

# REFORM- ATION TODAY'82



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## The Whitefield Fraternal April 1982



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# EDITORIAL

## *The Pope's visit to Britain*

Ours is a generation that lives by images and impressions. It is hard work to get people to think rationally, and harder still to get them to think according to principle. The Pope's first visit to England is expected to make an enormous impact. Gorgeous television views will impress multitudes. Expressions on people's faces and the countenance of the pontiff will be the telling factor, not Scripture teaching. It is the calling of believers to use every opportunity to reason with people, lovingly, graciously, winsomely, wisely and with authority. By authority is meant the authority of the Bible. We must show that there is no authority in tradition. Jesus said to the Pharisees of his day that they had made the Scripture of no effect by their tradition.

The Pope's visit offers an excellent opportunity to clarify the Gospel. In house-to-house visiting we find we get a much better reception from Roman Catholics than nominal Anglicans. As never before Catholics are open to read the Scriptures and test things for themselves. We aim to make an all out effort to use the booklet in evangelism and urge our readers to do likewise. There is space to stamp an address or write an invitation welcoming discussion or questions on the subjects presented. The booklet is designed in content to be suitable after the Pope's visit. However it is best to use it when interest is high.

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The booklet is designed to be relevant after the Pope's visit.

## *Confusion at the F.I.E.C. Assembly*

The work of maintaining Biblical standards and principles is essential and sometimes exceedingly difficult. As expressed in the booklet on the Pope's visit we believe in freedom. Arthur Blessitt is as free to carry his large cross as the Pope is to display his smaller one. We are not saying that these men are not nice men. It is the doctrine they represent and the methods they employ which must be examined. Arthur Blessitt is free to organise his own pro-

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*Front cover: Pastors of Pendelton and Anderson, Indiana, Dennis Clark (on the left), who contributes to this issue of the magazine, and Tom Lutz, whose ministry is anticipated at Cuckfield on Sundays 18th July to 22nd August, and at the annual Carey Family Conference. The theme of the conference is, 'Daily Practical Godliness'. For details write to Andrew Symonds, c/o Reformation Today, Box 106, Haywards Heath, RH16 1QL.*



grammes. That is one thing. But to thrust him into a position of leadership is another.

It is evident that some F.I.E.C. leaders are disillusioned. The work of evangelism, they claim, is not attended with success. In some cases it is not being done at all. Therefore, they maintain, we have to resort to unorthodox means. We do not agree. It is never right to resort to the manipulation of the altar call. We had hoped that we had seen an end of the invitation system. Now it seems as though we are going to have to fight that battle all over again. Personally I am surprised we are having to face it so soon. If gimmickry is going to be the fashion (supported as it always is with stories of the blessings that attend it) where will it end?

Certainly we must be realistic about the meagre equipment of most of our ministers. Few have seminary training. Few are bursting with personality. Nevertheless true leadership will provide encouragement for those who are modestly equipped. We must never forget that the apostles were humble men. The Holy Spirit can wonderfully use modest men who rely on spiritual weapons. We do not have to resort to carnal methods. The apostle Paul said that he put no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). It is a myth to think that we have to resort to the flesh. That is a denial of our belief that regeneration of individuals and awakenings on a larger scale are sovereign acts of God. Of course it is wrong to have a fatalistic view of revival. But resorting to the flesh — manufacturing our own revivals — that is misguided. As Pastor Coomber testifies, he has personally witnessed and can document the harm that follows unscriptural methods.

#### *Stuart Olyott*

The Belvidere Road Church, Liverpool, has been led by Stuart Olyott for fifteen years. He is now to take up the pastorate of Lausanne, Switzerland. The church there has only twelve members and no resources. From a strategic point of view it is ideal. An expository ministry of the kind that can be provided by Stuart could be greatly used. We rejoice in this opening and urge its support. Details can be obtained by writing to Mr. Olyott, 21, Dovey Street, LIVERPOOL L8 8BT.

#### *A successful Leicester Conference*

Between 250 and 300 attended the annual Leicester Conference including an encouraging proportion of younger men and a significant number of ministers from overseas countries. We have enjoyed the company of Peter Dewberry of Goodwood, Capetown. He is due to return to South Africa to take up a new work in Durban. He and Branco Trajkovski of Macedonia, Yugoslavia, came back with good reports of Leicester. David Kingdon was one of the speakers. Recordings on the subjects of Providence (he gave an excellent commentary on the life of Joseph) and Depression are available from the Banner. Al Martin returned from Leicester to provide that high standard of ministry which is his gift. Pictures of the Whitefield Fraternal adorn the inside covers of this issue. His subject was piety and preaching. □ □ □



# The Doctrine of Grace – an encouragement in Christian living

Bob Sheehan

If the doctrines of grace have a large part to play in evangelism (see *R.T.* 66) then they also have a Scriptural use in the Christian's life. They are an aid to the Christian in the following ways:

*1. The doctrines of grace are used in Scripture to encourage us in times of pressure.*

Romans 8:28-39 is full of the doctrines of grace and full of encouragement. The circumstances of life are in the hands of a sovereign God who does all things for the benefit of those who love him. These lovers of God are sinners called by God's grace according to his purpose (v. 28): simply because he wanted them for himself.

Out of his eternal knowledge of them (to 'know' being the Scriptural term for intimate relationships e.g. Gen. 4:1; Matt. 1:25) came his predestination to make them like Christ, his calling by grace, his justification by grace, through faith, and their glorification (vv. 29-30). So certain is the glorification of the eternally loved that it is recorded as an accomplished fact. He whom God has loved from eternity will reach his appointed conformity to Christ.

On the basis of these saving purposes, stretching from eternity to eternity and encompassing time, the apostle assures us that God is with us and for us in all circumstances. No charge can be made to 'stick' against God's elect. No eternally loved sinner can find himself condemned. The Father has given the Son for us. The Son has died, is risen and intercedes for us. There is nothing in our circumstances, in heaven, hell or earth, in yesterday, today or tomorrow that can change our relationship with God (vv. 31-39).

What encouragement then for the Christian 'going through the mill'? When our circumstances crowd in on us, when physically, mentally and spiritually we are weighed down, when Satan 'tempts us to despair and tells us of the guilt within', when past sins hammer at the conscience, when anything and everything seems contrary to us we have the certainties of grace: an eternal election, an unfrustratable predestination, a never-ending justification, a certain glorification and a Trinitarian God on our side.

As we sink beneath our circumstances, our sins and our fears we find the unchanging grace of God to be a support buoying us up because he has purposed that we shall not perish.

## *2. The doctrines of grace are used in Scripture to stimulate holiness*

We have seen that the Scriptures teach that nothing can change our relationship with God. Some argue that such a doctrine promotes loose living. Some have abused that doctrine to justify their evil ways. Some of Cromwell's soldiers sang, 'elect when I am sober, elect when I am drunk' but they did not get that doctrine from Scripture.

When men looking for an excuse for sin perverted the doctrines of grace and suggested that sin was an aid to God because it gave him the opportunity of showing greater forgiveness Paul destroyed their argument with reference to our union with Christ. Not only has Christ died for us and is risen for us, but we have died to sin with Christ and are raised to righteousness (Rom. 6:1ff.). The Gospel does not bring us forgiveness and leave us with our sin. It brings forgiveness and promotes holiness.

Our blessings in Christ include being chosen 'to be holy and blameless in his sight' (Eph. 1:4). He who has the hope of being perfectly holy like Christ one day is to purify himself from sin today (1 John 3:1-3). The Gospel of grace teaches us to reject ungodly living and live holy lives as we await the return of our Lord (Tit. 2:11-13).

It is in no way an overstatement to say that where there is not a holy life there is no evidence of election and calling. A credible confession of faith is witnessed by holy living, as John the Baptist well knew (Matt. 3:7-10).

Peter could not be clearer. Having stated that all we need for salvation, including the faith to believe, is God's provision, he exhorts us to add virtue to virtue and so make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:1-11). His intention is not to teach that election can fail when there is insufficient holiness, but rather that without holiness there is no election. No holy man ever perished yet! No unholy man was ever yet saved (Heb. 12:14).

This stress on holiness is very important, particularly in respect of the careless and presumptuous. Some people are happy to be saved 'by the skin of their teeth' — but that is not enough to save any man. There cannot be a genuine assurance of salvation where there is no holiness. Only those who do the Father's will enter the Kingdom (Matt. 7:21f.). In this respect free grace preachers need to take the apostasy passages in Hebrews far more seriously.

Spurgeon was so concerned to declare that election leads to holiness and that perseverance is not a promoter of ungodliness that he entitled sermon 1735 'The doctrines of grace do not lead to sin'. In the sermon that followed he repudiated the idea that the truth of free grace promotes sin because salvation is salvation from the power of sin, because love to God keeps the



saved from sin, because the Gospel reveals the evil of sin, because the saved are new creatures, because of the cost of salvation to Christ, because the Holy Spirit gives constant aid against sin, and because the entire character of a saved man is elevated.<sup>1</sup>

### *3. The doctrines of grace are used in Scripture to stimulate trust in God*

When Paul looked back to his ministry at Thessalonica he was full of praise to God for the evidences of election seen there: a preaching of the Gospel with power, the Holy Spirit and deep conviction (1 Thess. 1:4-5), and a welcome of the message as the Word of God, with joy and a resultant turning from idols to serve the living God (1 Thess. 1:6,9; 2:13). This stimulated Paul to trust that a lasting work had been accomplished.

Paul's confidence for a saving work was always in God. His understanding of a salvation from eternity to eternity gave him confidence and assurance for the future (Rom. 8:28-39). The work which God had begun he would complete (Phil. 1:6). Jude joined him in commending Christians in a heresy-filled world to the keeping, sanctifying work of God (Jude 24).

In days of increasing confusion trust in a God whose purposes of grace cannot fail is of great strength. If a redeemed multitude too large for man to count must be saved why the gloom and despair (Rev. 7:9f.)?

If history is not in the hands of Brezhnev and Reagan but in God's hands, if salvation is not in the will of man but in the mercy of God, if all the ransomed church of God must be saved to sin no more, then why the gloom? Should not the Biblical teaching of the triumph of grace and righteousness make us unlike the world of which we are part? When men's hearts fail them for fear should not our hearts rejoice at our impending redemption (Luke 21:26-28)? Are we to be as miserable and pessimistic as the world? Have we not certain grounds for optimism in God and hope in grace?

Listen to Warfield: 'You must not fancy, then, that God sits helplessly by while the world, which he created for himself, hurtles hopelessly to destruction, and he is able only to snatch with difficulty here and there a brand from the universal burning. The world does not govern him in a single one of his acts: He governs it and leads it steadily onward to the end which, from the beginning, or ever a beam of it had been laid, he had determined for it. . . . Through all the years one increasing purpose runs, one increasing purpose: the kingdoms of the earth become ever more and more the kingdom of our God and of our Christ. . . . Surely we shall not wish to measure the saving work of God by what has already been accomplished in these unripe days in which our lot is cast. The sands of time have not yet run out. And before us stretch, not merely the reaches of the ages, but the infinitely resourceful reaches of the promise of God.'<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. *The doctrines of grace are used in Scripture to stimulate praise*

The preaching of the doctrines of grace can often produce opposition. As far as the Scriptures are concerned they ought to produce praise! When election and predestination are mentioned by the apostle they are being listed as reasons for praising God. We are to bless him; to speak well of him, because of his acts of grace (Eph. 1:3ff.).

Faced with the impenitence of the cities of Israel our Lord praised the good pleasure of his Father in hiding the truth from those full of their own wisdom and for revealing the truth to those of simple faith (Matt. 11:25-27). Even in the face of unbelief free grace opens lips for praise.

In Peter's lavish description of the people of God he declares them to be elect and called to declare the praises of their saving God (1 Pet. 2:9). Shall not we, who have been set apart for God by distinguishing grace, praise him?

Calvin comments on Ephesians 1:6 in his sermon: 'Now St. Paul immediately says that it is "to the praise of the glory of his grace". Here he shows the final reason that moved God to elect us, namely, that his grace might be praised by it, yes, not after a common and ordinary manner, but with a certain glory. For he coupled those two things together so that we should be ravished when we see how God has drawn us out of the bottom of hell to open to us the gate of his kingdom and to call us to the heritage of salvation. . . . It is not enough for us to confess coldly that our salvation springs from God's pure liberality, but we must be, as it were, inflamed to give ourselves wholly to his praise. . . . God's praise shall never be glorified as it ought till we acknowledge his election to be the cause of all the benefits he bestows upon us.'<sup>3</sup>

Is not Calvin merely reflecting the apostle? How did he finish his teaching on the sovereign purposes of God? 'Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements, and his paths past finding out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever! Amen' (Rom. 11:33-36).

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Banner of Truth, Vol 29, p. 445ff.

<sup>2</sup> B. B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, Presbyterian and Reformed, pp. 518, 521.

<sup>3</sup> J. Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, Banner of Truth, pp. 42, 44.



*Dennis Clark author of this article is a young minister who, despite his youth, has been pastor of the Pendleton Baptist Church, Indiana for a number of years. He has two children.*

## The Necessity of a Long Term Ministry

### *The Problem*

In the last several years there has arisen a phenomenon which has affected virtually every major denomination in America — the short pastorate. Churches with a denominational hierarchy have ministers rotated on the average of three to five years. This practice, however, is not confined only to the church tied to a rigid ecclesiastical structure. Independent churches have fallen into the 'temporary pastor' trap. This pastoral shuffling has become so common that many pastors move to a church expecting to leave after a brief stay.

There is a double aspect to the problem. First, congregations have falsely concluded this to be the proper procedure. It is not uncommon for a pastor to have some well-meaning member say, "Pastor, maybe the reason we are facing so many problems is you have been here too long. What we need, for your sake and ours, is new leadership." Second, pastors have imbibed this thinking. When the church is facing a multiplicity of problems, including congregational unrest, he begins to think, "Maybe I've been here too long; maybe the church would prosper under another teaching elder. It would be nice to start anew in a different location." He faces a confusion within himself as to how long he ought to stay.

### *Biblical Reasons for An Extended Pastorate*

Although there is no passage of Scripture which gives to us the ideal term of ministry; yet, there are some clear Biblical principles which indicate the neces-

sity of a long term ministry. One of the key passages of Scripture is 1 Peter 5:1 which partially reads, 'the elders which are among you I exhort . . . neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock'. The elder is to be an example to God's flock. The Greek word means 'pattern'. The picture is one of teaching by living patterns. This kind of teaching cannot be accomplished overnight. Examples are set forth as the pastor meets the challenges of each day. His struggles with sin, his reaction under pressure, his concern for the people, present living pictures to the body of believers. He must not only verbally instruct, but, he must also teach with his life. This is a long range task carried out over a period of years. The Apostle Paul was painting a similar portrait in 1 Timothy 4:16, 'Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee.' Here Paul is linking together preaching and the manner of life. The truth he expounds to Timothy is that of continual teaching and holy living. This implies a period of time. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the type of teaching required of an elder also requires a continuity which only an extended ministry could give.

Not only does the duty of teaching imply a prolonged ministry, but also, the work of personal sanctification demands it. Paul in writing to the church at Ephesus sets forth the progressive work of personal holiness. In Ephesians 4:11 he says the pastor is God's gift to the church. In verse 12-16 he tells why God gives the Church pastors. The Church is to grow, to come to maturity. This work is a progressive work as seen from verse 15, 'But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things.' If this work is gradual, and it is the task of the pastor to oversee this work, then, the ministry must be seen as a gradual, progressive work.

Throughout the Pauline Epistles the local church is presented as the crucible of sanctification. The local assembly is not only a place of learning the Word of God; but, it is also a place where believers learn through fellowshiping together. The instructions given in Colossians 3:8-17 illustrate this. I learn forgiveness as I actively forgive others. I learn more of God's grace as my brother in Christ graciously admonishes me. One of God's chosen tools to work holiness in us is the church and every aspect of her ministry. But, let us suppose that your local church changed pastors every three years. How could that pastor set the example in this crucial area of holiness? About the time people became aware of his personal life, he would be moving on to a new flock. The local assembly would never be able to see this gradual work of holiness exemplified by the one God appointed to lead in the work. It is interesting to note when Paul was giving the details as to correcting a problematical elder, he never gave that elder permission to seek a new church. Instead, the implication is for that elder to be an example in being rebuked. 1 Timothy 5:20 states, 'Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.' Pastors sin. The church is never exhorted to hide that sin, but to rebuke it. This becomes stern teaching for the saints concerning God's holiness. An elder who receives such rebuke and responds in a Biblical manner is one who has shown himself to be worthy of his office. He has submitted to the God-given authority of the church, and has taught his flock the same. Church problems and turmoils ought never be viewed as signs indicating a pastoral resignation. Rather, they ought to be seen as opportunities to present living object lessons to God's people of how his grace and wisdom cause us to stand in the darkest moments. This kind of teaching is only done through long term ministries.

There is another reason for seeing the

pastoral ministry as an extended work. It can be said that the honour of God's name is involved. The prophet Jeremiah presents an example of this principle. In Jeremiah 1 we see that the basic content of God's message to Judah was judgment. Jeremiah faithfully proclaimed God's Word. However, the people would not listen. When you come to chapter 20, Jeremiah is despondent. He is mocked daily. As he pours his heart out to God he says, '... the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me. ... Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But, his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay' (8, 9). Jeremiah was so discouraged that he contemplated never preaching God's Word again. But, there is something true of the man of God which Jeremiah reflects in verse 9. In essence, he said, 'I wanted to stop, but I could not. God's Word burned within me and I could not keep quiet.'

There are many pastors who have felt the heartbreak of Jeremiah. They have stood firm for the Word of God; they have embraced the doctrines of grace. They have longed for their hearers to come to the same truths they have grown to love. But alas, rather than receptive hearts, they have met with closed minds. Instead of being respected for their message, they meet with criticism. They witness some trying to sow seeds of discord in the church. They see families leave for whom they have spent hours praying and individually teaching. Their hearts are pierced with a grief beyond description. Then, one day, they see that criticism affects their families. No matter how hard they tried to protect their wives and children; yet, some of their problems are communicated to their loved ones. They see sorrow in the eyes of their wives, bewilderment in the faces of their children. 'Oh Lord, I am ready to quit, to



move on. My grief is more than I can bear.'

Here is the importance of Jeremiah's words. He said there were two reasons why he could not quit. First, God's Word burned in his heart. He had to preach. So, it is with every man called of God to the ministry. Second, he knew the honour of God's name was involved. In Jeremiah 20:10 the prophet says '... All my friends are waiting for me to slip, saying, "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him".' Suppose for a moment you were to give in to those temptations to seek 'greener pastures'. What does that say to the unregenerate community you live in? If truth is precious, if truth is eternal, if your life is committed to the proclamation of divine truth, then, how is it possible for adversities associated with that truth to drive you away from the community which desperately needs the truth? The pastor's steadfastness in his work speaks of the value he places upon God's Word. The community is accustomed to seeing the liberal minister move on when things are rough. To them, it is just another job. But, the man of God who suffers for truth's sake leaves an indelible testimony throughout the land. He is saying, 'God's Word burns in me like a fire and I must be faithful to my calling.' He proclaims a faithful God to a world steeped in sin. Therefore, his ministry in a particular locality must be viewed as a long term work.

Why must every pastor seek his work as an extended work? First, because of the kind of teaching he is called to do. Second, because of the gradual work of sanctification in which he must take the lead. Third, because his ministry is tied up with the very name of God. May God deliver us from falling into the temptation of wanting another church because discouragement has dimmed our lights.

*Maurice Roberts, Presbyterian Minister of The Free Church in Ayr, Scotland comments on the above exposition.*

## How long should a pastorate Be?

Dennis Clark raises some very important issues in his brief but valuable article on the necessity of a long-term ministry. Clearly his own experience is that American ministries are on the whole too brief, at least in those evangelical and Reformed congregations best known to him. This judgment is probably just as true of, and relevant to, evangelical congregations in Great Britain at the present time. The present writer, for instance, noted only the other day and with great amazement that although he has only served in the ministry for seven years he is now one of the most senior ministers in terms of years of service in the district where he lives — and that too in an area well served by various denominations. The particular details may be worth giving as they amply illustrate Mr Clark's point. Out of about 20 Presbyterian congregations in this area, some 12 or 13 have had pastoral changes of one sort or another i.e. new ministers or else linkage with other congregations. In the two local Baptist congregations both the ministries have changed in the past seven years. At least two small independent congregations have in that time become defunct.

Admittedly not all of the above-mentioned congregations could be called evangelical — still less Reformed. But if there is an allowance made for this factor it still remains that there has in this particular district of Scotland occurred a more rapid change in the local ministerial complexion in the past seven years than probably ever before, at least within living memory. How far this is reflected in Scotland and in Britain as a whole is not

easy to say. But one may fairly suppose it to be far from unique. The point that needs of course to be stressed in relation to Mr Clark's argument is that frequent ministerial change in any area is now commonplace and has engendered a state of mind which is almost inevitably going to affect — if it has not already affected — evangelical pastors and congregations as well as others.

Consequently one must conclude that Mr Clark's article, written to encourage longer-term pastorates, is most timely and relevant as well as clearly and cogently argued.

Mr Clark's article may, however, be supplemented in one or two respects even while we are in deep agreement with his central argument. What follows is an endeavour briefly to offer certain additional or else balancing considerations which it is hoped may not appear in any way to invalidate — though at times they may slightly modify — his main point.

First, a lengthy (say at least 15 years) pastorate is not necessarily and of itself a blessing to a congregation even when the pastor in question is orthodox. It is not unknown for ministries which last a long time to prove fatal to the life of the churches which suffer them. This may sound rather humorous but it is in fact very tragic. Examples will occur to everyone's mind without much effort. The demands made on a man to go on preaching helpfully over a lengthy period of years to the same congregation are very great. An orthodox creed will not suffice of itself to carry a man through. There must be much agony of prayer, personal growth in the preacher, sustained interest in his pulpit-work and respect from his people if there is to be congregational progress. No doubt that is precisely why Methodism tended to enforce the briefer type of pastorate, because John Wesley felt he would

preach himself and his people to sleep if he stayed a whole year in the same place. It can happen.

Another factor we must not overlook is that the minister's life and work today must be seen against the background of the highly unsettled state of society as a whole. The ministry has never been an easy work. But in some ways it is probably much harder today than it has been for a very long time. Urban areas especially (and they are not the only ones by any means) suffer from a high mobility of population. For churches this means that not only congregations organised according to parish boundaries but also those which are 'gathered' have generally a larger component of short-term attenders than was true in, say, pre-war churches. For the ministers of these churches it means that life is more unpredictable and the strain on his nervous system that much greater. To take a practical case: a pastor may labour for long enough to see a congregation planted — only to have the chagrin of losing his best supporters overnight because of a factory closure affecting half the membership, who then have to leave the district to find work elsewhere. Not every man has the iron nerve to refuse a call away from such a situation of discouragement.

There is a third evil which must surely have a good deal to do with unsettling men in the pastorate at this time. It concerns the high degree of loneliness and isolation which very many evidently feel. And one suspects it is the best and most orthodox men who are principally at risk here. However we may lament the fact, it would nonetheless appear true that a fair proportion of Reformed ministers one meets with have little fellowship from their own congregation. To say that is not to forget that the relationship of pastor and flock is, and always has been, a special one which on some subjects and occasions must needs rule out a fellow-



ship of unqualified intimacy between him and every one in the congregation. But there clearly ought to be a fellowship for the minister and his family such that his soul is refreshed, encouraged and enlarged in his work and given palpable evidence that he does not labour among them in vain. When men for one reason or another lack this for even a year or two in their ministries they may be forgiven for at least sighing and groaning and looking for it in some other charge, real or imagined.

What has been said in the above paragraph about the possibility of a pastor's suffering from a starvation of fellowship would apply with tenfold greater force where he is the victim of open hostility from certain persons in the congregation where he serves. If it takes two to make a marriage work it certainly takes two parties to make a congregation function harmoniously. But where persons come together to obstruct a pastor in his legitimate spheres of influence or else stand in the wings with sullen faces and half-whispered expressions of disrespect and disaffection, absenting themselves whenever they can hurt him by their absence or making their presence felt whenever they can wound him still more by their presence, it is no great marvel if the pastor leaves on receipt of the first call he gets. For these are days, alas!, of low sanctification and discipline. Too many churches have got away with murder for so long that they would much rather have the bare name of orthodoxy than be brought under the control of a well-ordered congregational discipline fostered by an eldership which believes in the power of godliness more than in the form of it simply. If in such circumstances even Calvin was happy to leave Geneva, it is not remarkable if men of less genius are glad to go from their ungrateful people, thankful if they can at least save their own and their family's sanity when they go.

We may wind up with a few positive suggestions as to when a pastor would do well to go to another charge and when not. In the interests of brevity it is proposed to tabulate these points as brief guidelines rather than to develop them in full:

1. It is questionable whether a pastor should leave a church before he has seen anything happen under his ministry. If he has been called then there should be progress by way of advance in maturity in the members, or addition by way of converts;
2. It is debatable whether a pastor should leave an area which is poorly served with gospel ordinances and go to a privileged area (especially when the church he leaves may not get another man for a long time);
3. Knowing the infirmities of our own hearts, pastors would do well to think carefully before going to the larger church, and they would do well to weigh up the possibility even of going to the smaller or more difficult charge at times;
4. The cases of Oliver Heywood, Philip Henry and Thomas Boston show that able men may do work of immortal value in smallish places;
5. The case of Stewart of Cromarty shows that gifted men may not be temperamentally suited to stand in the lime-light of large charges but would be more useful in smaller ones;
6. Jonathan Edwards said that when a minister has poured forth all his powers to do good and failed then God comes forth to do that for him which he could not do himself. So the preacher must not go away too readily if he sees nothing at first;
7. At the same time, it is fair for a man to seek the largest sphere of influence

which God opens up to him. Life is short and we should expect to catch most fish in the largest pool;

8. A man must try to know himself and his family. If a pastor could find it within him to pray (like Andrew Bonar) for two hours normally each day, he might well live to see even the hardest situations transformed. But not every man could stand up to such a high level of self-discipline;

9. Finally, it is questionable whether a pastor should move to another church at all without very serious special prayer, perhaps with fasting.

No doubt many additions could be made to the above, but these are offered by the present writer as a humble attempt to keep brethren in the work of the gospel who may be exercised about the prospects of a call elsewhere. It will be observed that all that is said here is in substantial agreement with the article written by Mr Dennis Clark.

*Examples from the past and present day migration*

## Extended pastorates

Some men have been enabled to sustain edifying ministries in one place for a lifetime. Daniel Rowlands (1713-1760) sustained a preaching and pastoral ministry at Llangeitho for 27 years. His congregations were always between 3,000 and 4,000. Obviously many travelled to hear him, and one, Peter Jones, walked a distance of 105 miles for soul refreshment no less than 11 times! It was a divine cordial to hear Rowlands preach. He would plunge very deep into the Word, but display the truth in a gloriously clear light. Thomas Charles who was converted through hearing Rowlands preach declared of that sermon that 'the glorious scenes opened to

my eyes will abundantly satisfy my soul millions of years hence', in the contemplation of them!<sup>2</sup>

William Jay of Bath (1769-1853) was pastor there for 62 years. He never seemed to falter in fetching fresh waters from the wells of salvation. During that long time he always presented those supplies in clearly marked containers. The method of using clear headings was followed by Spurgeon in his long 'preaching pastorate' in London of 37 years. One of Spurgeon's predecessors was John Rippon who ministered for 63 years. But in his closing years he struggled and often prayed for a successor of ability, a request that was answered in Spurgeon more fully than he could have imagined.

Similarly Solomon Stoddard ministered in Northampton, New England, for 60 years. He was followed by Jonathan Edwards his grandson who was responsible for the pastorate until he was ejected 23 years later. It was an unrectified error in Stoddard's doctrine which caused the trouble. Stoddard not merely allowed, but encouraged, 'natural man' to the communion table. That error surfaced later in a fatal way for his grandson. When Edwards endeavoured to implement reformation he was rejected.

That there can be long and rich preaching ministries in one place is further illustrated by the Puritan William Gouge (d 1653) who ministered at Blackfriars, London for 44 years, a ministry which was mighty to the conversion of many souls. While labouring in one particular geographic sphere, men like Thomas Manton (1620-1677), William Gouge and many other Puritan preachers committed their expositions to the discipline of writing. Manton wrote his commentaries on James and Jude in his early twenties. Edwards was a prolific writer as was Thomas Boston (1676-1731). Boston laboured for 23 years in the village of



Ettrick in Scotland. The quality of his sermonic material is illustrated by the fact that his works have just been republished in America.

Long pastorates are not confined to the distant ages of past times. We can think of some in our own times, the most celebrated being that of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, thirty years minister of Westminster Chapel, a ministry sustained by following the Puritan method of systematic exposition. His way was different to Spurgeon's who followed the Puritans in doctrine but not in the systematic expository method. But lesser known men of other Christian fraternities could be cited. For instance here in Sussex a pastor by the name of Stanley Delves (1897-1978) ministered in the village of Crowborough for 54 years. His life story has been written by Peter M. Rowell.<sup>3</sup> This biography is edifying and enjoyable. However there is a condition or proviso. The reader must allow for the fact that Stanley Delves associated with, and ministered among, the Strict and Particular Baptists (Gospel Standard) in England.

In some ways the Primitive Baptists of America would be a counterpart. This denomination stands apart from other evangelicals, although some of their ministers will occasionally fraternise with trustworthy Reformed men of other groupings. The stress among the Gospel Standards is on experimental preaching. Alas for the most part it falls lamentably short of the expository, homiletical, and hermeneutical standards which we deem essential if God's Word is to be opened up in a manner worthy of the One who inspired it. Stanley Delves was in the opinion of many by far the best preacher in the denomination in which he ministered. The reason was because he laboured in the Word, preached the Word expositively, and applied that Word. His style was ponderous. He often took too long to do it. But the fact

is he did it. And that alone made him a prince among his people. That too is the key to his long pastorate.

I believe that if we investigate the background to the few examples that have been described we will discover that this single factor; expository, lively, systematic, applied preaching is the main explanation. In Scripture we have a fountain of life which need never dry up. Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel spent their lives ministering to one flock. They were in process of receiving what we sometimes call the inscripturated Word. Our great privilege is to open up the now complete revelation. That Word alone is infallible. Of its fullness and wealth there is no end.

It is important that we reckon with the considerable sociological phenomenon of migration. A large proportion of Western society is subject to moving home three, four, five or more times in a lifetime because of employment factors. This means that average congregations are subject to more change than was the case with former generations.

Nevertheless while this form of change has to be reckoned with, the pastor in one place for a long time still has *himself* to reckon with, plus a fair proportion of those who do not move. No preacher worth his salt is happy with a repetitive ministry. His concern is advance and improvement. He should experience greater ability, advancement in spiritual maturity and increasing enrichment of his materials throughout his life. The dimming of his intellectual faculties by reason of old age or ill-health could hamper this improvement, but a true minister will strive always for all round improvement. At the same time he will labour to make amends for the fact that the sameness of his personality and style can be a hindrance to some. Again the variety of Scripture and its fullness is the source of

the preachers strength as he deals with these problems. His long period of service does in one way enable him to ensure that undue repetition of themes and imbalances of doctrine are avoided.

Members of well-grounded churches who do move, often find themselves in the awful quandary of spiritual starvation. Then, to their chagrin, they discover that a reliable ministry is the most valuable asset in this world, and the only satisfactory means by which full preparation can be made for eternity.

The question of an accumulation of spiritual opposition within the church (and from without) can precipitate the question whether it would not be better for someone else to come and untangle knotty relationships. But, as in a family life, problems are solved by patiently living through them, not by divorce or separation. So in spiritual families a new leader usually takes a year or two to familiarise himself with a situation before he can give adequate leadership in difficult situations. And then there is no guarantee that he will be any better equipped than the previous leader to unscrew inscrutable pastoral tensions. Perhaps Richard Baxter's advice is timely:

We must carry on our work with patience. We must bear with many abuses and injuries from those to whom we seek to do good. When we have studied for them, and prayed for them, and exhorted them, and beseeched them with all earnestness and condescension, and given them what we are able, and tended them as if they had been our children, we must *look* that many of them will requite us with scorn and hatred and contempt, and account us their enemies, because we 'tell them the truth'. Now, we must endure all this patiently, and we must unweariedly hold on in doing good, . . . He is unworthy to be a physician, who will

be driven away from a phrenetic patient by foul words (*The Reformed Pastor*, p. 119).

In our consideration of this subject we ought not to forget the sovereignty of God. Indeed we should stress not only the sovereign right of the head of the Church to transplant men, but his sovereign wisdom in doing so. Jesus Christ gives gifts to his Church and it is his sovereign prerogative to employ these exactly as he sees fit. That can well explain why he sometimes moves a man who is in full flight from one area to another. Not all moves are by divine counsel. Remember Jonah! The complexity of discerning the will of God is too great a subject for digression to be made here.

The rightness of persevering in one place has been stressed. In concluding it is important to be observed that a minority of men who possess unique evangelising and pioneering ability are called to itinerate. The like of Paul, Barnabas and Silas must be moving. Whitefield was called to light the fires of revival in one place after another. Others, like William Burns, were prepared in pastorates and then moved to be burning and bright lights in dark places teeming with lost souls.

E.H.

<sup>1</sup>This contribution was written with the advantage of having read the previous expositions. The quotation from Baxter was prompted by Dennis Clark.

<sup>2</sup>For an 80 page account of the life of Daniel Rowlands see special issue of *Banner of Truth* magazine, Numbers 215, 216.

<sup>3</sup>Obtainable from Zoar Publications, 44, Queens Drive, Ossett, W. Yorks WF5 0ND.



# Polycarp of Smyrna c69-155 A.D.

*Gwynne Ll. Williams*

Many Christians seem to have a huge gap in their knowledge of Church History. They know about the History of the New Testament and they understand the story of the Reformation and subsequent developments. All too often however there is a black hole between the death of the last Apostle and the hammering of 95 theses on a certain Church door. This is a sad omission for many reasons, not least of which is the spiritual stature of many who lived in these centuries. There were few who excelled Polycarp of Smyrna, a giant of the second century Church whose character and achievement is indicated by his name, which literally means, 'Bear much fruit'.

The exact date of his birth is unknown, but the evidence which we have suggests that Polycarp was born sometime around 69 A.D. He never seems to have lived anywhere other than Smyrna and was probably born there. This was an important port and trading centre and has survived to this day. Polycarp was apparently converted at an early age and was a long standing member of the Church at Smyrna. This assembly almost certainly originated with the Apostle Paul's mission in that area, recorded in Acts 19:10. Sometime before 115 A.D. Polycarp became Bishop of Smyrna and held the office for almost fifty years. It is important to remember that the term 'Bishop' is used in its New Testament sense, identical in meaning to 'elder' or 'presbyter'. Even small towns or cities boasted more than one Bishop, who were usually part time officers of the Church. Polycarp seems to have earned his living as a farmer or farm owner.

Throughout his long life Polycarp never tired of speaking about the time which he spent under the ministry of the Apostle John. He had contact with some of the other Apostles, but it was John that he knew and loved best of all. Many writers have asserted that Polycarp's gracious humility derived from this close association with John.

As a church leader, Polycarp lived in a difficult and dangerous age. Paganism was on the rampage, each separate group sought to outdo its rivals in the depth of its depravity. The cults encouraged men to abandon all restraint and pursue their own pleasure at any cost. Smyrna was also the centre in Asia of the all powerful state cult, which demanded the allegiance to all. Smyrna was also the home of a large Jewish community. They aligned themselves with the pagans in their bitter hostility to the Christians. The enmity of the Jews earned them the description 'Synagogue of Satan' in Revelation 2:8. These were very serious external problems, but the church also faced internal difficulty. Gnosticism was growing in influence and was stifling the life of the Church. They stressed the importance of acquiring secret knowledge if one was to be saved. This was obviously an attack on the finished

work of Christ. Doceticism was another threat. The docetic error was belief that Christ was a pure spirit and only appeared to be human. This teaching effectively did away with the incarnation and with the atonement.

In the sole surviving epistle of Polycarp, he warned of the dangers of these heresies. He was gentle and caring in his admonition, but was very firm at the same time. Two anecdotes show his uncompromising attitude towards heretics. On one occasion he described the heretic Marcion as 'The first born of Satan' to his face. Then one day when he was in the public baths at the same time as another heretic, Polycarp advised his companions to escape before the place was struck by the thunderbolt which the heretic so richly deserved!

In the letter mentioned above, Polycarp also gave advice to the Philippians about how to deal with an elder, who along with his wife was in some financial trouble. His comments again show a mixture of graciousness and a recognition of the seriousness of sin. His advice was that the couple should be disciplined strictly, but added that they should be forgiven if they truly repented of their sin.

The record of Polycarp's visit to the church at Rome is very interesting. He went there to discuss the date of Easter with Bishop Anicetus. They did not reach an agreement but parted on the best of terms. Incidentally the two men met on equal terms, there is no hint at all of any claim that the Roman see was superior. Polycarp chaired a communion service and his ministry at Rome was greatly blessed by all account. He was also respected and loved throughout his native Asia.

Polycarp made it clear in his epistle however that despite the universal respect which he enjoyed, he made no claim to sharing the Apostolic office. He quotes from the Gospel and the letters of Peter, Paul and John, making it clear that he regarded them as Scripture. He had no literary pretensions. The style of his writing was open and simple, suggesting a gentle author. Apparently he was not a profound scholar but had the gift of adhering faithfully to that which he knew was true.

Polycarp passed on much of his wisdom to Irenaeus, who for all his faults did produce a weighty case against the Gnostics. When he was older, Irenaeus spoke nostalgically of those old days when he heard Polycarp speak of the things of God.

Sadly, Polycarp was not allowed to die in peace, rather he had to face the death of a martyr. The record of his death is the earliest non-canonical story of a Christian martyrdom. The document is a simple and direct piece of work with little floweriness.

There occurred an outbreak of severe persecution for the Christians in Smyrna and Polycarp was eventually persuaded to retire to his farm in the country where he spent much time in prayer. Eventually the authorities



forced a servant under severe torture to reveal Polycarp's hiding place. A large armed force went with the informant to capture the old man who was found in his bed. When they arrived, Polycarp got up and spoke with them. Food and drink was dispensed to his captors who in turn allowed him to spend two hours in prayer. Doubtless his serenity and total lack of hostility must have impressed many of those hardened men.

When Polycarp arrived in Smyrna, two leading citizens sought to persuade him not to be so dogmatic. Why should he choose death rather than admit the lordship of the Emperor? Polycarp refused to yield to either this gentle persuasion or the more violent threats which were employed. In the end he was thrown out of the carriage in which these discussions had taken place, with such violence that the poor man badly barked his shins.

Absolute chaos broke out in the arena when the mob realised that it was Polycarp who stood before the Governor. That official asked him to denounce the Christians by proclaiming 'down with the infidels!' The response was typical, Polycarp turned to face the ugly mob, pointed towards them and shouted 'down with the infidels!'

The governor continued in his efforts at persuading him to take the name of Christ in vain. The reply was typical of Polycarp and is as heartwarming today as it ever was; 'Eighty and six years have I served Him and he has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?'

Courage is a tremendous attribute. This Polycarp did not lack! He told the Governor that to change from good to bad was out of the question, but to turn from bad to good was commendable. When he was threatened with death by the fire, he retorted that the only flames to fear were those of Hell itself.

The Governor realised that it was futile to dissuade Polycarp and ordered his death. Wood was quickly gathered for this purpose, the Jews being especially enthusiastic in this task. Polycarp was tied rather than nailed to the stake and the fire was lit. Then someone stabbed the godly old man doubtless to shorten his agony and so came to an end the earthly life of a true man of God. His bones were eventually acquired by the Christians and were buried in a secret place.

Polycarp is one of the great forgotten heroes of the Christian Church. His faithfulness to God and his perseverance under the most arduous of trials are an example to every Christian. Here indeed is an ordinary, sinful man made extraordinary by the grace of our God. We may face similar ordeals in the future. False Christianity may increase and abound. Many who live worldly and careless lives may profess at the same time to be believers. This secular age may grow much more impatient with the godly who may suffer rejection and contempt more fierce than in former years. We need then to learn from examples like Polycarp that we must be faithful irrespective of the consequences.



# What are we to think of the Free Masons?

*by David Jones, minister of Grove Chapel, Camberwell, London*

‘Cut my throat and hope to die!’

Did you ever hear that expression or use it when you were a child? It comes from the initiation ceremony of an Apprentice Free-Mason and forms part of the blood-curdling oath, which the candidate takes, never to divulge any of the secrets of Free-Masonry on pain of ‘having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the roots, etc.’.

Or perhaps recently you have bought a packet of that ‘square deal’ washing powder advertised on the T.V. Maybe you regard yourself as being a man who is ‘on the level’. This is all Free-Masonry terminology which has found its way into our everyday speech.

Who are the Free-Masons? There are an estimated six million in the world (about one million in Britain) and although much of the mystique seems to be evaporating from Free-Masonry, many still regard ‘the Brotherhood’ as the largest secret society in the world. Up to twenty years ago, under the 1799 act, British Free-Masons had to register their lodges and the names of every member with the local J.P. as technically members of a secret society.

Where did it all come from? Apparently it all began in the Middle Ages with a guild of stone masons who specialised in building churches, cathedrals and other religious buildings. These men, many of whom were single and had no family ties, advertised themselves as being ‘Free’ to travel, anywhere in Europe, Africa and even the Far East. On site, they lived in small huts around a larger hut called the Lodge, where they would gather in the evenings for social purposes.

Later they opened their lodge to other kinds of masons, and later still to other tradesmen, who were referred to as ‘Accepted Masons’.

Over the years this developed into quite an organisation and, probably, in order to deal with gatecrashers, they would put a guard on the door of the Lodge and require a secret password and handshake from their members. This developed in time into a full-blooded initiation ritual and the whole thing has grown from that into what exists today.

In some countries (as we have seen recently in Italy) it has taken a decidedly sinister turn in its development, with political overtones, though in Britain it seems to be little more than a harmless, upper middle class friendly society.

However, recently I have been led to question whether the Masons are as harmless as they believe themselves to be. A few months ago, a friend of mine (a Presbyterian minister) was dismissed from his pastorate and turned out of his home with just six weeks’ notice. One of the reasons given for this scandalous action was that he was ‘intolerant of unbiblical teaching and in particular Free-Masonry’. Whether or not Free-Masonry had a hand in this is an open question. However it must be said the denomination in question did not deal with this case ‘on the level’. All the normal rules of procedure were broken and even the principles of natural justice were disregarded in the attempt to remove this man of God from what has been described as ‘a Free-Mason church’.

Surely a case like this must raise for us some very serious suspicions and objections to Free-Masonry:



### 1. *Secrecy*

It is interesting that although there are Anglican, Methodist and Baptist ministers' Lodges, there are no Roman Catholics among the Free-Masons. Why? — because Free-Masonry covers a section of a man's life with a cloak of secrecy from which even the priest in the confessional is shut out. Is such secrecy healthy for our society? — especially when you consider that Free-Masons rule in Banking, Medicine, the Army, the Police, the Judiciary, the Civil Service, Parliament and among the clerics of all denominations. Are there not great dangers when so many of our so-called 'top people' belong to a secret society, bound together by solemn oaths to look after one another's best interests?

### 2. *Syncretism*

Our main objection however must be to the religious flavour of Free-Masonry. Masons claim that Free-Masonry is not a religion, it is religion. It is, in fact, a hotchpotch of all religions as this quotation shows. (*The Entered Apprentice's Handbook*, page 1, J. S. M. Ward).

Bacchus died, and rose again on the  
golden Asian plain!

Osiris rose from out the grave, and  
thereby mankind did save.

Adonis likewise shed his blood by  
the yellow Syrian flood;

Zoroaster brought to birth Mithra  
from his cave of earth,

And today in Christian lands we  
with them can join hands.

One of the most closely guarded secrets of Free-Masonry is the name of God, only revealed to the candidate who has reached 'the third degree'. The god of Free-Masonry turns out to be a composite deity made up of the names Jehovah, Baal and On (or Osiris), J.B.O. for short. Such blasphemy is surely abhorrent to any true believer!

### 3. *Sin*

Indeed, surely it is necessary to say that any sort of involvement with Free-Masonry is in every sense sinful. Take any definition of sin that you find in the Bible:

(i) Transgression of the law — (1 John 3:4) — 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me,' 'thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain' — to swear such distasteful and ridiculous oaths on an open Bible in the name of God, whether the oaths are taken seriously or not, is to transgress God's law.

(ii) It is unrighteousness (1 John 5:17) — God's word lays down principles of right and wrong behaviour. Is it 'right' for a husband to have secrets from his wife? Is the sort of partiality encouraged by Free-masons 'right'? Are the undignified embarrassing ceremonies 'right'?

(iii) *Doubtful* (Rom. 14:23, 1 Cor. 8:12) Because many do not take the oaths seriously and would not abuse these 'privileges' as Free-Masons that does not make it any the less sinful. 'What is not of faith is sin.' Sin includes the 'doubtful' and the 'harmless'.

The Biblical attitude to Free-Masonry is clearly summed up negatively and positively in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. How much better to be 'sons and daughters of the living God', than 'apprentices to the Great Architect in the sky'. How much better to belong to 'the people of God', than to some narrow, class conscious, secret society. In Christ there is no 'male or female', 'rich or poor', 'bond or free'. In Christ there is real freedom. 'If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed' (John 8:36).

In concluding this article let me suggest some practical lessons which, perhaps, we need to learn from Free-Masonry.

Obviously Free-Masonry is attractive to men. It is a society for men. Why is it that men are not attracted into the Church? To what extent have we contributed to the popular image of Christianity that it is for 'women and children only'? Do we make our people feel like children when we talk down to them from our pulpits? Is our preaching producing manly men and feminine women? — it should! And what about our fellowship with one another? Surely we of all people should be able to demonstrate what 'love of the brethren' is all about? Are we meeting one another's deepest needs? Do we know one another spiritually? And what about good works? Of course, we would reject the notion

of salvation by works which seems to be the corner-stone of Free-Mason religion. If you live 'on the level', 'on the square' God will accept you. We reject that and we say that 'we are saved by grace'. Yes but 'with good works' cf. Ephesians 2:8-10. Do we give good works their proper place in the Christian life? Do we do good works at all? Remember James's definition of true religion (James 1:27), it has to do with widows and orphans.

We have a more excellent 'Way' than that of Free-Masonry, but are we following the Lamb of God and are we making *him* known to those around us as God's open secret? ☐ ☐ ☐

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## The Free Masons

David Jones, contributor of this article on the Free Masons, has been the Pastor of Grove Chapel, Camberwell since 1981. This inner London Church has a long and fascinating history going back to 1819 when it was under the leadership of Joseph Irons. (See cover picture depicting Joseph Irons preaching in Grove Chapel, Banner of Truth No. 62 Nov. 1968). Over the years the church was retrieved from both death watch beetle in its beams, and hyper-calvinism in its doctrinal joints. A. A. Campbell was minister from 1955-1960 and Iain Murray (now minister at St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Sydney) from 1961-1970, John de Witt was co-pastor from 1967-1969, and Hywel Jones was pastor 1970-1980. The church is tied to the Westminster Confession of Faith. David Jones reports that the members have a healthy God-given concern for evangelism.



# The testimony of baptism

*An introduction by the editor to the articles which follow.*

Dr. J. Douma who is a tutor at Kampen Seminary in Holland wrote a 36 page treatise with the title 'Infant Baptism and Regeneration'.<sup>1</sup> In his exposition he describes the church at Cuckfield in a very generous way but goes on to explain our difference over infant baptism. On all major doctrines we are in unity but this matter seems to disturb our Dutch brethren. For our part we are reconciled to Presbyterian brethren. We do not wish them to have division over this matter. Our fellowship at Cuckfield with them is rich and mutually advantageous. We desire that it should stay that way. Subsequent to Dr. Douma's treatise we published several articles on the covenant and baptism designed to show that we believe in the covenant of grace with as much consistency as our brethren in Holland. The only substantial difference is that we stress *both* the unity and diversity of the covenants (see RT 54). We believe that it is their unwillingness to face up to the implications of the radical difference between the Old and the New Covenant (Heb. 8:7ff.) that prevents them from accepting our position.

Dr. Douma's treatise exposed our need to be more detailed and specific on some issues which will be referred to in the next paragraph. David Kingdon's book *Children of Abraham* could hardly be more clear. Especially is he lucid in his final chapter, 'Children and regeneration'. There are many books or booklets on infant baptism currently in print (Berkouwer, Bannerman, Uprichard, Rayburn, Adams, Charles Hodge, G. W. Bromiley, Stein, F. N. Lee and Schaeffer are just a few that come to mind). As Baptists we tend to rely on the self-evident nature of the New Testament. Baptists are very poorly equipped as far as expository literature on this subject is concerned.

The editor has completed 18 chapters on this subject which is now with the printer. Four of these have appeared in *Reformation Today* (see RT 53, 54, 55,

57). The following extracts will show that an attempt has been made to produce a work which is essentially practical and readable for the average church member. The chapters are as follows: 1. The relevance of baptism for believers, 2. Why a testimony? 3. The testimony of immersion to baptism, 4. The distinct testimony of sprinkling, 5. The distinct testimony of washing, 6. The testimony of John's baptism, 7. The testimony of Jesus in his baptism, 8. The testimony of the believer in his baptism, 9. The testimony of the local church in baptism, 10. The ongoing testimony of baptism, 11. The testimony of baptism to the new covenant, 12. The testimony of baptism for procrastinators or sick people, 14. The testimony of believers' baptism for our children, 15. What is covenant theology? 16. Various views of non-Baptists considered, 17. Jesus and the little children, 18. Our unity with non-Baptists.

Dr. Douma attempts to move the whole debate from believers to infants. As David Kingdon shows in the last chapter of his book it is not possible to settle the issue of baptism there. The theme or central subject of the New Testament is justification by faith, not infant regeneration. We do not go into all the world to regenerate infants. We go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. Justification is for believers. So is baptism.

The Scriptural responsibility of maintaining unity is emphasised in chapter 18. Seven compelling reasons for unity with Reformed non-Baptists are outlined. The basic areas of doctrine and practice on which we agree is explained. There is copious reason that we should be mature enough to differ with a generous and mutually appreciative spirit. Have you ever found the importance of unity stressed in a treatise on baptism?

<sup>1</sup>Copies are available from the Christian Bookshop, 15 College Square East, Belfast, BT1 6DD, N. Ireland.

# The recognition of a credible testimony

**N**OBODY could be left in any doubt that the gift of the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. The result of this was that every person who believed and was baptised could be assured of the gift of the person and work of the Spirit (Acts 2:38,39). Every person baptised by the Spirit was baptised into the body of Christ. The baptism in water which followed repentance and faith was a symbol of what had already happened to the convert: he had been baptised into Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:13).

The New Testament knows of no exceptions to this rule either in its examples or in its language.

A difficulty could be helpfully removed from the minds of some by explaining that it is not necessary that every believer receive visible and audible proof that they are the recipients of the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was necessary at the beginning as a decisive confirmation of the inauguration of the new and final age — the Messianic era. But even then we must recognise that the extraordinary and supernatural phenomenon is reported on only four occasions. Nothing is said in all the other cases. The 120 experienced tongues of flame, but not the 3,000 that were subsequently converted.

To circumvent doubt or division, audible and visible proof was given. This was to prove the Gentiles were included in the same body by the same gift of the person and work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8,9). This gift was confirmed by the laying on of the apostles' hands (something unique to them) in Samaria (Acts 8), Caesarea (Acts 9-11), and later at Ephesus (Acts 19). Subsequent to the establishment of the Christian Church it was no longer necessary to furnish visible (tongues of fire) and audible (tongues and prophecies) proof that we have the gift of the Spirit. The new birth is our proof. By the Holy Spirit we have been baptised into Christ (Gal. 3:25-27; 1 Cor. 12:12ff.), have been anointed (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 Jn. 2:27) and sealed (Eph. 1:30, 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22). We have holiness of life given to us by the Spirit as well as fruitfulness, comfort, knowledge, the ability to pray in the Spirit, assurance, and guidance. These are proofs that we have received the Holy Spirit. To receive Christ is to receive the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). Nowhere are we commanded, still less required, to produce special supernatural signs that we have the Holy Spirit. Our proof that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit is that we constantly bear his fruit (Gal. 5:22ff.), enjoy his seal of assurance (2 Cor. 1:22), pray by his help (Rom. 8:26), have been taught by him (1 Jn. 2:27), receive his guidance and comfort (Jn. 14:26; Rom. 8:14), are being transformed by him (2 Cor. 3:18), and above all, have been born again through him, and by him have been made into new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). We know we live



in the Father and in the Son by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (1 Jn. 3:24). A person may do many wonderful things in the name of Christ; yet if he does not have the fruit of the Spirit he will be cast into hell as Jesus said:

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Explanation concerning a credible profession of faith is appropriate because of those who are suspicious of this subject. They object to it on the grounds that it is too subjective, that is, that we have no right to pry into individual religious experiences. Yet I maintain that it is not a thing indecent, improper or unkind to set about the work of recognising a credible profession of faith. If we are unable to recognise our fellow believers, who are our own spiritual brothers and sisters, then we are in a sad state indeed! Christians are required to recognise elders and deacons according to principles laid down in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. In a previous exposition we saw how the elders and the members combine in recognising new believers. Discernment of spiritual matters is never perfect or infallible, but that in no way removes the responsibility of discerning what is a credible profession and what may be deemed otherwise.

How do we go about this matter? A brief reminder of some of the New Testament epistles will help us both in self-examination and in reminding us of the main features of a Christian.

According to *Romans* a Christian is one who repents of sin and trusts only and wholly in the imputed righteousness of Christ for salvation. He is justified by faith and shows the fruits of that justification (5:1-9). He is engaged in the battle to mortify all sin (chapters 6, 7). He evidences that he has the Holy Spirit indwelling his life and rejoices in the great doctrines of sovereign grace (chapter 8). He submits to the practical teachings about the church and submission to civil authorities (chapters 12, 13). He is ready to live in such a way as not to offend weaker brethren (chapters 14, 15).

According to *James* faith must be accomplished by good works, otherwise it is false and hypocritical (2:18). A true Christian is one who is not 'in it' just for himself. He must show willingness to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction (1:27). Moreover, he must show that at least he has begun in the difficult task of taming the tongue (chapter 3).

A scholar by the name of Bornemann has advanced the thesis that 1 Peter was originally a baptismal sermon in loose association with Psalm 34.<sup>1</sup> A Christian according to Peter's first letter, is one who has been saved by baptism (3:21). This baptism, of course, represents a baptism into Christ by

which the believer has been born again, and by which new life he has joy inexpressible, even in trials, because he knows he is receiving the goal of his faith even the salvation of his soul (1:1-9). He is concerned to purify himself through obedience to the truth (1:22). He submits himself to rulers and masters because he has embraced the Shepherd of his soul (2:13-25). Marriage is held in honour by the believer, and no person's profession of faith can be acceptable who lives in immorality or sin (3:1-7). The elements of submission and obedience must be present in a person who professes faith. There must be a teachable spirit. No lawless person can be accepted no matter how eloquent he or she may be with the mouth (5:1-6).

According to the *Hebrews* epistle the Christian is one who holds to Christ in faith and obedience — that is, to Christ as king, prophet and priest. He proves this faith by his willingness to meet with Christians and by taking an interest in them (10:25). He shows some (even if it is a little) endurance in bearing hardship, because discipline is an essential part of the Christian life. Without discipline we cannot be true sons and daughters (12:4-13). A further mark of a credible profession is submission to the oversight of the local church (13:17).

According to *Ephesians* a Christian is one who has an appreciation of his spiritual blessings through union with Christ (1:3-14). He realises that it is by grace that God has made him alive in Christ (2:1-10). A professor of the Faith will, if he is genuine, show respect for the unity of the church and for her teachings (4:1-16). He will be concerned to live a life of practical holiness which includes the arena of the home — wives, husbands, children and parents (4:17 – 6:4). Concerning those who apply for baptism, discreet enquiry should be made as to their behaviour at home (5:22 – 6:4) and at work (6:5-9). This may not be possible, but no Christian testimony can be accepted as credible if the person in question lives inconsistently at home or at work. Certainly it is not perfection that is being advocated. But we are concerned about credibility. We must insist that the profession of faith must be credible before both Christians and non-Christians.

So far we have seen that the elements of doctrine, experience and practice must be present if faith is to be credible. We have seen that the emphasis on practical holy living is very strong and is stronger by far than that on feelings or emotions that can so often prove to be unreliable or temporary.

In the *first epistle of John* the apostle shows that the experimental factor is at the heart of Christianity. 'We love because he first loved us' (1 Jn. 4:19). Love for God is first. But it is easy to say, 'I love God.' How is that love proved? God has proved his love to us by action. He has given his Son. We prove our love to God by loving one another. It is not difficult to see why so much stress is laid on practice when we observe how deficient we are in love for others. John gives three tests for the testing of a Christian profession: the



*Psalm 1*

*Happy the man whose life displays  
No mark of scornful sinners' ways.  
The law of God is his delight:  
On this he ponders day and night.*

*Like trees when planted by a stream,  
Forever fruitful, always green,  
The lives of those who daily feast  
On God's rich word are daily blessed.*

*But unbelievers are not so:  
Like chaff before the wind they blow.  
And therefore on the judgment day  
Shall wicked men be swept away.*

*Nor shall the sinner stand beside  
The number of the justified;  
The LORD protects the just man's path,  
But godless ways shall end in wrath.*

— D. G. Preston

Tune: Warrington

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doctrinal, the social and the moral. A true Christian will believe correctly (4:2), he will live correctly (2:29) and he will regard his brothers rightly, that is with love (3:14). I have given only three references, but these tests recur in John's epistles over and over again.

This overview of our subject has been brief and selective. Many other tests or signs of a credible profession could be given, such as 'turning from idols to serve the living and true God' (1 Thess. 1:9) and learning to control the body (1 Thess. 4:4), but enough has been presented to substantiate the claim that recognition of what a Christian is is the business and coinage of the New Testament.

A right appreciation of the grace of God will always preserve us from wrong attitudes in making judgments. We must never be censorious or proud (Matt. 7:1-5), yet at the same time the Christian is commanded by Christ to exercise his powers of discernment (Matt. 5:6 and 15-20; 1 Cor. 2:15).

Reader, from these pages you have seen what a Christian is. Are you one? If not, why not? Why do you delay? What prevents you from coming now to Christ? Do you believe? Have you turned from sin? Perhaps you reply affirmatively, yes! Well, that is excellent! May I then ask you whether you have been baptised as a believer? No? Why not? What hinders you? You believe, you repent and yet have not been baptised? What does Peter say? 'Repent and be baptised every one of you.' Surely that includes you! ☐ ☐ ☐

<sup>1</sup>*Baptism in the New Testament*, G. R. Beasley-Murray, p. 252.

# The testimony of believer's baptism for our children

THE unity and diversity of the covenants is a subject large and profound. God's covenant was with his people whom he rescued out of Egypt. In the Old Testament it was necessary that there be a strong emphasis on the uniqueness of Israel as a nation. Every child was born with the privilege of covenant status. Within the nation into which they were born personal salvation was experienced by repentance and faith in the same way as in the New Testament. The difference was that their sacrifices represented the sacrifice to come. They believed on God's future provision for salvation; we believe in the accomplished reality.

The emphasis on a nation held together by birth and by blood-tie no longer exists. The Old Covenant has passed away completely (Heb. 8:13). With the coming of Christ the middle wall of partition has been broken down and now all believers, Jews and Gentiles, are one in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:11-22). The body of Christ forms a new holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9). The children of believers no longer have their attention directed to the privileges of their physical birth. Rather they are taught that the way to the new birth is through hearing the Word (1 Pet. 1:22,23). The privileges of the Gospel are immeasurably superior to Old Testament privileges. The book of Hebrews fully demonstrates the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old. Christ is superior to Moses as a prophet and exceeds Aaron as priest. All the privileges of such a superior ministry are set before our children. Birth into a Christian family means birth into immense advantage and privilege. The privilege is the reality of Gospel nurture and teaching. The blessing lies not in the mark of an external sign but in the Gospel itself. The sign follows only when the reality has been appropriated. Our children are prayed for, protected and instructed in the home. There they see lived out day by day the life of the New Covenant. In addition they enjoy the prayers, teaching, preaching and nurture of the Christian church. Nowhere in the Bible are we told to encourage our children to trust in the fact of their birth privilege. On the contrary, personal faith and personal repentance are stressed. We are to take our children to Christ. We are always to set Christ before them in his all-sufficiency. We are to discourage all trust in self-merit. Moreover we are to stress that our faith and our parenthood cannot save them. Only Christ can save them. They are the victims of original sin in exactly the same way as are all other members of the human race. They are guilty of Adam's sin. They are destitute of that righteousness in which Adam was created. They were born at enmity to God with corrupt, unspiritual natures in an identical way to all others. They have by birth inherited natures which are wholly



inclined to evil and opposite to all spiritual good. In no way have they escaped the awful implications of the fall. This we teach them to recognise.

The only difference between them and children of unbelieving households is that they are surrounded by those means designed to rescue them from their plight.

Commended to them at all times by their parents and by the church is salvation by faith in Christ. This commendation is supported and illustrated by the holy and beautiful life of faith that flows out of justification. As we have seen, believers' baptism portrays this salvation and portrays the saving work of Christ in his death and resurrection. The ordinance spells out that union that believers have with their Lord. That is what our children are to look forward to. That is what they are to seek. We do not direct their attention back into history to a birth privilege. We ourselves are living epistles of the truth. We constantly point our children to our Redeemer. Yet they are not to trust in any birth privilege for salvation, only Christ. As we have repented of sin and continue to make sin our enemy so they are directed to do likewise.

Compared with those who are born into unbelieving homes our children have these privileges of nurture, prayers and example as well as the glorious privilege of preaching which God declares is his instrument of power to save.

We are unjustly accused of being individualistic in contrast to being body-minded or corporate minded. The baptism of infants, we are told, ensures the unity of the body and puts the emphasis on the corporate nature of the household and church.

In response to that charge we declare that we are very jealous for the unity of Christian households and for the oneness of the Christian church. It is because we are concerned for the unity of our households that we lay such tremendous emphasis on repentance and faith, for without that there can never be unity.

However well intended infant baptism may be, it rebounds on those who practise it and is the enemy of unity. Infant baptism is based on presumption. It is presumed that the infant is elect or it is presumed that the infant is regenerate, or will become regenerate, and thereby have faith. All such presumption is disastrous. The children grow up unbelieving and that unbelief divides the Christian home. When they have been given church membership prematurely, but do not savingly believe, that unbelief divides the church.

It cannot be denied that the tendency is for children of believing households to grow up to be well-behaved, respectable, restrained, nominal believers. They see the good, they benefit from the immense wisdom and strength of

Bible instruction, yet they show no signs of union with Christ. They are good listeners but have no prayer life. They possess no heart love for Christ. It is common in non-Baptist circles for such 'children of the covenant' to be included in church membership. All they have to do is attend catechism or confirmation classes, give correct answers and avoid anything offensive or scandalous.

But that is not the New Covenant procedure. The new covenant means that God's laws are written on the mind and heart. Faith which leads a person into union with Christ is essential. Faith we hold forth as crucial and essential. It can never be, and ought not to be presumed. Presumption is fatal to interests of souls and certainly fatal to the best interests of our children.

While we do everything in our power to maintain the spiritual unity of our families by directing our children into the way of salvation, we note our Lord's warning that his Gospel does divide. He did not come 'to bring peace, but a sword'. 'A man's enemies will be the members of his own household' (Matt. 10:34,36). Division comes when some believe and some do not. Division comes if some of the children do not embrace Christ. There is no absolute guarantee that all members of every family will believe. Faith is the only ground for the new covenant seal of baptism. Any departure from that is a violation of justification by faith alone. What has been said here accords well with Acts 2:39. The promise is indeed to our children. It is not a certainty but a promise. That promise is realised only in the call of God. Note that Peter goes on to declare that it is, 'for all whom the Lord our God will call'.

Likewise 1 Corinthians 7:14 accords fully with what has been said: 'For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.' The root meaning of holy, or sanctify, is, to be set apart. The word 'holy' is also used in the sense of definitive sanctification (1 Cor. 6:11), and progressive sanctification (1 Thess. 4:7). That the term is not being used in either of these ways, definitive or progressive, is clear in this case. Paul is specific about it: the partner is *unbelieving*. The partner is not sanctified by spiritual union with Christ (definitive sanctification) or by indwelling, progressive holiness. In what sense then is the unbelieving partner sanctified? What exactly is meant? It is the root meaning of the word 'holy', namely *set apart* that provides the answer. The unbelieving partner is set apart as far as privilege is concerned. The apartness is an apartness to privilege, a privilege which is not enjoyed where there is no believing partner. It is likewise with the children in homes of one believing parent. The advantage of having one believing parent gives them a distinction of privilege not afforded to those in unbelieving homes. But whether that privilege is to be effective has yet to be seen. That is precisely what Paul says when he declares, who knows whether the unbelieving



partner may yet be saved? When that unbelieving partner does believe then baptism can follow. The same applies to the children.

At this point it will be helpful to observe that what is practised as infant baptism is something entirely different from New Testament baptism. The difference can be noted as follows:

Baptism of infants	Believers' baptism
1. Is imposed on the infants without their consent	Is voluntarily entered into
2. Is received unconsciously, the infant having no idea of what is happening	Is entered into with a full appreciation of the significance and meaning of the ordinance
3. Is received with complete passivity (although in some cases a strong vocal protest is made!)	Is entered into actively as the candidate steps down to be buried and entrusts himself to be raised up again
4. Is administered on the presumption that the infant will one day exercise repentance and faith	Is entered into on the New Testament practice and procedure of recognising a living, credible profession of repentance and faith
5. Is proceeded with on the basis of the faith of the parents, that is that one or both believe	Is proceeded with on the basis of the New Covenant, that is, the candidate knows the Lord; he has a living faith of his own
6. Is proceeded with on the basis of covenant status and descent, that is, physical birth	Is proceeded with on the basis of the new covenant of spiritual birth into the family of Christ
7. Confers upon the infant the presumption that he is a Christian so long as he is consistent	Confirms the fact that the candidate has now come from darkness to light, from Satan to God, from worldliness to holiness
8. Confers upon the infant the presumption of right to church membership	Symbolises the ingrafting of the new believer not only into Christ, but also into his body, the Church, of which he now becomes a member
9. Confers upon the infant the presumption of right to the Lord's Table	Introduces the believer to the Lord's Table for the first time, on the sole basis of the New Covenant, that is, he now knows the Lord
10. Introduces a syndrome of looking back to something which can never be recalled, or remembered, or felt, but only imagined	Establishes a conscious historical fact of entrance into Christ and his body, the Church, by faith, with all the new responsibilities now voluntarily undertaken, always to be remembered and referred to, as is the case with all the N.T. references

The contrast between the two practices should be obvious. The antithesis is apparent. Infant baptism is something entirely different from believers' baptism.

The baby boys of the Old Covenant had a physical mark put upon them. We are not required to do that. Our responsibility is to bring our children up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). That is a continual responsibility of about two decades' length of time.

Reference has already been made to the privileges of the means of grace conveyed by the light and example of the New Covenant which far outshine the privileges of the Old Covenant. As we have seen, our children are blessed with the innumerable advantages of a Christian home, godly parents, godly living, the fruit of the Spirit, Biblical instruction and prayers. The light, protection, counsel and loving care which unite in a believing household joined to a believing church constitute advantages and privileges which can never be equalled in any other place, family or environment.

A momentary sacramental act for an infant who can never recall the occasion is one thing. The constant, gracious influences of the Christian home and Christian church is another. The latter has Biblical warrant, the former has not.

John the Baptist counselled the Jews as follows: 'And do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our Father"' (Luke 3:8). In other words, we are taught not to depend or rely upon anything intrinsic in birth, or national status, or credit by way of parentage. To what then must we look? The answer is that we must rely completely on sovereign grace. In the Bible grace stands for the favour of salvation which proceeds from the love of God alone, without any consideration of human merit in any shape or form. The very essence of grace is that it comes to the undeserving. By sovereign is meant that God is free to bestow grace as he wills. He is not bound to save his enemies. He says, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy' (Rom. 9:15).

Of course, it is not easy to look to sovereign grace alone. By nature we desire to find some merit of our own, or see some merit in our children, because they are so close to us and spring from us.

Why, it may be asked, should we be shut up to sovereign grace, and not find reason for the salvation of our children in their privileged position by birth? The answer should be clear. It is that when God does bring about the conversion of our children, all the glory for that is attributed to him. All is to the praise of his glorious grace.

What advantage do our children have then over those who are born into unbelieving homes? Already we have seen the advantage to be superabun-



# The Aftermath at Westminster Chapel?

by Kingsley Coomber

Preaching in 1877 (vol. 23, p. 514) Spurgeon declared the truth that after decease it is impossible to return to rectify mistakes made in the ministry. He went on to say:

I sometimes think if I were in heaven I should almost wish to visit my work at the Tabernacle, to see whether it will abide the test of time and prosper when I am gone. Will you keep to the truth? Will you hold to the grand old doctrines of the gospel? Or will this church, like so many others, go astray from the simplicity of its faith, and set up gaudy services and false doctrine? Methinks I should turn over in my grave if such a thing could be. God forbid it! But there will be no coming back. . . . We cannot return to save the burning mass, nor to rebuild the ruin, but we shall, doubtless, see and know what comes of it.

Iain Murray in his *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (p. 209 ff.), shows how rapidly everything changed at the Tabernacle.

dant. Salvation is near to our children. It is right by them. In the case of those born into non-Christian homes the prospect is terrifying because everything militates against their coming to understand, trust in Christ, and believe in the Scriptures. Ignorance prevails. Indeed, it is worse than ignorance, because in most modern homes prejudice against the Bible prevails.

Christian parents can be encouraged to think upon the fact that the Lord who plans from eternity and orders all things well, has already caused our children to be born into the circle where grace is mediated. Included in the means of grace are the prayers of God's people. How marvellous is the privilege of being surrounded by loving prayers throughout one's upbringing! And who can estimate the advantage of knowing the Scriptures from childhood? As Paul reminded Timothy, 'how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 3:15).

In addition to all the advantages outlined so far, the children of believing households are witnesses of the actual testimony of believers' baptism. Our children are not excluded from hearing the testimony of new converts, sometimes those of their own age. They observe the transformation of life in such new believers.

Then all that is involved in conversion is portrayed in the actual ordinance. The involvement of the new believers in baptism and the joy of the local church are witnessed. The entrance of converts into the enrichments and pleasures of the New Covenant, joyful union with Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are likewise observed. The Holy Spirit sometimes uses the ordinance of believers' baptism, together with the witness wrapped up therein to convince the unconverted ones of the reality of faith, and of their own need to come to Christ in trustful obedience.

□ □ □

It is only about a year since the decease of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Yet in this short space of time events have taken place at Westminster Chapel through the leadership of the minister there, Dr. R. T. Kendall, and under the wholehearted auspices of the F.I.E.C. annual assembly, which could not have been imagined in the period 1939-1981, during which time the powerful influence of the doctor was being exercised.

Arthur Blessitt, platform artist, master gimmick maker, manipulator of assemblies, archdeacon of the frivolous and trite, man-centred in the extreme — the opposite of everything exemplified in Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, held sway on the first and third evening of the F.I.E.C. annual assembly. The front pews were removed beforehand to make room for those responding to the appeal. I will not attempt to outline all that took place as it was not edifying. To me it was a circus. The second evening John Blanchard preached. His ministry was excellent and in strong contrast to the rest. He made it plain that he did not agree with Blessitt's claims about revival. The proportion of two evenings of gimmickry to one of preaching represents in my estimation the way things are going in the F.I.E.C. I can see no leadership of calibre emerging. The majority have nothing to offer. The minority in opposition to the drift have little hope of turning the tide. To illustrate the current aftermath, Arthur Blessitt is now billed to appear at Melbourne Hall, Leicester, where Paul Bassett is the minister.

History has a way of repeating itself. The bookroom at Westminster Chapel used to be a place where you could be sure to procure materials of the front rank of expository effort and historic appraisal. I asked for a Banner of Truth magazine but was told that it was no longer stocked. The bookroom is now lined with glossy material. It is unrecognisable compared with its former service.

I began by quoting Spurgeon. Words he used in 1888 are as timely now as they were then. 'Jesus said, "Preach the Gospel to every creature". But men are getting tired of the divine plan; they are going to be saved by the priest, going to be saved by the music, going to be saved by theatricals, and nobody knows what! Well they may try these things as long as ever they like; but nothing can ever come of the whole thing but utter disappointment and confusion, God dishonoured, the gospel travestied, hypocrites manufactured by thousands and the church dragged down to the level of the world.'

Not much happens by thousands these days. However with the Pope coming that too may be seen. Apart from the 1000's I have seen the depressing results of Blessitt's gimmicks in London before. It is now due to happen again but this time on a wider scale. This debacle shows that ministers in the F.I.E.C. will need to look for leadership in other quarters. It is not the fine trimmings or more refined doctrines that we are talking about now. It is the gospel itself. The choice before us is straightforward, claptrap or the holy Gospel of Christ Jesus!

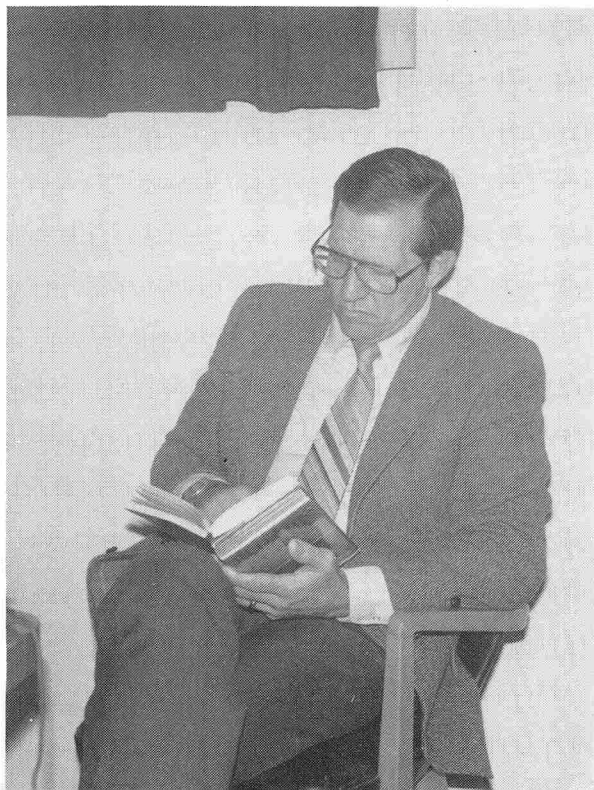






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Al Martin

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