

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning.*

VOL. 50. No.7

JULY 1982

A NICE OLD MAN

When the church came into being, almost 2000 years ago, the emphasis was upon simplicity. The items and form of worship were few and uncomplicated consisting of prayer, songs of praise, the breaking of the bread, fellowship of believers and adherence to the teaching of the apostles. Each congregation was independent of others and there were no earthly headquarters (not even Jerusalem). There was no clergy/Laity situation and the only official offices (or works) in the congregations consisted of elders (to care for the spiritual needs of the church) and deacons (who looked after the temporal requirements of the needy). Elders enjoyed complete equality with one another and were of necessity married men. However, from the very outset men were not content to keep it simple but thought up all kinds of embroidery and improvements. Indeed the apostle Paul probably spent more time, effort and worry in preserving the purity and simplicity of the church than he spent on preaching the gospel.

He continually feared for instance with some justification, that the church in Corinth would depart from *"the simplicity in Christ"* (2 Cor. 11:3) and warned that the church contained, even then, false apostles and deceitful workers — and this did not surprise him for in the same chapter he explained that even Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. The "Gates of Hell" would not prevail against the establishment of the church but yet it was possible, as Paul knew, that it could rot from the inside. Secular history confirms that this is, in fact, exactly what happened to the church and that from the elders themselves sprang the Papacy and the Great Apostacy. Elders in the congregations appointed a "leading elder" and in the process of time leading elders appointed a "Head Elder."

There followed great rivalry and wrangling between various congregations in Rome and Asia Minor as to which would dominate and which would be regarded as church headquarters and deserve to have in residence the "Head Elder" or Pope. Rome, as we know, was eventually successful but like all digression the process was gradual and took roughly two or three hundred years. Compared with the simplicity of the church founded by our Lord the present Roman Catholic Church bears no resemblance to the original but has become a grotesque and hideous monster.

Paul's parting but tragically true words to the elders of the church at Ephesus were, "Take heed to yourselves . . . to feed the church of God . . . For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the

flock. Also of your own selves (elders) shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts 20: 30.

A Pope of Rome has come to Britain for the first time in history and it has been of some interest (inter alia) to observe the reaction of so-called protestants. Many religious denominations were invited to services over which the Pope officiated and did attend, including, I believe, the United Reformed Church. The biased media has referred to any vociferous reaction among protestants as "ugly scenes" created by "Protestant extremists" forgetting that "protestants" are supposed to protest. The forces of law and order, sensing that protestants now amount to only a handful of disorganised men with bibles and banners have given them fairly rough treatment and heavy fines (60 days imprisonment in one case). If however, one cares to "ban the bomb" or sabotage the work on a nuclear power station one usually "gets away with murder." Protestants in the true sense are few and far between and in Scotland, at least, the spirit of John Knox is virtually dead. Indeed the Pope was cordially received (although not kissed) by the Moderator of the Church of Scotland under the horrified gaze of the huge statue of John Knox in the quadrangle of New College. Few protests came from the Church of Scotland for the simple reason, in my view, that the Church of Scotland are in no position to complain. Two or three years ago their General Assembly approved women to the clergy and women elders without even making a passing reference to the scriptures. The same Assembly this year severely censured (although did not ex-communicate) one of their clergy for being immersed in the sea by a local elder — having from his study of the New Testament come to the conclusion that baptism is immersion. Thus the Church of Scotland are in no position to object to a Pope who also takes great spiritual liberties.

The actual visit of the Pope was however, a very cleverly orchestrated publicity exercise and he came over on all channels of British T.V. as a kindly benign old man of God, blessing the physically and mentally handicapped and indeed blessing everyone in his path. To the religiously uncommitted he appeared a good and peaceful man — a mixture of "Old Father Time" and "Santa-Clause" and indeed from all the letters in the press many non-catholics have expressed shame at being protestants and as such committed to oppose such a kindly old fellow.

They are surely unaware that underneath the undoubted charisma of the man there are very shrewd eyes and a very calculating brain and all the time the Pope was in Britain he was doubtless wondering how long it would be before the Anglicans would merge with Roman Catholics, and who knows what other of the protestant fold would follow suit. They are surely unaware that there is more political manoeuvring hatched out in the Vatican than in the Kremlin. All the time the Pope was in this country he talked about peace, usually in the same breath as "unity" (as if the terms were interchangeable) but one would soon discover what Catholics mean by "peace and tolerance" if one tried to establish a congregation of the church of Christ in Italy and especially in Rome. The Pope is only tolerant of British protestants because he has no option, but in "Roman Catholic countries" especially in South America, protestants have a rough time and have to endure severe persecution from the church of this "kindly old man." The Church of Rome has a long and undeniable history of burning men at the stake and taking bloody vengeance on those the Pope termed "heretics". The Pope received great publicity even before he got here by swithering whether to come at all in view of his great disdain for conflict (in the Falklands in this case) but yet it seems he never commands his followers (in the Argentine, in the I.R.A. or elsewhere) to lay down their arms, and (unlike some previous Popes) he cannot stand bloodshed but yet does not encourage pacifism in his large flock.

Certainly in his words and gestures he appeared a man of peace and tolerance and this is certainly the image received by the bulk of the British population — many

non-catholics were heard to say, "What a nice old man." But what are *the fruits* of the church represented by this "nice old man" — for by the fruits of an organisation we can gain an opinion as to how God must regard it.

As to *the fruits* of the Roman Catholic Church we saw for ourselves the Pope praying to God that the water in the baptismal font would become "Holy Water" which like the Rosary and the many sacramentals (125 in number) is supposed to drive away evil spirits and have a "magical" effect in all sorts of situations. The large round wafer we saw the Pope hold aloft is round because its shape was copied from Egyptian paganism, the shape symbolising the sun. Much or most of the teaching and worship of the Roman Catholic Church comes from paganism and the rest is a wresting of the scriptures.

Time would fail to enumerate a fraction of it but the following are a few samples:— Praying to so-called "Saints" to intercede on behalf of the person praying (and we heard the Pope lead such prayers, particularly to "Mary, the Mother of God"). The Mass (high and low) with the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Priesthood and vast hierarchy. The "Confessional" and the requirement for the Catholic Laity to engage in auricular confession. The doctrine of Purgatory: the doctrine of Mortal Sin and Venial Sin: interpretation of the scriptures by the Church; the sale of indulgencies: the worship of images; compulsory celibacy of the priesthood and monastic vows; baptism of bells and the blessing of candles and tapers; priestly vestments; praying for the dead; extreme unction: canonisation of "saints"; the doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception"; penance: infant baptism: sign of the cross: lent: veneration of relics: doctrine of "mental reservations" in oath taking: the eucharist: Papal infallibility and the belief that the Pope is the head of the church on earth (the Vicar of Christ and entitled to be called "Holy Father" or "Lord God the Pope").

These samples of the doctrines and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, some of which are fairly recent, have come mainly from paganism and superstition and have, consequently, no authority or warrant whatever in the word of God. If "by their fruits ye shall know them" then these fruits would seem to endorse the view that the church presided over by this "nice old man" is indeed the Mother of Harlots (Rev. 17) and that the benign old man is himself the anti-Christ.

Jesus Himself claimed to have been given *all* power and authority, *both* in heaven *and* on earth, and so the Pope has no authority on earth any more than I have — and I have none. Hundreds of thousands of good people queued for hours in the hope that the Pope would "Bless" them and yet the Pope has no more authority than I have to bless anyone.

The Pope referred to Jesus a few times in his speeches and prayers and yet Jesus taught "And call no man your father *upon the earth* for one is your Father, which is in heaven." Our spiritual Father is, like our headquarters, in heaven (not on the earth). Yet the Pope allows himself to be called "Holy Father" in direct contradiction of our Lord's injunction. The apostle Paul seemed completely unaware that the Pope was head of the church for he taught, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, several times, that Jesus was undisputed head of the church, e.g. in Col. 1:18 he says, "And He (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Jesus is the head of the church and should have the pre-eminence. Any casual observer of the Pope's visit could be excused for thinking that the Pope receives all the pre-eminence.

In Eph. I Paul, in speaking of the exaltation of Jesus by God, says that God not only raised Jesus from the dead but raised Him to His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, *not only*

in this world but also in that which is to come, "And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church. Which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

After the Papal visit to Britain it seems that all are agreed, from "the man in the street" to the mainstream of the denominations that the Pope is a good and holy man, full of understanding and tolerance. Whilst I must agree that the present Pope is certainly more masculine than some recent Popes have been it remains nevertheless an unassailable fact that any man who, in any shape or form claims to be Head of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ is guilty of indescribable blasphemy and well qualifies not only for the description of "anti-Christ" but also fulfils the description "that man of Sin, the son of perdition," "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing that he is God." (2 Thess. 2:4). A nice old man indeed.

EDITOR

CO-OPERATION ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

Co-operation in Christian labour is wanted, and the question here is this *How is it to be attained?* We are asked — Must not an association of churches be established? Now what of this association? Are not the churches themselves this already, so far as scripturally constituted? Did not the many congregations founded by the apostles, constitute in the aggregate but one body — "The church"? Their constitution, of necessity, made them one body; and nothing but defection from that constitution, individual or congregation, severed that union. And now that we see everywhere the divisional effects of the long continued apostacy, and almost everywhere the abortive character of all and sundry human patchwork attempts after union, one thing above all others appears abundantly evident: that *nothing short* of the one apostolic platform, and *nothing more* than it, will ever do. We believe that anything *more*, as well as anything *less*, must defeat the end. For, however, unobjectionable one human institution may be as compared with others, there are yet, even against the best, the following among other insuperable objections. *First*, the tacit admission which they give forth that something more than the church, as at first constituted, is necessary. *Second*, the undeniable probability that once begun, the divergence from the divine word and model will gradually increase. *Third*, the fact that no society, however simple, can exist without laws; and consequently, that in the formation of these associations there must be human legislation, which of all evils in the conducting of the affairs of the kingdom of God, has proved an essential element of defection. *Fourth*, officialism and routine are fostered.

The waste of time, means, and energies in the construction, and carrying out of these societies, which might have been expended in the work itself which they profess to execute, is known to everyone who has had anything to do with them, or is at the trouble to note their doings. On the other hand, they throw the chilling influence of official routine over the entire church. Than this there are few things more deterring to ready, personal effort. In whatever department of life the assumption of official position by the few be found, it deters the many from personal action in the business. In Christian action it is the exact inversion of the New Testament principle. The society idea is, that a man must get an official standing ere he do anything in the work, and the result is — the people stand by. The Scripture idea is, that all be encouraged to prosecute the work, and that he who does it be recognised *according as he does it*. The contrast between the two principles is not more

apparent than it is favourable to the Scripture system. Indeed, all great movements have had their beginnings and their fairest progress by the individual voluntary system of Scripture; and we think that we do not say too much when we affirm, that they generally stood still or retrograded on merging into the opposite.

We want co-operation. We must have it if the work is to advance. But was there no co-operation in apostolic times? There was. Was it successful? It was. What then was its character? Was it of an individual and congregational order purely, or of the extra-association sort? Of the previous entirely. Why, then we ask, not rest perfectly satisfied with that which wrought so well? In New Testament history we have examples of Christian co-operation in its truest, purest, noblest forms. Men and women voluntarily suffering the loss of all things — hazarding their lives — laying their necks on the block for one another's sake and the gospel's. Who does not see in these examples of Christian heroism, the very type of labourers which the gospel has ever stood in need of? Who does not perceive the moral power which such examples must every carry with them? Who does not see in these examples of Christian heroism, the very type of labourers which the gospel has ever stood in need of? Who does not perceive the moral power which such examples must ever carry with them? Who does not discover in them the brightest possible verification of the prophetic psalm — "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power?" Who does not see that this individual willingness to labour and suffer, inspiring the disciples by the love of Christ, to go forth for His sake, taking nothing of the Gentiles, must ever be the moving principle of Christian action? Who does not apprehend, that men who walk by faith and not by sight, are the only true soldiers in such a war? But who does not see as well that to 'get up' associations, to 'engage' and 'salary' 'agents,' is to lose sight of most, if not all, that the brilliant examples of New Testament history reveal? Who does not find that the same error is committed in such a case, as is done in leaving the divine word, as the rule of faith, to repose belief in human systems of doctrine; since in both instances the living word, with its living examples, is left, and the faith and practice of the churches are ordered by human rule and appointment? Sure are we of this that if ever we are to have New Testament Christianity, it is not by well-articled systems of belief; but by an intelligent personal faith in the teaching of the living through unsystematised oracles of God. And as sure are we that if we are to have truly effective co-operation, it must be by following the steps of those whose works of faith and labours of love are left on record for our learning: and not by any conventional arrangement which even the sanctified wisdom of good men can now suggest. There cannot be the slightest question that all these conventional institutions as 'unions,' 'alliances,' 'conferences,' 'associations,' and the like, are departures of different degrees from New Testament usage. Just, therefore, as we cannot hope for ecclesiastical union on human theological systems, but alone on the one foundation laid by God, we announce our utter want of faith and hope in any formal, stated, minute-taking, clerk-employing functionary-making, pounds, shillings and pence establishment; but we affirm, on the other hand our perfect confidence in the moral power of that faith and love, which enkindled by the everlasting gospel, was the first Christians in all their attempts for the crown and kingdom of Jesus and for the sake of which they braved the loss of all things.

The following notices by the Apostle, in his letters to the congregations at Rome and Corinth show very plainly the mode, character, and principle of operation and co-operation existing and recognised amongst the churches. Indeed, not more plainly do the sacred records indicate the action, subject, and design of baptism, than do the references which we have on the subject of Christian labour mark out its features and principles. Not, therefore, the Apostle's words — 'I commend unto you Phoebe, our sister; a servant of the church at Cenchrea, that ye receive her in the

Lord as becometh saints; and that ye assist her in whatever business she has need of you, for she has been a succourer of many and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Jesus Christ, who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also the churches of the Gentiles. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis who laboured much in the Lord.' So much said Paul to the church at Rome; now for what he said to the congregation at Corinth. 'If Timothy come see that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also. Let no man, therefore, despise him, but conduct him forth in peace that he may come unto me, for I look for him with the brethren.

As to Brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren, but this will was not at all to come at this time: however he will come when he shall have convenient time. You know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. I beseech you, brethren, that you submit yourselves to such, and to every one who works and co-operates. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied: for they have refreshed my spirit and yours; therefore acknowledge you them that are such.'

From the facts before us in the New Testament, we conclude as follows:—

1 The brethren addicted themselves to the work. It was a willing service on their part. They went everywhere preaching. 2 The churches were enjoined to acknowledge such — assist them — honour them — submit to them.

3 These brethren went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles. The churches and individual brethren supplied their wants. They had faith in God: but they knew that God wrought agents and means, that the grace of God was the great motive power, and the recipients of that grace the actors under it. To the brethren, therefore, they looked, and when they received from them they gave not only them, but God the thanks; for they knew that it was as much the grace of God, to which they were indebted, as if that grace had wrought the most stupendous of physical miracles in order to supply their wants. 4 The churches, therefore, had all needed instructions given them for the fulfilling of this service. There was to be simplicity — the reverse of ostentation — the brethren were to give into the treasury of their Master as he had, during the past week, prospered them — the contribution became a stated weekly ordinance — the deacons were the custodians and disbursers of it — the funds thus collected were disbursed as occasion required both to churches and to individual brethren. 5 Intercourse betwixt the churches and the preacher was sustained both by correspondence and personal visits. Brethren were sent out for different specific objects, as the messengers of the churches so sending them. 6 Churches and preachers let their wants and state be known to the faithful by both of these channels. 7 Every church and the locality of every preacher, was thus a centre of operation and co-operation. Headquarters were in heaven, not even in Jerusalem. For fourteen years Paul saw it not, and received nothing from it. 8 The unity of the body and the equality of the brotherhood were thus practically demonstrated. The system of Diotrephes was then the exception; but, unfortunately it is now the rule.

With all this before us, we know of nothing but faithfulness that is wanting to meet alike the exigencies of the church and the world. We really do not know what any scheme that the brethren could possibly 'get up' would or could effect in the way of Christian co-operation, apart from Churches of New Testament constitution. What these churches did accomplish may by such churches — be again effected. There is nothing to be done that we know of what was not done in apostolic days, and which we have not apostolic example or precept for effecting. The difference of the times is incomparably in our favour. The press, the post, the rail, and the telegraph have

quicken the labour of the amanuensis and lightened the work of the pedestrian. And now, if ever, may the wish of John for as many books as would fill the world, and the prophecy of Isaiah, that the preachers' voice should be heard at the ends of the earth, be fulfilled.

T. H. MILNER *Edinburgh, Sept. 26, 1856.*

Sent in by Br. D. Daniell.

GLEANINGS

"Let her glean even among the sheaves." Ruth 2:15

The Beauty of His Mind

"We may learn something of the beauty of His mind. The beauty sleeping in a seed reveals itself by the colours of the flower as they unfurl to the sun, and the fragrance that fills the air. The beauty in the unexplored heart of a friend reveals itself in the verses we suddenly light upon, or the books which bear his name. The beauty of the artist's mind is discovered in the pictures or statues which he has produced. And what revelations are made to us of the beauty of the conceptions of our Lord, as we arm our eyes with telescope or microscope, and study the infinite above or the infinite beneath!"

F. B. Meyer

Ye are not your own

"Ye are not your own." "That is the fact. You did not create yourself. You did not sustain yourself for a great part of your life. You do not sustain yourself now. The whole world is busy to keep you alive. Were everyone to stand aside, saying in effect, "Here is one who thinks he can do without help; let him try," you would starve, you would shiver, you would die, and your body would lie unburied. One has only to think for a very short time to see that we are bound up with one another, that we belong to one another; that to be cut off from one another, to be independent, is to be dead — as a tender plant is dead which I tear up out of the soil and leave uprooted to the devastating work of time.

"There is no beggary and dependence like the condition of every one of us — as we see the moment we begin to think. We come into a world of various amenities which were all here before we came. We did not toil for any one of them. Now, believing, as we do, and as the Cross of Christ declares, that every real good has come to man by the way of toil, toil of the body, toil of the soul and the spirit, I look about me, and see the wonderful amenities of life — homes, friends, books, liberty, the whole world of the spirit — I see all this, I share it, I live on it. And what ought I to conclude? Simply, that the price has been paid, and I have come into the possession."

John A. Hutton

Me

"How personal Jesus is! He is constantly speaking of Himself. 'Come unto Me', 'obey Me', 'love Me', 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father' — we could multiply such statements. And yet there is nothing egotistical about these personal statements. They are natural. The 'Me' predominates on every page of the evangelic record. He moves with ease in the midst of great alternatives. God is no undiscovered reality to Him. For nearly two thousands years He has stood in the centre of humanity and directed its gaze upon Himself. What He says about Himself, what He can do for you and me, is the very kernel of Christianity and the hope of the human race. Forgiveness and abundant Life are what men find and receive when they commit themselves to this Son of Man who knew himself to be the Son of God. Between Jesus and God men can no longer distinguish. The 'Me' of Jesus is the 'I' of God. Christianity is a life, not a set of intellectual beliefs. It is a life caught up and irradiated by the personality of One who said, 'Come unto Me'."

Gardner Miller

We quote — Ruskin

“Is not the evidence of Ease on the very front of all the greatest works in existence? Do they not say plainly to us, not ‘there has been a great effort here’? but ‘there has been a great power here’? It is not the weariness of mortality but the strength of divinity, which we have to recognise in all mighty things; and that is just what we now never recognise, but think that we are to do great things by help of iron bars and perspiration; alas! we shall do nothing that way, but lose some pounds of our own weight.”

Underneath are the everlasting arms

“Child of God, forlorn and weary,
Doth the way seem overlong?
Are the skies above thee dreary,
And thou hast no heart for song?
Pause awhile! and think and ponder, —
There are Arms outstretched for thee!
Arms that tell of love far fonder
Than earth’s fondest love could be!

J. Danson Smith

The greatest of these is love

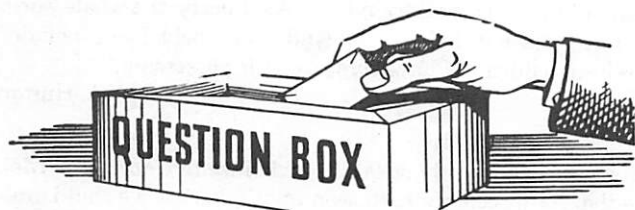
“Love is the Esperanto of Christianity, the one language everybody understands.”
Oscar Prentkin

The love of Christ constraineth us

“The claims of humanity are insufficient alone to sustain prolonged consecration to this service of the suffering. A higher inspiration is required. A gentleman once visited a hospital where the victims of a terrible malady were sheltered. To the nurse who accompanied him, he said, “You must have a great deal of enthusiasm for humanity to keep you in such a place as this.” “Enthusiasm for humanity, sir?” the nurse replied; “That motive would not keep us here for a single day; the love of Christ constraineth us!”

C.G.

Selected by Leonard Morgan



 Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“In view of recent divisions in the Churches of Christ, can you still hold on to those ideals and aims of the early pioneers of the Churches of Christ, and those who immediately succeeded them?”

The word ‘you in the question seems to signify to me that the questioner is not a member of the Church of Christ. He is asking me, as an individual, to give a collective answer which involves all members of the Lord’s Body, therefore, I can only answer for myself and pray that my views will correspond with those of other Christians.

The Pioneers

The first point which I must make is the fundamental one, i.e., that the Church of Christ must not be viewed as a sect among sects. The 'pioneers,' so called, were not instrumental in the *building* of the Church; their message was a message of *restoration*. It was Christ who built the Church. After Peter had confessed Jesus as the Christ, Jesus said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock (Peter's confession) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:16-18).

Writing to the Church at Ephesus later, Paul comments on the way in which Jesus had broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and then goes on, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:13-20). I certainly would not like any reader to be looking to the 19th Century for the *beginning* of the Church of Christ. The Church started on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus, when on that day three thousand souls obeyed the message given by the apostle Peter, "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 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 2:38,39). That call has come by the Gospel ever since; it will never change.

The truth is plain and unambiguous. Christ is the Head of the Body, the Church. He ought to be. He purchased it with His precious blood. If we must talk about pioneers then let us be objective. The Church was pioneered by the Holy Spirit and the Apostles. I am convinced that we would cause less confusion if we forgot all about pioneers and concentrated on the unique plea of the Church of Christ, i.e., to and get back to Jerusalem, to the first century A.D., and to *teach and practice* those Apostolic injunctions which are so plain, in the N.T. particularly.

Those Divisions

The Church of Christ is a unique Body here upon earth. When people say to me, "What church do you belong to?" and I answer, "The Church of Christ," they say, "Oh, I've never heard of that one;" this only proves to me that they have never read their New Testament. If anyone can read the N.T. and find any church other than the Church of Christ then I for one would certainly like to know of it.

If people do not know of the Church then they are unlikely to know and understand Its aims and objectives. It is *not* an exclusive Church in that only a limited number of people can join it; the instruction of Jesus to His disciples was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" (Mark 16:15, 16). It is exclusive in the sense that only they who have believed and obeyed the Gospel, and have been immersed into the Lord Christ may claim true identity with Him in His Body, the Church.

There is only one Head of the Body, the Lord Christ Himself. Titular heads such as we see in the denominational world make nonsense of a true appreciation of the New Testament; Paul says, "And he (Christ) is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col. 1:17,18. But read whole chapter). How different from what we see today!

In matters of doctrine, the Church of Christ refers itself solely and exclusively to the Word of God, the Bible. We have no other authority for what we teach and practice, nor would we presume to look for any other authority; if God was willing to reveal Himself in His Son and through His Apostolic messengers, and if Jesus was

willing to die to bring Salvation to a sin-stricken world, then surely it would be a slight on God, a non-recognition of the work of Christ, and a plain and crude departure from the Gospel message if we had the temerity to add to or take from that Revelation which God has so graciously given.

In matters of organisation, communities of Christians meet and worship in the geographical areas where they happen to reside; hence the origin of that sometimes misleading statement, 'Churches of Christ.' The leadership of each such community is by the scriptural method of Elders and Deacons. Each community is completely autonomous and seeks only to worship God in the way in which He has appointed in His Word, and to promote in their locality the Gospel for which Christ died. By this method, if one community were to defect for any reason whatsoever, then this would be a *wound* to the Body but not a *mortal* wound.

The reason I have explained the position in some detail is to show that 'divisions' in the Church of Christ are not of *recent* origin. It ought to be patently clear to men and women of reasonable intelligence that from the beginning of the Church the situation must have been exactly as Paul described it, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:3-6). Can anyone explain to me how Jesus can pray to His Holy Father in Heaven (John 17:11), and yet people can laud and magnify the so-called 'Holy Father' here upon earth? Could someone please explain how some four hundred plus religious groups in the world today, teaching different doctrines and having different heads and governments, can claim to be the one body and the one faith?

We must look a long way into the past in order to see the *real* divisions in the Church of Christ. We must look at the Judaisers, the Gnostics, the Docetists, the Marcionites. We must look to the 3rd and 4th centuries for the exertion of patriarchal rights from Rome, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem. We must look at the great and abiding divisions between the Eastern and Western claims on the Church. We must see the confluence of the temporal power and the ecclesiastical power in the shape of the Roman Emperors and the unscriptural hierarchical structure of the Church. We must see the emergence of a strong and oppressive clergy exerting not only ecclesiastical but also temporal pressure from offices which they had usurped in many instances. We must appreciate the misery and the hopelessness of the so-called Dark Ages, and deplore the wars and intrigues of men in the name of the Christ of Peace. And then we must see the re-emergence of light, and we must place our pioneers in their *true* role in church history as harbingers of that light, pointing people forward, and yet paradoxically *back* to Jerusalem, to Christianity as it was in the beginning.

And Today?

It is inevitable that there will be differences of opinion within the Church on certain matters, but I am quite sure that any difference of opinion ought to be capable of quick resolution, given love and understanding. Intolerance of other peoples views is, perhaps, one of the greatest difficulties. That does not mean, of course, that we ought to condone error; everything taught and practiced must be measured against the Word, and if it does not measure up to *that* standard then it ought to be rejected. The tragedy is when people can look at the Church and see elements of division, when understanding, and prolonged study, if necessary, ought to be the order of the day. Right from the beginning, the greatest hindrance to the progress of the Church has come from within its own ranks; let it never be said of any of us that we have hindered the glorious work which our Lord and Master commenced. And dear friends, don't write off the Church because *you* think that it doesn't measure up to *your* standard of perfection, but rather see sincere souls struggling upwards,

sometimes immaturely, sometimes imperfectly, often making mistakes, but always conscious of the fact that they have been redeemed with the precious blood of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ. Our agreement on the fundamental points of doctrine far, far outweigh any disagreement which we may have. In the words of the old song let us 'accentuate the positive,' and see to it that Satan is never able to exploit the negative.

(All questions please to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Hayfield, Wigan, Lancs).

THE PASTOR SYSTEM

In the language of sectarian denominationalism, the "one man pastor" refers to a system of church organisation that invests in one man the responsibility of directing the affairs of the church. While he may use others to help in the accomplishment of certain goals, the primary responsibility is his and his alone. He may use such phrases as "my church," "my deacons," "my elders," and "my ministry."

For many years churches of Christ steadfastly withstood this denominational practice. Gradually, however, there has been a definite move in that direction. W. E. Garrison and A. T. DeGroot, historians in the Disciples of Christ movement, state on page 406 of their book, *The Disciples of Christ: A History*: "... in the years since 1896 Churches of Christ have greatly softened their formerly hard stand on the issues of the pastor system, instrumental music, and societies." Most digressive churches would strongly deny that this is the case. It seems to me, however, that even the casual observer would have to admit that "they have softened." In theory most congregations oppose the denominational concept of the pastor system, yet in actual practice they have the equivalent to just such a system.

To this writer there are a number of reasons why such a system is wrong. Let us notice a few:

1. It opposes God's purpose in christianity.

In Christianity the emphasis is placed upon the individual. I am accountable to God. I cannot answer for you, nor you for me. Every Christian composes "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 2:5 All are expected to minister to God and each other within the limitations of the revealed word. God will judge "without respect of persons according to everyman's work." 1 Pet. 1:17 In the New Testament church the Holy Spirit did not make one man the mouthpiece. In the assembly all who were gifted with the power of edifying, exhorting, and comforting were given the privilege to do so. 1 Cor. 14:31. Any system which invests in one man the responsibility of edification, directly opposes God's purpose in christianity.

2. It opposes the true basis of ministry.

Jesus said "Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The pastory system creates an atmosphere which tends to place the responsibility for everything on the shoulders of one man. Others feel no responsibility, for after all, "that's why we have a preacher." If someone is ill the preacher is notified and is expected to make an official visit. When someone moves into town we give the name to the preacher and he makes a professional call, leaving "his card" lest they forget who he is. It is he who checks on the non-attenders, maintains a membership file, organizes the recreational activities, rounds up the wayward, and binds up the broken hearted. If he fails to do any of these things someone is quick to remind him "that's what we pay you for." This system destroys the whole essence of christianity, which is service to others. If

there are those who need comfort, all should comfort 1 Thess, 4:18. Are there fatherless and widows who are afflicted? Every Christian should visit them Jas. 1:27. Are there outsiders to be convicted? They should be convicted of all 1 Cor. 14:25. Is one overtaken in a fault? All who are spiritual should seek to restore him. Gal. 1. We are all ministers (servants) of Christ. As such we all have obligations. We cannot remove them by default or hiring someone to do our work for us.

3. It reduces the Church to a helpless weakling.

It is common to both read and hear of "big church buildings" "huge contributions", and "growing crowds" as men glowingly declare the successes of their ministries. In many such "success stories" when the preacher departs so does the crowd, leaving one to wonder if all those converted were converted to Christ or the preacher? It is a deplorable situation when a preacher says "I need to leave but I'm afraid if I do some may quit the church", an open admission that he has failed to convert the people to Christ. Something even worse is for a preacher to say "I don't know what to do, If I remain in here some will quite the church, If I leave some will quit the church, I just don't know what to do." This is a clear indication that had the preacher spent more time converting men to Christ and less time politicking for personal gain he wouldn't be faced with such a dilemma.

All this underscores a weakness in the one man pastor system, i.e. the church grows progressively weaker under such an arrangement. The talent of the multitude are so underdeveloped that at the first sign the preacher may leave a mad frenzy results as the weakened flock begins to search for "another pastor". A lack of exercise will eventually result in one being crippled. The same is true in the church. When "the many" get not exercise, do not work, but allow someone else to carry all the load, weakness cannot help but result.

The Pastor system discourages individual growth and work. It tends to elevate "the clergy" to an unscriptural position. While often giving the appearance of spiritual progress and prosperity, it actually robs the Kingdom of both. Do we have such a system among us today? Are we gradually moving in that direction? Every saint should carefully ponder both questions. If we are indeed moving that way or already entrapped in some instances, we better turn around and make some changes. Brethren if we've "softened our stand" did we do so because the Bible dictated such a posture or because "the people willed it so."?

Ronny F. Wade

707 Pearson Dr. Springfield, Mo. U.S.A.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

AUGUST 1982

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Lev. 19, 23-37 | I Tim. 5, 1-16 |
| 8 Prov. 23, 23-35 | I Tim. 5, 17-6, 10 |
| 15 Prov. 15, 1-18 | II Tim. 6, 11-21 |
| 22 Psa. 119, 1-16 | II Tim. 1 |
| 29 Psa. 119, 17-32 | II Tim. 2 |

Letters that endure

Two to Timothy and one to Titus by

an apostle approaching death deliberately by martyrdom, have helped innumerable men and women to "behave themselves in the House of God." The principles upon which their teachings stand will never change though the conditions under which they are to be applied have changed beyond recognition. Many of the changes — those for good of mankind — have been brought about by these same principles at work. I have supposed that Paul was released from the imprisonment in

which we leave him in Acts 28. This seems most probably since we cannot account, for instance, for his working in Crete, during the time recorded by Luke. He must have anticipated freedom, seeing he asked Philemon at Colosse to prepare him a lodging (Phile. 22).

Scholars find differences in language and subject in these three letters from those in the prison epistles, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. This would be accounted for by the passage of time from 63 to 66 A.D. — and the difference in purpose. The onset of apostasy must have made the apostle anxious to safeguard his young fellow-workers against the errors he already faced. What faithful servant of Christ does not feel the same? Thus these letters reveal to us how soon Satan gets busy to ruin the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who accept the gospel and are truly repentant believers. These letters vibrate with urgent encouragement to faithfulness and stern warning against slacking off in the effort inspired by the Word of God. The hymn writer puts it into verse and song, "Christian seek not yet repose, Hear thy guardian angel say, "Thou art in the midst of foes, Watch and pray!" (Christian Hymnary 405: 1908 book 693). Timothy did not enjoy the best of health, and perhaps did not share the indomitable spirit of his leader, but the strongest equally need to be reminded continually of their being engaged in a battle against human weakness and devilish temptation.

The churches likewise growing in numbers and experience need to be prepared for battle by a measure of organisation through the variety of activities in which the members are engaged. Christianity is not a matter of observing ordinances. It is a matter of daily persistence in well-doing, which includes the earning of a living by honest toil in a Christ-like manner. Every function of body and mind is involved, and the community of saints, set apart for the service of God, need to be organised

suitably. Some must take the lead, some must do the menial jobs, some must wash feet, some must care for the sick, all must act in the name and for the sake of Jesus, being moved by the same spirit. We observe that the characteristics set out for bishops are those applicable to every Christian, certainly as the ideal for mature persons. It must NOT be made an excuse for failure to strive, that the ideals are too high. Practice in accordance with the rules prepares for the race. Concentration on service brings about strength for the war. (II Tim. 2, 3-6). Timothy has instructions in brief for treatment of all members (I Tim. 5, 1 & 2).

Widows

Needless to say the position of widows at least in the "western world" differ very much from those whose care was so important in the early days of the church. It is certain that the list of widows (5, 9) involved their support, and their having obligation to do certain duties in the Church, for which quite specific qualifications were required. The primary responsibility however rests with their relatives.

If the relatives are christians they must shoulder that responsibility. Widows are "widows indeed" if they have no relatives or if their relatives refuse to do their duty. What is plainly proved is that they are to be a special charge on either individual or church. In this same way we are safe to assume those in distress received from Church or individual christian, support and sympathy such as was never heard of before at least in a heathen society. Present public welfare is a take-over. It is not pagan, humanist, Buddhist or Moslem. There is only one religion of love. Its origin is in the life, teaching and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The Jews of course did have such laws, being God's people also.

Honour

The name Timothy embodies the Greek word thus translated, and could

be interpreted "Honour God." He has instructions to honour widows, to honour masters and to double honour elders that rule well. At least one translator has here rendered it "pay" or "wages". The word has a basic thought of value or "preciousness," but our word "honour" certainly conveys the correct understanding in most cases although it has to be rendered "price" and "sum" quite correctly (Matt. 27, 6 & 9: Acts 4, 34: I Cor. 6, 20 etc.: Acts 7, 16). If we honour somebody or something, we are involved in actual payment as well as respect or esteem.

The honour required to fulfil God's instruction in the case of widows we have already considered. It issues in material support, and service *from them*. The honour to masters issues in glad and willing service to them for pay (and for love). The double honour for elders who oversee the church is obedience and co-operation with them and in supporting them materially if necessary, and giving them respect and love. To deserve the extra respect they must "labour in the word and doctrine." Every church blessed with such men will increase in numbers and in spiritual effectiveness, whether they need support or not. Any distinction between laity and clergy was unknown in the New Testament church. The priesthood of all believers (men and women) is a fact of true christianity. Differences are in individual capability, character, age and sex, and are of minor importance within the community. If a man desire the position of a bishop he desires a good WORK RATHER THAN AN OFFICE, and it is an exacting task of which few men are worthy. It is not surprising to me that in my grandfather's day the six men appointed by the church to oversee its work declined the title "bishop" and were accordingly called always "deacons." Most of them laboured in the word and doctrine in the London district churches and more widely, and never received anything beyond actual expenses, and often not those — and

gladly did it all. The first world war and death concluded their work, and it has gone on at a reduced level in common with so many religious activities. We can only honour them in respectful remembrance. They earned enough money to keep themselves and their dependants, and gave generously in time and money to maintain the church in their day.

Happy relationships

How important are our close relationships. With what joy did Paul look back and remember Lois and Eunice! These two women were largely responsible for the decision of Timothy to leave home, kindred and earthly ties for the life-service of the Saviour. Some of us have good reason to bless our Heavenly Father for our upbringing with the enlightened vision of a church owning allegiance only to God as revealed in His Word, clear from traditions of men.

Have we realised what it means to a person to be brought up in the "Holy Catholic Church," maintained by a priesthood dependant upon it for a livelihood and trammelled with "sacred" buildings, relics of the "saints," miracles at Lourdes and one supreme LORD THE POPE? It has all the appearance of wealth and power, and so much of "good works" to cover up its actual apostasy, and an appearance of unity, which no other religious body can claim.

We know it is false because the Word of God condemns its practices and teachings. We must very humbly continue to plead for a return to the divinely approved "spiritual house". (I Peter 2, 5), "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3, 15).

R. B. SCOTT.

Apology and correction

Comments on April Readings, p.43, col. 1. The physical terrors of Sinai by their greatness, and its strict insistence upon physical acts of obedience had brought condemnation upon Israel, but the gospel had brought forgiveness and eternal life to light.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Cape Town, R.S.A.: Now here is some brief news items, of interest, "It was on the 9th May 1982 that myself and my wife along with my entire family (sons, daughter-in-laws, grandchildren could have given God the needed thanks, in that by His Grace we were able to Celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary (as known to many Golden wedding) with many many happy memories, of God's blessings, care and protection, granted us over these many years (Psalm 40:1-5 indeed expresses what we cannot do) "count our blessings too innumerable to mention."

And personally I could have, on the 10th May 1982, look back to the day being also 50 years ago, that I was baptized into Christ, which included remembering in my young Christian years, as I grew in strength, grace and knowledge, souls led to Christ, and that how my deep desire and prayer was to give up my secular work, and which took place on the 15th December 1955.

Which portrays, that almost 27 years, out of the 50, was one of an allout reach for Christ and the gospel in Evangelism, with many many precious led to Christ, all I can say to all of this to God be all the Glory. Last of all, with the small congregation I am labouring with in Bokmakierie, it being our prayerful, and hopeful desire to witness the visitors who sincerely, and interestingly attend all our meetings, Bible study, Cottage meetings, etc, turning to the Lord Lord willing.

Well, out of the many visitors, it was on the afternoon of the 16th May 1982 that I was privileged to baptize one of them a young lady, with a few of the ... members, who could afford the time, to share in witnessing, and singing "O Happy Day That fixed my Choice." With the beginning of a new life and new future, in Christ in her life." As we pray for you

one and all in your endeavours, continue to share in your prayers for us, that many more days Lord willing shall bring about ... "saving results, and rejoicing moments." end of report.

T. H. Hartle

OBITUARY

Tranent: It is with deep sorrow that we report the passing from this life of our sister Jane Wise at the age of 76 years.

As a child she was taught in our Sunday School here, and in due time passed on into the Bible Class. It was while she was in the Bible Class, and still in her early teens, that she intimated her desire to become a Christian, and so was immersed into the ever-blessed Name.

She was keenly interested in the work with the young people, and so became a Sunday School teacher, in which capacity she served the church well for a number of years.

For the last few months before her death on 30th April 1982 her illness kept her confined to her home.

"After the weary conflict,
Rest in the Saviour's love,
Over the silent river,
Safe in the home above."

The service in the home and at the graveside was conducted by Bro. David Scott, assisted by Bro. James Sinclair Snr.

We extend our Christian love and sympathy to her husband David, and her family Margaret and John, and commend them to our Heavenly Father for all true comfort and consolation.

Tom Nisbet.

THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

"That they may all be one." — John 17-21

"One Body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one Hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one

Baptism, one God and Father of all." Eph. 4:4-6.

1 **The One Body** — "For in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free." — 1 Cor. 12:16.

2 **The One Spirit** — "Know ye not that ye are a Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" — 1 Co. 3:16.

3 **The One Hope** — "That, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the Hope of eternal life." — Titus 3:7.

4 **The One Lord** — "To us there is one God ... and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him." — 1 Cor. 8:6.

5 **The One Faith** — "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." — Rom. 10:9.

6 **The One Baptism** — "Then answered Peter, can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptised?" — Acts 10:47.

7 **The One God and Father:** — "We know that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one." — 1 Cor. 8:4.

"And they shall become one flock, one Shepherd." — Jesus (John 10:16).

J. M'Cartney.

Things we are saved by:

"Not by Faith only." — James 2:24

1 **By Grace** — "For by grace have ye been saved through faith." — Eph. 2:8.

2 **By the Gospel** — "Who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved." — Acts 11:14.

3 **By Belief** — "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved." — Acts 16:31.

4 **By Confessing Christ** — "And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." — Rom. 10:9, 10.

5 **By Calling on His Name** — "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." — Rom. 10:13.

6 **By Baptism** — "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism." — 1 Peter 3:21.

7 **By Renewal** — "He saved us by the . . . renewing of the Holy Spirit" — Titus 3:5.

8 **By Hope** — "For by hope were we saved ..." — Rom. 8:24.

9 **By Christ's Life** — "Much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life." — Rom. 5:10.

10 **By Perseverance** — "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." — Matt. 10:22.

"The Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation." — Paul (2 Tim. 3:15). J. M'Cartney.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH	£5.00
CANADA & U.S.A.	\$10.00

AIR MAIL please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Tel. No. Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead Midlothian, Scotland, EH37 5PT