

EXCERPTS FROM

JANUARY/MARCH 1978

THE LINK

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

Internet Edition

"WHAT IS TRUTH?" (John 18v.38)

Our study at North Road of "The Doctrine of the Church" has over recent weeks brought us to the section of "The Church and Truth". This has been particularly searching, and much has had to be said which was not easy to say, neither was it pleasant to listen to, but when dealing with "THE TRUTH", above all else, one must be "TRUTHFUL".

What is said is said in all charity, but the absolute confusion among the people of God today demands a clarion call. Never was the question asked by Pilate more upon believers' lips than today - "WHAT IS TRUTH?".

Everywhere one looks there is either cold formality, or turbulence within the church; parties, factions, division, sub-divisions. Coming out of these things we see movements bent on unification, great comings together of folk of all persuasions (and some of none) to manifest a spirit of love which is said to be a pre-requisite to the Holy Spirit coming upon them in a second blessing and thus "coming alive in Jesus". Many claim that here lies the answer to the hour; this is the new thing which God is doing; some have even gone as far as to say that it is the greatest happening since Pentecost; here lies "THE TRUTH" say many.

The writer has been present (as an observer) at quite a number of these gatherings over the past few years and can only say that in his humble judgement such gatherings are Corinthian in nature. It is true to say that to witness these meetings is to see 1. Cor. Chapters 11-14 come alive, anyone and everyone takes part; indeed it is the claim of many of these folk that they are pew centred rather than pulpit centred. (Here lies the great failure). Some have a hymn (or chorus) some have a Psalm (or recitation), some a prayer, some a revelation or a tongue. Both men and women take part in these things, and a woman with a head-covering is a rarity.

Sometimes there is dancing in the aisles (supposedly before the Lord) and hand clapping and uplifted arms are the norm. Almost on all occasions there is the strumming of the groups with their ill-clad performers who move with vulgar gesticulations to the beat and rhythm of their sensual and heathen music. Readings come from versions so numerous, that much is unrecognizable as being Scripture at all.

Prayer in the main is addressed to Jesus, constantly referred to as "YOU"; seldom is He addressed as the

"Sovereign Lord". There is much invoking of the Holy Spirit, and it is lamentable to see arm waving by men who are leaders in evangelical (so called) churches and assemblies as they beckon to the Holy Ghost to descend upon them. On occasions these gatherings are rounded off with the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and these things are practised and supported by men and women in all sections of Christendom from Brethren assemblies to Romanists.

It is claimed that this is spiritual renewal but, is it? Is this so-called unity the true unity of the Spirit? and the answer must be NO! For UNITY AND TRUTH are inseparable in the Word of God. Truth is found only in the Holy Scriptures and in them alone. "Thy Word is Truth" (John 17.V.17). That Word is given to us: "I have given them Thy Word" (John 17.V.14), and the Holy Spirit guides us into the truth as contained in the SCRIPTURES OF TRUTH, (not apart from them) (John 16.V.13). The operation of the Holy Ghost upon us is ever to bring us to a greater knowledge of "THE TRUTH". As this is wrought in the lives of men and women, so there is unity, and believers who are at one with Truth, are at one with their Head, and also at one with each other.

When believers are truly at one with Truth there will be no divisions, but all will be in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1.v.10). This is the true unity of the Spirit. It is not a unity at the expense of Truth, rather it is "THE TRUTH" and our adherence to it which produces the unity. So we return to the question "What is Truth?" and the truth concerning Corinth is that they were wrong; they were carnal and infantile; their set-up and ordering of things was adrift, and chapters 11 - 15 of the first epistle were written as rebuke and correction, and we must beware of reading precedent into rebuke. The Corinthians were in a muddle with regard to the Apostolic office, to the gifts, to church order, to the ordinances and to the resurrection. They were in error with regard to the sexes. The Word of God strictly forbids a woman to usurp authority over the man; she is not to teach or lead in worship; she is to be in silence in the church (1 Tim 2.v.8-15 - 1 Cor 14.V.34.) This is not a question of superiority or inferiority; this is DIVINE ORDER. Further to this, a woman's head is to be covered and a man's head is to be uncovered. This is not just an ancient tradition, this is not puritanical custom, indeed not, for this is the way in which the church gives visible and tangible expression to an eternal truth.

The Spirit of God says through the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 11.v.3 HE WOULD HAVE US KNOW "that the head of every man is Christ, and that the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God". "The husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church ... He is the saviour of the body therefore ... the church is subject unto Christ" (Eph. 5.v.23-24). Headship is the great truth involved. As man is head of the woman so Christ is Head of the Church, and visible evidence is REQUIRED BY GOD to set forth this truth. Therefore, when believers assemble together men bare their heads. The man typifies "The Head". Authority is vested in him; he gives evidence to his head and authority by uncovering his head (1 Cor.11.v.7). The woman typifies the Church "His Body", she is in subjection, therefore she covers her head that it might not be in evidence and because of this she is silent. This is a vast subject which cannot be dealt with in this short article but the truth is of the utmost gravity. This is not tradition, neither is it chivalry, but the tangible and visible expression of vital doctrine one of the few things we are called upon to act as well as to proclaim, and to ignore this truth of Christ's headship and blatantly refuse to demonstrate it in the church is serious in the extreme.

We pass from this section to another, which is a move to separation rather than unification where men and whole fellowships have withdrawn from their previous associations, from liberalism, formality and traditions of men, to a position of independence and autonomy. One is thankful to God for this great stand which has been taken by many at considerable cost. Because of this many links have been forged as men of varying backgrounds find themselves in agreement over truths and principles which have been neglected, even discarded, for many a generation. Fellowships, Councils and Conferences are set up to draw together such men, but is there complete refuge here? Is this forbidden territory to the adversary - the great deceiver? Does ALL TRUTH reside here? One feels that a warning note needs to be sounded, for the Holy Spirit having revealed to us further truth from God's Word upon which we must make a stand, we must be very vigilant to see that the devil does not cause us to so concentrate on these things that we lose grip of other truth previously held. Is there not much ground for continued reformation in that which is today styled "Reformed".

Have not seeds of second blessing teaching been sown in recent years by so-called reformed men? Must we not be very careful that we be not identified with a Paedo-Baptist position? Do we not see also amongst churches who claim to stand for TRUTH a growing disregard for woman's head covering? Is not the deplorable practice of addressing the Godhead as "YOU" and "YOUR" gaining ground? Did not this creep in with the arrival of the R.S.V. Bible where the Son is invariably referred to as "YOU" and the Father as "THOU" - why this distinction? But now the Godhead is invoked in the indefinite "YOU" not in the singular "THOU". We who stand for the "TRUTH" should "hold fast to sound words" and not be carried away by modern versions based on manuscripts which the Reformers and Puritans would not have countenanced.

There is also a CONTINUATION of unscriptural styling of elders. The Divine pattern for this age is Deacons and Elders within a local church (1 Tim. 3.v.1-15) and these must be duly recognised and set apart. All elders rule and must have an aptitude to teach in order to exhort and convince the gainsayers (Titus 1.v.9); but amongst elders there should be one (possibly more) gifted of the Holy Spirit to expound the Scriptures, one who labours in the Word and in doctrine (1 Tim. 5-v.17): such an one is not a leading brother but a minister or teacher, and should never be styled otherwise. That the term "Reverend" ever crept into Protestantism from Rome is very sad, later finding its way into Non-conformity and now STILL HELD by so many in an autonomous position, is not this tragic?

The titles "Reverend", "Reverend Father", "His Holiness", are not for men but for DEITY ALONE (Psalm 111.v.9), (Isaiah 40.V.25) and should be abandoned forever by men who stand for "TRUTH". Ah! some may say, these are incidentals, we are concerned with basics. TRUTH is TRUTH, and no truth of God's Word is inferior or to be disregarded (Deut.12 v.32, Joshua 11.v.15, Matt. 23.V.23). Brethren and Sisters, as in the confusion of these sad days many of us are hungering after righteousness, let us come with unbiased minds to the Scriptures of Truth, ever receptive to ALL its teaching, and ever ready to throw off the traditions of men, for these things will "SPOIL US" (Col.2.v.8). May the "Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another ..." (Col.3.v.16). So may we teach and admonish, that at the end it might be said of us as of Caleb, "He hath WHOLLY followed the Lord" (Deut.1.v.36). W.H.M.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

By JOHN P. THACKWAY.

Devizes.

There are two ordinances which God made before the fall of man. The first was the sabbath day Gen 2:2-3, and the second was marriage 2:21-25- These two therefore, have several things in common. For one thing, they are both important. Their very antiquity and priority show this. They have the honour of being the very first institutions God ever made. For another, they are perpetually binding upon mankind. Their roots are in creation. They are not confined in their scope to any dispensation or divine economy. Nor are they only the possession of a nation or church. They came into being before all this. And again, the place in which they were ordained is significant. It was before sin entered the world, and where paradise conditions reigned; a place of holiness and true happiness It can be said that both began there, and if kept aright, will lead there in our experience. Now most believers would heartily concur with all this in regard to the second., - marriage. They acknowledge its importance, the perpetuity of its obligation, and that it can lead to a paradise here below. Of these things they are quite convinced and clear. But what about the first - the sabbath day? Sad to relate, but the same just cannot be said here. Much of the church is in ignorance and error over this matter. We need only to look at the lax and careless way believers keep the Christian sabbath, their indifference and even hostility toward the work of the Lord's Day Observance Society, and the muddle-headedness which abounds in their thinking, to see that this is so. If Christians today approached marriage in-the same way as they approach the sabbath question, I shudder to think of the outcome!

But none of this need be. For the same bible that informs our belief and practice regarding marriage, can do so for the sabbath too. God has revealed very clearly in his word truth and obligation concerning his day. And so much of his glory and our blessing is bound up with how we obey this. The matter is a highly important one for us as Christians It has to do with us as a church and as individuals; in the chapel and in the home. It concerns our temporal and spiritual well-being; the good of our bodies and of our souls. For these reasons I thought that it would be profitable for us to look together at the biblical teaching

concerning the Lord's day. If so much depends upon our right keeping of it, then it is well worth our attention. We will first lay a doctrinal foundation. Upon this, later, we can build in the form of more practical' considerations.

To begin with, it may be helpful to analyse a little how most people approach this subject. The reasoning goes something like this:- The old Testament teaching regarding the sabbath only applies to that dispensation, and to the nation of Israel. It cannot apply today because Christ has abolished it and made "all things new". So, when you come over into the New Testament, there is a new day (first day of the week Acts 20:7). and a new name (the Lord's day Rev. 1 10), and therefore a new sabbath. This is further argued by appeal to the comparative absence of commandments and regulations concerning it found in the New Testament. Thus, it is concluded, the Lord's day is more spiritual, and much more a matter of conscience as to how it is kept. And what's more, the Lord's day Observance Society is wrong because we do not have any right to impose our Christian standards upon unbelievers! Now this kind of reasoning is basically and fundamentally in error. It stems from the fact that the scripture as a whole - both Testaments - is not taken into consideration. A wedge is driven between Old and New Testaments here, which results in most serious and harmful conclusions. Let us answer this by appeal to "all the counsel of God".

Firstly, as has already been said, the sabbath has its roots in creation. Gen 2:2,3 gives the account of its primitive institution. As such, it is on a par with marriage. Now if you say that it is peculiarly dispensational or Jewish, then you have to say the same about marriage. And if Christ has "abolished" it, has he abolished marriage too?? Moreover, there is evidence that early worshippers kept this sabbath long before Israel came on the scene. In Gen 4:3 there is the first recorded act of worship: "And in process of time. (Lit. 'at the end of days' i.e. at the end of six days, on the sabbath) it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. "And even when Israel did come on the scene, the idea of the sabbath was nothing new to them Ex. 16:5,22-30. So, at the giving of the decalogue, the command is "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy" Ex.20:8. As George Burder said, in a sermon on this text: "The sabbath was not first instituted when the law was given to Moses; it was only

renewed. We read of the sabbath in the second chapter of Genesis. It began as soon as the world began. There can be no doubt that Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the good men of old, observed the sabbath; but when the descendants of Abraham became slaves in Egypt, it is probable that they could not observe it as they ought: but now being delivered from bondage, the law was revived, and they are commanded to remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. "Let it not be thought, then, that Israel and the old covenant have given the sabbath a provisional and temporary significance. Like marriage, it is as old as the world itself, and is to last until the end of it.

Secondly, the fact that God makes commandment in the decalogue concerning it is important. This means that it is a part of the moral law, not the ceremonial law. It is binding upon all men. Jesus did not abolish this Mt.5:17.18; the sermon on the mount is his exposition (not abrogation) of it for believers. The New Testament writers make free use of the law for saints Roms. 7, 13:8f; Eph 4:25f; Jas.2:8 comp. Mt 22:39. It is also seen as binding upon all unbelievers: it proclaims them guilty Roms.3:19, they are under its curse Gal.3:10,13 and it is the means to bring them to Christ Gal.3:24- Therefore, because the whole ten commandments are in force and not abolished, so also is this fourth commandment regarding the sabbath day. It is binding upon believers and unbelievers. Therefore the L.D.O.S., or anyone else for that matter, are not "imposing their Christian standards upon others" when they contend for this in a godless society like our own.

Thirdly, that there is a change regarding the sabbath in the Christian dispensation, we readily admit. This is in regard to the day upon which it falls, and the term used to denote it. As was noticed before, it no longer falls upon the seventh day of the week, but the first. And it is now known as "the Lord's day". But this does not make any essential or fundamental difference. The change is not to the extent of abolition and replacement, but merely to position in the week and terminology. Therefore the sabbath principle, commandment, and obligation is still in force as much as ever it was.

What is the nature and purpose of this change then? And what difference does it make to the sabbath for us today? These are questions which the following considerations are

now designed to answer. As they do so, we should have before us a clearer picture of the true Christian sabbath.

1. The Old testament legislation concerning the sabbath day was always given in terms of proportion. That is, there was to be six days work, and one of holy rest. This of course is patterned upon the number of days which God took to create the heavens and the earth (six), and the period of rest which followed (one day) Gen. 2:1-3- So when we come to the decalogue, this is given as the basis for the fourth commandment Ex.20:11 "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth ... and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." There is therefore a sabbath principle here. That after every six days, the next is to be one of rest, and of use for God. Now it can be seen that the New Testament makes no difference at all to this principle-If you count up, you will see that the Lord's day preserves this entirely. The day is moved now from the seventh to the first, of the week. But each Sunday comes after six days, as much as each Saturday did. Therefore the Christian sabbath is as much six days work and one day for God as the sabbath of old.

2. In the Old Testament the actual change of the day and its new name is anticipated. This is found in Psa.118:22,23- These verses refer to our Lord Jesus Christ. This is clear because our Lord applied them to himself Mt.21:42; Mk.12:10; Lk.20:17, and so did the apostles Acts 4:10,11; 1Pet.2:7- The fulfilment came about in this way. Christ was "rejected by the builders". when they put him to death. But he was made "head stone of the corner" when he rose from the dead. Now according to the next verse, Psa.118:24. the day when our Lord was to become head of the corner was to be the day of his own making, and of great joy for the church: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it". The day of his resurrection, of course, was just this. It was on the first day of the week Mk.16:2, which thereafter became the Christian sabbath, the Lord's day Rev.1:10; and the church rejoiced on that day Jn.20:20, and continues to do so. Christ, as Lord of the sabbath, has fulfilled this prophecy. He has made a new day for it, and makes his church glad upon it. As Isaac Watts puts it:

This is the day the Lord hath made,
He calls the hours His own;
Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,
And praise surround the throne.

Today He rose and left the dead,
And Satan's empire fell;
Today the saints His triumphs spread,
And all His wonders tell.

To be continued...

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION

This past quarter brought us again to our Annual Church meeting. Unfortunately, some were not able to be present, we missed them, nevertheless it was a most happy and profitable occasion. As reports were given and the work reviewed a real spirit of thankfulness prevailed for Gods great goodness to us in every way.

The visit of Mr Dix to us again last November was as always, a most helpful time. It was disappointing that the weather was so rough and wet which kept several from attending. As this has been the case for the past two or three years, we are arranging for this annual visit to be made in the summer in future.

It was with great joy that in October we received into the membership of the church our brother and sister Mr and Mrs Gee, who came into the area from Penzance some months earlier; we thank God for them, and for His providence in directing them to North Road.

On Sunday Nov.6th our brother Mr W.Bennett was "set apart" for the work of eldership in the assembly. It is with gratitude and thanksgiving that we look to the "Great Head" of the church in raising up amongst us another fitted for the vital task of eldership.

As is our usual custom the first week night meeting in the New Year will be devoted to prayer. This will be held in the main chapel and commence at 7.30p.m. We have two meetings of a missionary character; a visit of the London City Mission in February, and in March Mr & Mrs Alexander Luther. An offering will be taken on each occasion for the respective works.

It was hinted in the last Link that the ministry on "The Doctrine of the Church" would be completed by the end of 1977. However, this is not so, and it now appears as if it will continue well into the present quarter. May all that is said and done amongst us on all occasions ever be to the praise and glory of God.