

THE CHURCH IN CHAINS

I gaze upon the wealth in seats around me,
The treasure-stores who wait and warm the pews,
And wonder how the Lord of light who found me
Can make these vessels burst with Gospel news. . .

The “sermon” reigns supreme upon a priestly pulpit-perch,
And nothing’s wrong with ritual and form. . .
But where’s the burning place to start a living, blazing church?
A hearth of fellowship to keep it warm?

For centuries, since Constantine, we linger
In temples staring with spectator’s trance.
We wake, surprised, if God just stirs His finger,
But He awaits us all to join the dance!

Most members hesitate to mention deeply hidden needs,
Or bare the pain and fear and wounds they feel,
When, right beside, are souls who have the skill to sow the seeds
Of grace to help their hearts to mend and heal.

In silence, precious pearls are left unspoken.
Self-nurture for the Body, overfilled
With preaching plans in endless streams unbroken,
Is lost in speeches Jesus never willed.

Each pastor has but one real task: to multiply himself,
Equipping all his flock to use their gifts.
But God’s intended ministers draw dust upon the shelf.
Their will to spread the Kingdom dims and drifts.

God’s people all were meant to serve their Savior
Diversely, each with Spirit-given tools.
If only Sunday-bulletin-behavior
Became a meeting where the Master rules!

If there’s no place to share a verse or insights from the Lord,
No time for open praise to worship with,
Then Christians won’t be taught or trained to wield the Spirit’s Sword,
And “priesthood of believers” is a myth.

— *David L. Hatton 1/14/1993*