

EXCERPTS FROM

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THE LINK

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BIDEFORD

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THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

In the epistle to the Ephesians the apostle Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God states clearly the fact that the ascended Lord - The Great Head of the Church - gave gifts unto men. These gifts are of course within the Church, the companies of His true believing people. The gifts mentioned are, APOSTLES, PROPHETS, EVANGELISTS, PASTORS, and TEACHERS. The first two were of temporary duration, being the special gifts for that period, pending the completion of the New Testament revelation and the full ordering of the New Covenant assemblies of God's people. There is also a certain element of doubt concerning the continuing office of the Evangelist, for with the established order of Church government, as set out in the Pastoral Epistles, Timothy who himself was one who had been set apart for the "Ministry", was commissioned to do the work of an Evangelist.

However, it stands out with great clarity in the Scriptures that the work of the Pastor and of the Teacher is a work and an appointment of the Head which is perpetual. It is an office (post of service) never to be set aside, despised or usurped, for it is the Divinely appointed means for the perfecting of the saints; for the edifying of the body of Christ; bringing men and women into the UNITY of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. To set aside this office and neglect the work of the ministry will result in puerile, stunted, Christians, not grounded in the faith, scarcely knowing what they believe or why they believe it, drifting from one thing to another; "confused!" "He (Christ) gave some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of .thee ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christs Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christs That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:11-14).

As we view the contemporary scene, surely one word sums up today's evangelicalism - CONFUSION. There are some who

call themselves Calvinists, but they know not why; others are steeped in Arminianism, yet they know not what it is, or whence its origin. There are Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, Reformed, Neo-Pentecostals, Charismatics, yes! (and believe it or not) Reformed Charismatics, plus R.1s and R.2s. All these and more, within the ranks of so-called Evangelicalism, to say nothing of professing Christendom. What utter confusion^ What are people to believe? Where does the truth lie? Even more pertinent, WHY SUCH CHAOS? What is the cause? The charge must be laid at the pulpit. It is what the minister has taught, or failed to teach.

In the Scriptures the Holy Spirit uses a very apt term: "the sleight of men" (Eph.4:14). It means "dexterity," "skilled in manipulation," "to trick." A very solemn thought when one realizes that this is used in connection with the ministry. This is, of course, the cunning and craft of the Devil. Next to the Word itself, the pulpit is his major target. There he lies in wait to use preachers to so manipulate the Word of God that its meaning is distorted, and often, destroyed altogether. It is his age-old tactics; "Yea, hath God said" (Gen.3:1). By this means men and women are "deceived" and "tossed to and fro."

Concerning Israel in the Old Testament, God said: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). The same is true today; let truth be watered down in the pulpit and it will soon have its effect in the pew; "Like people, like priest" (Hosea 4:9). When the work of the ministry fails, truth is very soon, "fallen in the street" (Isa.59:14).

With regard to the ministry of today, there are two major evils:

1. Neglect, by not giving the preaching of the Word of God its rightful place.
2. Clever manipulation of the Scriptures to support a theory or tradition. That which is described as "Cunningly devised fables" (2 Pet.1:16).

It is sad that some sections of evangelicalism have become so sacramental as to resemble Rome in-as-much as they have

put an extravagant honour on the Lord's Table to the degree that it takes precedence over the preaching of the Word. To thrust the Lord's Supper forward so that it is made the all-important part of church life, is to give it a position for which there is no Biblical authority. Christians cannot live on sacraments. Important as the Lord's Supper is, it is void of meaning and an empty ritual apart from the Truth. Those who never miss the Communion service but who have little relish for "in depth" ministry of the Word of God can soon be detected when one gets into conversation with them.

Another anomaly is that of "any-man" ministry; such as happens in companies where the church is so ordered that any male member of the fellowship is at liberty to stand up and give a brief word. This has come about due to a failure to distinguish between the priesthood of believers and the gifts of Christ to the Church. The warrant for this form of ministry is based upon chapters 11 to 14 of the first epistle to the Corinthians. Such look upon the ministerial office as wrong, and dub it a "one-man" ministry; failing to understand that the Corinthian practice was DIS-order, and that those chapters do not set a precedent, rather are they words of rebuke.

If this was to be the correct order for a local church is it not strange that the subject is not dealt with elsewhere in the church epistles? What is more, in the pastoral letters which treat the most comprehensively upon church order and practice, there is not a hint of "any-man" ministry; indeed the reverse is the case, and when we come to the last church letters to be written, which was at the very close of the apostolic age, when ordered companies of the Lord's people were established, with elders and deacons as set out in the New Testament, we discover that each of the seven churches addressed had a minister or messenger (cf. A.V.margin - Rev. Chap.2&3).

Furthermore, what we see in the Corinthian epistle is an assembly of God's people in the very early stages of the New Testament age, when the extraordinary gifts of the Apostle and Prophet were still in operation - before the settled practice of church order was fully established.

To claim that local churches today are to return to the apostolic order, is to fall right into the lap of Neo-Pentecostalism. "Any-man" ministry, the "brief word," and "itinerant preaching" is a destroying of the God appointed office of the ministry. No company of the Lord's people can be brought to a "unity of the faith" apart from the consistent, constant and thorough exposition of the Word of God. If a local church is truly grounded upon Divine principles, then, such a man will be "set apart" for the work of the ministry; one manifestly gifted by the Head; truly called of God and obviously and definitely recognized by the church for the task. He is to "Feed the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pet.5:2). "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

That all elders or overseers have the responsibility of guiding and counselling, the Scriptures make plain; but so also is it clear that amongst the eldership is "the teacher;" one who labours in the Word and in doctrine. Such an one is not only to be recognized by the church, but also supported in material things, should circumstances warrant this (cf. 1 Tim.5:17-18). That this work is not itinerant is obvious, for it refers to the flock which is among you; it is the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers. It can mean no other company than the local fellowship of believers. There the minister is to labour in the work of the ministry, feeding the flock, and doing the work of an evangelist.

Where a church fails in the matter of a true God ordained ministry it will inevitably, over a period of time, crumble spiritually, for the very means of edification is missing.

It is surprising to note that whilst the lack of an "ordered" ministry, and the practice of "any man" making a little contribution was peculiar to only a small section of the church a generation or so ago, today it is widespread in Christendom. As one listens to the media, it is apparent that pew participation is general practice in almost all denominations, men, women, and children taking

part in the services. The advent of the Charismatic movement is responsible for much of this; but let none be under any illusion, Charismatic activity is but to carry out fully that which was the order at Corinth. The confusion so apparent in this generation should drive all thinking Christians back to that which is truly Biblical regarding church order and its ministry.

Then there is the second reason for the confused state of today's church; the clever manipulation of the Scriptures. This is very much allied with what has already been stated, for all strange practices, as with false cults, have some verse of Scripture upon which to hang their beliefs and support their actions. Satan himself was adept at quoting Scripture, using it in such a way as would further his own design (cf. Matt.4:6).

His cunning craft has not altered, this is why he lurks behind the ministry, lying in wait to deceive by using the very servants of God, who, if not vigilant and steadfast in the faith will succumb to his wiles by conveniently passing over certain teachings which might be unpopular.

The taking of Scripture out of its context, crass literalism, as well as careless allegorizing, are all highly dangerous. Yet, the Word of God is so often used in this way, and by so doing cleverly "manipulated," to promote theories or prop up man-invented traditions. It is in this way that fables are cunningly devised and propagated. This is to handle the Word of God deceitfully, Thus, by so doing the minister is not only deceived himself but what is even worse, deceives his hearers.

The Scriptures must be searched, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor.2:13). For this very reason the apostle Paul exhorts Timothy in his ministerial office, to give attendance to reading; to doctrine; to meditate and give himself wholly to these things. Only as this is done would he be safe himself, and truly establish those that sat under his ministry (cf. 1 Tim.4:13-16).

Sufficient has been said to alert the reader as to the importance of the work of the ministry. The confused

situation all around us is conclusive evidence that, generally speaking, there is no "certain sound" emanating from the pulpits of Great Britain today. What is the remedy? Have ministers lost sight of their vocation? Do ministers need more intensive and sophisticated college training for the work? Is the ministry necessary in this day of modern science and electronics? Has not the means of communication so drastically changed as to have outdated the ministry? Is it feasible to think that people will assemble and sit up in rows to listen to a man hold forth from a pulpit?

Surely preaching has become irrelevant in modern society. Dialogue, film, video, drama, are the ways to get over the message; the world has proved this; we must move with them; we must be geared to the times. One hears such comments frequently. But what does the Word of God say concerning this, and of the minister and his work? This will be the subject of the next part.

PART 2

In the Sermon on the Mount there is much instruction given on the subject of the Ministry. Whilst parts of that wonderful discourse were undoubtedly addressed to the multitude, yet, there are large sections which concerned more especially the disciples, those who within a few years, Christ would commission to "Go ... and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt.28:19-20).

With this in mind, the Great Head of the Church, having called these men, immediately commences to instruct them in the work for which they are destined; and after His wonderful introductory beatitudes He warns them that they will not have it easy in life; all manner of false criticism, ostracism, and even persecution will be levelled against them. He then links them with the prophets of the Old Testament (cf. Matt.5;11-12).

From this we are to learn that it is the Lord's particular Messengers who are in view, and He addresses them in a most direct manner by saying: "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt.5:13). The writer is in no way asserting that this statement of Christ has only relevance to the disciples, for every believer is (or should be) as salt in this corrupt world. Nevertheless, it was those who were ultimately to be anointed of the Holy Spirit and commissioned by Christ to teach the "ALL THINGS" commanded who were in the main addressed.

The ministry of the Old Testament prophet and of the New Testament apostle, has now ceased. Theirs was a special office for the particular times of the unfolding of the Eternal Purpose. The whole of Divine revelation has now been given and this is contained in the Holy Scriptures, God breathed and God preserved; from which nothing must be added and nothing taken away (cf. Rev.22:18-19). Within its covers we have a full disclosure of God's eternal plan, and the complete mandate of faith and practice.

Further to this the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost and indwells every believer. His activities are many; one being to take of the things of Christ and make them understandable to us. He enlightens and quickens the mind and understanding. It was not so in Old Testament times when revelation came often by vision or dream. Now the Spirit of God operates upon and through the Word, and never outside it.

However, it is not uncommon to hear a person say, "I was led to do such and such a thing!" Groups of people claim further enlightenment and revelation, causing them to depart from established tradition. If such action or practice which they claim to have been guided into, does not line up with the teaching of Holy Scripture, then we must not take those people seriously, for the Great Head of the Church himself said, "Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17). The function of the Holy Spirit is to guide us into that Truth, and never into paths which are either "anti" or "extra" Biblical.

In this matter of guidance into truth, "MEANS" have been provided. One, and possibly the most important, is the

preaching of the Word of God. Theologically, this is termed as one of the MEANS OF GRACE. "Means" is defined as the "specified intention." This exactly explains it; for it is the specified intention of God to use PREACHING to obtain the decreed end. Preaching is not, however, the business of every man. God called and set apart the prophets of the Old Testament, and although Israel were all His chosen people He did not expect everyone to do a little in the capacity of a prophet; indeed such practice would have caused utter confusion. Prophets were "particular;" they were raised up of God from among the rest, and had special anointing. So it was in the New Testament. With all the perception of Deity, Christ chose His disciples and sent them forth. Others did not decide that they would like to try their hand at it, neither did the Lord ever infer that he wanted every man who followed Him to be a preacher. A witness, yes! but preaching is different.

Just as in the Old Testament and early New Testament days God had His particular messengers, so is this ongoing; not now in the form of Prophet and Apostle but of Pastor and Teacher that is, "the work of the ministry" (cf. Eph.4:12). "Who is sufficient for these things?" asked the great apostle Paul; no man of himself. However great a scholar a man may be, whatever his powers of oratory, and although he may have a persuasive manner and a pleasing personality, these things of themselves do not qualify him for the ministry. Nevertheless, a minister may well possess some of these qualities. For example, a preacher must be articulate and able to communicate. God will not call a man to preach who is not equipped for the task, but it is not his vocabulary or diction which fits him, it is God himself, as we learn from the Apostle. "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph.3:7-8).

Paul is saying that he was made a minister, not by reason of any ability which he possessed, neither did he choose it as a career, but it was through the grace of God which was given to him.

It is in this way that the Head dispenses these gifts to men. It is the effectual working of the Holy Spirit within a man. It is His power; the minister is nothing; it is the gift that is great, not the man. Therefore, is it not evident how careful a church must be as to its order and practice? God has given His Word; the Holy Spirit; and the gift of the divinely ordained Preacher, and the three must ever be kept together.

It is an outrageous practice, yea, grossly dishonouring to the Head, to put a man in the pulpit who is not patently gifted of the Lord for the task. Are we to expect the true blessing of God to be upon the ministry of one who is not a chosen vessel? Is the "Body of Christ" to be edified by men who are totally unable to expound God's Word in all its fulness, or, by those who by misinterpreting it, handle that Word deceitfully? Again, how can the saints be brought to the "unity of the faith" and grow into "spiritual maturity," by a little regiment of itinerant preachers who probably stand in thirty or forty different pulpits a year and use a few sermons, maybe six or seven, to cover that period and fit each situation? This practice is a caricature of the Biblical pattern; it is a grotesque form of church order, and is far removed from the mandate which has been given to us.

God ordained preachers are not nearly as common as some sections of the Church make them out to be. In those last epistles written in The Revelation, where it is quite obvious that there was one minister (messenger) in each church, it was he who was held responsible by the Head for the spiritual state of the church in which God had called him to minister. How can travelling preachers be held responsible for the condition of a church? They cannot. Such a system is bizarre and finds no warrant. The mandate laid down for these last days (the New Testament age) is Elders and Deacons, and within eldership the teacher, who is to be set apart by the local church for the work of the ministry within that church. As a man hath received the gift so let him minister, and do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified (cf. 1 Pet.4:10-11).

The importance of the ministerial office in the true Biblical sense cannot be overstressed. The fact that Christendom has abused and corrupted this office is no warrant for abandoning it; indeed, the latter is as grievous an error as the former. The pulpit and the work of the minister must be guarded with "walls and bulwarks," for, said our Lord as He faced those men whom He had first chosen to go forth to teach the "ALL THINGS," "Ye are the salt of the earth." By this Christ did not mean that they of themselves were special, or that they possessed certain purifying properties, rather was it the truth which they were to teach and dispense; therein lay the savour; but because there was a God appointed partnership or union, in that they were the chosen and special executives charged with the dispensing of the truth, they, as the channels or conveyors, are styled the salt.

W.H.Molland.

TO BE CONTINUED

PICTURES OF CHRIST

J. Marcellus Kik

Exodus 20:4-6, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

In this second commandment we are forbidden to make any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. We are forbidden to bow down to them or to serve them. Now the question has been asked whether or not this commandment forbids the use of pictures of Christ. Naturally the commandment forbids the bowing down before such pictures and worshipping them. There can be no question of that.

But in many Protestant churches and in many evangelical churches pictures of Christ are used in teaching, and in the homes of Christians pictures of Christ are hung up to remind them, I suppose, of Christ. Is that Scriptural? Does it meet with the approval of God? Is it sinful? Is it another way of breaking the second commandment?

Now here is the surprising thing. Nowhere in the Bible, either in the Old Testament or New Testament, is there a physical description of Christ. Isn't that strange if God wanted to use the picture of Christ in spreading the Gospel or in worship, that we are not told whether Christ was tall or short, fair or dark, light or dark hair, blue eyes or brown eyes?

With all their love for the Lord you would think that Peter or John would have given a description of Him unless, of course, they were forbidden. They wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Surely it is significant that neither they nor any other of the Scriptures gave a physical description of the Lord. Surely if God desired the use of pictures of Christ to further the cause of Christ He would have had a physical description of His Son in His Word. Why should we consider ourselves wiser than God and provide what He has deliberately left out?

The second amazing fact is that in the first four centuries of the history of the Church, no picture of Christ was used. These were the years when the Church made her most astonishing growth. These were the years in which the Christians conquered pagan Rome. It is so frequently stated that we need pictures of Christ in order to teach the Gospel. The apostle Peter did not need pictures of Christ to instinct the young or bring the Gospel to adults. The apostle John did not need pictures of Christ to convert pagans and instruct the Church. The apostle Paul did not need pictures of Christ to convert Barbarians and Greeks. The early church did not need pictures of Christ to conquer paganism. They accomplished it by preaching the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When pictures of Christ were first introduced, they were opposed. The Church historian Eusebius who lived in the fourth century declared himself in the strongest manner

against images of Christ in a letter to the Empress Constantia who asked him for such an image. Amongst other things Eusebius wrote: "Who can therefore counterfeit by dead and insensible colours, by vain shadowing painter's art, the bright and shining glistering of such His glory? whereas His holy disciples were not able to behold the same in the mountain; who, therefore, falling on their faces, acknowledged they were not able to behold such a sight."

Here Eusebius touches on one of the reasons why it is impossible to have a true picture of Christ. If you want a picture of Christ do you want it as He was upon earth or as He is now in heaven? If you want a picture of Him as He was upon earth, you have quite a problem. There was no picture of Him painted. The so-called pictures of Christ which are present today are from the imaginations of the artists. That is why there are so many different pictures. Not one of them is a true picture. So every time you say this or that is a picture of Christ, you are uttering a lie. You cannot teach truth by a lie. Christ is the Truth and surely He would not want the use of a false means to point to Him. Christ abhors lies and falsehoods.

But someone will state that at least we can depict the humanity of Christ as He appeared upon earth. But who are we to separate His humanity from His divinity.' The apostle John states in his Gospel, ch.1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Notice that the apostle states that even while Christ was in the flesh, they beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. In other words, they beheld His divinity as well as His humanity. This, one cannot paint. So one must behold His humanity as separate from His divinity. Then one falls into the ancient error of Nestorius. He stated that Christ consisted of two persons: one human and the other divine. There was, according to Nestorius, a separation between the human and divine persons.

That was the ground on which the Council called by Constantine V condemned paintings of Christ. You see, this

question of pictures of Christ was the subject of controversy throughout the eighth century. So Constantine called a council in 753 of three hundred and thirty bishops. Their conclusion was this: "If any person shall divide human nature, united to the Person of God the Word; and, having it only in the imagination of his mind, shall therefore, attempt to paint the same in an Image; let him be holden as accursed. If any person shall divide Christ, being but one, into two persons; placing on the one side the Son of God, and on the other side the son of Mary; neither doth confess the continual union that is made; and by that reason doth paint in an Image the son of Mary, as subsisting by himself; let him be accursed. If any person shall paint in an Image the human nature, being deified by the uniting thereof to God the Word; separating the same as it were from the Godhead assumed and deified; let him be holden as accursed."

This council points out the difficulty and indeed the impossibility of painting a portrait of Christ. Christ is more than man. He is God-man. It is impossible to depict by a painter's brush the almighty power of Christ; the glorious majesty of Christ; the infinite knowledge of Christ. You cannot localize by a painter's brush the everywhere presence of Christ. One can only succeed in degrading Christ. When one considers the deity of Christ it is no wonder that the apostles did not attempt a physical description of their Lord and Saviour.

There is always, also, the danger of worshipping the picture of Christ and attaching power to it. Even a Protestant publishing firm stated that there is power in a picture of Christ. It is stated: "When one plants deeply and firmly in his mind the picture of Christ, it has a strong and powerful influence in his life." Thus instead of attributing this influence to Christ and the Holy Spirit they attribute it to the picture they are trying to sell. That is a breaking of the second commandment. It is not through the foolishness of pictures that sinners are converted but through the foolishness of preaching.

It is amazing how slowly unscriptural practices enter the Christian Church. We must at all times go back to the

Scriptures. The Bible is our infallible guide. And if our practices and doctrines do not conform with the teachings of the Scriptures, then we must eliminate them. The Bible instructs the Church not to make any likeness of Christ. The present day pictures of Christ are false and no one would make a serious claim that they resemble Christ upon earth. They separate His humanity from His deity. They do not at all give us a glimpse of His present glory. They are not condoned by the inspired apostles.

God has ordained the foolishness of preaching to evangelize the world. He has promised to attend the preaching of the Word with the power of the Holy Spirit. The so-called pictures of Christ are a hindrance and a temptation to idolatry. Let us cleanse the Temple of God from them.

"If the edification of the church proceeds from Christ alone He has surely a right to prescribe in what manner it shall be edified. Paul expressly states that, according to the command of Christ, no real union or perfection is attained but by outward preaching ... Those who neglect or despise this order choose to be wiser than Christ. Woe to the pride of such men! It is, no doubt, a thing in itself possible, that Divine influence alone should make us perfect without human assistance. But the present inquiry is not what the power of God can accomplish, but what is the will of God and the appointment of Christ. In employing human instruments for accomplishing their salvation, God has conferred on men no ordinary favour. Nor can any exercise be found better adapted to promote unity than to gather around the common doctrine."

John Calvin

(Calvin's Commentaries Vol.21 Page 282)

THE PUBLIC MINISTRY

John Gill D.D.

The public ministry of the Word is an ordinance of Christ; There are private teachings, which are not only commendable, but are obligatory on men; as on the heads of families, parents and masters; parents are to teach their children, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and masters are to instruct their servants, and command their household to keep the way of the Lord; and even women, particularly aged women, are to be teachers of good things; and every man who has received a gift, though only for private use, should minister it one to another in private conference and conversation; but it is the public ministry of the Word which is the special ordinance of Christ for public good and for general usefulness. This is not a device of man, for sinister ends, and with selfish and lucrative views; but is by the appointment of Christ, who ordered His disciples, that what they heard in the ear they should preach upon the housetops; that is, in the most public manner; and therefore sent them into all the world, to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven; and accordingly the apostle Paul, that eminent minister of the Word, preached it publicly, as well as from house to house, and even from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum. It is Christ that appears to men, and calls them, and makes them able and faithful ministers of the New Testament; hence such are called ministers of God, of His making, and not man's; and good ministers of Jesus Christ; educated, not at schools and academies, but nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine. The gifts qualifying them for such service are from Christ; the apostle Paul himself was made a minister of the gospel, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto him; and it is He who gives gifts to ordinary ministers of the Word, and makes them pastors and teachers in His churches; the apostles had their mission and commission from Him, John 20:21; and so all ministers of the Word in successive ages; for "how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Rom.10:15; and they have their doctrine from Him, which they are to preach; the words of the wise are from one Shepherd, who is Christ; and it is with words and doctrine from Him they, as under-shepherds, are to feed the flock, even the doctrines of

the gospel; which are not of man, nor taught by man, "but are by the revelation of Christ; particularly such as pardon by His blood, justification by His righteousness, and atonement by His sacrifice; which He has ordered to be published in His name, to all nations, and which accordingly has been.

The public ministry of the Word is a standing ordinance, to be continued to the second coming of Christ; there will be ministers, and so a ministry, unto the end of the world, and this will not be until all the elect of God are gathered in: the world, and the continuance of, is for their sake: the reason why the coming of Christ to destroy the world is seemingly deferred, is, because God is not willing that any of His beloved ones should perish, but that all should come to repentance; and when they are all brought in, He will then come and burn the world: hence the work of the ministry, Christ has given gifts to men to qualify them for, will be continued.

That the ministry of the Word is a work; it is called "the work of the ministry," Eph.4:12; it is a ministering work, a service, and not a dominion; such who are employed in it have not the dominion, neither over the faith nor over the practice of men, no farther than enjoined by the Word of God: the ministry is a service, as the word imports, and not a sine-cure; there is business to be done, and a great deal of it; enough to employ all the time and talents of ministers, and no room nor leisure to indulge in sleepiness, to laziness and slothfulness: and it is a laborious work; the ministers of the gospel are not to be loiterers, but labourers in Christ's vineyard; they labour in the Word and doctrine, which requires much reading of the Scriptures, frequent prayer and constant meditation and study, in preparing for their work, which is a great weariness to the flesh; and much zeal, fervour, and affection in the performance of it, which is attended with much fatigue, and an expense of the animal spirits; to which the apostle may have some respect, 2 Cor.12:15: and the ministers of the gospel are not only fellow-labourers with one another, but with the Lord Himself, in His church; the manuring, cultivation, planting and watering His vineyard, and the building up of His people in a church-state, are laborious services; so that if the Lord

did not go forth working with them, it would be to no purpose; "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth," which are both parts of the gospel ministry, but "God that giveth the increase," success to their ministrations; and "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," 1 Cor. 3:7,9, Psalm 127:1.

Who are fit and proper persons to be employed in this work?

1. They must be of a good moral character; an immoral man is not fit to be a member of a church, much less a minister of the Words among the qualifications of a bishop, overseer, or pastor of a church, several moral characters are observed, as, that such must be blameless, of good behaviour, and have a good report of them that are without; inoffensive in life and conversation, lest the ministry should be blamed, and lie under reproach, but then he must be more than a moral man, both in theory and practice; a mere moralist is not capable of doing the work of an evangelist, or of a gospel preacher.
2. They must be such who are partakers of the grace of God in truth, or otherwise they will not be able to speak of divine things feelingly and experimentally.
3. They must be endowed by Christ with ministerial gifts, such as Christ received for men, and gives unto them, whereby they are made and fitted by Him to be pastors and teachers; it is not grace, nor human learning, nor natural parts which qualify for the ministry of themselves, though they are all meet and useful; but a gift from Christ; the apostle Paul had all the above things, but he ascribes his being a minister of the gospel to neither of them, but to a gift he had received, fitting and qualifying him for this important work, Eph.3:7,8; and this gift is in some greater, in others less; but in all where it is, it more or less qualifies for the work of the ministry, Rom.12:6.
4. They must be studious in the Scriptures, and have a competent knowledge of things contained in them; whereby the man of God, the minister of Christ, "may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," and particularly unto the work of the ministry, 2 Tim.3:16,17.

They should make the Bible their chief study, and attend to the diligent and constant reading of it, and meditate upon the things in it; and give themselves up wholly to them, that their profiting in the knowledge of the mystery of Christ might be manifest; for as they are to feed the churches with knowledge and understanding, it is necessary they themselves should have a good share of such knowledge; and such who are like Apollos, mighty in the Scriptures, are as scribes, well "instructed unto the kingdom of God," Matt. 13:52.

5. They must have a call both from God and men to this work; no man takes this honour to himself, but he that is called of God; which is the inward call, and is known by the furniture of gifts bestowed upon a man, fitting for such service; and by the providence of God, inclining and directing the church to separate him to the work to which He has called him; and the outward call is by the church itself, upon trial of his gifts.

6. They must be sent forth, they must have a mission from Christ, and that by the church, Rom.10:15; the apostles of Christ were sent forth by him, as he was by His Father, John 20:21; there were some in Jeremy's time who ran, and were not sent; prophesied, though not spoken to; but these were not true prophets and ministers of God.

7. They must be such who are counted faithful, and put into the ministry by the Lord Himself; as the apostle Paul was, 1 Tim.1:12; not who thrust themselves, who intrude into this office, and take it to themselves, without the leave of God or men.

8. They are only the proper persons to exercise this ministry, to whom it is given, and who have received it of the Lord, and have given themselves up to it: the apostle speaks of the ministry of the Word as what he had received of the Lord Jesus; as a gift bestowed on him, a trust committed to him, and therefore was concerned to fulfil it; and directs to it as an argument to be used with Archippus, "to fulfil it," Acts 20:24, Col.4:17; and therefore such should give themselves up wholly to it, and employ their time and talents in it; addict themselves to the ministration of the saints, as the house of Stephanas did; and as little as possible entangle themselves with

the affairs of life, but give themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer, as the apostles chose, Acts 6:4.

9. They should be both able and apt to teach, have abilities from Christ for this work, who only makes men able ministers of the New Testament; and also have utterance of speech, a gift of elocution, so as to be able to clothe their ideas with proper words, conveying in an easy manner the sense of them to the understanding of others; and should seek to find out acceptable and suitable words, as the royal preacher is said to do, Eccles. 12:10; giving pleasure and profit to those that hear them, 2 Tim.2:2, 1 Tim.3:2.

10. They must be such who study to show themselves workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; giving the true sense of it, searching into the deep things in it, and imparting to every one their portion, agreeable to their age, of children, young men, and fathers; to children, the sincere milk of the Word; to those more grown, strong meat: also should distinguish between saints and sinners, the precious and the vile, giving the children their bread, and not holy things to dogs.

"I have made thee a watchman." Ezek.3:17. Here we read a true account of the making of a minister. God alone can do it. Two things are absolutely requisite to make a man a preacher, viz. (1) Special gifts - such as perception of truth, simplicity, aptness to impart instruction, some degree of eloquence, and intense earnestness. (2) Special call. Every man who is rightly in the ministry must have been moved thereto of the Holy Ghost. He must feel an irresistible desire to spend his whole life in his Master's cause. No college, no bishop, no human ordination, can make a man a minister; but he who can feel, as did Bunyan, Whitefield, Berridge, or Rowland Hill, the strugglings of an impassioned longing to win the souls of men, may hear in the air the voice of God saying, 'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman.'"

C.H. Spurgeon.

EDITORIAL

In this magazine we now lay stress upon the office of the ministry, and of the prime importance of consistent, consecutive, expository preaching. We do this for two reasons; firstly, because it is Biblical, and secondly because of the great need at the present time. It is our firm conviction that in a magazine such as this, we should assess the position as it can be so clearly seen, and through these pages minister accordingly. There can be no doubt that true expository preaching is fast becoming a thing of the past, and reasons for this are given elsewhere in this edition. These matters should cause thinking Christians to stop and consider; indeed, to restructure their whole church order.

In the local press there are often to be seen advertisements and reports of gospel rock concerts, dancing, drama, processions of witness at which large crosses are carried. These are not infrequently accompanied by a statement that almost all denominations participate, from Roman Catholic to Brethren. What is happening in Devon is, alas, common throughout Great Britain. Sadder still, very many who profess to be true children of God are staunch supporters of these events; indeed, they are often the instigators, and are naive enough to believe that God would have them to communicate His truth in this way. In a coming day when we stand before the Judgment Throne, the question will be asked, "who hath required this at your hand" (cf. Isa.1:2). Practices and methods which are outside of the mandate of Scripture, or "extra" Biblical, God will not tolerate.

The Divinely appointed means of making known spiritual truth is preaching. This does not mean isolated so-called gospel addresses, short homilies or epilogues; rather does it convey the thought of the thorough consistent exposition of Holy Scripture in all its fulness. If we are to see a better order of things in both the church and society, then the pulpit must be restored to its central position in church order, and be occupied by men who prayerfully and diligently study the Word of God and faithfully declare all its teaching and practice without fear or favour, to both saint and sinner.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and INFORMATION

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION - Saturday 12th July 1986

Afternoon 3.30pm - Tea 5pm - Evening 6pm

Speaker: Dr. PETER TRUMPER Th.M., Th.D.
(Holywell N. Wales)

VISITING PREACHERS

Sunday 13th July	Dr. Peter Trumper	
" 3rd August	Mr. John Roberts	(L.D.O.S)
" 24th August	Mr. John Brentnall	(Swanwick)

THE "DRIVE-IN" CHURCH

Services will be held from 13th July to 7th September (inclusive) each Sunday in the Kingsley Car Park on the river bank at 6.30pm.

The proposed publication of a book on the Biblical teaching of Salvation, as mentioned in the previous issue of The Link, has brought in considerable support from a number of people. Work is now well in hand and we should have more definite information in our next edition.

One of the many contacts which have been made as a result of the circulation of The Link has been with THE ARABIC EVANGELICAL CENTRE at Wolverhampton and we are most happy to make mention of this important work. The Centre is based in Wolverhampton - the address is P.O. Box 140, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV2 2NP. Particulars of their policies and basis of doctrine can be obtained on request at the above address.