25., Peter says Jesus is "the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls," and in 1Pet.5v4., Peter calls Jesus "the Chief Shepherd." Our Lord uses the verb "poimaino," to shepherd, to commission Peter in Jn.21v16., and Peter uses it in 1Pet.5v2., for other overseeing elders.

Elders will try to ensure that all things are done "decently and in order," and that both doctrine and experience are kept sound. Titus.1v5,9. Churches have to be preserved from false teachers, ambitious persons and other dangerous wolves that can harm God's flock. Titus.1v11. 2Pet.2v1. Acts.20v28-32. Elders must have a shepherds heart, full of love for God's flock; it is not enough to be an able talker, they must have a faithful and loving ministry. Spiritually lifeless intellectual talking has nothing whatever to do with a true pastoral teaching ministry. A genuine teaching ministry is a Divine gift that imparts truth with Divine life and power, and should not be confused with natural talent, human intellectual training, or oratory. This anointing can only be maintained by prayer, faith and waiting upon God. A person who has a genuine pastor-teacher ministry shuns causing division and preaches the great Scriptural fundamentals, not unprofitable doubtful theories or disputations, their ministry is particularly directed to helping young believers. Acts.8v14. 11v20. 14v21-23. 15v36. 18v27. etc. There are some more important things that we need to note regarding the ministry of elders.

1. Several Pastor-Elders guided each local church.

Leading a local church is too important, and too demanding a task for one man, as W.F.P. Burton said, "It is too much for one man." This is why several, or many elders, were put over each local church, and this is why elders are always spoken of in the plural in the context of the local church. 1Cor.12v28. Heb.13v7,17,24. 1Pet.5v1. Acts.11v30 13v1-3. 14v23. 15v4,6,22,23. This is particularly true, when, as in Paul's day, there is malicious persecution. Jerome stated that the churches were originally governed by a plurality of presbyters, but in the course of time one was elected to preside over the rest as a remedy against division. Neander says that some think that the local elders presided in rotation however; the important thing is to let Jesus preside over and direct His churches.

The New Testament informs us that there were recognised leaders of each local church, but no exclusive one-man ministry. Paul ordained elders, plural, in every church, singular. Acts.14v23. Even though 1Tim.3v2. and Titus.1v7. speak of "the bishop," "ton episkopon," and of deacons in the plural in 1Tim.3v8,10,12.; it must not be thought that each local church was governed by one elder or bishop. Paul in Titus.1v5., speaks of "elders in every city." and Heb.13v7,17. and 1Thes.5v12. speak of local Christian leaders in the plural.

Some would say that there are not enough men with the qualifications of New Testament elders to have plurality of elders in a local church. This is not correct, for many godly Jews, who loved the Scriptures, came to accept Christ, besides the 3,000 out of every nation under heaven who got converted on the day of Pentecost. Acts.2v5,41. Paul went and preached to the Jews first, and got a lot of his best elders from among them. Rom.1v16.2v9,10. If we have the intense revival and many converts which they had in the early Church, there will be more than enough converts and elder brethren, to have a plurality of elders. The New Testament churches had as many elders as desired the office and had the qualifications, there is no number or limit laid down in the Scriptures, except that there was a plurality of elders. 1Tim.3v1. The advantages of a plurality of pastor-elders over one pastor-elder are as follows.

Churches have better instruction and more spirituality with several pastor-elders.

Christians mature much more quickly when there is a diversity and variety of ministry gifts operating in the local church. What one lacks another may possess, and so the diversities of gift, evangelism, teaching, comfort, and visitation, complement each other. Even the most complete ministry, that of apostle, needs the other members of the body of Christ to be fully effective. Christ can only be manifested in all His fullness, when all parts of His Church work together as a body under Him as its Head. The local church guided by a plurality of elders has greater efficiency in evangelism, better instruction, and greater spirituality.

Churches have greater protection from wolves with several pastor-elders.

A body of elders are better equipped to protect the church from ambitious people in the church, and from persecution and false teachers from outside. Acts.20v28-32. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Prov.11v14. 24v6. Wise Christian leaders or pastors will ensure that they never run the churches on their own, but that decisions and government are shared with other responsible and spiritual people, and the local church

as a whole. Several pastor-elders also prevent the great evils of clerical pride, ambition and tyranny. Many pastors and ministers practice a monarchical form of government, and say, "I am monarch of all I survey, My right there is none to dispute." This love of power cost Satan his place in heaven. A plurality of elders also results in greater efficiency in looking after the flock of God in visitation, and a greater knowledge of people's needs, conditions and problems. This brings greater security for the flock, particular when it is under great persecution; it is more difficult to destroy the flock, when there are several or many leaders guiding each local church.

2. The Pastor-Teacher's ministry is pastoral, not dictatorial.

Pastor-elders had authority from God to oversee and guide the local church, but they did not form an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Elders are not to dictate to, or lord it over the Christians in a local church, they are to exercise the care, guidance and superintendence of love. 1Tim.3v4,5. 5v17. Titus.1v9. Acts.20v28-32. Heb.13v7,17. 1Pet.5v2. Elders are the executors of God's Word, not the legislators of their own rules. Indeed, there is no Scripture that says it was the exclusive privilege of elders to baptise converts, or preside at worship or the Lord's table, in fact the very reverse is true. The pastor-elders did not take over everything, the body ministry of the local church continued as before. The elders were not just to show their ability to minister, they had the responsibility to develop the ministries of others in the local church, and this is one of the major functions of a pastor-elder-teacher in the New Testament.

In Mt.20v25-28. and Mk.10v42-45., Jesus states that God's great ones are known by their humble service, and warns Christian leaders that they are not to lord it over, or "play the tyrant" with God's people, and instructs them to be like Him, and be humble servants of the people of God. "Lord it over," in both Matthew and Mark, is "katakuriuousin," the present indicative active of "katakuriueo," 2634, to lord it over someone, to exercise complete control, to exercise dominion, to domineer. "Exercise authority," is "katexousiazousin," the present indicative active of 2715 "katexousiazoo," 2715, to exercise authority, to wield full power over, to play the tyrant.

In 1Pet.5v3., Peter remembers our Lord's word's and uses "katakuriueontes," the present active participle of "katakuriueo," to instruct elders that that they are not to be lords over God's heritage, and instructs all God's people, to put on the apron of humility, as His Lord did at the Last Supper. Domination of others is the mark of worldly rulers, and of the demon in the man in Acts.19v13-16., who overpowered "katakuriueo," and prevailed, "ischuo," over the seven sons of Sceva, when they tried to exorcise the demon in the Name of Jesus, without any relationship with Jesus, or any authority to use His Name. "Katakuriueo" only occurs in Mt.20v25. Mk.10v42. Acts.19v6., 1Pet.5v3. Elders are not "to lord it over," over the flock of God, like worldly rulers do, they are to be loving shepherds, as Peter says in 1Pet.5v2., elders are to "feed," or better "shepherd the flock of God." The Greek word is "poimaino," that is, "to act as a shepherd," or "to tend the flocks," it occurs in Mt.2v6. Lk.17v7. Jn.21v16. Acts.20v28. 1Cor.9v7. Judev12. Rev.2v27. 7v17. 12v5. 19v5. 1Pet.5v2..

The verb "hegeomai," is used for the rule of elders, it is translated in a variety of ways in the New Testament., it primarily means, to lead, to guide, to consider, to esteem. In Phil2v3., Paul tells us that we are "to esteem" other Christians as better than ourselves; and in 1Thes.3v15., he says that we are not to consider even disorderly Christians as enemies, but look upon them as brothers. In Acts.14v12., Paul is spoken of as the chief speaker. In Acts15v22., "hegoumenous," the present participle of "hegeomai," is used as a noun, "leaders, leading men," in describing Paul and Barnabus as "leading men among the brethren." In 1Thes.5v13., Paul says that we are to "esteem," "hegeisthai," the present middle infinitive, of "hegeomai," Christian leaders very highly because of their work. In Lk.22v25-27., Jesus gives the greatest light upon the use of "hegeomai" as it is applied to Christian leaders, the word translated "chief" in v26, is "hegoumenos," the present middle participle of "hegeomai," to lead, to be the leader. Jesus says that His leaders are to be the slaves and servants of the flock, and are not even to be looked upon as "Benefactors," never mind "Lords," the greatest is to become as the youngest, and the leader as the slave. We can see, then, that though "hegemon," the noun, denoted elevated rulers, and "hegeomai," the adjective, meant leadership and rule, it was not to be in the spirit of the world, but in the spirit of Christ, who was among us as one who serves. Lk.22v27.

Vine says that "hegeomai" should be translated in Heb.13v7. and 17 as "guides," so verse 7 says, "Be mindful of those who are guiding you," and verse 17, "Give ear to those who guide you, and be willing to do what they say." The word translated "obey" in Heb.13v17. is "peitho," which means "to persuade," and Vine says, "The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority but resulting from persuasion." The teaching and suggestions of the elders are acceptable because they are seen to be reasonable, not because they are dictatorial. In Heb.13v17. "submit," is "hupеiko," which is only used here, it means "to yield under," the younger particularly are to submit themselves to the elder, but we must not forget that Peter tells us that the elders have also to submit themselves to the younger, for all have to submit themselves to each other, and all are to submit themselves to Christ. Eph.5v21. 1Pet.5v5. "Hupotasso."

In 1Thes.5v12. Paul directs the Thessalonians to appreciate, and get to know, and follow the leaders who laboured amongst them. The words "over you in the Lord," mean literally, "those who stand in front of you," the words "admonish you," mean, "to put into the mind," they gave wise counsel and put sense into the mind, sometimes a thankless and difficult task. No wonder that the writer to the Hebrews tells us to remember, and have hallowed memories of the lives of godly Christian leaders.

Another word used for the rule of elders in Titus.3v8,14., is "maintain," "proisteemi," which means, to stand before, and hence, to direct, lead, attend to, and to maintain. It speaks of care, diligence, guidance and maintenance. "Proisteemi" also occurs in Rom.12v8. 1Thes.5v12. and 1Tim.5v17., all of which speak of the thoughtful guidance and rule of the elders of a church, and in 1Tim.3v4,5,12. of the able guidance and maintenance of elders of their own families, for elders have to be able to properly guide their own families before they can guide a church. Elders have to love, develop, guide and maintain God's flock, as a good father does his own beloved family.

N. B. Elders did not have exclusive rule of the churches.

The government by elders did not exclude the whole local church participating in the management of church affairs as Acts.15. etc., makes quite clear. The rule of the local church was not left entirely in the hands of the elders, they had the spiritual oversight of the local church, but not the exclusive rule of the church, important matters were brought before the whole local church as Jesus instructed in Mt.18v15-17.. Matters were not settled by a body of elders or ministers in secret. In matters of policy all the local church could, and did, contribute and suggest answers and direction. In matters of discipline, justice was not only done, it was seen to be done by all. This kind of procedure makes all the difference between failure and success in a church. A leading Pentecostal minister has told me, that the weekly church meeting at which policy and problems are discussed and settled is one of the major reasons for the outstanding success of the Swedish Pentecostal churches, and I can well believe it. If church members cannot be trusted with decisions, there is no possibility for progress. In the early Church there were no secret sessions and unknown decisions behind locked doors; there was no clerical hierarchy. The representatives of the church at Antioch and the whole body of disciples at Jerusalem had a share in the decision concerning the relation of the Church to Judaism; it was the decision of the whole Christian community. Acts.15v1,12,30-33. 11v26,29. 14v27,28.

The elders work, however, is not just to carry out the common will of the people, all were to wait upon God for His answer, and then they were to perform the revealed desires of the Holy Spirit. Acts.15v28. The Holy Spirit made the elders overseers; they had to carry out His desires. Acts.20v28. Their first work was to watch their own spiritual condition, "take heed unto your selves," and then to the flock of God. It is for this reason that we find the elders at Antioch, gathered for prayer and waiting upon God, and to this praying and worshipping leadership God moved to direct Barnabus and Paul on an apostolic mission. These leaders led in prayer and worship, the flocks followed them and the results were amazing, may we follow their example. These church members were not dominated by their leaders, nor were they unhappy with them, they loved and trusted them for their love, genuine humility and sacrificial service. Acts.15v26.

3. Pastor-elders were usually local men who were well known and well loved.

We see from Acts.13v1-4. that mature prophetic and teaching ministries went to help and guide infant churches, and to correct things that were deficient. Titus1v5. The church at Antioch was founded by the evangelistic efforts of ordinary Christians and so the converts needed outside help to guide them into New Testament truth and experience. Outstanding Christian prophets and teachers came to help them for about three years until the ministries in the church at Antioch had developed and matured. We also know that the New Testament speaks of Christians receiving "the right hand of fellowship," and of well respected Christians with ministry gifts receiving "letters of commendation." Gal.2v9. Acts.15v25. Paul and Barnabus: Acts.18v27. Apollos: 1Cor.16v10,11. Phil.2v19-23.: Epaphroditus Phil.2v25-30.: Phoebe Rom.16v1.: Mk Col.4v10.: Titus and friends 2Cor.8v19-23. The Jewish synagogues, could, if they desired, call in a trained Rabbi; in the early Church prophets or pastor elders from other churches, could, under the direction of Christ, be sent to help either infant or mature churches. Apart from this temporary help given to infant churches, and these visits by mature ministries, we find no other rule other than the superintendence of local men. These visiting ministries were accepted and welcomed, but they certainly did not take over the exclusive permanent oversight of the churches, this was the work of the local elders as we see from Acts.20v17-38.. We see no other ruling ministries in the church at Ephesus other than the elders. Paul elected these pastor-elders out of the local church, the church did not import its permanent pastor-elders, they were local men.

In the New Testament we find no bringing in of elders or "ministers" from outside to permanently and exclusively run a local church, never mind the choosing of a minister by a centrally governed ordaining council. Mature New Testament churches did not elect strangers, of whom they knew little or nothing about, to run their churches, the pastor-elders were men who were well known for their character, talents, ministry, spirituality and personality by all the members of the local church. The practice of importing one person to take over the exclusive rule of a local church, whether it is by central government or local invitation, is unscriptural. The invitation of some well-known ministry to help with the local elders took place, but there was no setting aside of the local leadership. There was the recognition of the part that leading ministries had in the body of Christ under the guidance of Christ the Lord, but there was no surrender to them of their own responsibilities.

From the New Testament we see that the early Church ministries desired to put the local church in the hands of local people as soon as possible. Paul and his helpers appointed local leaders in 1 to 3 years of churches being founded. Without such outstanding ministries it would obviously take longer for an infant church to develop its own ministries. However, it is a tragedy when churches are still infant churches, which are full of immature baby Christians, and still in need of imported supervision, ten, twenty, thirty, or even forty years after they are founded. The problem is that some leaders want to make their congregations permanently dependent upon

them; their aim is personal or denominational kingdom building, not the spiritual growth of the Christians in their churches.

4. Our attitude to denominational churches and their ministers.

Denominational churches and their ministers must be judged on their individual merits, churches of the same denomination vary very considerably. Some churches are centres of evangelism, fellowship, and teaching; others are so far from God that they are mission fields, and have no ministries. Some denominational churches are more evangelical and Pentecostal than many Pentecostal churches, whereas others reject the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the new wine put into their old bottles causes them to burst, and the new wine spills out elsewhere.

What, then, should be our attitude to denominational churches and their ministers? We should ask ourselves the following questions. What is the spiritual condition of a church, and what does the Lord want me to do about it? Is the church an opportunity for witness, or is it a fellowship centre? Is it profitable for evangelistic work or teaching? Has the minister a ministry gift from Christ, and a good and sound Bible teaching ministry? Is he a man of prayer, able and willing to pray a prayer of faith for the sick? Does he have the qualifications of a pastor-elder laid down in 1Tim.3., Titus.1., and James.5.? Does he love his flock? Does he welcome the Holy Spirit's workings and gifts? If he does, then this man, or woman, should receive our help and support, for such a church will enjoy the guidance and blessing of God.

Even if a church or minister is spiritually dead we should not cut off all association or fellowship from them. Spirit filled Christians should lovingly witness in these churches of their experience and try to bring them into blessing. This responsibility should not be shirked. Jesus and Paul preached in synagogues until they were violently opposed, and their message rejected. Acts.18v1-11. 28v17-31. We too should be prepared to suffer persecution in witnessing about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Churches of all kinds have been transformed by the radiant witness of truly Spirit-filled Christians, and have become centres of evangelism and blessing. Those who take on this task should make sure that they have some really lively, loving and prayerful fellowship behind them, to which they can resort to for spiritual sustenance and help. However, one does not have to become a member of a lively Spirit-filled group to have fellowship with them, and be blessed of God. Membership is men's way; fellowship is God's way. Many people join the wrong ship, membership confines us within a church, fellowship reaches out to the body of Christ. If a denominational church can become a centre of blessing, it will forward God's work, and this is what we should try to achieve. Love suffers long and is kind, and desires, and strives to see others blessed.

We are, then, to follow church leaders if they fulfil God's qualifications and God's Word, and work with spiritual pastor-elders in the local church, but if they become formal and deny and oppose God's power, we are told to turn away from them by the apostle Paul. 2Tim.3v1,5. In 2Tim.3v5. the word for "form," is "morphosin," a rare word which means, according to A.T. Robinson, "the rough sketch, the pencilling of the 'morphe,' the outline without the substance." The word is only found in the New Testament here in 2Tim.3v5. and in Rom.2v20., where Paul said the Jews had an outline of God's truth without the experience of that truth. Denominational churches that oppose and reject the saving power of Christ, and the movings and gifts of the Holy Spirit, are empty of spiritual reality, and Christians will have to separate from them, even as the early Christians had to leave the synagogues that rejected Christ and His power. Acts.13v42-52. In Acts.18v4-8.7., we see that Paul started his meetings next door to the synagogue in the house of Titus Justus, after the Jews had rejected Christ and vital New Testament truth, and division can occur for these very same reasons today. Let us help seekers with every means at our disposal, but let us never compromise truth to keep in with unspiritual or unconverted "Christian leaders."

5. How old does a person have to be to become a Pastor-Elder?

The Jews and other nations highly respected wise old men; indeed it was a command of God. We read in Lev.19v32., "You shall rise up before the face("pawneem," 6440) of the grey headed ("seybah," 7872, the feminine of 7869), and honour the face ("pawneem," 6440) of the aged ("zagen," 2205, old man, old woman, elder in authority), and fear and revere your God; I am Yahweh. See also Lev.19v32. Deut.32v7. Job.12v12. Prov.16v31. The very old, who are wise, godly and spiritual, are obviously elders, the question is, "At what age can a person be a pastor-elder?" We read in Acts.7v58. that Paul was a "young man," "neonias," however, there is fairly strong evidence that Paul the persecutor was a member of the Sanhedrin, if not at Stephen's death, certainly soon afterwards, for Paul states that he not only had power given to him from the High Priest to imprison Christians, but that "when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them." Acts.26v10. Many scholars believe that this proves that Paul was a member of the Jews supreme court of judicature, the Sanhedrin, which alone had this right, and so was looked upon as an elder. So though Paul is said to be a "young man," most people believe he was at least 30 years of age, and having a vote in the Sanhedrin was looked upon as an elder. Mt.26v59. Lk.22v26. Acts.22v5.

Upon his conversion Paul proclaimed as a herald that Jesus was the Son of God, and the Messiah of promise. Jn.20v39. 20v28. Within six years Paul taught the converts at Antioch with Barnabus, as a pastor-teacher. Acts.11v26. In Acts.13v1., about three years later Paul is mentioned among leading prophetic and teaching ministries at Antioch, so Paul fulfilled an elder's ministry at about 40. The law would not allow people to be priests under 30 years of age. Num.4v3,23,30,35,39,43,47. Lev.8v30. 1Chron.23v3. One notable expositor states that he had known Christians of about 30 who had the qualifications laid down for elders in 1Tim.3. and

Titus.1.; and that he had known men of 60 who did not. This is the crux of the matter, if a person over 30 has reached the maturity and spirituality laid down in Timothy and Titus, then they can function as an elder. If they do not have these qualities, they should not be an elder, even if they are a 100. There may be some like Paul, who can fulfil the office of pastor-elder-teacher, under the age of 40. However, it is not age that is the most important factor in choosing elders, the length and depth of Christian experience, an ability to shepherd, love, oversee, teach and guide people into a deep experience of God are the really essential qualifications of elders.

It is not desire for position, but love of people and a spiritual ministry gift from Christ that makes New Testament elders, or, indeed, any New Testament ministry. Every New Testament elder has to have a pastor's heart of love, or he is not a New Testament elder-teacher. Teachers with no love for Christ's flock, and I mean a genuine concern, not a professional bed-side manner, should not be leaders in God's work. There will, obviously, be in each local church, young men who are developing ministries given to them by Christ, that will later make them a recognised elder. A young person can be used of God in prophetic and evangelistic ministry, without being in charge of a church. Christ gave young men, apostolic and evangelistic ministries, but they could not take on the work of an elder, until they were old enough to do so. God knows that it needs wise, spiritual, older men, with both an experience of God, and an experience of life, to guide His people.

God intends all the ministry gifts to be manifested and developed in the local church under the supervision of mature prophetic and pastor-teacher ministries, until people are able to perform the ministries that God has given to them, without supervision and guidance. New Testament ministry is not a title in name only; they are a ministry that manifest Christ's power, truth and love. There are many who are called elder or pastor by men, who are not in God's eyes; there are others who are not called elder or pastor by men, who are so in God's eyes, for they are fulfilling a ministry given to them by Christ.

A New Testament ministry is not a seeking or scrambling for position and power; it is a ministry of Christ's love, power and truth to others. God has given many solemn and terrible warnings against false shepherds, who fail to care for God's flock. Jer.23v1-6. Mt.23v1-39. Ezek.34v1-31. God hates shepherds who "with force and severity" dominate God's flock. God says, "Woe to these shepherds, -- I will make them cease from feeding sheep, --- I shall deliver my sheep from their mouth." Ezek.34v3,4,10. Being a shepherd is not only a great privilege, it is also a very grave responsibility, and it should not be entertained lightly. No one will ever get away with spoiling God's flock, no matter how eminent their position, or exalted their reputation amongst men or denominations. James gives the solemn warning, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall be judged with special strictness and a more severe standard." James.3v1. Greater condemnation, not greater reward, comes to those who fail to lead God's flock in the way He intends.

6. Pastor-Elders, paid ministry and deacons.

It is quite unscriptural to think that a person has to leave secular work to be a pastor-elder. In the early Church if it was necessary for an elder to give himself to church responsibilities, or to study, the local church made it up to him, but there was no regular princely stipend that some modern "prosperity gospel" preachers expect and demand. Christ and His apostles were satisfied with their essential needs for food being met by people's hospitality. Lk.8v1-3. Paul worked to keep himself while he was engaged in apostolic evangelism, he claimed the right for financial support, but often did not use it, so that there could be no criticism of his message. 1Tim.5v17,18. 1Cor.9v1-27. N.B. v12,18. As we have already seen from Dr. Hatch; "There is no early trace of the later idea, that buying, and selling, handicraft and farming, were in themselves inconsistent with the office of a Christian minister. The bishops and presbyters of those early days kept banks, practised medicine, wrought as silver-smiths, tended sheep, or sold their goods in open market. They were men of the world taking part in the ordinary business of life."

That some pastor-elders did devote themselves entirely to the ministry, study and prayer and were financially supported, is confirmed by Peter, who says that elders were not to do their work for "filthy lucre," or "for sordid gain and personal profit." 1Pet.5v2. Certainly the pressure upon Christians with outstanding ministry gifts, can be so great that, like Jesus and the twelve apostles, they have to choose others to do even charitable works. The meeting of people's needs consumed all of their time, "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. --- But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." Acts.6v2-4. However, because there were several, or many, elders over each local church, and they all usually worked in secular employment, there was no drain on the financial resources of the churches, and this could be used to help the pioneer and itinerant ministries where necessary, and particularly to meet the needs of poor Christians. Acts.2v44. 4v31-37. N.B. 3v6. Gal.6v6,9,10. 2Cor.8v1 to 9v15. Phil.4v14-19. The early Church did not pay for expensive buildings, Christ's base was a simple home in Capernaum, not a mansion, or expensive headquarters. Mt.4v13. 8v5. 11v28. 17v24. Mk.1v21. 2v1. 9v33. Lk.4v23-31. 7v1. 10v15. Jn.2v12. 4v46. 6v17-24,59.

DEACONS.

Financial matters were not handled by those who had the spiritual oversight of the churches. Deacons had the responsibility for charitable work, and were to relieve the spiritual ministries of the practical caring for the needs of the poor. 1Tim.3v8-13. Acts.6v1-6. Deacons fulfil the ministries of "helps," "antilempseis," which means an undertaking on the behalf of another; it is used in the Septuagint of help from God and men. Deacons could also come under the description of "governments," "kuberneseis," literally refers to the steering and piloting of a ship, so "organisers, administrators," this could refer to the administration of funds. The more important ministry of

pastor-elders comes third in the list under "teachers," so it is doubtful if it would be mentioned again, and certainly not after "helps." We know the word "diakonos," "deacon," is also used of the higher spiritual ministries, 1Cor.3v5. 2Cor.3v6. 6v4., however, Paul uses "diakonos" in this context to show that the higher ministries are servants, not lords, over God's flock.

In Greek literature "diakonos" spoke of a servant or slave within a household, whose chief work was waiting upon his master at the table, and sometimes in marketing for him. The English equivalent to the Greek usage would be "menial," or "servant," though it can speak of someone giving free service or even civil rule as in Rom.13v4.. In both the Old Testament and New Testament the poor had a major place in receiving the gifts of God's people; the Old Testament tithe was for the poor, fatherless and stranger as well as the Levite. The tithe was Israel's income tax, and it not only upheld Israel's religious system, it was also used for Israel's welfare state aid for the poor, fatherless, widow and stranger. It seems that women could take part in this work of ministering to the poor and needy, we read in Rom.16v1. of "Phebe our sister, which is a servant, that is, deaconess, of the church which is in Cenchrea." There can be no doubt that deacons have an important part to play in the work of God, for God is very concerned over the material and physical well-being of His children.

D. "EVANGELISTS." Eph.4v11.

In 1Cor.12v28., the ministry of evangelist is almost certainly mentioned under gifts of healings, and possibly workings of miracles as well. Evangelists, as the Greek word "euangelistes" suggests, are proclaimers of the Gospel. "Euangelistes" means literally "a messenger of good;" so evangelists preach, "euaggelion," "glad tidings and good news." To evangelise, "euangelizo," is to proclaim good news of salvation in Jesus. The main theme of an evangelist is Christ and His death for sinners. 1Cor.2v1-5. Evangelists convey the same truths as apostles but do not have the same level of authority and power; the seventy evangelists were not instructed to raise the dead, whereas apostles were told to do so. Mt.10v1,7,8. Lk.10v1,8,9. Apostles also had the authority from God to judge and discipline both believer and unbeliever who withstood the truth, an authority, which it seems, was lacking in evangelists. Acts.5v1-11. 12v1-6,18v25. 13v6-12. 1Cor.5v1-5. 1Tim.1v18-20. with 2Tim.2v16-19. Evangelists, like apostles, preach God's love for mankind, and like apostles they have a ministry of signs, wonders and miracles, which results in the founding of churches. However, unlike apostles, they usually do not have the ability to care for converts, or lead them into the fullness of the Spirit, and the manifestation of spiritual gifts.

Philip is a good example of a New Testament evangelist, he founded a thriving church at Samaria, but he did not have the ability to consolidate it, he had to send for Peter and John to lead the converts into the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Acts.8v1-25. Evangelists who have this limitation in their ministries need the help of the more mature apostolic, prophetic, or pastor-teaching ministries to establish their converts in the faith, otherwise the good they have done can be dissipated. It is good to know that those who have little or no ability to feed and care for Christians, can be used in evangelistic ministry. Philip was as willing to follow God's guidance to speak to one person in a wilderness, as he was to preach to an entire city. After Philip had led the Ethiopian eunuch to Jesus and baptised him in water, God gave Philip supernatural transport to his next assignment. May God give us more evangelists like Philip, who have experiences like this.

One has to question the financially demanding structures and commitments of some modern preachers and evangelists, their emphasis upon giving and demands for money, shock and dismay thoughtful Christians, and give unbelievers considerable grounds for criticism. Some openly state that they can only preach to large gatherings in cities, so that they can obtain big offerings to sustain their expensive financial commitments. These are dubious practices in the light of the practice of Jesus and His early Church ministries, who were directed by God, not by financial commitments. It was a good thing for the Ethiopian eunuch that Philip was not directed by the size of the offerings that he could get, and for the Samaritan woman by the well, that our Lord, was driven by the constraint of love, not by a need or desire for finances. Acts.8v26-40. Jn.4v1-43. The financially undemanding nature of Christ's apostolic band and His early Church ministries, is a Divine design, and it meant that they could be sent anywhere by the Father. **Christ's total poverty censures those who demand riches from God's people, and preach a prosperity gospel. Paul states in 2Cor.8v9., that our Lord was totally destitute.** "He became poor," is "epptocheusen," the aorist active indicative of "ptocheuo," to be a beggar, to be reduced to abject poverty. "His poverty," is the noun "ptocheia," which again describes poverty to the point of the danger of starvation, and meant that Jesus did not have one penny in His pocket, which is proved by the incident of the coin in the mouth of the fish. Mt.17v24-27. **Wonderful Jesus! He who owned all things became totally destitute to give us the riches of Heaven. The sacrificial love of the Trinity is beyond praise. Jesus has given us the supreme example of sacrificial apostolic evangelism. He is the pattern to follow.**

The ministry gifts should bring an experimental, not just an intellectual knowledge of God.

God desires His New Testament ministries to bring people to an experimental knowledge of truth and Himself, as well as an intellectual appreciation of truth. This is shown by the Greek words for knowledge in the New Testament. In Eph.3v14-21., Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians to be strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that being rooted and grounded in "agape" love, they may be strong enough ("exischuo," 1840, to have full strength) to eagerly grasp ("katalambano," 2638) and know experientially ("ginosko," 1097) the love of Christ that surpasses ("huperballo,"

5235, to surpass in throwing, to transcend) knowledge ("gnosis," 1108, knowledge, understanding), so that they might be filled with all the fullness of God.

"Ginosko." 1097. Scholars say "ginosko" usually means, to know experientially, in contrast to "oida," or "eido," which usually mean to know intuitively, and that it often speaks of knowledge producing a relationship, and an experimental appreciation as well as intellectual knowledge. 1Cor.8v3. Gal.4v9. Jn.8v32. 14v20,31. 17v3. 1Jn.2v3,13,14. 4v6,8,16. 5v20. The Scriptures reveal that a deep experiential knowledge of God is brought about by a revelation from God, and not by intellectual effort. Mt.11v25-27. Lk.10v21-24. Eph.1v15-19.

"Epiginosko." 1921. "To know fully, to fully perceive, to receive full knowledge of, or become fully acquainted with." It suggests an even more special or advanced experimental appreciation than "ginosko," as in 1Cor.13v12., "Now I know ("ginosko") in part, but then I shall fully know ("epiginosko"), even as I am fully known," ("epiginosko").

"Proginosko." 4267, to know before hand." Is used of God's foreknowledge concerning Christians; Rom.8v28,29., and Israel,.Rom.11v2. It is used to speak of Jesus being foreordained to be the Lamb of God before the foundation of the world. 1Pet.1v18-20. See.Rev.13v8. Titus.1v2. Rom.16v25,26. In Acts.26v5., Paul uses it to speak of the Jews knowledge of how Paul behaved before his conversion. In 2Pet.3v17., it speaks of the foreknowledge of future end-time events, through the knowledge of prophetic facts in the Scriptures.

"Oida." 3608, and "eido."1492. Both mean to perceive and know intuitively, or to perceive with the physical senses, with sight, or perceive with the mind, or to know from observation. As we have seen, "ginosko" speaks of experimental growth of knowledge, and an active relationship whereas "oida" can suggest perceptive and intuitive knowledge, and can speak of a fullness of knowledge. e.g. Jn.8v55., "Ye have not known Him "ginosko," but I know him," "oida." See Jn.13v7. 14v7. and Mk.4v13. for a similar contrast. In Mt.7v23., "I never knew you," the aorist of "ginosko," means, "I have never at any point of time been in any relationship with you."

Compare "Epistamai." 1987. To put the mind upon, comprehend, or be acquainted with, to know, understand. Peter's denial. Mk.14v68. Peter at the house of Cornelius. Acts.10v28. See. Acts.15v7. 18v25. 19v15,25. 20v18. 22v19. 24v10. 26v26. Heb.11v8.etc.

CHAPTER 4. THE EARLY CHURCH WAS GUIDED BY CHRIST INTO BODY MINISTRY.

The Church is described as Christ's building and temple, Eph.2v21.; as Christ's beloved bride and wife, Eph.5v22,23. Rev.19v6,7. 21v2,9. 22v17.; as Christ's household. Eph.2v19. Gal.4v10. 1Tim.3v14. Heb.3v5. However, here I want to consider the Church as Christ's body. 1Cor.12v11-31. Rom.12v3-5. Eph.4v7-11. Christ desires all the members of His Church, from apostles to young converts, to act together as a body under His guidance. Under the inspiration of Christ every member has something to contribute to the spiritual ministry of the Church, this is what we mean by body ministry.

1. BODY MINISTRY TOOK PLACE IN FELLOWSHIP, WORSHIP, EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY.

Body ministry involves the participation of all believers in fellowship, worship, evangelism and ministry. There was no division between clergy and laity in the early Church, all believers are priests. 1Pet.2v5. Rev.1v6. Every child of God has the right to minister what they receive from God. "Everyone hath,"---"ye may all prophesy one by one." 1Cor.14v26,31. Paul said that the Corinthians had the right idea in desiring body ministry, but they selfishly wanted to do everything, and did not make way for other people's ministries. Paul said we need a Holy-Spirit co-ordinated body ministry, not all-ministry. All rights in the Church spring from Christ; the Quaker principle is correct, members have the right to minister only as Christ directs. The prophets and pastor-teachers in the local church should only act under the inspiration of Christ, like the rest of the believers. This is spiritually much more demanding than a program. It also demands real humility and gentleness in the pastor-elders, who may have to call a halt to unprofitable ministry, or correct wrong teaching and fanaticism.

In many churches, Christians are judged to be faithful and true by their ministers, if they sit passively in their church pews for years. Paul did not teach this kind of spiritual decadence, he certainly did not want Christians to be passive listeners, or "none-speaking babes," he desired them to develop ministries and grow spiritually. Eph.4v11-15. This shows the importance of having a fellowship meeting where Christians can develop their gifting and ministries. Paul taught that in these fellowships there was to be a real participation of all the local church members in body ministry. Today, many Christians fear body ministry, because of the demands that it will make upon them. Others feel that young Christians will make mistakes, and will not be as presentable to the world as a polished well-spoken minister. However, unless "everyone has" something from Jesus in our fellowships, they are not genuine New Testament church fellowships. Some modern Christians, who go regularly to church services, have never been to a New Testament fellowship meeting at all. In most churches a "minister" has replaced Christ-directed body ministry, and this has kept multitudes of Christians in spiritual infancy and immaturity.

The Greek word "kerusso," "to proclaim as a herald," obviously implies that there was a place for an uninterrupted discourse in preaching, teaching, and evangelism in the early Church. However, in both evangelistic and fellowship meetings, the more usual pattern was dialogue, discussion, reasoning, and question and answer in an informal conversational manner. There was far more participation and discussion in Paul's

preaching hall, than there is in today's church services. "Dialogue," "dialegomai," is used in Acts.17v2,17. 18v4,19. 19v8,9. 20v7,9. 24v12,25.. "Peitho," to persuade, occurs in Acts.28v23,24., in connection with Paul's evangelism. "Suzeteo," to reason, is used of Paul's and Stephen's irresistible Scripture reasoning with those who opposed them. The arguments of these great Christians was unanswerable, so their opponents murdered Stephen, and planned to murder Paul. Acts.6v9,10. 9v29,30. Modern Christianity has cramped and straightened even the Gospel mission to a formal service, which it certainly was not in the early Church.

2. BODY MINISTRY ENCOURAGES AND DEVELOPS MINISTRIES IN GOD'S FLOCK.

The Holy Spirit is the overall superintendent of the whole Church of Christ, His aim is to produce ministry in each local church. The object of the New Testament leaders, therefore, was to produce ministries in the flock by informal body ministry. Eph.4v8-14. In Eph.4v14., Paul speaks of immature believers without the ability to minister; the word he uses for "children," is "neepios," which means literally, "none-speaking ones," or "without the power of speech," its literal meaning was lost in general use, but immaturity was always associated with it. "Neepios" occurs in Mt.11v25. 21v16. Lk.10v21. Rom.2v20. 1Cor.3v1. 13v11. Gal.4v1,3. Eph.4v14. Heb.5v13. Paul says in Eph.4v14., that those who remain children, and do not grow and minister, are at the mercy of false teachers, who though seeming to play the game, are really using loaded dice and trickery. "By the sleigh," is "en tei kubia," which means literally, "in the throw of a dice." By craft and trickery is "panourgia," and methodical deceit is "methodia." Crafty false teachers can fool God's babies as easily as a conjurer or trickster can deceive a young child. Paul's statement has been proved true again and again by the way that false cults have deceived many Christians, because they have been kept in doctrinal and spiritual infancy by the churches which they have attended.

We read in Heb.5v13,14., that the Hebrew Christians had been converted long enough to have grown into able teachers of God's Word, but most of them were still immature non-speaking babies, when they should have grown to maturity. Christians who are mature ("teleios," 5046, full grown, perfect), have "by constant use" ("hexis," 1838, habit), had their senses "exercised" ("gumnazo," to exercise vigorously) and are "able to discern" ("diakrisis," 1253, judge thoroughly) between "good" ("kalos," 2570, properly beautiful, but also that which is good, virtuous, valuable and precious.) and "evil" ("kakos," 2556, worthless, depraved, injurious, pernicious, evil). Elders are to bring their flocks to maturity as soon as possible; this involves giving them moral example, doctrinal stability through correct teaching, and leading them into an experience of spiritual gifts. Elders are to make sure that the doctrine and experience of their charges is sound and healthy, "hugiaino." 1Tim.1v10. 6v3. 2Tim.1v13. 4v3. Titus.1v9,13. 2v1,2. The maturity of their flocks is the test of an elder's ministry.

Many Christians have been kept in spiritual infancy by their religious leaders for decades, and are "none speaking ones," they have been taught only to listen, and have not developed any ministries. This is very dangerous for the Christians concerned, and disastrous for the effectiveness of the Christian witness. Ministers who keep their members in spiritual immaturity, and don't allow God's babies to grow, frustrate God's longing desire for the spiritual and doctrinal growth of His children. Those who thwart the spiritual growth of God's children in this way, certainly cannot expect a, "Well done," when they meet Jesus. God gives a ministry of some kind to every Christian, but if people are not given a chance to develop their ministries, they will wither and die, instead of grow and develop. Happy, indeed, is the Christian fellowship, or church, that allows the Holy Spirit to give and develop ministries, it can be a veritable heaven upon earth.

Christians are stultified by passivity and formality in one-man ministry meetings. However, in the freedom of informal meetings, with sympathetic friends we know, love and trust, there is far less stress and strain, and we feel much more at ease and are less likely to be nervous, and we know that our friends don't mind if we do stutter, stammer or hesitate. The informality, sympathy and friendliness, enable and encourage even the most timid to discuss God's Word and manifest spiritual gifts. Informal, body ministry meetings bring greater interest, absorption and increase in Scripture knowledge. Christians can learn far more by dialogue and discussion, than they can by passively listening to one speaker, and if they get something from God's Word for themselves and minister it to others, it will mean far more to them than if they are just a passive listener. In Luke.11v5-13., Jesus said that God will abundantly bless with the Holy Spirit, those who earnestly seek Him to obtain "bread for others." This determined seeking of God for something to meet the needs of people, brings greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit, this will certainly bring greater operations of the Holy Spirit. In 1Cor.14v23-25., Paul says the revelation of the secrets of peoples hearts will make them acknowledge that God is in the midst. This shows that we can manifest the same gifts that Jesus manifested when the Samaritan woman had the secrets of her life revealed by Jesus. This brought about her salvation and brought revival among the despised Samaritans, this can happen today, when we submit to the leadings and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I have found that informal meetings have a really beneficial effect upon children. When children associate Christianity with formal, dead services, they grow up not wanting it. However, when they see the liberty, fellowship, love and joy in Christian meetings, and feel the presence of God, and see His acts and manifestations, they desire and enjoy Christian experience.

3. INFORMAL BODY MINISTRY MEETS DEEP SPIRITUAL NEEDS IN THE CHURCH.

There are important ministries of the Holy Spirit that rarely take place in many churches; such as the healing of memories and hurts, and a release from burdens and worries, by the gift of faith. This is not a kind of Christian psychology, which under the guise of spirituality is really an invasion into people's privacy. It is a sin to resurrect

and demand the details of people's past sins and lives, they are buried with Jesus. Woe betide anyone who digs up what God has buried. Rom.6v1-4. The Christian who operates God's power and revelation gifts, often never needs to know what that need is; there is often simply the revelation of a burden and need, and the knowledge when God has met that need. The Holy Spirit is a perfect gentleman, He does not want to parade people's innermost secrets and problems before all. He will only show us specific needs, if He thinks that it is absolutely necessary, and many times this information will only be for the person praying to know, and it should not be spoken out to others. Many of the Holy Spirit's revelations are for secret prayer, not public utterance. It is also often very wise and necessary to seek God for the lifting of people's hurts and burdens without them even knowing it, or openly praying for them, just as our Lord did for people in need when He attended the synagogue services at Nazareth.

I have found, through over 50 years experience, that people come into formal meetings with burdens and time after time go out with the same burdens. Christians just don't get to know one another, or each other's needs in formal meetings. In an informal meeting, or in a time of prayer after a formal meeting, these burdens can be met by the power and revelation gifts of the Holy Spirit. Formal meetings can have a definite place, but they need to be followed by informal fellowship and ministry, if we are to meet people's needs and experience the fullness of God's blessing.

4. INFORMAL BODY MINISTRY PRODUCES A REMARKABLE FELLOWSHIP OF "AGAPE" LOVE.

Body ministry makes Christians depend on one another instead of themselves, and this is not only a real antidote to pride, it also produces real love between Christians. 1Cor.12v20-26. Jn.13v35. We are to learn from, and help each other. 1Thes.2v4-9. In genuine body ministry, there is an exercise of mind over doctrine, and controlled emotion in worship and praise. There is also an exercise of spirit in contact with God and in ministry to others, and a remarkable fellowship of love between Christians and their God. It is this contact with God and love for each other that gives life to our doctrine and worship. Jesus said that we must worship God in spirit and in truth, and this involves loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jn.4v24. 13v35. Those who have experienced this remarkable love and fellowship of spirit with other Christians, know what Christ meant when He said, "I pray that they may be one, as we are one." Jn.17v20-22. When Christ ministers through the local church as a body, there develops a remarkable fellowship of saints, which is as real as their fellowship with God. It is this deep ministry of the Holy Spirit and real fellowship in Christ, that creates and constitutes the liberty Paul speaks of in 2Cor.3v17,18.. Freedom and liberty in the spirit, does not consist in the repetition of twenty lively choruses again and again, this can be the worst form of bondage, if it is not led by the Holy Spirit. True liberty comes from a God anointed worship, and a love impregnated body ministry, which produces real fellowship and friendship in Christ.

In many modern churches there is no fellowship of the saints, Christians just don't get to know one another. In the early Church there was the atmosphere of love and friendship, which enabled Christians, not only to share their blessings, but their burdens too. They could talk of their deep problems, and even their sins, knowing that they would be lovingly and thoughtfully prayed with, until their spiritual and physical needs were met through the power and love of Christ. James.5v14-20. When Jesus is in control, a friendship, fellowship and tender burden bearing, can take place in an informal house fellowship, that can never take place in formal church meetings.

We can have fellowship without membership and membership without fellowship. Many Christians are looking to the wrong "ship" for blessing. In many churches fellowship takes place in loving conversations after the services, but often there is little or no fellowship during the services. This is certainly not a New Testament Christian fellowship, where all were of "one accord," "one soul" and "one mind." It says in Acts.4v32., "There was one heart and soul in the multitude of those who believed." This shows that there can be a real unity in a multitude of Christians, and Christians should gather together in these large groups for teaching and fellowship, but they should also break up into separate small meetings for closer fellowship and body ministry participation. Where numbers get large, there can, of necessity, only be a limited number of people taking part. This is why John Wesley divided a church into a number of class meetings, and limited the size of these class meetings. This deep and loving fellowship of saints with God and each other, will preserve us from backsliding in these evil last days. Heb.10v24,25.

The depth and beauty of true Christian fellowship can be seen in Phil.2v1., Paul speaks of "consolation in Christ," "parakleesis;" and "comfort of love," "paramuthion;" and "bowels of compassions," "tis splanchna," tender higher emotions; and "mercies," "oiktirmoi," pities. All these beautiful, heavenly emotions, spring from a "fellowship of the spirit," "koinonia," a partnership and sharing of the common fountain of their life in God. "Koinonia," means a common sharing, communion, joint participation and fellowship, occurs in Acts.2v42. Rom.15v26. 1Cor.1v9. 10v16. 2Cor.6v14. 8v4. 9v13. 13v14. Gal.2v9. Eph.3v9. Phil.1v5. 2v1. 3v10. Philemon.v6. Heb.13v16. 1Jn.1v3,6,7.

In Phil.2v2., Paul speaks of Christians being "one in soul," "sunpsuchoi;" and "of one mind," "to hen phronountes," we are to have harmony of desires and feelings, and unity of thought. The book of Acts is full of this unity; when Christian's enemies are of one accord, Acts.7v57. 18v12. 19v29., Christians certainly need to be united and of "one accord." See Acts.1v14. 2v1,46. 4v24. 5v12. 15v25. Rom.15v6., in every case the word is "homothumadon." See Acts.8v6. 12v20.

The early church at Jerusalem experienced a glorious unity, fellowship and love, and a joint participation in the Holy Spirit's ministries. It is true that Satan tried to spoil this unity, and succeeded in many churches, but in Acts.2 and 4. we certainly see this lovely fellowship in Christ. The fruit and influence of the Holy Spirit is love, and where He is in control, there is entreaty, tender consolation, tender higher emotion and pity, and a real sharing, trusting and binding together in Christ.

5. BODY MINISTRY EVEN TOOK PLACE IN NEWLY FORMED CHURCHES.

Infant churches depended upon their founders for the majority of their teaching and spiritual guidance, however, they were also encouraged to exercise body ministry. 1Cor.12v4-31. Indeed, body ministry participation in teaching was a normal part of synagogue services, so the Jews would be used to this. The Jewish synagogues were more conformed to the New Testament pattern of body ministry, than most of today's churches. Modern ministers would die of shock if their sermon was interrupted by a question, or their statement challenged, or someone else asked permission to comment or give a contribution, yet this was the normal procedure of the synagogue and early Church. The Jewish converts in Paul's churches already had a good knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, and already knew how to practice body ministry in relation to teaching, they just had to learn and practice body ministry in relation to spiritual gifts. The Jews in Paul's churches, knew the Old Testament Scriptures very well, but it was not just a question of learning the doctrines and teaching of the New Covenant, it was also essential for them to experience the powers of the age to come. It was not just a question of theology, but of spiritual dynamic as well. The rapid spiritual development of the churches through body ministry enabled Paul to appoint elders within two or three years of churches being founded.

Unlike Paul, many Christian leaders today, resent rather than encourage developing ministries in their churches, however, to keep God's children in an infantile state is a serious sin, for it frustrates God's purposes and ministrations. When ministries are not allowed to function, or are suppressed, there are only two alternatives, frustration or separation. The early Church members developed rapidly in spiritual strength in the informal meetings in believers homes, they got to know each other well, and shared each others burdens and joys.

6. BODY MINISTRY TOOK PLACE IN THE LORD'S SUPPER.

We see in 1Cor.11v21 to 14v31., what actually happened at a New Testament communion service, it consisted of spiritual ministry plus spiritual gifts. The Lord's Supper was part of the fellowship that took place in the body ministry of the local church.

a. The Lord's Supper nearly always took place in a home.

The insistence that the Lord's Supper should only take place in a church building under the control of a paid minister, is quite unscriptural. For well over 250 years, the Romans did not allow Christians to own church property, they met in homes, catacombs, the open air, or hired buildings. With so many believers in the churches, Christians had to celebrate the Lord's Supper in many homes, and this they did. Acts.2v46. When our Lord instituted the communion service, He did so in a private house, and with close friends. Church leaders usually object to the Lord's Supper taking place in homes, because they desire to uphold their power structure, and to have things firmly under their control. It was for this reason that the religious leaders of our Lord's time persecuted Jesus and His Church. Love is content to see others blessed and rejoices to see God's Word fulfilled. How often has clerical tyranny disguised itself as zeal for God and righteous indignation. We can celebrate communion and remember our Lord's death, whenever, or wheresoever it is desirable, in a church building, a home or in the open air. Only two or three believers are necessary, and any believer can administer and partake of the Lord's Supper.

b. The Lord's Supper had the divine order of informality and spirituality.

The Passover feast was a family occasion, a social event, as well as a spiritual event; there was the divine order of informality and spirituality. The Lord's Supper was also an informal occasion, part of a Christians social fellowship with other Christians, part of an ordinary simple meal, and after a family meal, it was naturally supernatural. God intends Christians to ENJOY spiritual fellowship together, not to be formal, distant and restrained with each other. Notice the sweet, conversational, natural, informal nature of the Lord's last supper. We see the conversation between Christ and John, Christ and Peter, Christ and Judas, Peter and John, and separate conversations between other disciples. Jesus gave informal teaching, prophetic insights from the Scriptures, and prophetic warnings of His death and betrayal, mixed with encouraging promises, sublime praying, and a telling practical lesson in humility, when He washed their feet.

It is a striking fact that the early Church linked the Lord's Supper and Christian fellowship with social fellowship. Their Christian fellowship was also a glorious free informal Holy Spirit anointed social fellowship, "And day by day continuing with one mind in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart." Acts.2v46. 1Cor.11v20,21,32-34. The idea that we should fast before taking the Lord's Supper has no Scriptural basis; Jesus instituted it, "as they were eating in the Passover night." Mt.26v26. The whole aim of the Lord's Supper in the early Church was not just listening, but also the development of ministry and spirituality through sharing fellowship and experience in a conversational manner. The joy of the Lord that makes us strong is developed in this environment. Neh.8v10.

In many churches Christians gather for the Lord's Supper, but there is little communion or fellowship of the saints. I am not saying that the formal communion services are wrong, or that Christians are not remembering their Lord's death, they certainly are. I am saying that if there is no informal, conversational sharing of experience and loving ministry to one another, we have not reached the New Testament ideal of a communion service. There can be no communion, where there is disagreement and division; deep love, trust and fellowship was the New Testament basis of fellowship. 1Cor.10v17. Mt.5v23,24. Paul warned the Galatians that if they did not walk in love to each other they would bite and devour one another. Gal.5v13-16. Fellowship is based on mutual love for each other. We are one body, united by one spirit, having one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one Father. Eph.4v1-6. Rom.8v9.

We see from Acts.20v7-12., that hours of fellowship, instruction and talk could take place both before and after the Lord's supper. There was prolonged informal fellowship, discussion, teaching and worship, as there was at the actual Last Supper. It is a sign of spiritual inertia and weakness, when a great deal of time is given to singing, and there is hardly any teaching and discussion of the Scriptures. At the actual last supper we only read of one hymn being sung, this obviously is not the rule, for we read in Eph.5v18,19., of Christians thanking God and admonishing one another in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." We read in Col.3v16., that these songs are to be based on the Scriptures, like the marvellous hymns of the Wesley's, their content being full of glorious doctrinal and experimental Christian truth. Beautiful church music may be elevating, but without the blessing of God it can degenerate to the level of mere entertainment. Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are indeed very blessed, when we are filled with the spirit, and make melody in our hearts to the Lord.

c. The Lord's Supper took place at any time, any number of times a week, anywhere, and by any believer.

The Lord's Supper was instituted, not on the first day of the week, but on a weeknight, as a supper. We read in Acts.20v7., that Christians gathered on that occasion on the first day of the week, however, this is not the only day, for the Lord's supper can be celebrated on any day. Though the Passover meal was a supper, it does not mean that the communion service should only take place in the evening, for Acts.2v46., indicates that it can take place at any time during the day, though evening was probably the best time for most believers. The head of the house administered the Passover feast, however, all Christians are kings and priests and can administer the Lord's Supper. Men have replaced the simplicity, beauty, and freedom of the communion service with their own forms, and have taken much of the blessing away, however, if we follow the pattern laid down by Jesus, we shall always find blessing, and God.

7. CHRIST INSPIRED WOMEN TO TAKE PART IN BODY MINISTRY.

The New Testament tells us that women were anointed by God to participate in the worship and ministry of the Church. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that women sometimes led in God's work. Miriam, a notable prophetess, led the women in praise and prophecy; she is given the credit with Moses and Aaron for delivering Israel from Egypt. Exod.15v20,21. Micah.6v4. Deborah was not only a prophetess, she was also the leading judge of Israel; notice that she was not made the leader of Israel by men, God appointed her, and led her to victory over overwhelming foes. Through her spiritual power, Israel had victory for 40 years. Judges.4v1-5v31. The prophetess Huldah was the spiritual giant and spiritual leader of her day, when anyone wanted to have a word from God they went to Huldah. Jeremiah was alive at this time, but when good king Josiah needed a word from God, he sent the high priest to Huldah for God's guidance; she had a superior prophetic ministry, and could get the word of the Lord far quicker than Jeremiah. (See Jer.42v7., it took ten days for Jeremiah to get the word of the Lord.) Huldah's prophecy brought about Josiah's revival. 2Kings.22v13-23v25. Anna the prophetess was the person closest to God in Israel at the time of Christ's birth, Israel's male religious leaders were spiritually dead, and were spiritual babes compared to this godly prophetess. God used Anna to minister His love and life, and to meet the needs that they missed. God can, and often does, do the very same today. Lk.2v36-38. History reveals a vast army of godly women, like David's mother, "the handmaid of the Lord;" and Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and many others, who have been the channels of God's love and power to their children and their generation. They changed history by their prayers and spiritual ministries. When men have grown spiritually cold and formal, it has often been left to godly praying women to rekindle the fires of revival. Men nearly always monopolise the pulpits and positions of authority, women usually take the lead in love, spirituality, prayerfulness and faith.

The Devil and misguided men have tried to squash the ministry of women by misquoting certain texts.

An examination of these verses shows that both are concerned with domestic matters.

The first Scripture is 1Cor.14v34,35., "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; --- it is a shame for women to speak in the church." In 1Cor.14v34,35., we see that the wife had to ask their husbands at home, this was certainly not over teaching, for in the informal house meetings of the early Church there was always liberty to do this. Paul had just stated in 1Cor.11v4, 5., that women could pray and prophecy in the church, and you cannot do this and be silent, and an examination of 1Cor.11v16-20., proves that Paul had been considering church practice, not private prayer. 1Cor.14v4,5,22-24,29-33. Acts.2v16-18. Paul said they must not discuss domestic matters at church fellowship meetings. Paul had said in Gal.3v28., that in Christ there is neither male or female.

The word "speak," "laleo," in 1Cor.14v34., has been translated "chatter" by some scholars, because "laleo," literally means, to chatter like a bird, to talk much, to prattle. It is true that in the New Testament the word is more used in the sense, "to talk," "to speak," but who is to say that Paul was not using it in its basic meaning, which would make very good sense in the light of the Christian fellowship gatherings in the Middle East in Paul's time. The synagogues did not possess our modern order, propriety, formality and "reverence." While the synagogues did not have the drunken, uproarious and disgraceful revelry that accompanied heathen religions; they enjoyed a real freedom and informality. The word "silence" was spoken to the restless, emotional and talkative Orientals, Greeks and Latins in Corinth, who were not used to any discipline, routine and order, not even in the informality of the synagogue meeting. In the synagogues there was a very definite informality; extempore prayers were permitted, and those who desired to read the Scriptures and make comments upon them, could do so. Anyone who was thought to express wrong teaching in prayer or preaching was immediately stopped. Acts.13v45-47. 18v6,7. Dialogue freely took place in the synagogue meeting. Acts.17v2,17. 18v4,9. 24v12,23. "dialegomai," Mt.2v34. Jude.v9.

In "A New Testament Commentary," Howley, Bruce and Ellison, state with commendable honesty, that the verb "lalein," translated as "speak" in 1Cor.14v34., is used to generally to refer to any specific kind of speaking. They say that the suggestion cannot be ruled out, that Paul is merely speaking of irregular talking, in the form of soothing or rebuking babies, shouting out a remark or query, or just plain chattering. There can be no doubt that Paul is referring to unedifying abuses of their freedom to speak, pray and prophecy in church gatherings, which Paul says is their right in 1Cor.11v5,6.. Since two or three Christians could make up a New Testament fellowship, Mt.18v20., when two or three Christian women meet and pray together, they make up a church meeting, must they be silent? of course not! The New Testament meetings were nearly always informal meetings in a home, and it was certainly not disgraceful for women to talk in this social fellowship, which accompanied Christian fellowship. Satan is delighted over the restrictions that men have placed on the ministries of the Holy Spirit through God's handmaids; he knows that the Church has lost a great deal through these restrictions.

The ordinance in 1Cor.14v34., is said to be based on the law, "but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law," however, no Scripture states that a woman could not pray, prophesy or preach. In Gen.3v16., God warns women that men would ruthlessly dominate them; however, this was a warning of bad home relationships, not church practice. In Gen.3v16., God did not curse women, it is a bad translation. See Appendix 1. In Eph.5v21-33., Paul instructs husbands to love their wives as Christ loves His Church, there is to be no bossing or hardness, there is to be the fellowship of love. In 1Pet.3v7., Peter warns that God will cut off and not listen to the prayers of a bad or inconsiderate husband. Ill-treatment of wives or women will have to be answered for on judgement day.

The second Scripture is, 1Tim.2v11. "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man," should be viewed strictly in the context of which they are spoken. In 1Tim.2v11,12., Paul is also referring to domestic matters, as the context clearly shows, for in v 13,14., Paul speaks of Eve's relation to Adam and to child-bearing. Paul said that women should not usurp a man's place, and this is certainly true in the home; however, if God gives a woman a ministry, she is not usurping a man's place, she is taking her Christ-appointed place, she is only usurping a man's place if God has given her no ministry. The trouble with the Church today, is not that women are usurping men's authority in the Church, but rather because men are usurping the God's authority over the Church, by their traditions and practices. It is true that Miriam tried to usurp Moses place and authority and suffered a very necessary chastisement from God for it. Numbers.12v1-16., However, there are far more cases in Scripture of men resisting and usurping God-appointed ministries, than there ever are of women. It is a fact that women have manifested apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, and pastor-teaching ministries. Women are ideally suited to a prophetic ministry, for God has given women a love and gentleness of spirit to care for their children and husbands, which is really the basic essential for a prophetic ministry. As Paul said, love towards others is the best and most powerful channel of spiritual gifts, and so women, who have developed love, by loving and caring, are often able to manifest the higher gifts of revelation, power and comfort, with great blessing. The women that do this are certainly not usurping men's authority; they are fulfilling the ministry that God has given to them.

Women certainly did not keep silent in the early Church. God told them to speak and minister.

Women were included in the great commission, they can proclaim the Gospel, and be used in healing the sick. Women first announced that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Mt.28v5-10,18,20. Mk.16v16,17. They also spoke out in tongues in the upper room, on the day of Pentecost. Acts.1v8,12-14. Women are looked upon in the same way as men regarding worship and ministry by the apostle Paul. Gal.3v28. We read in the New Testament of women who were recommended for their spirituality and ministry. There were the women without whose help Christ's ministry could not have continued in the way that it did. Lk.8v1-4. There was godly Priscilla, helper of Apollos, she had a church in her home. Acts.18v24-26. Rom.16v3-5,19. 2Tim.4v19. We see Paul's women fellow labourers, Junia, Rom.16v6,7.; Phebe, Rom.16v1,2.; and other women. Phil.4v3. Luke was impressed by the prophetic gifts of Philip's four daughters. Acts.21v8,9. Dorcas had a spiritual as well as a practical ministry; she was loved by all for her practical godliness. Acts.9v32-42. We read of the "elect woman" of 2Jn.v1., another notable spiritual woman. Besides these there were a multitude of women who prayed, prophesied and preached, as the Hebrew of Ps.68v11. states, "The Lord gave the word, and great was the multitude of women who published it." Blessed are those who publish the good tidings of Christ's Gospel. Is.52v7. I feel that it is

dishonest and hypocritical to give a woman a place in the ministry in difficult mission fields, and refuse them the same place in much easier conditions at home.

Women can make their homes a ministry, and men should co-operate with them in this. Paul said that older women should teach younger women sound doctrine and wise practice in the home. Titus.2v1-5. 1Thes.4v11. It is often better for Christian women to minister to women's needs for prayer, where this is possible, to save from criticism. It is certainly very unwise and dangerous for men to pray with women on their own, if a man does have to pray with a woman, others should be present if it is at all possible. If we practice this it will save from appearance of evil, and will in particular save young people from emotional involvement, which can injure their feelings and spiritual growth, and cause even greater problems. Women, who have children, already have a congregation in their home, and they can minister love, faith and teaching to their children, which will never leave them. I owe an incalculable debt to my own dear departed mother for her constant love, concern, and support, and the inspiration of her prophetic ministry. God has often changed history through the ministries of godly mothers; think of godly Hannah, the prophetess, the mother of Samuel; Elizabeth the prophetess, the mother of John the Baptist; godly Mary the prophetess, the mother of our Lord. 1Sam.2v1-11. Lk.2v1-16. We thank God for women, like Hannah, who have made their grief, problems and frustrations, an incentive to seek God, and as a result have blessed whole communities and nations. Mary of Bethany was the one above all others, even more than John, to minister to Jesus in His hour of need. Mary's faith, genuine affection, concerned love, and fellowship of spirit, strengthened and sustained Jesus, and her name is recorded in the Gospel for all time because of it. Lk.10v38-42. Jn.12v3-8. Mt.26v6-13. Jn.11v1,2,5,6. Godly praying women are the spiritual backbone of most churches.

There are millions of Christian women today who are winning souls, blessing saints, preaching, prophesying, teaching, comforting the needy, and labouring on very difficult mission fields, with a ministry from Christ, out of a pure love for Him and mankind. May God richly bless every one of His handmaids! God puts His Spirit upon those He commissions, and Spirit-filled women have the right to minister as God directs. Numbers.11v29. God has poured His Spirit, not only upon His menservants, but upon His handmaids as well, and given them a very definite ministry and place in His Church, therefore, those who resist women's ministry, resist God. Acts.2v15-20. Sister, obey God, not men's traditions. You must pray, prophesy, and preach as God leads and enables you, and do not allow anyone to make you bury your God-given talents, in the soil of silence.

8. BODY MINISTRY TOOK PLACE IN CHURCH DECISIONS AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

We have already seen under pastor-elders, how the local churches put forward those Christians who had a definite ministry from Christ, to be their pastors. We see from Acts.6v2,3., that all the Christians in Jerusalem gathered to discuss the problem of looking after poor widows, "then the apostles called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, 'Look ye out, seven men'--- and the saying pleased the multitude." There was leadership, but not exclusive leadership or exclusive authority, not even by the twelve apostles; all the believers were consulted, and they put forward the men they knew would do the job the best. It was a family matter decided by all. There seems to have been no disagreement at all in the choice of the seven deacons. This is Divine wisdom; there is nothing more divisive than clergy or councils making decisions regardless of the feelings of "the multitude of the disciples." The regular meeting in the Scandinavian Pentecostal churches, at which policy is discussed and problems ironed out, where all can take part, is an essential part of New Testament Christianity. This means that problems in the churches are not allowed to carry on without being dealt with, so undercurrents of criticism or frustration of ideas do not occur. Important decisions should not be imposed on the local churches by the leadership of the churches with a "take it or leave it" attitude, they should be tested to see if they "please the multitude" of the disciples. Acts.6v5. 15v28.

In the church at Antioch, prophets and teachers gathered for fellowship and prayer together. Acts.13v1-4. However, they were not deciding church policies, they were "ministering to the Lord," and waiting upon Him, for His blessing, guidance, and a deepening of their ministries. It was God who sent Barnabus and Paul on their apostolic mission, the church at Antioch recognised this call and stood behind them in it.

THE "COUNCIL" OF JERUSALEM.

Many church leaders believe that councils of ministers should make decisions for their churches, and they quote "The Council of Jerusalem" to prove their point. However, if we examine Acts.15 closely, we will find that it gives no authority for councils, or synods composed of ministers, or representatives, autocratically deciding the policies and running of the churches.

Dean Farrar writes on page 243 of his, "The Life and Letters of St. Paul:" "It is only by an unwarrantable extension of terms that the meeting of the Church of Jerusalem can be called a 'Council,'---- It was not a convention of ordained delegates, but a meeting of the entire Church of Jerusalem to receive a deputation from the Church of Antioch." End of quote.

1. Notice who gathered at Jerusalem and why.

God had opened "a door of faith" to the Gentiles, but Satan tried to destroy the basic and essential truth of justification by faith, through those who had joined Christ's Church. Satan had tried to destroy the Church by persecution, but his attack by intrigue from within was far more deadly and dangerous, and but for the apostle Paul would undoubtedly have succeeded. Certain "false brethren" from Judea tried to close "the door of faith,"

and bring the lovely converts at Antioch into the bondage of their own belief, they demanded obedience to the Law of Moses, instead of proclaiming the glorious liberty and freedom of the New Covenant. These Judaizers refused to accept the obvious implication of God's dealing with Cornelius and his friends. Satan through them tried to destroy the Church with the God-given tradition of the Old Covenant. The Judaizers blindly refused to see that Christ had fulfilled the Law with its types and prophecies, so the type was no longer necessary; they had Christ the living fulfilment of the type, not the shadow. Heb.8v1-13. 9v15,23,24. 10v8,9.

The Judaizers inferred that the Gentile Christians were not only inferior to unregenerate Jews, they systematically taught that Gentile converts had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses, or they could not be saved. Acts.15v1,5. "Except," is "ean me." In Acts.15v1., the word "taught," is "edidaskon," the imperfect active of "didasko," to teach, to teach or speak in a public assembly, the imperfect shows that they began to teach and kept it up. The Judaizers made a systematic attempt to bring the converts at Antioch into legalism, they practised a determined espionage and proud indoctrination of these lovely young converts. Antioch had proved its love and friendship with the church at Jerusalem with a very generous gift. Acts.11v30.

These Gentiles' hearts burned with love for Christ and their Jewish brethren in Christ, Paul was determined that this was not going to be extinguished by legal bondage. Paul and Barnabus challenged these Judaizers, "they had no small dissension and disputation with them," Acts.15v2., the word for "dissension" is "staseos," which means "insurrection" or "violent disruption;" the word for "disputation," is "zeteseos," which means dispute or discussion. It was a prolonged row, and these Judaizers refused to accept the revelation of the Church age as preached by Paul, Satan made a determined attempt to destroy the New Covenant truth through these Judaizers. Gal.5v1-4. Even the combined mighty ministries and Scriptural knowledge of Paul and Barnabus failed to convince these self-appointed guides of Christ's Church of the error of their ways. The church at Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabus and some others to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders to settle this matter.

On their journey to Jerusalem Paul and Barnabus reported to the churches of Phoenicia and Samaria how the Gentiles had turned to God, and their news was received with great joy and praise. At Jerusalem Paul and Barnabus again "declared all things that God had done with them." Acts.15v3,4. After the welcome of the Jerusalem Church and the elders and apostles, battle is joined, the Christian Pharisees insist that these Gentile converts "must," "dei," be circumcised and charged to keep the Law of Moses. They evidently were still as narrow in their outlook as when they challenged Peter over his preaching to the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius. Acts.15v5. with 11v2-18.

We read in Acts.15v24., that the Judaizers from the Jerusalem Church had greatly troubled and subverted the church at Antioch. "Troubled," is "etaraxan," the aorist of "tarasso," to agitate, to disturb, to throw into confusion, to make the heart palpitate. Jn.14v1,27. "Subverting," is "anaskeuazontes," the present participle of "anaskeuazo," to plunder, ravage, pervert, and destroy," it has the thought of the reversal of good that had been done, or the tearing down of what had been built, and is used to describe the plundering of a town. The idea of deciding the matter with the church at Jerusalem, came from the church at Antioch, not from the church at Jerusalem, and so all the Jerusalem church, and representatives of the Antioch church, gathered to discuss the problem. The Judaizers had greatly damaged the church at Antioch, and were severely censured for it. It seems the Judaizers either withdrew, or submitted to the decision for a while, whatever they did at this point, they later certainly started up their divisive and satanically inspired activities again.

This conference at Jerusalem was not a conference of ministers from many churches, but appointed representatives of the church at Antioch, meeting the whole church of Jerusalem. This is the only meeting of this kind in recorded in the New Testament, even though, by modern standards, many more would have been thought necessary, and held on a regular basis. It was a meeting to decide the answer to a fundamental doctrinal point. The decision had consequences for the Church universal, for it decided whether the Church and Gentile believers were to keep the Jewish Law, or be separate from Judaism.

When Christian leaders insist that they have the right to lead and decide matters on their own, they are departing from New Testament principles, and in particular Acts.15v22,25., where we see that "the whole church" was involved and of "one accord" in this critical decision. The Holy Spirit confirmed their decision, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us." Acts.15v28.

N. B. It is obvious that the first gathering at Jerusalem in Acts.15v4. was adjourned, for 15v6., speaks of another gathering. It is between these two gatherings that the private conferences of Gal.2v1-10. undoubtedly took place. Dean Farrar writes: "I have here assumed without hesitation that the visit to Jerusalem of Gal.2v1-10., though here mentioned as though it were a second visit, was identical with that of Acts.15., and therefore was in reality his third visit." End of quote.

Farrar then details the five visits of Paul to Jerusalem, which I have detailed as follows in my own words.

1. Paul's visit after his conversion on the Damascus Road. Acts.9v26.
2. When Paul brought the contribution for the poor at Jerusalem. Acts.11v30.
3. Paul's visit to resolve the problem of the Judaizers at the Council of Jerusalem. Acts.15v2.
4. Paul's visit after his second missionary journey. Acts.18v22.

5. Paul's visit to fulfil a vow at Jerusalem, and before his imprisonment at Ceasarea. Acts.21v17.

Farrar continues: "Now this visit of Gal.2. could not possibly have been the first; nor as it is proved by Gal.2v7., as well as by the whole chronology of his life, could it have been the second; nor, as we see from the presence of Barnabus (compare Gal.2v1. with Acts.15v39.) could it have been the fourth; for no one can assume that it was without accusing Paul of disingenuous suppression when he spoke to the Galatians of this sole intercourse which he had with the apostles; and that it was not the fifth is quite decisively proved by Gal.2v11.

By the exhaustive method, therefore, we see that the visit dwelt on in Gal.2. must have been the third. It would, indeed, be inconceivable that it was some visit not recorded by the author of the Acts if there were any reason whatever for such a supposition; but when we consider how impossible it was that such a visit should have occurred without the knowledge of St. Luke, and how eminently the facts of it accorded with the views which he wished to further, and how difficult it is to find any other occasion on which such a visit would have been natural, we have no reason for adopting such an hypothesis. Nor, indeed, can anything be much clearer than the identity of circumstances in the visits thus described. In the two narratives the same people go up at the same time, from the same place, for the same object, in consequence of the same interference by the same agitators, and with the same results. Against the absolute certainty of the conclusion that the visits were one and the same there is nothing whatever to set but trivial differences of detail, everyone of which is accounted for in the text." End of quote.

Luke would hardly have passed over the events of Gal.2v1-10., if they had taken place in Acts 11v29,30.; it is also difficult to fit 14 years between Acts.9v27. and Acts.11v29,30.; also Gal.2v1-10. cannot be Acts.11v29,30., for Paul saw the elders, not the apostles, and in Gal.2v1-10., Paul proved that he was not behind the greatest apostles in experience and knowledge. So, we come to the conclusion that in Acts.15v5-29., we have the public narrative of events, and in Gal.2v1-10., we see the private discussions of Paul with the other apostles. Paul and Barnabus saved the Church from staying within the Old Covenant.

We see, then, leading men among the brethren meeting for discussion, but not for decision without the approval of the rest of the church at Jerusalem. In Acts.15v4,6,12,22., the whole church at Jerusalem gathered to consider the problem of the relation of Gentile Christians to the law and circumcision; not only apostles and elders, but "all the multitude," and "the whole multitude of disciples," and "the whole church," were involved in the discussion and the decision.

2. Notice the freedom of participation in discussion and the unanimous decision.

The apostles did not assume authority over the meeting of the two churches, they let discussion freely take place, they did not direct by apostolic authority, or by prophetic revelation. Nor did the elders, who were the pastors of the two flocks, insist that they were the only ones to hear and decide the matter. The apostles and elders did not decide the issue on their own, all the Jerusalem church was there, and all God's local family was at the discussion. Considerable time was given for people to air their points of view, grievances and objections. The Judaizers were given opportunity to fully state their views and there was "much questioning and disputing," "polles zeteseos," but there was no attempt to silence them, or to rush things to a decision by a majority vote, or to limit discussion and debate. There was a prolonged controversy and discussion over what to believe, it was a question of faith, and all could take part, not just a select few. This questioning, debate and discussion, was a blessing, it made everyone think through the implications of the New Covenant.

After there had been much debate, Peter stands up and repeats how God directed him to preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his friends (about twelve years before), all of whom were Gentiles. God saved these Gentiles and filled them with the Holy Spirit just as He did the Christian Jews. Peter then asks the telling question, "Why tempt ye God?" that is, how could they accuse God of making a mistake, or refuse to follow His guidance as the Israelites had done at Massah and Meribah. Exod.17v7. Deut.6v16. 1Cor.10v9. Peter then says that the Christian Gentiles should not be compelled to carry a yoke, which they as Jews had never been able to bear. Mt.11v30. 23v4. Peter finishes by saying that salvation is by faith in Christ not in ceremony or ritual, and it is fitting that the last words of Peter in Acts are for forgiveness and liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul and Barnabus follow up Peter's account and conclusions from God's dealings with Cornelius, with their own account of God's dealings and mighty workings with the Gentiles. Peter's words had silenced everybody, Acts.15v12., and prepared the way for the appeal to Christian experience, these facts were far more eloquent than any intellectual argument. James then gives the Scriptural proof to back up God's directive to Peter to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, by quoting Amos.9v11,12., from the Septuagint, and finishes by recommending four simple prohibitions for the Gentiles, which would stop them stumbling the Jews. These were abstaining from eating food offered to idols; from things strangled, Gen.9v4. Lev.3v17. 7v26. Deut.12v16. 1Sam.14v33. Acts.10v15. Rom.14v14.; from blood, dishes made from blood were common among Greeks and Romans; and from fornication, which was treated very lightly, indeed, as natural and permissible, by the heathen. Acts.15v21. Notice the insistence of appeal to God's workings and God's Word, not only to God's Word, or just God's workings, but also to both. Peter, Paul and Barnabus, tell of God's workings, Peter gives a very strong Scriptural warning as well, and James concludes with Scriptural proof and the practical application of that truth.

3. Notice the unanimous decision.

There was prolonged discussion, then decision; nothing was done until unanimity was reached, "having come to one accord," v25, "then it pleased the apostles and elders, **WITH THE WHOLE CHURCH,**" v22, "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." v28. The decision was confirmed to be of God by the unanimous decision of the whole church, and the Holy Spirit.

We cannot expect to get God's will in a church with a prayerless and worldly "rule by majority vote," this is a carnal expedient. We know that elders were elected by the popular vote of Christians, but this was a statement of confidence in proven ministries, and this was done prayerfully, and is quite different from worldly majority voting. Both Christian and worldly experience has often proved the majority to be wrong and the minority right. The report of the twelve spies proves that the carnal and unbelieving often outnumber the spiritual and full of faith. Num.13v1 to 14v45. Rule by majority vote often brings dissension, disagreement, confusion and distrust, and hinders fellowship, which is certainly against the divine desire that God's children should be one. Rule by majority vote has led to families and friends being either estranged, or indoctrinated to vote certain ways, and has resulted in fights for power behind the scenes, which can only be described as worldly and wicked. It is a tragedy when churches are divided into voting power groups, these power struggles destroy fellowship, and frustrate the desires of the Holy Spirit, and instead of the unanimity that brings certain victory, there is a division that brings sure defeat.

We must seek "the mind of the Lord," and recognise Jesus as the Head and Guide of His body the Church. Rom.12v4,5. 1Cor.12v12-27. Eph.4v11-16. A body goes into convulsions when it is sick and is not directed by the head, this is a true picture of Christ's Church, when we do what we want, and not what He wants. We must be willing to pray until we all come to the same mind, this proves our subjection to Jesus. Jn.17v20-22. Rom.15v5-7. 1Cor.1v10-13. 2Cor.13v11-14. Eph.4v1-6,14-32. Ph.1v27. 2v1-5. 4v2. 1Thes.5v12-15. Jesus desires us to be one as He was with the Father, this oneness springs from mutual love, and this alone gives an effectual testimony to the world. A public practical unity of the spirit is essential, and the God who brought the Christians of the early Church, with their different ways, thoughts and backgrounds, to one accord, will do the same for us if we will humble ourselves and seek His face.

To obtain the mind of the Lord, prolonged united prayer has to be exercised by a church; there is no short cut. Prophecy may well confirm guidance from God, but it can never do away with the necessity of a person or church earnestly seeking God for His will. All local church members must have God's peace in their hearts before important decisions are made, if there is no unanimous decision, the matter should be left week by week, month by month, again and again, until all are of one accord. The China Inland Mission of Hudson Taylor practised this method, the secretary said, "When there has been a delay, it has always proved to have been a wise step, and the necessary guidance has come later on, ----no inconveniences have been found to arise from the plan." In an age of rush, quick decisions and worldly government and management techniques, churches have to be careful not to partake of the spirit of the world, or they can miss the good and perfect will of God. The Trinity works by unanimity of plan, and churches should too, we should seek and follow the perfect plans that God has for His churches. If the early Church had been as prayerless as many modern churches, Satan's attack by cherished tradition would certainly have succeeded. Without diligent waiting upon God in prayer and worship, defeat is inevitable.

Some have objected to the practice of unanimity on the grounds of 2Cor.2v6. "hoi pleiones," "the many," or "the majority," of 2Cor.2v6., means all the church except the sinning brother. A church should restrain action until there is unanimity of opinion, this demands the fruit of the Spirit, longsuffering and self-control, but it is the divine highway to divine guidance.

4. Notice the appealing and reasonable spirit of the decrees to the churches.

The apostles and elders at Jerusalem gave their decisions to the Gentile churches in a gentle manner, they did not pontificate, or act as lords. Mt.20v25-28. 1Pet.5v3. The decrees are given in an appealing advisory spirit, for Acts.15v28,29., reads, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; v29. That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well." "Ye shall do well," is certainly not hard legalism, it is the language of love and reasonableness.

We read in Acts.16v4., that the decisions of the apostles and elders and members of the church at Jerusalem are called, "the decrees," "ta dogmata," meaning decisions, or decrees, from "dokeo," to give an opinion. "Dogma" is used in Col.2v14. and Eph.2v15., of the legal requirements of the ordinances of the Law, and in Lk.2v1. and Acts.17v7., of the decrees of the Caesars. The decrees of Acts.16v4., are said to be, "ordained of the apostles and elders;" "ordained," is "kekrimena," the perfect passive participle of "krino," to judge, to decide, the perfect emphasises the permanence and abiding nature of the decrees. In Eph.2v20. and 3v5., Paul confirms that the foundation of doctrine was laid down by apostles. The important thing about the Jerusalem decree was that the heads of the church at Jerusalem, and the apostles, admitted that circumcision was not essential to salvation, and a Gentile was not to be compelled to be circumcised or keep the Law. This brought temporary peace to the Gentiles, but it did not finally settle the problem, as we see from our next point.

5. Notice the danger of being restricted by a former God-blessed tradition.

There was a great conflict in the early Church over the relation of the Law to Christianity; even genuine Christians were very slow to realise that Christ had fulfilled the types and prophecies of the Old Covenant, and He had instituted a completely New Covenant. The early Jewish Christians still followed and cherished their old forms and traditions, we are no different from them, and we too are often slow to follow the Lord Jesus to the blessings of the New Covenant. In our day we often still see former God-blessed cherished traditions being a hindrance to Christians experiencing the fullness of New Testament Christian experience. The numbers of zealous Jews who became Christians was so great, that it appears that Peter, James and Barnabus were overcome by them, it seems from Gal.2v12. that they had compromised New Testament truth through fear of offending them. This proves how we all need to watch our hearts, if men of God of this calibre can be inconsistent and compromise truth when pressured to do so by Jews who were loathe to put on one side their former Jewish traditions. We can all fail God if we do not keep close to Jesus. It is only as we seek the mind and will of God in earnest prayer, that we shall be clear-sighted enough to discern God's will, and strong and courageous enough to perform it.

We read in Gal2v11-21., that Paul reproved Peter and Barnabus, for living like Christians one day and like Jews another day. It was very wrong for them to treat Gentile Christians as brothers one day, and then to shun them as Gentiles another day, because of the fear the Jews and the Judaizers in the Church, so Paul publicly rebukes Peter and Barnabus for this. Paul's words were obviously received by Peter, for we find no trace of bitterness in Peter towards Paul, he recognised his great ministry, and his divinely inspired New Testament truth. 2Pet.3v15. Peter and Paul honoured and respected each other, and Paul's correction did not spoil their affection for each other, they parted in friendship, a lesson we need to note. Barnabus did not separate from Paul on the grounds of this correction; it was on the issue of Paul's rejection of Mark, a relative of Barnabus. Paul later as good as admitted that he had been wrong over Mark, when he asked for his help, and Peter spoke well of Mark also. Col.4v10. Phil.v24. 2Tim.4v11. 1Pet.5v13. This teaches us that even the judgement and actions of apostles and notable Christian men, can be suspect at times, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1Cor.1v26-31.

When Paul came to Jerusalem after his second apostolic mission, the issue of the relation of Christianity to the Law came to a head again. The church praised God for what He had done through Paul, but they were obviously suspicious of Paul's doctrine. They asked Paul to take part in a Nazarite vow, to show that he did not teach "apostasy from Moses," as the Judaizers had said that he did. Paul did not teach "apostasy from Moses," this was a devilish parody of his teaching, he taught the fulfilment of Mosaic type and prophecy in Christ.

Paul had made a vow in Acts.18v18., and undertook a Nazarite vow in Acts.21v23-27.. This involved the sacrifice of burnt offerings, sin offerings and peace offerings, as well as a basket of unleavened cakes and a libation of wine. Num.6v1-21. While it is true that God had ordained the ceremonies of the Law, and the Jews had practised them in God's will for fifteen centuries, and the apostles had used the Temple for a period, Lk.24v53. Acts3v1., there can be no doubt that the Old Covenant had passed away when Christ came and died. Jn.1v17. Mt.11v11-14. Heb.8v7-13. 10v1-9. It is almost unbelievable to see Paul, the chief exponent of justification by faith, not only standing in the Temple and submitting himself to the Law, but also to the petty ceremonial additions of the Rabbis. Paul must have realised that he was giving the Judaizers, who had seized on his circumcision of Timothy as a proof of his inconsistency, Acts.16v3., some real ammunition to use against him. Why did Paul do it? Some have tried to justify Paul's visit to Jerusalem and his involvement with Temple worship on the following grounds, which I personally am not happy with.

1. Those who try to justify Paul's observation of Temple rites, say that Paul did not give way on the issue of justification by faith, the brethren at Jerusalem admitted that this was not the issue. Acts.21v25. They say Paul was acting on the principle he laid down in 1Cor.9v19-23., it was an act of love, to the Jews, he became a Jew to win them to Christ. **However, this expediency involved a considerable compromise with truth.** Paul had called the Judaizers, who said that keeping the Law was essential to salvation, "false brethren," "dogs," "false apostles," "deceitful workers," and servants of Satan. 2Cor.11v13-15. Gal.2v4. Phil.3v2. In both Galatians and Corinthians, Paul had said that no one could be justified by the Law, and said that all who taught they could were accursed. Gal.1v6-10. 2v16. 3v10-14. Paul had called the ceremonies of the Law "weak and beggarly elements," as a means of justification, and said that circumcision was an unnecessary mutilation. Gal.4v9-11. 5v12.

2. Those who try to justify Paul's observation of Temple rites, say that when Paul withheld truth from those who could not bear it, he was following the example of Jesus who withheld truth from those who could not bear it. Jn16v12. Jesus did veil the truth of the implications of the New Covenant from His apostles, even after His cross and resurrection, because of their inability to bear that revelation, because they were so bound by the traditions of the Old Covenant. Jesus had to leave that to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is evident from the apostles question, "Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" that even after the forty days ministry of the risen Christ, the apostles did not understand the truth about the Church. Paul might have tried to justify his observation of Temple rites by thinking that if Jesus had been limited in what He could say to His apostles, then he had the right to act in the same way, and that if the matter had been thrashed out immediately, it would have produced great disorder in the Church, and great opposition from the Jews.

However, nothing can justify Paul's visit to Jerusalem, for the Lord had told Paul not to go there. The problem of the relation of the Church to Judaism was going to be solved a mere ten years ahead, when the destruction of Jerusalem ended the Jewish state and religion. Those who defend Paul's action, say that he looked upon his vow

as an act of public consecration to God and as an appeal to the Jews, not as a means of justification, however, it was an act of expediency, and was a carnal attempt to remove barriers and win people over, but instead of doing this it produced a riot and more persecution, just as the Lord had warned Him.

N. B. Paul disobeyed God when he went to Jerusalem.

The above reasons are not satisfactory, for in Acts.21v4., God told Paul NOT to go to Jerusalem, and his disobedience brought about tragic results. Acts.20v22,23. 21v4,11-14. Why did Paul disobey the Lord and go to Jerusalem? Paul love for his people drove him to Jerusalem; he was willing to be accursed from Christ, if it could only have saved them. Rom.9v1-5. It is very sad that the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem were the means of bringing the prophetic warnings to pass. They should have defended Paul's teaching of the New Covenant, but their appeal was based on an unscriptural expediency, and it nearly cost Paul his life. It all shows how difficult it is to break free of our traditions, and how the fear of man can hinder and harm the church of God. If we are not careful we can be as presumptions and disobedient as the Israelites, who disobeyed God's command to Moses that nothing was to be added or taken away from the pattern that He had given, Heb.8v5., they ignored this command and added thousands of their own traditions and rules and so made the Word of God of none effect. In the end they persuaded themselves that their tradition was God's truth and rejected Christ in favour of their own tradition and murdered their Messiah.

Excommunication and Discipline.

Jesus personally instituted the procedure for discipline in the Church. Mt.18v15-22. Not every private wrong has to be brought before the local church as the Lord makes clear in Mt.18v15-17., the person wronged should first aim at a private reconciliation, then, if there is no repentance and reconciliation, before witnesses, and finally before the whole church; then if they do not repent, they are not to be treated as a Christian brother until repentance is forthcoming. Mt.5v23,24. Lk.17v3,4. Jesus insisted that the whole local church performed the discipline of a member of a local church. Charges must be established in the presence of all, and confirmed by at least two or three witnesses, there is to be no conviction or hearsay or tittle-tattle. 2Cor.13v1. In the whole of the New Testament there is no such thing as a group of ministers gathering to discipline and excommunicate at their own will; there must be no secret sessions or private condemnations, justice has not only to be done, it has to be seen to be done by all the local church. Failure to do this puts the 'judges' in the way of discipline from Christ Himself. If we fail to follow Christ's pattern of church discipline, then Jesus, as the Head of the Church, personally disciplines the saints that He loves. This is why some of the Corinthians had died, and many others of them were very ill, so that they would not be condemned with the world. If we will judge ourselves, we will have no need of Christ's discipline and judgement. 1Cor.11v23-33. The Lord's supper is either a place of cleansing or a place of condemnation.

Immorality, dishonesty, heresy, and the like have to be publicly dealt with by the whole local church, and believers who will not repent of wrong are to be shunned. Mt.18v17. 1Cor.5v1-5,9-13. 1Cor.6v4-10. However, the aim of discipline is not mere punishment, it is the preservation of the church and the restoration of the offender. 1Cor.5v5. 2Tim.2v17. 1Tim.1v20. Rom.12v19-21. Gal.6v1. The Scripture also makes it clear that a person is a heretic who rejects Jesus as their Saviour and divine Lord. 1Jn.4v1-5. 2Jn.v9,10. Gal.1v6-9. Rejection of apostles and their writings by Christians, was to result in their company being shunned and the person looked upon as a perverted and sinful Christian. 2Thes.3v6,14,15. Titus.3v10,11. If a person loved the pre-eminence they could be cast out. 3Jn.v9,10. No one can be accused unless there is firm evidence; the elders are not to be accused unless there are two or three positive witnesses. 1Tim.5v19. The emphasis should always be upon mercy and longsuffering, where this is at all possible. However certain sins are so serious that severe spiritual discipline has to take place, this can involve direct judgement from God, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira; or the delivering to Satan for discipline as in the case of the wicked man of 1Cor.5v1-5., and Hymenaeus and Alexander. 1Tim.1v20. Notice, those who upset the faith of Christians with wrong doctrine are dealt with in the same way as the immoral. The exercise of the gift of faith in judgement was performed in the New Testament by the whole local church, or by apostolic ministry. 1Cor.5v1-5. 4v21. 2Cor.1v23. 13v10. This kind of disciplines brought a very healthy fear of God upon the early Church. Acts.2v43. 5v11.

The Lord Jesus warns us that religious people will excommunicate us, when we fulfil His words, and follow Him and others who have prophesied and preached God's Word. Lk.6v22,23. This was certainly fulfilled; the Jewish Christians knew what it was to suffer the temporary and permanent cutting off of religious and social privileges (the "Niddui" and "herem,") and even the solemn handing over, with fearful curses, to God for judgement and final perdition, (the "shammata.")

Religion that rejects God's workings, loves to act as if it was acting on His behalf, many solemn excommunications done in the great name of God, have really been the workings of Satan. The true Christian must expect to be slandered, opposed, criticised and persecuted by religious people, just as the Lord Jesus was. If there is no Satanic opposition we should really doubt if we are really serving the Lord as we should. Lk.6v26. When the Church of Christ acts as His body and ministers His life and love, there is an inevitable response from the dark powers that control the minds of men. Let us go forward in the steps of our crucified and risen Lord, in Heaven it will all seem such a small sacrifice for what He has done for us.

CHAPTER 5. CHRIST ORDAINED LOCAL, SELF-GOVERNING CHURCHES.

1. THE LOCAL CHURCH IS NOT A BUILDING, IT IS A GROUP OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS.

The early Church had no external visible organisation in the form of buildings; there was not even an official meeting place for Christians. Christian believers gathered for fellowship at any place or hour that was suitable. These meetings usually took place in homes, the open-air, or even in the catacombs, the place and time being decided at the convenience of each group of Christians. There was liberty as to where and when Christians could worship. Christ stated in Mt.18v20., that two or three Christians gathered together in His name could know His blessing and presence. In Jn.4v19-24., Jesus said that Christian believers can worship God anywhere and at any time, without a Temple, or any kind of building. Christ's Church organisation did not follow the empire building and power structures of men, or even of Old Testament Jewry. The Israelites spoke with great reverence of the Temple as, "The house of the Lord," and they had consecrated buildings for worship, yet in the New Testament, there is no mention of Christian church buildings, and no hint that they are thought to be desirable or necessary. Paul states that every Christian is a temple of God, and God's glory is going to be manifested through Christians, not in buildings made of bricks and mortar by human hands. Acts.7v46-50. 17v24. 1Cor.3v16,17. 2Cor.6v16. Jn.2v21.

A New Testament local church consisted of all the Christians in an area or locality. It was not a Gospel Hall, Mission, or any other kind of church building. All churches in the New Testament are local churches; there are no churches larger than a locality. The smallest part of a local church was the church in a house, but it was linked to the other Christians in that area, who met in other homes. If the locality was large and there were many thousands of converts, as at Jerusalem and Rome, there were many house fellowships. Paul instructs these fellowships not to be cliquish, and so they gathered together for fellowship, and to discuss matters of importance, or to hear outstanding ministry. The whole church in a locality made up the body of Christ in that area. If a church is not as wide in its outlook as the body of Christ in a locality, it is sectarian. We should recognise that every truly born-again Christian is part of the Church of Christ in that area. We should follow the divine pattern and wisdom of meeting together to hear outstanding ministry, and also gather in house meetings for fellowship, and sharing in order to develop ministry and spiritual growth. Acts2v46. 4v31. 5v12,42. 6v2-7. 10v27,28,30. 15v4,12,22,23,30. 20v7,17-37. Evangelism can take place both in large meeting, or small house meeting. Acts.5v12,42. 28v23-30.

Quite a considerable part of the remarkable things that took place in the life and ministry of Christ, took place in homes. The worship of Christ by the wise men took place in a home. Mt.2v11. Christ healed Peter's wife's mother in Peter's home. Mt.8v14. Mk.1v29. Lk.4v38. Christ ate with, and ministered to, sin-sick, needy souls in Matthew's house. Mk.2v15. Lk.5v29. Jesus brought peace to a sinful woman in a home. Mt.7v36-49. Jesus had wonderful fellowship in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Lk.10v38. Jn.11v5. Jesus and His apostles centred their operations around the homes of sympathetic friends and helpers. Mt.13v1. 17v25. Mk.2v1. 9v33. 10v10. Acts.10v6,17,32. 16v15. 18v7,8. 28v40. Mt.10v12,13,14. Mk.6v10. Lk.9v4. 10v4,5,7. Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead in a home. Mt.9v23. Lk.8v51. He healed the Syrophenician daughter lying sick and demon-possessed a distance away in her home. Mk.7v24-30. Christ healed a paralytic in a person's home. Mk.2v1-12. The Lord's supper took place in a home. Mt.26v3. Lk.22v10.

The early Church carried on Christ's practice of ministering in homes. It was in a house that the Holy Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost. Acts.2v2. The disciples who were converted on the day of Pentecost used their homes for fellowship and the Lord's Supper. Acts.2v46. The risen Christ sent Ananias to help Paul in a house, and Paul was healed and filled with the Holy Spirit as a result. Acts.9v11,17. God instructed Cornelius to ask Peter to come to his house to preach the truth; the result was a glorious revival. Acts.10v2,22, 30,44-48. 11v12-14. The disciples had a prayer meeting in Mark's house for Peter's deliverance, and God answered their prayers. Acts.12v12-19. The early Church fellowship meetings were centred around homes, this is an indisputable fact of Scripture as well as of Church history. Acts.2v2,46. 5v12. 12v12. 20v7-9. 21v8-12. Rom.16v3-5,23. 1Cor.16v19. Col.4v15. Philemon.v2. Paul persecuted the Christians who were meeting in homes, before he himself became a Christian. Acts.8v3.

The fellowship between Christian groups was wisely limited in times of severe persecution, to protect the Christians in these groups. When the Prefect Rusticus examined Justin Martyr (scourged and beheaded for Christ in approx. A.D. 166), and asked him, "Where do you assemble?" Justin answered, "wherever it suits each one's PREFERENCE and ABILITY. You take it for granted we all meet in the same place; but this is not so, for the God of the Christians is not circumscribed by place, but being invisible fills heaven and earth and is everywhere worshipped and glorified by the faithful." Rusticus then asked, "Tell me where you meet together, or in what place you collect your disciples?" Justin answered, "I am staying at the house of one Martinus, and I know no other place of meeting besides this, and if one wished to come to me I communicated to him the words of truth." A quote of Neander from Justin Martyr.

We can see, then, that when Paul speaks of there being divisions at Corinth, in 1Cor.1v10-14. 3v1-9., he is not speaking of the Christians in Corinth dividing up into separate groups for fellowship; in a city of 100,000, as at Corinth, and many converts, the division into smaller groups for close fellowship was essential. Acts.18v9-11. The thing that Paul is condemning is the lack of recognition, love and fellowship between these groups, it appears some refused to fellowship in larger groups with the whole local church in that area, or when they did they were full of pride, criticism, and a sense of superiority. This kind of attitude made profitable Christian fellowship quite impossible, and Paul tells them that while they persisted in this attitude, they were carnal and

immature babies, and could not hope to progress spiritually. 1Cor.1v2,12. 3v4. This same condemnation applies today to those who will not recognise other truly converted Christians.

A.T. Robertson says the Greek "hairesis," our "heresy," means simply a choosing, from "haireomai," to choose, to take for oneself, and then a chosen opinion, then in a bad sense as a party or faction. Gal.5v20. 1Cor.11v19.. It is used to describe a school of thought, like that of the Sadducees in Acts.5v17.; of the Pharisees in Acts.15v5.; and in Acts.24v5., Paul uses it of Christians. Christianity was a sect everywhere spoken against. Acts.28v22. In Gal.5v20., "hairesis" means "choosings," or "preferences," and is division on the grounds of doctrinal belief.

Vincent says "hairesis" means 'parties', into which divisions crystallise." The word occurs in Acts.5v17. 15v5. 24v5,14. 26v5. 28v22. 1Cor.11v19. Gal.5v20. 2Pet.2v1. Paul tells us that if we make emphasis upon certain nonessential doctrines and Christian teachers a cause of division, we are working after the flesh. Damnable heresies will of necessity produce division, 2Pet2v1. Titus.3v10. 1Jn.4v1-5., but there should be no antagonism or division between local leaders or Christians, on the grounds of human personality, doctrinal preference, race, politics, social standing, denominational affiliation, or like or dislike of various ministries. The body is one. However, we see in Acts.13v42-48. 14v19. and 19v8-10., how Paul could no longer have fellowship with the Jews because they contradicted Paul and blasphemed the truth that he taught, and persecuted him. One can well understand how very upset the Jews were when they saw their members accepting Paul's teaching and leaving their fellowship, but what alternative was there when they were so hard-hearted, stubborn, malicious and unbelieving. When the Jews spoke against Paul's doctrine and refused to believe, he had no other alternative but depart from them and separate the disciples from the corrupting influence of these Jews. The same thing can happen today between Christians experiencing revival, and those who are content with their church tradition, and reject the Holy Spirit's ministries, and so separation may be unavoidable. However, bitterness should be avoided like the plague, we may like the Lord Jesus. speak the truth with feeling, but not in a bad temper. Mt.23v1-39. Acts.28v23-30.

Churches can vary a great deal in their spiritual condition. Having local churches and house fellowships does not automatically solve every problem, there has to be wise leadership and permanent abiding in Christ for spiritual progress. Some churches and house fellowships are centres of revival, Bible teaching, fellowship, and manifest God's power and love through spiritual gifts. Others churches, like some of the churches in Revelation, have serious problems, and even grave sin in them. Some are self-centred, religious clubs with no evangelistic emphasis. Some have merely transferred one-man ministry and formality from the church building to the home, and the same cast iron bondage with it.

2. THERE IS NO CHURCH FEDERATION SEEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The New Testament local church was a voluntary, self-supporting, self-propagating society, with no subordination to outside ecclesiastical centres or civil authority. There is certainly no church federation seen in the New Testament, we read that all the believers in a city were a church, 1Cor.1v2.; there are the churches of a district or an area. 2Cor.8v1. Gal.1v2. Acts.9v31. The smallest expression of the universal Church was the church in a house. Meetings in various homes or other suitable places soon replaced the meetings in Temple or synagogue. Acts.2v2,46. 5v12,42. 10v2,22,30,44-48. 12v12-19. 20v7-9. 21v8-12. Rom.16v3-5,23. 1Cor.16v19. Col.4v15. Philemon.v2. Each local church was made up of all the Christians in an area, and each house fellowship had to answer to its spiritual oversight.

The ministries that founded infant churches, obviously had a real interest in the spiritual welfare of those that they had brought to Christ, and nourished in the faith, they did, however, leave the oversight of the local church in the hands of local men as soon as possible. Paul exercised a loving apostolic oversight, but it was not just an official position, it was a divine ministry gift and the superintendence of love. No apostle had the right to found a private church or denomination; the authority of an apostle was moral and spiritual not official.

Apostles have a very real and definite delegated spiritual authority from God, not only to be a channel of blessing, but also to act in spiritual discipline and judgement. This was not just mere talk, but a very real operation of the power of God in judgement. Acts.5v1-11. 13v9-12. 1Cor.5v1-5. 4v21. 2Cor.1v23. 13v10. 1Tim.1v20. The leaders of Bethlehem trembled when Samuel came to them, because of his ministry and authority from God, they realised that you could not play the fool with someone who manifested mighty spiritual gifts and acted on God's behalf. For the same reason there was a very healthy respect for apostles in the New Testament, and great fear fell on all the Church and the outsiders, when Ananias and Sapphira died through Peter's authority in God. 1Sam.15v1-5. Acts.5v1-13.

N. B. PEOPLE JOINED THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH BY BAPTISM IN WATER.

Baptism in water proclaims to all that we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and demonstrates our faith in Jesus, and identifies us with Him in His death and resurrection. It is a public witness to all that Jesus not only died but rose again, and that we are now dead to the old life and walk a new life in Christ. Rom.6v3-5,11. Gal.2v20. 1Cor.15v1-4. 2Cor.5v17. In Rom.6v4. "buried," "sunthapto," does not mean, to put down under the ground and cover up, it speaks of the performing of burial rites, and the disposing of a dead body, by either burial or burning. However, though Christ was not buried under ground, He was entombed, which for all practical purposes had the same effect. Our old life has been disposed of, for we account ourselves as dead with Christ to

the old life, and publicly witness to our determination to follow our risen Lord. It is not just adults, but believers who are to be baptised, that is, people who are old enough to believe and receive the Gospel truth. Acts.2v37-42. 8v12,13,36-38. 9v17,18. 10v44-48. 16v14,15,31-33. 18v8. 19v1-7. 22v16. Mt.28v19. 3v2,3,6.

In the New Testament baptism is always linked with repentance and faith, and people should be baptised almost immediately after conversion. Baptism followed repentance and faith in Jesus, it did not precede it, only those who believe in Jesus should be baptised. Any believer, not only New Testament leaders, could baptise a convert. Acts.8v12,13. 1Cor.1v13-17. Every believer should be baptised, but unbaptised believers should not be excluded from the Lord's Supper or Christian fellowship. In the New Testament there is no other kind of church membership recorded other than baptism in water. In 1Cor.12v13., we see the Holy Spirit was the agent of regeneration, baptism in water was the outward sign of regeneration, no other act of church membership was necessary. It is a remarkable thing that Christ took the sinners place, not only on the cross, and in Hades, He identified Himself with us in baptism. Mk.1v11. Lk.3v21. Mt.3v15.

The Greek word "baptizo" is used for both baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit. "Bapto," "to dip," only occurs three times in the New Testament, in Lk.16v24. Jn.13v26. and Rev.19v13.. In Rev.19v13., "bapto" is used in its secondary sense to dye or stain. The primary meaning of "baptizo," is "to immerse," or "to submerge," but in its secondary meaning, which is developed from its primary meaning, refers to the influence which one thing exercises over another. "Baptizo," then, can speak not only of an immersion, but also of an impregnation, and infusion of the element in which it is baptised, as in dyeing or staining, it speaks of a bringing into complete subjection to an influence, and an imbibing of the virtues and nature of that influence. We should also note that in many cases, though not in every case, the same distinction occurs between the Greek words "bapto" and "baptizo," as between the English equivalents, "to dip" and "to immerse," the one being a momentary or temporary covering, the other usually implying a prolonged or permanent covering.

In reference to baptism in water "baptizo" is used in the weaker sense of "bapto," to dip, otherwise all those who are baptised would be drowned. "Baptizo" is used in the New Testament in its sense of permanent immersion and infusion, in regard to baptism unto repentance and remission of sins, and in baptism in the name of the Trinity, and baptism into the body of Christ, and baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. Mt.3v11. Mk.1v4. Lk.3v16. Mt.28v19. 1Cor.12v13. These baptisms do not speak of a temporary dipping in an element; they speak of being permanently and abidingly under the influence of the thing suggested. To be baptised unto repentance and remission of sins, means being brought under the power and influence of repentance and remission of sins, not for a moment, but for all time. To be baptised into Christ's death and resurrection, as Paul states in Rom.6v3-11., is to be permanently identified with Christ in them, and receive all the benefits and influences of them, not for a moment, but for ever. To be baptised with the Holy Spirit and fire, means that our whole personality is permanently impregnated with and under the influence of the presence, power and sanctifying purity of the Holy Spirit. To be baptised into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is not just a mere baptismal formula, it is to come under the power and influence of the Trinity, not for a moment but permanently and eternally. To be baptised into the body of Christ, is the permanent placing of ourselves under the influence and power of Christ and His body, the Church. Baptism, then, is more than an outward sign; it is the placing of oneself, under the headship of Christ. The important thing is not just to go through the form of water baptism, but also to have the whole personality imbued, stained, impregnated, and influenced, abidingly and permanently with Christ's death and resurrection life, and all their accompanying benefits.

Scholars admit with Dean Stanley, that baptism means "a plunge, an entire submersion in deep water," and say it was the universal form of baptism until the 13th. Century. The Greek word for "sprinkle," "rhantizo," is used in Heb.12v24. and 1Pet.1v2., but it is not used in relation to Christian baptism. The words for "pour," such as "ballo," Jn.13v5. and "katacheo," Mt.26v7., and "ekcheo" Rev.16v1-4,8,10,12,17., "ekchuno" Lk.22v20., and "epicheo" Lk.10v34., are not used in relation to Christian baptism. It is a monstrous lie to say that infants who die unsprinkled or unbaptised are lost eternally, it can be said to those who say such things, "in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines, the precepts of men." Mt.15v7-9.

Though we see infant churches being helped by the leading ministries of other churches, Acts.13v1-4., there is no trace in the New Testament of any church being directed by another church, the unity of Christ's Church was a spiritual fellowship and unity, not an organisational unity. Churches could give "the right hand of fellowship" to visiting Christians or Christian ministries, or give "letters of recommendation" to well-respected Christians who had ministry gifts, but there was no central government by men. Gal.2v9. Acts.15v25. 18v27. 1Cor.16v10. Col.4v10. 2Cor.8v22. The right hand of fellowship was not church membership, it was recognising a person as a fellow Christian. In Gal.2v9., we see the right hand of fellowship pushed to one side the accusing Judaizers, and united Paul with the apostles as an equal in God's work. In the New Testament, there was a lovely spiritual fellowship, not a formal membership; a formal membership, which has no spiritual fellowship and unity, is like a skeleton without flesh and life. The New Testament Church had a recognised doctrinal standard, but it was the simple and lovely bond of love for Christ and each other that was the basis of New Testament membership. In Acts.2v42-46., we see a truly lovely fellowship of saints, a mutual love of indescribable beauty. The blessing of God upon their informal, spiritual, friendly gatherings, not only made them enjoyable, but spiritually enriching and heavenly, so different from so many of today's formal and dry meetings, that have to be endured rather than enjoyed.

Even as late as the middle of the third century, the independence of each local church was still insisted upon; Cyprian, martyred A.D. 258, was probably one of the strongest advocates of Church unity, but he insisted that in each community each shepherd was only responsible to God. Christ is the Head of a body united by love, and Church unity is built upon mutual love, not upon ecclesiastical discipline and authority. To the outsider, the early Church looked very fragile and easy to destroy, but actually it was very strong and grew with incredible speed. There is no stronger bond than that of fervent Christian love, and no organisation and direction better than that received from Christ. The early Church enjoyed the loving superintendence of apostolic and other leading ministries, and recognition of other churches and their ministries, but there was no domination of the local church by people outside of the local church.

3. HOW THE DEPARTURE FROM EARLY CHURCH ORGANISATION TOOK PLACE.

The first things to go were the leadership of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and a Christ-directed body ministry. Then elders, plural, were replaced by a presiding elder, who later took over the rule of the whole local church. The second stage was an affiliation of churches in conference, whose decisions, though at first advisory, became more and more binding upon the churches, and power became concentrated into the hands of the representatives of these churches. The representative's authority then came to depend, not upon his spirituality, but on the size and importance of the population of the area that he represented. The third stage of church federation was the upholding of ecclesiastical traditions and decisions by civil power. Those who desire a much more complete study upon this can read Dr. Hatch's outstanding book on this subject.

We need to remember our Lord's anger at the unscriptural traditions of the religious leaders of His day, when we reject the Word of God and replace it with the traditions of men. Mt.15v1-13. 23v1-39. Mk.7v1-23. Lk.11v37-54. God is just as unhappy today with traditions that make void His Word, and frustrate His will and purposes. Religious leaders, who cling to men's traditions and reject God's truth, will never have a revival. They invariably reject Christians who have been given ministry gifts by Christ, just as the religious leaders of Christ's day rejected Christ and the ministries that He had appointed, and hindered the workings of the Spirit of God. 1Pet.2v4. Christ called Israel's religious leaders "hypocrites," and He said that their worship was vain. Christ told His disciples to leave these blind leaders of the blind alone, for God was going to root them up and deal with them, this is good advice for us to follow. Mt.15v1-14.

4. THE GREAT EVILS THAT CHURCH FEDERATION CAN LEAD TO.

I again want to make it quite clear that I am not against denominational churches. I certainly do not want to censure and destroy the beautiful, inspiring and beneficial acts of worship that take place in denominational buildings, but I do want to see an end to denominational bigotry, unscriptural tradition, and resistance to the Holy Spirit's workings. Denominational buildings can, like the school of Tyrannus, be centres of evangelism, teaching, fellowship and revival, if godly men lead them.

We must above all remember that love suffers long and is kind; we must speak the truth in love and not in condemnation. Let us exercise patience and Christian love with those who are seeking God, but find it difficult to break from the mental prisons of their own traditions. Jesus has been so loving, patient and kind to us in our stupidity, slothfulness, waywardness and pride. Let us forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us. Eph.4v31,32. The way to break down the barriers between churches is for Christians to have fellowship and prolonged prayer together, in Christ's presence barriers disappear and love and mercy triumph. Let us now go on to consider the dangers of denominationalism.

a. Church federation almost invariably leads to a sectarian bigotry that shocks the world.

The unbeliever will accept the fact that when there are many Christians, they will need to meet in different places, but they are greatly hindered from becoming Christians by denominational bigotry and the consequent bitter spirit and rivalry that many Christians manifest to each other. Christ said, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, and by your love to one another." Jn.13v34,35. 15v10-14. A false imitation unity and love and denominational mergers will not deceive the world, they want to see genuine Christian love between Christians, then, and not before, the world will believe. Jn.17v20-23.

The beloved Grimshaw, though a Church of England minister himself, built three churches for other denominations when they moved into his area, he was not going to have competitive division in Christ's body, we need to imitate his magnanimous spirit. Organic unity into one massive ecclesiastical system is entirely unscriptural and undesirable, we do not want one great denomination governed by men, we need one body united under the Lordship of Christ. Indeed, ecclesiastical central government by men, in reality usurps Christ's prerogative of guiding His local and universal Church, as He thinks best, and shows a real unbelief in the fact that Christ is personally guiding His local and universal Church.

Denominationalism and church federation produce and perpetuate division in Christ's Church. It is a striking fact that in a few years after 1848, the Wesleyan Methodists lost about one hundred thousand members, because they insisted on the supremacy of the Methodist Conference, instead of the independence of the local church fellowships like those of the early Church. Churches whose basis of fellowship is mutual love springing from recognition of Christ as Saviour and Lord, give a real testimony to the world. Many Christians have restricted their view of the Church and Christian fellowship to one denomination, instead of recognising, embracing, and fellowshiping with all true believers in Christ. Indeed, Christians who have this wider New Testament view of

Christ's Church, are looked upon as "unfaithful to our movement," or as "unreliable rolling stones," if they do not restrict their ministry and fellowship to one denomination. Whatever a person's denomination, if they are "born again," and know Christ and the Father in a living way, they are our brother or sister in Christ. Paul tells us that if we perpetuate these man-made divisions and do not recognise other Christian believers, we are carnal and immature spiritual babies. 1Cor.3v1. Those who say "I am holier than thou" are a smoke in God's nostrils. Is.65v5.

A denominational spirit narrows a Christian's outlook and limits a proper vision of Christ's Church. The early Christians called themselves believers, brethren, disciples, saints, followers of the way, and Christ's Church, they did not recognise any need for an organisational name, or man-made ecclesiastical structure. Faith, fellowship and love were the uniting bonds of the early Church. It is possible that the name of "Christian" has been given divine approval, for in Acts.11v26., "called," is "chrematisai," the aorist infinitive of "chrematizo." For Peter uses it in 1Pet.4v16., to describe believers in Jesus. "Chrematizo," is also used in the sense of a Divine command in Mt.2v12,22. Lk.2v26. and Acts.10v22., and in Rom.7v3 for "called." See also Mt.2v12,22. Lk.2v26. Acts.10v22. Rom.7v3. Heb.8v5. 11v7. 12v25. for "chrematizo." Some think the Gentiles gave this name to the Christians to distinguish them from the Jews. Acts.11v26. 26v28. 1Pet.4v16. It is only used once to describe Christians in the apostolic writings, by Peter in 1Pet.4v16., the more tender and intimate words of "beloved," "believer," "sister," "brethren," "disciple" and "saint" are the words that are used to describe Christians and their relationship to each other and to Christ. Jesus is the Head of a remarkable family, linked together by our love for Him and each other. It is love that binds the Church together and gives a testimony to the world, not constitutions or ecclesiastical machinery.

b. Church federation usurps Christ's authority and usually frustrates His plans and ministries.

Christ is the head of the Church, but men love to usurp His authority and to take the power into their own hands. Even church affiliation is very dangerous if it results in power being concentrated into the hands of a very few representatives, for this inevitably leads to Christ's Lordship over His flocks being replaced by men's rule. When Christian leaders become spiritual dictators and are touchy about their position and authority, they have never partaken of the Spirit of Christ, and lost the view of Christ's Lordship over His Church. The rule of men nearly always results in the rejection and isolation of the ministries that Christ has set in the Church, and they are not able to minister in churches because of denominational closed-shop attitudes.

Though the New Testament apostles are universally praised by today's modern churches, it is very doubtful if any of them would be accepted by the vast majority of today's churches. Healings, tongues, miracles, and hot sermons, are certainly not wanted, and are often opposed by most of today's church leaders. Most of the religious leaders of Christ's day opposed Him, and in the end succeeded in killing Him. We need "the authority from Heaven" that Jesus and John Baptist experienced.

Jesus did not desire or seek position in men's organisations, or their approval, authority and backing, He was content to do His Father's will, and be a blessing. Jesus never tried to join or start a religious hierarchy, He bypassed the religious leaders of His day and chose simple, unlearned men, of poor education, to be His apostles and lead His Church. God chose men who had a burning love for Jesus, and whose limitations made them depend on Him. Paul said that Christ chooses nobodies to lead in His Church, and said that he gloried in everything that made him Christ-dependent, so that Christ's power would rest upon him. 1Cor.1v26-32. 2Cor.12v7-10. The idea that a person should not be allowed to minister unless they have high academic and intellectual qualifications is completely foreign to the New Testament.

c. Church federation usually replaces body ministry with one-man ministry.

When divine ordination is replaced with human ordination, and one-man ministry replaces body ministry, the effect upon the spiritual life of a church is disastrous. Paul tells us that Christians should minister to each other as a body works together, often the least talented, naturally speaking, being the greatest blessing because of the manifestation of God's "charismata" through them. 1Cor.12v4-7,21-25. Rom.12v4-13. This was a fundamental principal of New Testament ministry and fellowship. The churches recognised teachers should not monopolise ministry, all have a part to play in the local church. Eph.4v1-16.

There was also a very definite place for an evangelistic mission in the New Testament, with one person having the leading part in debate, as in Paul's missions. Acts.14v12. 19v8-10. However, if we are to completely follow the New Testament, dialogue and reasoning should take place in both local church fellowship and evangelistic mission. "Dialegomai," occurs in Acts.17v2,17. 18v4,19. 19v8,9. 20v7,9. 24v12,25.. "Reasoning," "suzeteo," occurs in Acts.6v9. 9v29.. Some church buildings fulfil well the purpose of missions, even if they do not permit New Testament dialogue. We must also remember that Paul did not found missions buildings, he founded local churches with body ministry. It is quite Scriptural and correct to rent a building for evangelistic purposes, as it appears Paul did at Ephesus, but it is wrong only to have an evangelistic mission, missions should found churches with New Testament body ministry. The problem with buying and building consecrated buildings, is that it is so financially demanding and time consuming, that it can seriously restrict the practical helping of the poor and needy, which was the main use of New Testament church finances.

The Old Testament guild of priests, which left God's people in a state of permanent dependence and religious pupilage, has no place in Christianity. There is a change from the Old Testament prophetic and priestly offices,

which had a mediating and exclusive ministry, to the New Testament priesthood and ministry of all believers. 1Pet.2v5,9. Rev.1v6. All Christians can minister, as God illuminates and leads. 1Cor.12v7. The Old Testament priestly and prophetic offices were imperfect, because by being mediatory, they excluded God's people from close fellowship with God. In this age of grace, only Christ, the High Priest, has a ministry of mediation between the Father and Christians. Though the Church has important and leading ministries, they do not mediate between Christians and their God.

The guidance of a local church was not placed in the hands of one person; the local church was to be centred on God, not on any human leader. The domination of a church by even a gracious person can check the development of ministry in the church and hinder the movings of the Holy Spirit. Many modern church leaders resist the New Testament pattern of body ministry, and follow the Old Testament idea of exclusive priestly office, and desire their congregations to remain babies forever. This denies the New Testament principle of body ministry, and keeps Christians in a state of permanent pupilage and dependence on their religious leaders. It is a tragedy that the training of many modern clergy is aimed at producing priest-dependence. Denominations usually choose leaders who have the intellectual and academic qualifications and ability to lead churches, without any help from their congregations.

We do not place a premium upon ignorance, but we must note that Jesus chose unlearned men of poor education to be His apostles; they had to depend on God or fail. Natural ability can be a hindrance instead of a help in God's work, if we depend on it instead of God. In 1Cor.1v26-31., we read that God's choice of leaders humbles human pride and brings greater glory to God. What was true in New Testament times is often true today, a person ordained by men, and given a religious status, is not necessarily ordained by God, and a person who is ordained by God, is often not recognised by religious denominations.

d. Church federation usually leads to self-dependence and pride.

Denominationalism encourages a false feeling of power, pride and self-sufficiency. A large or growing organisation can give a completely false sense of achievement, and lead to something even worse, a reliance in a denomination's resources instead of God. When churches or denominations feel that they can say, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing," or "Is not this great Babylon that I have built," they are in a very dangerous spiritually bankrupt condition. Pride of denomination and reliance on human resources, should be seen for the serious sins that they are. Dan.4v28-37. Rev.3v17. Uzziah was marvellously helped by God until he was strong, then his heart was lifted up and he did corruptly. 2Chron.26v1-21. The same feeling of security and worldly influence has often had the identical effect upon churches and denominations. When a denomination directs and supplies every material need, church leaders feel very little need to seek, trust, or wait on God for His guidance and power, and so churches become spiritually dead and lifeless. It is a tragedy when church leaders equate worldly influence and power, with spiritual power and spiritual success, they usually mean the very reverse.

Many churches that manifest spiritual gifts can suffer from the same spiritual complacency and self-sufficiency as the church at Laodicea. Many churches seldom, or never, experience any spiritual gifts other than tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy, yet it is the other six gifts that make all the difference between victory and defeat for churches. People come into most of today's churches, with deep spiritual, physical and emotional burdens and other great problems, and yet there is no real attempt to meet these poor people's heart-cries to God for help. Teaching or tradition is looked upon as sufficient, and leaders are content with the superficial, and people never have their deep needs met, year in and year out. The churches that do this are in the same condition as the church at Laodicea, and like that church, they do not know, or will not admit their need, as Christ said, "**Thou knowest not**, that thou art wretched, miserable, naked and blind."

In many churches, Jesus is longing to meet the heart-broken needs of people, but is firmly excluded from doing so by the arrogant self-satisfaction, stubborn self-will, and crippling traditions of these churches. Even though the Lord Jesus looks upon even Laodicean churches with His great and wonderful compassion, He can only look upon such a state of affairs, as criminal negligence, and on the day when He judges His Church He will certainly say so. Rev.3v19-22.

Paul did not depend on oratory or excellency of speech, when he came to Corinth, he relied on the demonstration and power of the Spirit. 1Cor.2v1-5. This is just the opposite of most churches today, who imitate David's great sin of numbering Israel, and so prove that they are relying on, and glorying in, their numbers, worldly possessions and influence. 1Chron.21v1-30. God reprov'd David, and started to destroy the thing that David gloried in, He can do the same with us, let us "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." Micah.6v8. Let us make sure that we are Christ-dependent, not self-dependent, or denomination-dependent, and let us carefully watch our traditions. Church tradition, like the tradition of the Jews, can replace the desires, commands, doctrines and workings of God, with men's teaching and practice, and a form can be perpetuated that hinders, or even excludes, the mighty workings of the Holy Spirit.

e. Church federation usually leads to unscriptural and worldly power structures.

As we have already seen, all Christians in local churches took part in important local decisions; but in modern denominations, the power usually resides in the hands of a few ordained representatives. Men usually ordain those who will do the will of their denomination, and so they perpetuate their own kind of power structure and

make the ministry a closed shop, and only those who conform can join. The Lordship of Christ over the Church's ministries is replaced by the rule of men. Denominations can get to the place where they have enough financial wealth and ecclesiastical machinery to perpetuate their own type of power structure and standards without any help from God. Church history has proved that denominations, like the world, will fight to obtain and retain, power, wealth, prestige, influence and position. Satan fell through this same love of power, he lusted after God's position and for adulation and power, and proud men have done exactly the same thing in the Church.

The struggle for power.

It is a striking fact that Jesus was totally financially destitute, and came to preach His Gospel to the poor, and that the early Church consisted mainly of people of little political power, wealth and influence. 2Cor.8v9. Lk.4v18. 1Cor.1v26-31. Constantine used the Church as a means of exercising political power and control, and many others followed his example, until church organisations became an instrument of power and influence in the hands of the powerful and wealthy. Love of power has pervaded all denominations and has destroyed their spiritual vitality and effectiveness. It is a great tragedy that most denominations and churches, large and small, have become largely concerned with upholding their power structure, prestige and worldly influence. Some denominations have great worldly wealth and influence, but they are lacking in spiritual power. The spiritual power a church possesses is nearly always inversely proportional to its worldly wealth, influence, and ecclesiastical complexity. Men love to pass minutes, resolutions, and constitutions, and these man-made traditions, like the traditions of Judaism, often replace the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Mt.15v1-9. Mk.7v1-13. How easily the precepts of men can replace and frustrate the will and Word of God. Some conference resolutions and church minutes have made many churches and denominations secure against revival. Every church minute that narrows the fellowship of the local church is not of God, and will have to be answered for at the judgement seat of Christ.

The resistance to the Holy Spirit. Acts.7v51-53.

It is a striking fact of Church History, that churches or denominations, which have lost God's blessing, use their worldly power and influence to resist a move of the Holy Spirit. Genuine revivals of religion have always been violently opposed by unspiritual religious leaders, who have been determined to preserve their power structures. Churches and denominations, which have been formed out of the fruits of a spiritual revival, and have lost the revival fire, are often the bitter opponents of a new revival, because it exposes their own spiritual need, and threatens their power structure and their position as spiritual leaders. The Jews murdered Christ because they were envious of His spiritual power, and because they thought that He was threatening their power structure. Jn.11v47,48. Acts.13v44-47. Mt.27v17,18.

The fear of the Ephesian idol makers, of losing their prestige, position, and wealth, caused them to violently oppose Paul, and the same base reasons have always moved men to oppose genuine revival. Men love to have despotic power, and try to make people conform to their standards and system. Acts.19v23-28. It becomes obvious from a study of Church history, that Satan has often used federated churches, and state controlled church systems, to kill and persecute the true children of God. Suppression of truly spiritual Christians has always followed church federation and organic church unity, as surely as night follows day. Church history proves that federated churches have often proved as good an instrument of Satan for persecution, as the pagan Roman Empire. However, persecution of true Christians in a genuine move of God, is by no means limited to state churches or older denominations, the last move of God that has dried up and lost God's power and become an denomination, has often been a great hindrance, and the most bitter opponent, of God's new move of the Holy Spirit.

As denominations, fellowships and churches begin to get away from God and lose the blessing of God, they try to preserve their structure by emphasising faithfulness to that organisation and subservience to its leaders, regardless of whether they are fulfilling a spiritual ministry from Christ or not. Ministers often spend much of their time praising and uplifting their denomination, and emphasise faithfulness to their denomination and its ordained ministers, and there is often little reference to faithfulness to Christ and His New Testament standards. The glorious loving leadership and true fellowship of the early Church cannot be compared to this denominational bondage.

In John 13., Jesus washed His disciples feet to show them that Christian leaders are to serve God's people in love, not to lord it over them. The love of power in the apostles had blinded their eyes; they were fighting for position and power a few hours before the Cross. Jesus clearly demonstrated to them, by washing their feet, that they should serve each other in genuine humility and love. In Mt.20v20-28., James and John asked for position and power in the kingdom, but Jesus told them that the leading positions in His kingdom were for the most humble, sacrificial and loving, and that leaders in His Church were to be servants not overbearing lords. Jesus said that Christians can be "great," "megaloi," but warned us that true greatness is manifested in genuine humility and humble service. Mk.10v43,44. Luke.9v46-48. 14v11.1v15. Great Christians never "lord it over" others, "katakuriuousin," or exercise authority as a tyrant, "katexousiazousin." Jesus said the way to be first, "protos," and "great," in God's eyes, is to minister as a bond slave, "doulos," and a menial servant, "diakonos," even as He had done. Mt.20v20-28.

In 1Pet.5v1-5., Peter tells us the very same thing, pastor-elders are not to lord it over their flocks, but are to lead by example. Church history shows us how little heed has been taken to these words of Jesus and Peter. Men

have so loved their religious power structures and their position in them, that they have resisted the Holy Spirit, lied, deceived, tortured, murdered, and pillaged, to uphold and preserve their religious power structure, and they have usually done it in the name of God. Jn.16v1. The Scripture tells us that those who hate and kill in the name of God, are not God's children, they partake of the spirit of Satan, who was a liar and murderer from the beginning. Jn.8v44. 1Jn.2v7-11. 3v10-17. 4v20 to 5v3. When Christ's disciples wanted to call fire down from heaven upon the hostile Samaritans, Jesus rebuked them and told them that their attitude was evil, and that they should seek to save and bless, not destroy. Lk.9v51-56. True Christians are not concerned with power structures or fighting to uphold them, they are concerned with doing the will of God, and being a channel of God's blessing.

f. Church federation makes it easy for Satan to corrupt and persecute the Church. If one person, or a group of ministers governs a denomination, Satan has only to influence these ministers to affect all their flocks. If a local church is ruled by one person, and has a one-man ministry, the same is true; Satan has only to influence one person to make it difficult for all. One minister, even if he is kind, moral and good, can bring a church into bondage, if he is lacking in spiritual anointing, devotion and prayer. A minister can be a good intelligent Christian, but if he is not used to the movings of the Holy Spirit and His gifts, and body ministry, he will be a hindrance to revival. It is also true that one can have a gracious veneer and yet determinedly resist the movings of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries cannot be received by intellectual training at theological college; they are received through communion with Christ. Indeed, many theological colleges have been corrupted by Satan, and systematically train students in unbelief, not in vital New Testament Christianity, and so a whole denomination is affected and corrupted.

When Christians are organised into denominations, they are more easily controlled, captured, killed and persecuted, by antichristian forces, a thing that we need to take note of in these evil last days. The New Testament house fellowship is the only way that Christians can have fellowship in some countries today. The Church in Communist countries survived spiritually, because it followed the pattern of independent local churches gathered in house fellowships. The fine buildings, organs, choirs, and singing, can fulfil a useful function in our present circumstances in Western countries, but they are a burden in periods of militant persecution, and can be closed in hours, as events in many countries have proved. Men's insistence upon church federation, really prepares the Church for destruction in times of persecution. Only a love dominated church, which fervently seeks and waits upon God in prolonged prayer, can ensure the spiritual glow that will preserve the church in persecution, and deliver the church, local and universal, from spiritual death and corruption.

When churches tried to make a powerful system to save themselves from heresy, they brought greater evils upon their churches than they cured. The man-made form that was instituted to preserve the Church has really produced and perpetuated many forms devoid of the Holy Spirit. The form that was produced to preserve from heresy, has often produced and perpetuated that very thing. The edict of toleration of Constantine in A.D.313, and the consequent enforcement of orthodoxy by the state, was an unparalleled disaster for the Church. The union of the state with the Church did not save the world, the world's wealth corrupted and defiled the Church and rendered it spiritually powerless. The Church exchanged worldly power, prestige, buildings and gold for true spiritual wealth, and authority. God will not manifest His power to uphold the traditions of men. The dangerous and powerful wolves that Paul warns us of in Acts.20v29., have often been church organisations, and they have also spoken "crooked, perverted doctrines," which have greatly damaged the churches. 1Cor.1v11-13. 3Jn.v9. 1Tim.1v20. 2Tim.1v15.

When denominations evangelise other nations, they try to impose on these nations, not a New Testament form, but their own tradition and form of worship, and these traditions and forms are often quite unacceptable to the people of the nations that they are evangelising, and they hinder the evangelistic success and spirituality of the Church. The simple organisation of the early Church appeals to every nation. False tradition is disastrous for evangelistic success, and Satan is happy if he can keep people conformed to these traditions. How often churches expect the unconverted to conform to their method of evangelism, without any thought of whether it is Scriptural or not. The New Testament forms of evangelism were completely successful, Gospel preaching, either by discussion or heralding, in street, home, open-air, as well as consecrated building, such as a synagogue or Temple, brought tremendous results, because it was not only attractive and interesting, but also because it was anointed by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by mighty signs, wonders and miracles.

CONCLUSION.

One of the greatest evangelistic forces in the New Testament Church was its practical love and care for people; indeed, the majority of its finances went for caring for people in need. Church buildings and ecclesiastical systems consume the vast majority of the finances that Christians can give, and often little is left for the needy, and so one of the most powerful evangelistic appeals of the Church is lost. The early Church appointed deacons in every church to do works of charity; some modern churches have followed this practice and have brought great relief and blessing to the needy. Large building projects and complex organisations are very expensive and time consuming, and hinder rapid growth; the early Church grew very rapidly by following God's simple pattern. Samuel G. Green, on page 55 of his, "A Handbook of Church History," states that Justin Martyr wrote about 140 A.D., "There is not one single race of men, whether Barbarians or Greeks, or what ever they may be called, nomads or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents; among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus."

Samuel Green continues, on page 56: "Gibbon and Milman estimate the population of Rome at the beginning of the third century as one million two hundred thousand, and the calculation of the former that a twentieth were nominal Christians may be adopted as a minimum." This means that there were at least 60,000 Christians in Rome at this time. The spread of the Gospel and the conversion of tens of thousands of people, had taken place without any external form of buildings or denominational organisation. If we follow Christ's New Testament pattern we shall also be amazed at the results. There is a vital connection between following the simplicity and spirituality of the early Church organisation, and revival.

New Testament ministries are intended to bring people into a living experimental knowledge of God and His truth. Why, then, are there so few of the higher ministries in operation? The following answers suggest themselves. Much of the fog of the dark ages of the Church is still with us, even in evangelical circles. Ministers are often conformed to the denominational mould, and anything outside this mould is viewed with suspicion and opposed. Authoritative decrees from federated church leaders has forced those under them to resist the desires and movings of the Holy Spirit, and Satan has used this to keep churches from New Testament principles and practices. Acts.7v51-53. In Church history this has resulted in Christians with God's anointing upon them being rejected, opposed and even murdered. There are few who are willing to stand the sacrifice, suffering and poverty involved in following their Lord in this way. We have to very definitely take up our cross and follow Jesus, if we are to sustain His ministry gifts to us. A divinely directed New Testament ministry gift is almost certain to involve personal Calvaries in manifesting and ministering Christ's resurrection life. Many preachers are unwilling to walk this way, preferring to preach and believe in a spiritually sapping and worldly "prosperity gospel." The cry from God's longing, loving, tender heart is still the same, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Let us hear His call and obey His commands, and then we shall not only see Him in glory, but also hear His "Well done." Let us say, "Here I am. Send me!" Is.6v8.

Bibliography and Acknowledgements.

The writer owes a great deal to many other writers, and has freely quoted them, or used some of their thoughts in this book. The books on early Church organisation and practice by G.H. Lang and Dr. Hatch have been particularly helpful. Neander and Green have also been very good sources of information. There are also many other books and commentaries which have given me much assistance, Barnes, Ellicott, Farrar, Robertson, Jamieson Fausset and Brown, and Ellison, Howley and Bruce, to mention but a few of them.

APPENDIX 1. IN GEN.3V16., GOD DID NOT CURSE WOMEN.

Several mistranslations of Gen.3v15,16., twist and distort God's statement about women.

THE FIRST MISTRANSLATION. "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow." Gen.3v16. _

According to Katherine Bushnell, an outstanding Hebrew scholar, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow," in Gen.3v16., is incorrectly translated, she writes in paragraph 117 of her book, "God's Word To Women:"

"We hold that verse 16 should have been rendered, "Unto the woman He said, A snare hath increased thy sorrow," - the word "snare" being, literally rendered, "a lying-in-wait." Instead, it is rendered, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow." The difference between the two in Hebrew lies wholly in the interlinear vowel-signs of comparatively recent invention. (Footnote) The difference is between HaRBeh, AaRBeh, "multiplying I will multiply," and HiRBah AoReB, "hath caused to multiply, (or made great), a lying in wait." - the verb, as usual preceding its nominative. The capital letters, alike in both phrases, alone constitute the original text. This participle form, ARB, occurs fourteen times in Joshua and Judges. It is translated "ambush," and "liers-in-wait," or "in ambush." It is possible that we should read here, "A lier-in-wait (the subtle serpent) hath increased thy sorrow."

Bushnell informs us why the Jews added the vowel letters to the Hebrew text in paragraph 6.of her book, she writes:-

"Hebrew ceased to be spoken by the common people during the Babylonian captivity. It was practically a "dead language" as early as B. C. 250. In the absence of expressed vowels, its pronunciation was likely to become lost. So the Scribes took four consonants, "a h v and j," and inserted them into the text to indicate the vowel sounds. While this device helped to some extent, in the end it led to confusion, often raising the question: "Is this letter a consonant, belonging to the original, or is it a vowel-letter, added by the Scribes?" Moreover the insertion of these vowel-letters did not prove sufficient; then, as late as 600-800 A. D., a whole system of vowel-signs was added, most elaborately indicating the vowels of each word as tradition had preserved it. These vowel-signs were interlinear, and therefore did not confuse the text, as did the vowel-letters." End of quote.

The rendering in Gen.3v16., "Unto the woman He said, I have greatly increased thy sorrow," is against both the context and character of God, it should be translated, "Unto the woman He said, A snare hath increased thy sorrow," the word snare being literally, "a lying in wait," Satan, in the form of a serpent. Rev.12v9.

WHERE DID THIS ATTACK ON WOMEN AND THE CHARACTER OF GOD COME FROM?

1. FROM "THE DAYS OF MINGLING."

The time between the Old Testament and the New Testament has been called "the days of mingling." The Jews tried to adopt Hellenistic ideas from the Greek cities which surrounded Palestine. Greek kings were in control in Syria and Egypt so the Jews decided to obliterate the ideas of Jewish life and religion which were offensive to these Greeks. F. W. Farrar, and others say, "This semi-faithless epoch was described as the days of mingling." This was the time when the Jews mingled freely with the heathen population, F. W. Farrar says that they were "fascinated by the attractions of Greek life and literature, they wished to adopt Hellenistic ideas and to obliterate the most essential distinctions of Jewish life and religion."

Some think that it was during this time that women were given the badge of inferiority and servility. Before this the woman had a place in the tabernacle services as priestesses and Levites, and this is proved by the technical term used in Exod.33v38. and 1Sam.2v22., which is translated as "serving women." It was during those days that the blame was shifted from Adam to Eve, she was linked with the heathen teaching of Pandora, and Eve was blamed as the one who opened Pandora's box on the world. The city of Alexandria led the way in reconciling the Scriptures with pagan Greek teachings.

2. FROM THE TALMUDIC TEACHING.

a. This taught, "From a woman a beginning of sin and because of her all die." Ecclesiasticus.25v24.

The wisdom of Ben Sira, and many others, said the same dreadful theology, and greatly disparaged women.

b. The Ten Curses of Eve in a Talmudic commentary on Genesis.

In Lesson 13 of her book, "God's word to Woman," Katherine C Bushnell quotes the outrageous and disgusting 10 curses of Eve, from Dr. Hershon's, "Genesis With A Talmudic Commentary." (Bagster London). Bushnell states that some of the details were so obscene and filthy that she was unwilling to print them.

- 1) "Greatly multiply" refers to catamenia, etc.
- 2) "Thy sorrow" in rearing children.
- 3) "Thy conception."
- 4) "In sorrow shall thou bring forth children."
- 5) "Thy desire shall be unto thy husband." (This is followed by language too coarse and vulgar for reproduction leaving no doubt of the Rabbinical interpretation of desire: it was gross physical lust).
- 6) "He shall rule over thee." (More, and even fouler language)
- 7) She is wrapped up like a mourner, that is.
- 8) Dares not appear in public with her head uncovered.
- 9) Is restricted to one husband, while he may have many wives.
- 10) Is confined to the house as to a prison.

N. B. 1. Those who teach that woman is under a curse like this, are really putting themselves under a curse for misinterpreting the Scriptures in this fraudulent, contemptible, and insulting way. Those who believe, teach and practice these outrageous and evil doctrines can expect severe censure on judgement day. James.3v1.

N. B. 2. God certainly did not ordain women's servitude to man. We read in Gen.21v12., that God told Abraham to obey Sarah. See 1Cor.7v4., where Paul states, "The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. (NIV)

3. FROM CHURCH LEADERS WHO WERE INFLUENCED BY THE TALMUD.

Many Church leaders have been influenced by the Talmud, and by heathen ideas about women.

a) Tertullian twisted the Scriptures when he said that God visited Eve's sin and guilt on all women.

He stated, "Do you not know that you are an Eve? God's verdict on the sex still holds good, and the sex's guilt must still hold also. YOU ARE THE DEVIL'S GATEWAY, you are the avenue of the forbidden tree. You are the first deserter from the Law divine. It was you who persuaded him (Adam), whom the devil himself had not strength to assail. So lightly did you esteem God's image. For your deceit, for death, the very Son of God had to perish." End of quote.

What a male chauvinist twisting of the facts, and perversion of the truth! Tertullian fails to mention that Jesus was born of a woman and that the Scriptures ascribe the transgression to Adam. Adam is mentioned in Job.31v33. and Hosea.6v7. ("men" can be translated as Adam), and he is the one who gets the blame. Paul also states that Adam is to blame for the fall, in 1Cor.15v22., and seven times in Rom.5v12-19.. In 1Tim.2v14., Paul says that the woman was completely deceived, "exapatheisa," the aorist passive indicative of, "exapatao," "to deceive completely," or "to deceive successfully," and states that Adam was the one "who stepped over the boundary," "parabasis," and transgressed.

In 2Cor.11v3., "beguiled," is "exepatesen," the aorist indicative active of "exapatao," the preposition "ex" in the compound is perfective, and so means to completely deceive. Here we see Satan as the active agent in deception, in 1Tim.2v14., we see Eve as the passive deceived one. God says in Ezek.18v1-32. N.B. v2,20., that guilt cannot be transferred from parent to child.

b) Calvin said that God cast Eve into servitude to men.

This is the same as saying that God made men a curse to women, but God has decreed the very opposite, for the husband who does not treat his wife properly will have his prayers "cut off" by God. In 1Peter.3v7.

"egkoptesthai" the present passive indicative of "egkopto," means, to cut in on, and so to hinder, to impede, to detain. Christian men are commanded, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." Eph.5v25.

THE SECOND MISTRANSLATION ABOUT "CONCEPTION."

In the Hebrew of Gen.3v16., the word translated as "conception," is HRN, but this not the correct Hebrew for "conception," which is correctly spelt as HRJWN in Ruth.4v13. and Hosea.9v11., it occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Old Testament. Even though some Hebrew scholars say HRN is "an abnormal formation which occurs now were else in the Old Testament," and the lexical authorities Brown, Briggs, and Driver say that it is a "contraction or erroneous," the Septuagint translators, who were outstanding Hebrew scholars, decided that the correct translation of HRN was, "thy sighing." The sentence means, then, "a snare hath increased thy sorrow and thy sighing." Many ancient authorities agree with the Septuagint.

THE THIRD MISTRANSLATION "DESIRE." "TESHUWOAH" OR "TESHUQA." Strong 8669.

"Teshuqa," only occurs 3 times in the Old Testament, in Gen.3v16. 4v7. and The Song of Solomon.7v10..

In paragraphs 124 and 127, of her book "God's Word To Women," K. Bushnell states: "The correct rendering of Gen.3v16. is this: "Thou art turning away to thy husband, and he will rule over thee," - not as it has been rendered, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband." This assertion, as to the correct meaning of the phrase we shall now prove. As we have said before, a misinterpretation of Scripture can be proved by the misfit. The usual construction put upon the language of this verse fits accurately nowhere, the correct interpretation fits all around." End of quote.

Bushnell continues, "Thus we see that the context does not prove that this "shall be" of the sentence translated, "thy desire shall be to thy husband" is imperative. We can assert positively that this sentence is a simple future or present, warning woman of the consequences of her action. So it is rendered in all the ancient versions; never as an imperative. As a prophecy it has been abundantly fulfilled in the manner which man rules over woman, especially in heathen lands." End of quote.

According to Bushnell, "teshuqa" is derived from the verb "shuwq," its simplest meaning is, "to run," the prefix "te," "gives "teshuqa" an abstract meaning and corresponds to our termination "ness," as in "goodness," or "kindness," etc.. The ending "a, " is added to give the feminine form (of the verb), it can mean, "to run repeatedly," that is to run back and forth," and so have the derived sense of "turning," which most ancient versions give it. In Gen.3v16., Eve's turning. In Gen.4v7., Cain's turning, or sins turning, or crouching ready to pounce like an animal. In Song of Solomon.7v10., the woman states she is her beloved's, and his turning is towards her. Bushnell says, (para. 126): "No verbs are expressed. The conjunction is one for all and also the preposition. This is true of the Hebrew original also. In fact there is no variety in the three sentences, excepting in the proper nouns implied in the pronouns used. The sense of the three passages must be similar."

THE TRANSLATIONS OF TESHUQA IN THE MOST ANCIENT VERSIONS.

The Septuagint. Translates "teshuqa," as "turning" in the three places where it occurs; as "apostrophe," "turning away," in Gen.3v16. and 4v7., and as "epistrophe," "turning to," in Song of Solomon.7v10. God said that the consequence of Eve turning away from God to her husband, was that her husband would rule her. Nearly every quotation of the Old Testament in the New Testament follows the Septuagint, which tradition says was a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek by 72 Jewish scholars in Alexandria in about B.C. 285. The Septuagint was much favoured by the Jews until Christians used the translations of its prophecies to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Syriac Peshitto. Which some say was translated from Greek manuscripts as early as A. D. 100 to 200, renders Gen.3v16., as "thou wilt turn;" and Gen.4v7. as "will turn;" and the Song of Sol.7v10. as "turning."

The Samaritan Pentateuch. About A. D. 100. Only has Gen.3v16. and 4v7. readings and translates both as "turning."_

The Old Latin. About A. D. 200, reads "turning" in all three places, in Gen.3v16. 4v7. and Song of Sol.7v10..

The Coptic Sahidic. About A. D. 300, translates "teshuqa," as "turning," in Gen.3v16. and 4v7., but being fragmentary it lacks any reading of the Song of Sol.7v10..

The Coptic Bohairic. About A. D. 350, is more reliable than the Coptic Sahidic, but being fragmentary it lacks Song of Sol.7v10., but translates Gen.3v16. and 4v7. as "turning."

The Ethiopic. About AD 500, renders all three passages by words meaning "turning".

These ancient versions deny that Eve was under a curse from God, and was driven by lust after her husband.

The reason for the mistranslations of "teshuqa" in Jerome's Vulgate.

The Vulgate is a translation from the Greek Scriptures into Latin made by Jerome in about A. D. 382. Jerome went to Palestine and studied Hebrew under Jewish rabbis and appears to have been to some extent poisoned by

their Talmudic traditions. He translated Gen.3v16., "Thou shalt be under the power of a husband and he will rule over thee;" which is no in no way a correct translation of the original. In Gen.4v7., Jerome translates "teshuqa," as "his appetite," which is another strange translation. In Song of Sol.7v10., Jerome gets to the truth when he translates "teshuqa," as "his turning."

Wycliffe's Version. Made in A. D. 1380, was translated from the Vulgate not the Hebrew, Wycliffe followed the Vulgate in all three places as did the Douay version of 1609.

N. B. 1. The disproportionate unscholarly influence of the Italian Dominican Monk Pagnino.

Bushnell records in paragraph 142: "After Wycliffe's version, and before any other English Bible appeared, an Italian Dominican monk, named Pagnino, translated the Hebrew Bible. The "Biographie Universelle," quotes the following criticism of his work, in the language of Richard Simon: "Pagnino has too much neglected the ancient versions of Scripture to attain himself to the teaching of the rabbis." What would we naturally expect, therefore? That he would render this word "lust," - and that is precisely what he does in the first (Gen.3v16.) and third place (Song of Sol.7v10.); in the second (Gen.4v7.), he translates, "appetite."

Pagnino published his translation of the Hebrew Bible in 1528, and it influenced every older English version in their translation of Gen.3v16., for they render "teshuqa," as "lust," or "desire." What would we expect from the polluted Babylonian Talmud, and those who follow it, but the word "lust;" it is sad that this source and Pagnino had such a bad influence on the English translations of Gen.3v16.. Cranmer's Bible of 1539 first translated "teshuqa" as "lust" in Gen.3v16., and the Geneva Bible and the Authorised Version and the Revised Version softened the idea to "desire."

Bushnell states in paragraph 145: "Following him (Pagnino), to the neglect of ancient versions, the English translators have not, in regard to Gen.3v16., set forth the proper sense of "teshuqa." Lewis in "Lang's Commentary," states, "The sense of this word (teshuqa) is not "libido," or sensual desire." It is striking fact, that Tyndale, Coverdale, Matthew, (John Rogers) and Cranmer all translated "teshuqa " in Song of Sol.7v10. as "turning."

N. B. 2. The influence of some Church Fathers."

Bushnell states that Church Fathers translate "teshuqa," as "turning." Clement of Rome who died A. D. 100. Irenaeus who died A. D. 202. Tertullian who was born A. D. 160. Origen who was born A. D. 186. Epiphanius who was born A. D. 310 in Palestine. Ambrose who was born A. D. 340. Augustus who was born A. D. 354. Theodoret who was born A. D. 386. All translate "teshuqa" as "turning," in one, two or all three passages. The famous Philo, a Jew of Alexandria who died in A. D. 50 also translates "teshuqa," as "turning."

There can be little doubt that Gen.3v16. should be translated; "You are turning away to thy husband and he will rule over thee." This was not a curse, but a prophecy of the domination of women by men, something which has, tragically, been fulfilled not only among the Heathen, but also, all too often, in the Church as well.

"Rule," is "mashal," to rule, to reign, to have dominion, to manage, to rule over. It occurs 83 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, God uses "mashal," to tell Cain that he could rule over and master the sin that was taking hold of him. It is used of Eliezer managing all of Abraham's house Gen.15v2. 24v2. It is used of Joseph's brothers not entertaining the thought of Joseph ruling over them. Gen.37v2. (44v8,26.) It is used of the rule of an oppressive king, as in Isaiah.19v4. Of higher justice in Exod.21v8. Deut.15v6. Of the powerful ruling rich. Prov.22v7. Of political leadership. 1Kings.4v4-21. (Rom.13v1-7.) Of self rule and self control. Prov.16v32. And of God's overruling providence. Ps.89v10.

THE FOURTH MISTRANSLATION, "BRUISE." "Shuph."

"Shuph," occurs 3 times in the Old Testament, in Gen.3v15. it is translated as "bruise," in Job.9v17. as "breaking," and in Ps.139v11. as "cover." "Shuph," is used to mean "bite" (serpent bite on heal), crush, break, and cover." The serpent will bite the heal, and the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head. Ps.72v9. Rom.16v20. Gal.3v16. Eph.2v14-18. Col.2v15. Heb.2v14. 1Jn.3v8. 5v18. Rev.12v7-12. 19v11. 20v1-3,10. Some think that "shuph" means the seed will be in wait for the serpent's head, for some of the ancient versions translate "shuph" as "lying in wait," or a kindred idea, and the Revised Version gives this as an alternative meaning in the margin. This could mean that God, in Christ, would be "lying in wait" for the serpent to crush his head, just as the serpent had lay in wait for Eve and Adam to deceive and destroy them.

THE WOMAN AND HER SEED HAS ALWAYS BEEN A THREAT TO SATAN.

This prophecy has been like a sword over Satan's head from the day that it was uttered. Christ partly fulfilled this in His life and atoning death, and will fulfil it in great measure, when Satan is cast into the Abyss at our Lord's second coming. It will finally be completely fulfilled, when Satan is cast into the lake of fire, at the end of the Millennium. Heb.2v14. Rev.20v1-10.

The Lessons we can learn from the temptation and fall in Eden.

1. Trust God and obey His word. Adam and Eve failed to trust God, and believed Satan's lies. They failed to be open with God, and refused to admit sin and failure, and so missed forgiveness and restoration.

2. God can still bring our marriage partners to us; "He who finds a wife finds what is good, and receives favour from the hand of the Lord." Prov.18v22. "A prudent wife is from the Lord." Prov.19v1. God provided a helper suitable for Adam. Gen.2v18. God's unsearchable wisdom can direct us in marriage. Rom.11v33-36. However, don't leave it all to God, the decision is yours. In Ps.32v8-11., God tells us to use sanctified common sense, and not to be like a horse or mule which have no understanding; He wants to throw away the reins, He does not want to dominate our choices. Be glad and rejoice in the guiding mercy of God, He will guide us with His eye, and warn us, where necessary, of possible dangers.

3. God can make our marriages a new creation in Christ. 2Cor 5v17. As Paul states, "Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always endures, love never fails." 1Cor.13v7,8.

ANOTHER MISTRANSLATION, "RIB."

We read in the Authorised Version of Gen.2v21. that God took a rib out of Adam and made Eve, however, "rib" is not the correct translation. The Hebrew word translated as "rib," in Gen.2v21. (Strong 6763), occurs forty-two times in the Old Testament, in most cases it is translated as "side," or "sides," and elsewhere as "corners," or "chambers," but the only place where it is translated as "rib," is in Gen.2v21,22., which describes the creation of Eve from Adam. If the Lord had meant "rib," He would have used the word for "rib" that He uses in Dan.7v5., (Strong 5967), which means "rib," and nothing else. In the Septuagint version, the word is "pleura," which is invariably translated as "side" in the New Testament, where it is used of the side of Jesus into which the spear was thrust, Jn.19v34. and 20v20,25,27., and of the angels smiting Peter on the side to wake him up, when he was asleep in prison, in Acts.12v7.. "Pleura is also used to speak of a person's side in the Greek of Homer and Herodotus. Adam stated, "she is flesh of my flesh," not just, "she is bone of my bone." God made a female clone out of the flesh and bone of the side of Adam, a truly remarkable miracle.

In Gen.3v16. God did not curse women.

This is a summary of the teaching of the Scriptures that we have just considered. Some use a mistranslation of Gen.3v16., which twists and distorts God's attitude to women, to justify the domination of women by men.

It was not God, but Satan "the liar in wait," who increased the sorrow and pain of women..

According to the outstanding Hebrew scholar Katherine Bushnell, the translation, "Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow," in Gen.3v16., is incorrect. Bushnell states in her book, "God's Word To Women," that it should have been translated, "Unto the woman He said, A snare (literally, "a liar-in wait) hath increased thy sorrow." The participle form, ARB, occurs fourteen times in Joshua and Judges, and is translated as "ambush," and "liers-in-wait," or "in ambush," so Gen.3v16., could be translated, "A liar-in-wait (Satan in the form of a serpent) hath increased thy sorrow."

The Hebrew HRN has also been incorrectly translated in Gen.3v16., as "conception."

However, HRN is not the correct Hebrew for "conception," which is correctly spelt as HRJWN in Ruth.4v13. and Hosea.9v11.. HRN occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Old Testament, however, the Septuagint translators, who were outstanding Hebrew scholars, decided that the correct translation of HRN was, "thy sighing," "tu stenagmos autes." "Stenagmos," means "groanings," or "sighings," and is so translated in Exod.2v24. 6v5. Job.3v24. etc. Many ancient authorities agree with the Septuagint. The A.V. rendering in Gen.3v16., "Unto the woman He said, I have greatly increased thy sorrow and thy conception," is against both the context and character of God, it should be translated, "Unto the woman He said, A snare (literally "a liar-in-wait") hath increased thy sorrow and thy sighing." That ancient serpent, Satan, being "the liar-in wait.." Rev.12v9.

The Hebrew "teshuqa," in Gen.3v16., has also been incorrectly translated, as "desire," or "lust."

In paragraphs 124, 127, of her book "God's Word To Women," Bushnell states: "The correct rendering of Gen.3v16. is -- "Thou art turning away to thy husband, and he will rule over thee," - not as it has been rendered, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband."

Bushnell later continues, "Thus we see that the context does not prove that this "shall be" of the sentence translated, "thy desire shall be to thy husband" is imperative. We can assert positively that this sentence is a simple future or present, warning woman of the consequences of her action. So it is rendered in all the ancient versions; never as an imperative. As a prophecy it has been abundantly fulfilled in the manner which man rules over woman, especially in heathen lands." End of quote.

Lewis in "Lang's Commentary," states, "The sense of this word (teshuqa) is not "libido," or sensual desire." "Teshuqa," occurs 3 times in the Old Testament, in Gen.3v16. 4v7. and The Song.7v10.. Bushnell states that the Church Fathers translate "teshuqa," as "turning." Clement of Rome (died A. D. 100). Irenaeus (died A.D. 202). Tertullian (born A.D. 160). Origen (born A.D. 186). Epiphanius (born A. D. 310 in Palestine). Ambrose (born A D. 340). Augustus (born A. D. 354). Theodoret (born A.D. 386). All translate "teshuqa" as "turning," in one, two or all three passages. The famous Jew, Philo of Alexandria (died A.D. 50) also translates "teshuqa," as "turning."

Tertullian twisted the Scriptures when he said that God visited Eve's sin and guilt on all women. He stated, "Do you not know that you are an Eve? God's verdict on the sex still holds good, and the sex's guilt must still hold also. You are the Devil's gateway, you are the avenue of the forbidden tree. You are the first deserter from the Law divine. It was you who persuaded him (Adam), whom the devil himself had not strength to assail. So lightly did you esteem God's image. For your deceit, for death, the very Son of God had to perish." End of quote.

What a perversion of the truth! Paul states seven times in Rom.5v12-19., and once in 1Cor.15v22., that Adam is to blame for the fall. In 1Tim.2v14., we see we see Satan as the active agent in deception, and Eve as the passive deceived one. Paul says that the woman was completely deceived, "exapatetheisa," the aorist passive indicative of, "exapatao," "to deceive completely," or "to deceive successfully," and states that Adam was the one "who stepped over the boundary," "parabasis," and transgressed. In 2Cor.11v3., "beguiled," is "exepatesen," the aorist indicative active of "exapatao," the preposition "ex" in the compound is perfective, and so means to completely deceive. God says in Ezek.18v1-32. N.B. v2,20., that guilt cannot be transferred from parent to child.

Calvin said that God cast Eve into servitude to men. However, God has decreed the very opposite, for husbands who do not treat their wives properly will have their prayers "cut off" by God. In 1Peter.3v7. "egkoptesthai" the present passive indicative of "egkopto," means, to cut in on, and so to hinder, to impede. In Eph.5v25., Paul commands Christian men, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." God certainly did not ordain that women should be in servitude to men.

It a great pity that some theologians and translators have been too influenced by the perverted ideas of the Babylonian Talmud, and the Italian Dominican monk Pagnino, (who published his translation of the Hebrew Bible in 1528), and as a result have translated "teshuqa," as "lust," or "desire." The "Biographie Universelle," quotes the following criticism of Pagnino's work, in the language of Richard Simon: "Pagnino has too much neglected the ancient versions of Scripture to attain himself to the teaching of the rabbis." The Samaritan Pentateuch, the Old Latin, the Coptic Sahidic and Bohairic, and Ethiopic, translate "teshuqa," by words meaning "turning". The Syriac Peshitto, renders Gen.3v16., as "thou wilt turn;" and Gen.4v7. as "will turn;" and the Song of Sol.7v10. as "turning." The Septuagint, translates "teshuqa," as "turning" in the three places where it occurs; as "apostrophe," "turning away," in Gen.3v16. and 4v7., and as "epistrophe," "turning to," in Song.7v10. Nearly every quotation of the Old Testament in the New Testament follows the Septuagint, which tradition says was a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek by 72 Jewish scholars in Alexandria in about B.C. 285. The Septuagint was much favoured by the Jews until Christians used the translations of its prophecies to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. These ancient versions deny that Eve was under a curse from God, and was driven by lust after her husband.

In Gen.3v16., "Your desire will be to your husband, and he will rule over you," should be translated; "You are turning away to your husband and he will rule ("rule," is "mashal," to rule, to reign, to have dominion) over you." This was not a curse, but a prophecy of the domination of women by men, something which has, tragically, been fulfilled not only among the Heathen, but also, sadly, in the Church as well. The glorious Gospel of Jesus reinstates women to a position of equality with men, as Paul states in Gal.3v26-28., v26. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. v27. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. v28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, **there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.** (KJV)

NOTE:

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