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THE LORD IS *MY* SHEPHERD

A long time ago a native American boy lived with his mother in a little hut on an Indian reservation in the southwest. His father had died, and this meant the boy at a very young age had to take responsibility for the sheep.

One day, a missionary passed through the village and explained to the people how Jesus Christ, in love, had come to save sinners and now wanted to be their shepherd. The young boy listened to the missionary and grace moved his heart, so that he received the Lord as his very own Shepherd.

As the missionary was about to leave, he asked the boy if he could teach him a Bible verse. The boy said, "I don't think I shall be able to remember it." So the missionary gave him just five simple words from Scripture. "The Lord is my shepherd." But the missionary also taught him the way to remember it. He said, "Use the fingers of your right hand to help you remember: "The – Lord – is – my – Shepherd" and when you get to the fourth word, wrap your left hand around the fourth finger of your right hand. "The Lord is **MY** Shepherd."

Well, the boy remembered it – really remembered it – as the missionary would learn when he returned a year later. Revisiting that village, he stopped by the hut where the little shepherd boy lived with his mother. He knocked on the door and the mother answered. When the missionary asked for her son, she said, "Oh, you didn't hear?" Then she told him a very sad story. "Last winter", she said, "a sudden storm hit us while my boy was out on the hills with the sheep. He didn't make it back. It was three days before they found him. He was frozen to death."

The missionary couldn't muster any words except a quiet, "I'm so very sorry." Then the mother told him, "You know, when they found my boy and brushed the snow off his cold little body, they discovered something very unusual: his left hand was wrapped around the fourth finger of his right hand."

This missionary was quite overcome with emotion, understanding exactly what this meant. The little boy, having believed in the Lord Jesus, died trusting in

Him to bring him through death to the everlasting kingdom. His holding of the fourth finger was his last witness and testimony. “The Lord is **MY** Shepherd.”

When he recalled what had been said to the boy, he and the boy’s mother wept for joy, their hearts being filled with comfort and hope.

It is all too possible to know about the Lord Jesus, but you need, through grace, to receive Him and make Him your very own Saviour, Lord, and Shepherd.

Reportedly, Martin Luther once said, “The heart of religion lies in its personal pronouns.” How true this is! “The Lord is MY rock, and MY fortress, and MY deliverer; MY God, MY strength, in whom I will trust; MY buckler, and the horn of MY salvation, and MY high tower.” (Psalm 18:2)

Thomas Manton, the Puritan, said in one of his sermons: “God offereth pardon and life to you, and you must consent to accept it upon His terms; and that Christ may be yours, and you His, to the ends propounded in the gospel, you must choose Him, and depend upon Him as the only mediator, resolving to venture you souls, and all your hopes upon Him. You are not Christians without this.”

Blessed, happy and saved is the man who can say with full assurance: “My beloved in MINE, and I am his.” (Song of Solomon 2:16)

“The Lord is **MY** shepherd.”

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Our missionary weekend took place on 29 - 30 April, and we were pleased to welcome Rev. Timothy Burden as our speaker who represented the work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship. At the Saturday afternoon meeting, Pastor Burden spoke encouragingly of the many gospel opportunities in the Middle East through Internet access. In the providence of God, thousands of Muslims are being exposed to the truths of God’s Word through social media. MERF also helps to provide Biblical and theological training for potential leaders, as well as assisting with the publishing of books and magazines in

various languages of the Islamic world. Mr. Burden also led our worship services on the Lord's Day. The whole weekend was one of encouragement as well as a challenge to continue in prayer for the Muslim world.

From 5 - 7 May our Pastor was ministering at the Spring Conference at Gardenstown Free Presbyterian Church, Aberdeenshire. We were pleased, therefore, to welcome Rev. Jonathan Munday from Exeter Independent Evangelical Church on the Lord's Day 7 May who led us in both our worship services.

The Sunday School Anniversary was held on the Lord's Day afternoon of 14 May. The venue was Grove House, and it was led by our Elder Dale Roberts - the Sabbath School leader. Although numbers are currently low, the meeting was well supported by parents and friends of the children, who showed great enthusiasm in their psalm singing and reciting of scripture verses. The guest speaker very ably kept the children's attention as he spoke to them about "putting things back the way they should be" - (re-formation!). Referring to the place of God's Word in the nation, he used the illustrations of King Josiah in the Old Testament, and King Edward VI in the 16th century. Prizes were presented to the children by our Pastor, who then closed the meeting in prayer. Our prayer is that God will graciously add to our number, giving more children the opportunity to hear the truths in God's Word.

On Saturday afternoon, 20 May, a service was held at Emmanuel to give thanks to God for the provision of Grove House. A number of friends joined us for this meeting which was chaired by our Pastor. The visiting speaker was our good friend Rev. Maurice Roberts from Inverness, who gave a powerful address from 2 Timothy 4:2-4, his theme being "Preach the Word". Refreshments were served afterwards giving us the opportunity to fellowship with those who have been supporting us in prayer and giving over these past few years. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" - and our hearts are full of gratitude to Him.

On Thursday, 8 June, we were pleased to welcome Mr. Philip Bell from Creation Ministries International to a meeting held at Grove House. Mr. Bell's subject was "The Credibility of Genesis and Scientific Scrutiny". Proclaiming

creationism in our scientific age causes many to mock and scoff the Christian. Mr. Bell gave a very convincing and insightful lecture, emphasizing the 6-day creation (a few thousand years ago); the entrance of sin and the subsequent curse; the global flood; and the historicity of Babel. It was a well-attended meeting with a few visitors. During refreshments, we were able to browse through a large selection of books on this subject which were for sale.

In June, while Pastor and Jill were on holiday for 2 weeks in Wales, we were blessed with ministry on 11 June from Rev. Geoff Marshall, Pastor of Totton Evangelical Church; and from Rev. Robert Dale of Lincoln Evangelical Church on 18 June. Then, on 2 July, when Pastor was conducting the services at Chardsmead Baptist Church, Bridport, we welcomed to our pulpit Rev. Roy Mohon, from Stockton-on-Tees and, once again, the church spiritually benefitted from the preaching of God's Word. We are always indebted to these faithful men who willingly fill our pulpit in Pastor's absence.

An evangelistic barbecue was held at Grove House on 1 July. It was good to see a number of visitors present who listened well to the message which emphasized our sad state under the Law and the welcome news of Christ's salvation in the Gospel. We pray blessing on all who came that afternoon and heard God's precious Word. May it lead some to saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name." (Psalm 63:3-4)

THE FUTURE OF THE PASTORATE

It was over 46 years ago (13 February 1971) that I was formally inducted to be Pastor of our church. The years have quickly passed, as no doubt future years will pass; and this has led me prayerfully to consider what preparations should be made for the time to come.

Last year, at the Elders' Meeting of 12 July, and at the Deacons' Meeting of 18 October, I raised this matter with the other church officers, intimating to them

that, God enabling me, I would hope to continue in the pastorate for another 3 years or so, at which time I shall have concluded 50 years' service in this church. Then, I think, given my age, it would be wise to lay down my pastoral responsibilities.

Over the years, it has been repeatedly said in our meetings that, when the time draws near for retirement, the ideal would be for someone to be invited to work alongside me for a period of time, before, perhaps, taking on the full work of the ministry. With this in mind, when speaking to the officers, I mentioned the name of Simon Green, who had recently graduated from Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, in the U.S.A.

Simon comes from Wattisham, in Suffolk. I have known him for many years; and, in fact, when called to the ministry, he sought my advice on a suitable Seminary. While training at PRTS, he kept in touch with me and the church by letter and, in his final year, the church was pleased to receive his request to fulfil his "internship" among us, which involved, over a period of about 6 weeks, leading the worship services, preaching the Word of God, helping in evangelistic work, attending officers' meetings, and engaging in regular pastoral visitation. This proved to be a mutual blessing, and, without doubt, spiritual bonds were formed between Simon, the officers and the church members.

It seemed that Simon was the obvious choice. After due consideration, the officers were of one mind that Simon should be invited to serve with me for a period of just over 3 years, with a view to succeeding me as Minister of Emmanuel Church.

The Elders called a Special Church Meeting on 13 April, 2017, and brought their recommendation to the gathered church. Voting was by secret ballot, and those unable to be present at the meeting, were able to vote by absentee ballot. Although a 75% majority vote was constitutionally required, I am very pleased indeed to say that, with every member voting, the church vote was unanimous.

On 20 April, the Elders wrote to Simon, formally inviting him to serve among

us as a Minister or Teaching Elder. We wrote at the end of that letter: “We pray that if this is indeed God’s will, He will graciously turn your heart towards us and grant you a conviction that He would have you serve Him at Emmanuel Church in Salisbury.”

Simon replied on 17 June, writing as follows: “I gladly write to inform you and the Church that I wish to accept the call to serve as a Minister among you, alongside your Pastor.” He continued: “Though I could see many good, spiritual and practical reasons for accepting the call to come to Emmanuel, I knew the Lord had to confirm it to me, though I did not know how that would manifest itself. The conversations with Drs. Allen and Beeke were highly instrumental, but the command of the Lord to go to Salisbury only arrived very suddenly two weeks ago, literally hours before I travelled down to Salisbury for the weekend. As I informed Pastor of my decision to accept the call, the Spirit of Christ sealed peace and joy to my heart, and I then spent a memorable Sabbath with you. Both of these things were crowning signs from God that His will had been made manifest.”

We were all so very thankful to receive Simon’s letter. God willing, he and his wife will move to Salisbury so that Simon may begin a ministry among us. The Church here seeks the prayers of the Lord’s people, deeply aware that we proceed in total reliance upon our covenant God for His guidance, enabling and blessing.

Malcolm H. Watts

THE DOG THAT DOES NOT BARK: A Heart Cry for Leadership in the Church Today

John J Murray

Some of the most life-changing events in the history of the church have come about due to a stand being taken by a man at a critical juncture. In this year, 2017, we are commemorating the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on 31

October 1517, an event which lit the fires of the Protestant Reformation. Later the Reformer was summoned to the Diet at Worms, where, on 18 April 1521, he declared: 'My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against my conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen'. The Edict of Worms, dated 8 May 1521, declared Luther an 'outlaw' together with his adherents. That is the kind of difference that one man can make!

LEADERSHIP IN THE PAST

There are other examples in history of God using men to break the slumber of the church. We had Athanasius (c296-373) standing against the Arian heresy and almost single-handedly preserving the integrity of the Christian faith. We recall the heroic stand of Jan Hus (1373-1415) fighting against such great odds, and at the base of the fine statue of him in Prague today, we read 'Great is the truth, and it prevails'. There is John Calvin (1509-1564) contending against the Libertines in Geneva and achieving for the church freedom from the state in ecclesiastical disciplinary matters, 'the creator of the Protestant Church' (B.B. Warfield). William Tyndale (1494-1536) was hounded to his death 'simply because he wanted to reform the church, to restore the gospel, and especially to give the people of England the Bible'. John Knox (1514 - 1572) was raised up to blow His Master's trumpet and to rid the Church in Scotland of Roman superstition and idolatry.

George Whitefield (1714-1770), 'the Revived Puritan', burst in upon a dead church and a decadent London and saved England from a disaster akin to the French Revolution. C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) stood firm against the rising tide of unbelief, in an age of decline, and suffered scorn and ridicule against his person. J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), challenging the growing infidelity of Princeton Seminary and the Presbyterian Church in America, was suspended from the ministry and forbidden to defend himself. Dr. D. M. Lloyd-Jones (1899 -1981) called the decadent Church of the mid 20th century back to a God-centred outlook. Time would fail us to tell of others. They were men of one mind - seeking to advance the glory of God and to maintain His truth. They dared to stand alone. They nailed their colours to the mast. They were men on fire and so they were instrumental in lighting others. 'Your zeal hath provoked very many.' (2 Cor. 9:2)

In Scripture we find similar examples of bold faith. We see Elijah the Tishbite, coming from relative obscurity, heralding the Word of the God, 'before Whom I stand', to confront Ahab and the nation that was steeped in idolatry. Baal worship must be cast out. The prophet 'repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down', and the fire of the Lord fell that day and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal were killed (1 Kings 17-18). Time and again in the history of Israel God raised up a prophet to arouse the people and call them back to obedience. Even after His people had been chastened by their years of captivity in Babylon and had returned to Jerusalem, God raises up Haggai and Zechariah to call them to 'Consider your ways' (Haggai 1:5) and the people 'obeyed the voice of the Lord their God'. In the Book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, Christ comes, through a revelation to his servant John, to trumpet his displeasure with the evils tolerated in some of the Seven Churches of Asia and to call members of the congregations to repentance.

THE URGENT NEED TODAY

It is generally acknowledged that Western civilisation will collapse without a Christian revival. We are in the midst of a rapid spiritual and moral decline. The change that has come about in the last quarter of a century is staggering. We have seen the dismantling of the Judaeo-Christian heritage that underpins our society in Britain and the West. Our liberal elite are ready to give toleration to Muslims, Hindus and other false religions. We have gone beyond mere toleration. Islam is protected against criticism, while Christianity is exposed with impunity to insult and ridicule. The BBC editorial policy bans criticism of the Koran, but not the Bible. We find local authorities removing Christian symbols from buildings or suggesting that schools should not celebrate Christian festivals, lest this give offence to members of other religions. Gideon Bibles have been removed from students' rooms in Universities, for it is considered wrong to favour one faith above others. Our inherited Christian culture is being pushed to the sidelines. If there is not a change we face a holocaust. What do we do in a post-Christian secularized culture?

There is no doubt that Western civilisation needs to rise up against the forces that oppose it. The question is: Where is the body with the moral fibre to undertake that fight? It should be the role of the Christian church, which is rightly designated as the 'church militant'. Without the leadership of the church the nation cannot recover from its present descent into cultural degeneration and the neo-paganism that is its inevitable accompaniment. But is the church in the West in any condition to engage in such a warfare? She is in a weakened

state. It has been said 'The supreme duty of the Church is to see that she offends not her God and her Saviour'. It is obvious that as a church and as a nation we have offended God. He has turned His countenance away from us. What the church needs to recover above everything else is the divine favour.

How did the people of God gain the victory in former times? In Psalm 44 we are reminded that, 'They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them'. (v3) The Psalmist goes on to describe their present state: 'But thou has cast us off and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.' (v9). In such circumstances as the visitation of chastisements and the hiding of God's face, the way back must be by humbling ourselves, by confessing our sins and by repentance. The trouble is that we are presently in a kind of deadlock.

It is in this situation that the church desperately needs leadership. It is sadly true that the church, in a state of backsliding and under judgment, is often fast asleep. We need those like the 'men of Issachar who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do' (I Chron. 12:32). We need men to stand up and be counted. The church needs to hear the voice of God and be aroused from its present slumber. Who is going to be such a voice to the church?

FIFTY YEARS OF MISGUIDED LEADERSHIP 1967-2017

As we look back over the last fifty years of evangelicalism in the United Kingdom we are confronted with signs of misguided leadership that has contributed to the situation we are in today. We can look at examples in England and Scotland.

ENGLAND

The Church of England

In April 1967 the first National Evangelical Anglican Congress met on the campus of Keele University, under the chairmanship of the Rev. Dr. John Stott. It marked a change in the attitude of evangelicals to the ecumenical movement. There was to be no more confrontation with non-evangelicals. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Michael Ramsey, who had said that he expected to meet atheists in heaven, was invited to open the Keele Congress. John Stott hailed

the Congress as 'the coming of age of the current generation of evangelicals'. How mistaken in the light of subsequent developments!

One Anglican writer has said 'The Keele Conference turned out to be a two-headed monster. The intention of the founding fathers of Keele - that is, Jim Packer, Alec Motyer and others - was to campaign for the Church of England to return to its evangelical roots. But they handed the baton to younger evangelicals, and their aim was much less ambitious: to make sure that Evangelicalism was an accepted stream within the Church of England. Keele was wonderful: there were 1,000 people there, which in 1967 was a lot... But there were warning signs then that all was not well. There was an element of churchyness beginning to creep in.' (Rev. Jonathan Fletcher, in an interview with Tim Thornborough, March 2008)

Non-conformist churches

The evangelicals in the non-conformist churches in England were not without their 'high' moment in 1967. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, minister of Westminster Chapel, London had been invited to deliver an address at the Second National Assembly of Evangelicals, organised by the Evangelical Alliance, in the Westminster Central Hall, on 18th October 1966. It was basically an appeal for evangelicals within the existing denominations to join together in unity in the face of the threat of the ecumenical movement. At the conclusion of the address, the chairman, Dr John Stott, rose to repudiate the case made by the Doctor. The publicity arising from this confrontation meant the end of the Westminster Fellowship of ministers, as it had existed for 25 years. At the same time it brought about new alliances. The support for the position taken by Dr. Lloyd-Jones was strong. One prominent evangelical leader, Tom Rees, wrote to him: 'With respect may I point out that you do not realise that many evangelical ministers look to you for a lead...Why not leave your Church and start the Evangelical Reformed Church?' (quoted in *D. M. Lloyd-Jones, The Fight of Faith 1939-1981*, p 530) The Doctor's response was: 'I am not going to organize, lead or suggest anything.'

Later that year, however, Dr. Lloyd-Jones persuaded the congregation at Westminster Chapel to join the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC), first formed in 1922. Joining the FIEC automatically brought Westminster Chapel into membership of the British Evangelical Council,

formed in 1953. The involvement of the Doctor and the congregation of Westminster Chapel raised the profile of the BEC. In October 1967 its annual conference, which had 40 in attendance in 1966, boasted a congregation of two thousand seven hundred people, with Dr. Lloyd-Jones as one of the main speakers. Such an alliance was useful for a time but it was not going to lead to a church, Reformed in doctrine, worship and practice. The BEC certainly lost momentum, with less participation from the Doctor himself. Post 2000 a younger generation sought to bring the BEC 'into the 21st century' and re-named it with the title 'Affinity'.

The Reformed Movement

One of the most encouraging developments in the 1960s was the spiritual hunger for the great Reformed truths that had been covered over for so long by 'soul-destroying' liberalism and a defective evangelicalism. At the forefront of satisfying this hunger were the publications of the Banner of Truth Trust. Many ministers were brought to a new understanding of the faith and this had an effect on congregations. In 1962 there was a move to have a conference for these ministers. The venue was the campus of Leicester University in July of that year. Three veterans of the faith who had welcomed and supported the new work of the Banner of Truth Trust, Rev. Professor John Murray, Rev. Kenneth A. MacRae and Rev. W. J. Grier, were the main speakers. All three were of a Reformed and confessional conviction.

Following the memorable 1962 Conference, discussion took place on a way forward for the churches. To help the discussion on the nature of the church, various volumes were prepared: *Historical Theology* by William Cunningham, *The Church of Christ* by James Bannerman, as well as a composite volume, edited by Iain Murray, on the *The Reformation of the Church*. These matters were at the forefront of further conferences held at Leicester in 1964 and 1965. The expectation was that there could be a move towards the goal of the 17th century Puritan ideal which was, as defined by Dr. Packer, 'to serve God in a Reformed church, that would be instrumental in reforming the nation', or, as the wording of the Solemn League and Covenant put it: 'the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, according to the Word of God and the example of the best Reformed churches'.

As it turned out no agreement could be reached as to the way forward. There were differences as to whether we should go forward on a minimal doctrinal statement or on a full-orbed confession, whether congregations should be independent or joined with others after the Presbyterian fashion. Whatever may be said about the involvement of Dr. J. I. Packer in Anglican politics, he had a high view of confessionalism and his parting of the ways with Dr. Lloyd-Jones in 1970 meant a loss to England in that respect. The movement that had begun to recover the soteriology of the Reformed Faith was to stop short in the restoration of the ecclesiology. The expectation of having a new Reformed church order was frustrated.

SCOTLAND

The Church of Scotland

The resurgence of conservative evangelicalism within the Church of Scotland in the 1950s and 1960s led to the formation of the Crieff Fraternal in 1970. The Rev. William Still (1911-1997) had exercised an influence on younger men, including the brothers James and George Philip and Eric Alexander. They formed a brotherhood which met three times a year at Crieff (Perthshire) for mutual fellowship and encouragement. It was reckoned that up to a sixth of the ministers in the Church of Scotland were involved in this at one time. The number of evangelical students coming forward to train for the ministry increased considerably, but their training was at the liberal Faculties of Divinity in the universities. However, what happened in the last quarter of the 20th century is one of the saddest episodes in the history of the Church in Scotland. The policy adopted by the evangelicals was similar to what happened in the Church of England. As long as they were allowed to continue working in their own congregations within the denomination they thought they would change things gradually church-wide by quiet infiltration. The whole concept was exposed by Dr. Carl Trueman in an article posted on the internet (4/8/2006):

'Church of Scotland evangelicals standing in the trajectory of Willie Still have done great service in maintaining faithful preaching within the Church, and in the Crieff Conference and the various gatherings associated with Rutherford House, they have supervised the development of a great network of individuals and gatherings; but the tactic of going down this conference / congregational / informal connection path while allowing the church courts, committees and administration to be controlled virtually unchallenged, by liberals and neo-

orthodox - on the grounds that it was a useful trade-off, if evangelicals could preach the truth unhindered within their own congregations - has proved utterly disastrous as a long-term strategy... The public silence of the older generation at critical moments in presbyteries and ministerial selection committees (there's many a sad anecdote I could tell there) has proved far more damaging in undermining evangelicalism in the Church of Scotland than wonderful ventures like the Crieff Conference and Rutherford House have proved effective in building it up.'

'How many times, and in how many contexts, I wonder, did many a young minister hear the older generation of evangelicals telling him that "This is not the issue to fight on", whether it be women's ordination, doctrinal discipline or on the occasional frying of a young candidate at a presbytery interview on such an issue as opposition to homosexuality? As the ecclesiological and ecclesiastical silence of the older generation of Church of Scotland evangelicals (wonderful men though they were and are) sold the wide ecclesiastical pass with barely a whimper in the 70s and 80s, so I feel for former colleagues and students who now pay the price for the fact that the evangelical revival in the Church of Scotland concentrated on producing only congregational commanders and did not bring forth a single ecclesiastical leader of any stature or authority.'

It would have been good if the older generation of evangelicals in the Church of Scotland had heeded the words of Horatius Bonar in addressing the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in 1883: 'Fellowship between faith and unbelief must sooner or later, be fatal to the former'. As sure as Bonar's words proved true in the last quarter of the 19th century, so they certainly came true in the last forty years in the Church of Scotland. The declension was painful to witness. The nadir for some was the sight of the Rev. Dr. Angus Morrison, reared in the strictest Presbyterian Church in Scotland, presiding over the General Assembly of 2015 and announcing the result of the vote that sealed the fate of many. The Assembly agreed by 309 votes to 182 to authorize congregations to depart from 'the church's historic and current position' and call a minister in a same sex civil partnership. When Mr. Morrison announced the tragic result of the vote he led the Assembly in reciting the Prayer of St. Patrick: 'Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me etc'.

The Free Church of Scotland

The Free Church of Scotland had an indication of troubles ahead by some differences within her ranks in the 1950s. A booklet *The Resurgence of Arminianism* by the Rev. Kenneth A. MacRae caused a stir and aroused opposition from some of the hierarchy on the Mound. Because the name of Kenneth MacRae was linked with the early Banner movement it seems as if this was one factor in the Reformed recovery not taking on in the Free Church of Scotland, as it did in churches in other parts of the UK. Instead there emerged from the 1960s onwards a type of minister who was more concerned to bring change into the Church than to recover our Reformed confessional heritage. Some gifted young preachers appeared and they were looked upon as the 'saviours' of the Free Church. The Church gained quite a reputation at home and abroad. Things appeared to be successful and there was a surge forward in church extension and mission in the 1970s and 1980s. But while Camps and Youth Conferences flourished, there was a departure from catechetical instruction and family religion. Children's addresses became popular and young ones were withdrawn from the regular worship service for having a Sabbath School. The consequent haemorrhage from among covenant youth was quite significant.

Looking back over the 1970s and 1980s we can detect the presence of a similar element of pride that caused the decline in the 19th century Free Church. We failed to heed warning signs. Perhaps there was too much looking to men. John Livingstone speaking of the failure of the Church in his day said: 'Our ministers were our glory, and I fear our idol, and the Lord hath stained the pride of our glory'. The staining of our pride was seen in the 1990s and instead of dealing with the problem in a God-glorifying manner things were left to fester. On the question of leadership it was a matter of amazement to see younger ministers on the floor of the General Assembly, at meetings and in the press attacking more senior men. Those who called for more loyalty to creeds, confessions and ordination vows were even regarded as troublemakers. The then Editor of the *Monthly Record* spoke of such men in terms of, 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son'. (*Monthly Record*, October 1999, p 236) Great rejoicing took place in January 2000 because the Free Church of Scotland had got rid of her 'troublemakers'. A question now, some 20 years on, is: Who were the real troulbers of Israel? (1 Kings 18:17)

THE KIND OF LEADERSHIP REQUIRED

As the Lord has used the right leadership in the past to bring change in the church, so surely our earnest prayer must be that He will raise up men who will take a stand in the year 2017. How good it would be if such occurred in this year of the Martin Luther commemoration!

1) *It must be men who practise what they preach*

We have men who are hailed as 'stars' and international conference speakers whose own church life has been very mixed and confused. One such admitted recently to a gathering of ministers that he did not have a doctrine of the church. It is one thing to preach and write about what is regarded as scriptural, it is another thing to be putting it into practice. The fact is that truth is not fully believed unless it leads to practice. So much of what is taught and written is within the context of para church organisations and that does not help on the level of recovering a church that will be Reformed, in doctrine, worship and discipline, which is the crying need of the hour. What is the point of all the preaching and lecturing if we are not dealing with the matters that count. In this year of commemoration let us remember what Luther once said: 'Where the battle rages is where the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is merely flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point'.

2) *It must be men who are not in compromising situations*

For too long we have been listening to men who purport to be leaders of 'Reformed thinking' but who remain in compromising situations. They have chosen convenience over confrontation. The defence of the truth demands confrontation. Too many of the so-called leaders of today are influenced in some measure by the spirit of the age. In the published version of his address to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in 1883, Horatius Bonar adds a note: 'In what is called "public opinion" or the "the spirit of the age" we have the utterance of *unrenewed humanity*. That utterance is not likely to be on the side of God; for it is written "the whole world lieth in wickedness". Majorities have not often been trustworthy. The present is *man's day* (1 Cor. 4:3); God's day is coming; and when it comes it will undo many a human scheme, and disappoint many a fond hope, and reverse many a sanguine idea of modern enlightenment as to the self-regeneration of man and

man's earth'. (*Our Ministry*, 1883, p 18). If a man is in an alliance with deniers of the truth, what authority can he exercise? To the spiritually discerning he is as one of them. 'In the day that thou stoodest on the other side... even thou wast as one of them' (Obad. v 11). To quote Bonar again: 'Truth is truth and error is error. There the case begins and ends. The blending of light and darkness can at the best only produce twilight, not noon. . . Truth never demands a vote. It refuses to go to the poll or to acknowledge majorities.' (*Our Ministry*, p 97)

3) It must be men who are fully committed to the whole truth

It is the duty of the church and especially of her leaders to bear witness to the whole counsel of God. Many are satisfied to rest in a general evangelical creed for fear of being regarded as extreme. Scripture does not permit us to do that. The true faith is: 'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen'. (Rom. 11:36) The main purpose of creation and redemption is the glory of God. He will not give his glory to another. There is no place for a half-way position. A. A. Hodge put it clearly when he said: 'The last issue must be between Atheism in its countless forms and Calvinism. The other systems will be crushed as the half-rotten ice between two great bergs'. (*Princetoniana* by C. A. Salmond, Edinburgh, 1888, p 100). A form of political correctness has come into the church. We have heard it said: How dare you criticize a brother knowing that he is one who has been purchased by the blood of Christ? Others have said 'This is not a hill to die on', or 'Is it worth dividing over such an issue?' One declared: 'I think what you are doing is wrong, but it is not so significant that I think you are not within the same broad tent of Christian belief'.

4) It must be men who are willing to speak out

Carl Trueman asks 'What is the dog that doesn't bark in your church?' and goes on 'I am increasingly convinced that the measure of a theologian, or preacher or church is to be found not so much in what is said as in what isn't said' (*Christianity Liberalism and the New Evangelicalism*, p 27). In an article 'The Importance of Not Being Nice', Rev. Neil Richards declared: 'A desire to get away from a negative, confrontational image has sometimes led evangelicals to be comprehensive where they should be exclusive; irenic where they should be polemic, and diplomatic where they ought to be bold and

unyielding. There are times when for the sake of the gospel and for the cause of truth Christians must be narrow and exclusive; fierce in their resistance to error and altogether earnest contenders for the faith once delivered to the saints.' (*Foundations*, Journal of the BEC, 1989, p 2)

It is interesting to speculate what the church would be like today if Luther had been prone to compromise. The pressure was heavy on him to tone down his teaching and soften his message. Sometimes division is fitting, even healthy, for the church. It is right for the true people of God to declare themselves. Publications with a cutting edge did much to stir up controversy in the 1950s and 1960s. Compromise is sometimes a worse evil than division. What an encouragement it would be to see men taking a stand. It is not often nowadays a man steps out of line. It was so recently with Rev Gavin Ashenden, a senior clergyman of the Church of England and Chaplain to Her Majesty the Queen who made a public stand against the reading of the Qur'an in St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Glasgow on 7 January 2017. He resigned from his duties and left the Church of England. Douglas Murray, author and analyst, wrote on the Gatestone Institute website: 'Very occasionally - even in contemporary Britain - some good news arrives. No single piece of news has been more invigorating than the discovery that a member of the Church of England has found a vertebra.'

5) *It must be men who are on fire*

Where is the righteous Christian indignation? Zeal is in truth that grace which God seems to delight to honour. Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531), Swiss Reformer, said 'How much more would a few good and fervent men effect in the ministry than a multitude of lukewarm ones?' John Knox rallied the Protestants to battle with a sermon on Psalm 80:4-8 preached at Stirling on 8th November 1559. 'Under the burning words of the preacher each man became heroic'. Of a similar sermon Randolph wrote to Cecil 'The voice of one man is able in one hour to put more life in us than five hundred trumpets continually blustering in our ears'. As Samuel Chadwick said: 'Men ablaze are invincible. The stronghold of Satan is proof against everything but fire'.

THE CALL TO BATTLE

C H Spurgeon declared: 'We want again Luthers, Calvins, Bunyans, Whitefields, men fit to mark eras, whose names breathe terror in our foeman's

ears. We have dire need of such. When will they come to us? They are the gifts of Jesus Christ to the Church, and will come in due time'. (*The Early Years*, 1962, 1,v)

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, courageous leader Basilea Schlink rebuked the silence of Christians after Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass (9 Nov 1938) when the Nazis set the synagogues on fire and vandalized Jewish places of business, also killing and beating some Jewish victims as well. 'We are personally to blame. We all have to admit that if we, the entire Christian community, had stood up as one man on the streets and voiced our disapproval, rung the church bells, and somewhat boycotted the actions of the SS, the Devil's vassals would probably not have been at such liberty to pursue their evil schemes. But we lacked the ardour of love' (*Israel My Chosen People: A German Confession before God and the Jews*).

What we are called to do is summed up by Abraham Kuyper: 'When principles that run against your deepest convictions begin to win the day, then battle is your calling, and peace has become sin; you must, at the price of dearest peace, lay your convictions bare before friend and enemy, with all the fire of your faith.' There is so much discouragement in the evangelical church today. Bold leadership can give heart to a discouraged people. It may lead to a time of suffering but a storm is sometimes better than a dead calm. More men discovering a vertebra could be good news indeed in our troubled times.

THE PILGRIM FATHERS

Part 1

The Origins of Separatism

The dramatic story of the Mayflower begins in the area where the counties of Nottingham, York and Lincoln meet. It is here that the Separatist movement developed and the leading Pilgrim forefathers lived.

The Elizabethan age was a time of new ideas and a general broadening of outlook. There were famous playwrights – such as William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. It was a time of relative prosperity. Chiefly it was an era of great exploration and adventure with the voyages of Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh.

By the time of the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558, the majority of English people were still Catholics, but Protestant doctrines had become increasingly attractive to the younger generation at the height of persecution in Mary's reign. However, the English church was still organised with strong almost Catholic rituals, and Protestant reformers – the first Puritans – felt that the reformation of the Church under Elizabeth I had not gone far enough. The English translation of the Bible in 1560, with footnotes by John Knox, did much to influence intellectual minds – especially amongst divinity students at Cambridge University. The Bible brought family and friends together for the purpose of worship and to debate the scriptures. In England many Puritans separated from the established church on points of ritual or doctrine, and some of these were called Separatists – they thought they could only change the system from the outside. The Pilgrims were Separatists – nonconformists who believed in freedom of worship, religious tolerance and the simplicity of religious life.

The Bassetlaw Pilgrims

Separatists meetings amongst small groups of family and friends met with both the sympathy and approval of some clergy of the established church. One such parson was Richard Clyfton of Babworth in Nottinghamshire in 1586. Sympathisers came from the surrounding district to listen to Clyfton explaining the word of God and to join in his simple but sincere service. Clyfton was eventually accused before the Chancery Court of being a “nonconformist and non-subscriber” and was deprived of his living in 1605. The “offences” committed by Clyfton were probably the non-use of the cap and surplice in religious ceremonies, dropping the sign of the cross in baptism and not bowing at the name of Jesus. Clyfton was offered hospitality by William Brewster at Scrooby Manor, a few miles north of Babworth, and he gratefully accepted, becoming pastor of the Scrooby congregation. In 1608 he sailed with the Pilgrims to Holland, where he died in Amsterdam in 1616 at the age of 63.

William Brewster was brought up in the little village of Scrooby on the old Great North Road. In 1580 he went to Cambridge University where he was attracted by a group of scholars and preachers who advocated a stricter regard to the Scriptures and a return to the primitive and apostolic order.

On the death of his father he returned to Scrooby, living at the Manor House and inheriting the appointment of bailiff to the Archbishop's estates. He was considerably influenced by the sermons of Richard Clyfton and John Smyth at Gainsborough. When Clyfton was deprived of his living, Brewster's home became the meeting place for those who desired to worship according to the dictates of their own conscience.

The Manor House at Scrooby had long been visited by successive Archbishops of York who stayed and entertained here. There were many royal guests, but perhaps its greatest claim to fame is its association with the Separatists who met there.

A third important member of the Scrooby congregation was John Robinson. Formerly from the nearby village of Sturton-le-Steeple, he too became a Cambridge scholar. After taking holy orders, his first appointment was at a church in Norfolk. His increasing sympathy for the nonconformist point of view led to outspoken sermons which attracted the attention of the authorities. Returning to Sturton, he married a daughter of the White family, members of which sailed on the Mayflower in 1620. With Brewster and Clyfton, he became a member of John Smyth's congregation in Gainsborough. Later, when the Separatists gathered at Scrooby, John Robinson joined the company as teacher.

Two miles north of Scrooby, just within the Yorkshire boundary, lies the village of Austerfield. Here William Bradford was born in the winter of 1589 – 90, and baptised in the local church. In 1591 his father died and he was sent to live with his grandfather. After the subsequent death of his grandfather and remarriage of his mother he was looked after by his uncles. As a young man he grew increasingly interested in the scriptures. He was greatly moved by the preaching of Richard Clyfton and further influenced by the example of William Brewster. In 1606 he joined the Scrooby congregation, responding wholeheartedly to the simplicity of its worship. Bradford, with his strictly disciplined intellect and heartfelt emotions was a gifted member of the Separatist congregation. He was the epitome of Pilgrim principles and values. With no university education, William Bradford was the one member of the group to come from modest beginnings and rise to become one of the principal figures of 17th century New England. He was the Governor of Plymouth Colony almost continuously from 1621 until his death in 1657. It is thanks to Bradford's

writings that we have details of the lives of the Separatists in England, Holland and New England.

The Hickman family, residing at Gainsborough Old Hall from 1596 to 1720, had sympathetic leanings towards the Separatists. It seems possible that they gave their patronage to John Smyth, another Cambridge scholar, who held regular meetings at Gainsborough. Amongst his congregation were William Bradford, William Brewster and John Robinson. It was Smyth who reinforced John Robinson's leanings towards separatism.

The Persecution of the Separatists and the Flight to Holland

Early in 1604, King James called the Hampton Court Conference. The nonconformists made a restrained plea for liberty of conscience, to which the response of the King was..... "I will make them conform or I will harry them out of the land". As a result of the conference new decrees were implemented, including the suppression of all private religious meetings. Conditions became increasingly threatening for Separatist groups, and punishments against them became severe. The Scrooby group had been meeting for less than a year when the authorities struck. Some were imprisoned and others had their houses watched day and night. The congregation began to think seriously of a plan to flee to Holland where they had heard that there was "freedom of Religion for all men". John Smyth led his Gainsborough group to Holland in 1607 and the Scrooby group decided to follow during the winter of 1607-8. It was not an easy decision to make as it would inevitably involve hardship and danger.

The Scrooby group made their way on foot to Boston where a ship would pick them up. However, at the last moment the captain betrayed them into the hands of the local authorities. Their leaders were held in Boston but later freed.

A second attempt was made in the spring of 1608. This time the women and children travelled separately from the men. The women travelled in small boats to a deserted point on the Lincolnshire side of the Humber, whilst the men journeyed on foot. However, disaster struck when a Dutch vessel carrying the newly embarked men was forced to depart, leaving the women behind – their small boats were stuck in the mud. The poor women were hustled from one magistrate to another, before finally being allowed to join their menfolk in Holland. It shows the great strength of their religious convictions that this flight

was ever completed, and they must have wondered what further problems lay in store for them.

In Amsterdam the Scrooby group was welcomed by members of the Gainsborough community, who had connected themselves with a Separatist group – the Ancient Brethren, led by Francis Johnson of London. Soon after, becoming aware of moral laxity within the Ancient Brethren, John Robinson decided that his church members should seek independence in the Dutch town of Leyden. Richard Clyfton, by now becoming elderly and weary, remained in Amsterdam and died there.

Under the leadership of John Robinson, the Scrooby group was welcomed to Leyden in the spring of 1609. Robinson and Bewster later lectured at the university, whilst other members, including William Bradford, involved themselves in various artisan trades, and they became a respected group within the city.

During their many years there, the social and political climate changed, forcing Pilgrims to consider moving elsewhere. The treaty with Spain was due to expire in 1621 which meant that soldiers in the service of the Spanish Inquisition could enter Holland at any time. Many expressed a desire to find a place where they could live comfortably, enjoy freedom of religion and have greater success in spreading the word. They also wished to retain their English identity, having no desire to be absorbed by the Dutch.

The Merchant Adventurers and the New World

After much consideration and debate, the Pilgrims decided to leave Holland and seek permission to settle in the colony of Virginia in North America. A large number were terrified by the thought of such a move and believed that many perils awaited them – but the inspiration from their leaders gave them strength. In 1617 they sent two of their leaders, Robert Cushman and John Carver, wealthy businessmen, to London to ask the Virginia Company and King James if they would allow them to set up a religious colony near the existing settlement of Jamestown but there were long delays caused by internal conflict within the company itself.

Eventually assured of financial support from a group of London merchants, Cushman and Carver agreed to plant their colony within the territories assigned to the Plymouth Virginia Company. The final terms were hard indeed.

The partnership with the Merchant Adventurers would last for seven years, during which time the Pilgrims would work every day of the week to pay back the loan. At the end of seven years houses, land and goods would be equally divided between settlers and merchants. To gain royal assent the Separatists sacrificed their principles by acknowledging the King as head of Church and State. Two vessels would make the crossing. The Speedwell (owned by the Leyden group) would carry the Separatists and remain with them, while the Mayflower (chartered by the Merchant Adventurers) would take a group of speculators to establish commerce in the New World and return with the first fruits of their trade. The Leyden group was to be led by William Brewster and those who remained with John Robinson would follow later.

The Epic Journey Begins

The tiny Speedwell left Delftshaven on 21 July 1620. A few days later she anchored at Southampton where the Mayflower was lying ready with the rest of the company. New problems developed when their financiers no longer wished to invest as much as originally agreed in the venture. The Pilgrims were forced to sell some of their provisions to clear their debts and make further compromises with their investors.

On 6 August the Mayflower and the Speedwell set sail, but the Speedwell started to leak badly and both vessels were forced to put in to Dartmouth. On 23 August the Pilgrims set sail again. Four days later, in open sea beyond Land's End, the Speedwell began to leak again. Both ships returned, this time to Plymouth. After lengthy discussions the two captains decided that the Speedwell must be left behind. The passengers were amalgamated on board the Mayflower, and a number of the Leyden group withdrew. On 6 September 1620 the ill-fated journey started once again. The faint hearted had been left behind, leaving only the most stalwart Pilgrims. The epic journey had finally begun with 102 passengers and about 30 crew crammed into the overloaded Mayflower.

The Journey of the Mayflower

Although larger than the Speedwell, the Mayflower was still only 90ft (27.5 metres) long on deck. The journey which should have taken place in the summer was now dogged by appalling autumn sea conditions. Almost from the start there were rough gales. After two weeks the Pilgrims were confined to their quarters below deck. Their living conditions were cramped and stagnant. The seas were too rough for the ship's hatches to be opened during

the day, and as they had to sleep, eat and defecate in buckets below deck, the atmosphere became putrid. In addition many suffered from severe sea sickness.

By 27 September the high seas and strong winds were proving too much for the Mayflower. The main beam began to split open and for a time it looked as if they might all sink into a watery grave. Fortunately the Pilgrims had some tools and equipment with them to make basic repairs. However, leaks continued and it was impossible for them to keep dry. Some began to despair. The wet and soggy food was becoming monotonous and some of the Pilgrims began to complain of a general feeling of weakness. Early signs of scurvy were setting in. By 19 October the Pilgrims had been at sea for six weeks and conditions were like some foul prison. They began to argue amongst themselves and their health deteriorated further. On 6 November the first Pilgrim died – William Button of Austerfield – but to cheer their dampened souls, first signs of land were sighted two days later. They had intended to settle in North Virginia, but either by accident or design they landed further north, outside the jurisdiction of the English crown. The first land they saw on 9th November was Cape Cod. It was important that the Pilgrims should start off their life in America on the right footing, so the leaders decided to create an agreement to be signed by everybody, which established the principles, rules and regulations of the new colony. The agreement was organised before people were allowed to go on shore, and came to be known as the Mayflower Compact.

The Landing

The journey had taken much longer than planned. They were also 450 miles north of Virginia and were greeted by a cold and desolate wilderness. They could not have come to America at a worse time of year. The Pilgrims held discussions and prayer meetings to give them the courage to go ashore and undertake the tasks of founding a settlement. John Carver of Doncaster was elected Governor for the first year.

On 15 November a party made up of sixteen armed men set out under the leadership of Captain Myles Standish to search for a new river beside which they could establish their settlement. They found fresh water and stumbled on an old Indian campsite, graves full of artefacts and little mounds of soil, beneath which were buried Indian baskets full of corn. Because the Pilgrims

had arrived in America so late in the year, they would probably have starved to death if they had not found the Indians' corn to eat in the spring the following year.

By 6 December the Mayflower had been moored at the top of Cape Cod for 26 days, and still everybody was crowded on board. Colds and chest infections were rife and food supplies were fast becoming exhausted. A ten man party set out on what was to be a seven day trip to find a suitable site to start a settlement, using the shallop from the Mayflower. On 11 December the exploring party headed west in harsh sea conditions towards Plymouth, where the harbour was found to be deep enough for the Mayflower.

Beaching the boat at what was later to be called Plymouth Rock, they discovered to their joy little running brooks and cornfields. There was also good fishing, many specimens of timber, herbs, vegetables and a type of flax and hemp. Heads of household drew lots to determine which site each should occupy. "New Plimoth" was to be a planned community.

To be continued

EPILOGUE

"It is good for me to draw near to God." (Psalm 73:28)

This verse of Scripture was recently on display outside the church for all to see and read as they passed by. It struck me that the opposite is also true – it is not good to draw away from God. The Psalmist had been tempted to envy the prosperity and success of the wicked and ungodly. They seemed to have wealth, health and prestige. They die just like others do. The antidote to these thoughts was to consider how God views their lives and their eternal destination. God places the feet of ungodly men in a slippery place and ultimately will cast them down to eternal destruction.

But God keeps the lives of his people eternally safe. In this world God may cause us to suffer poverty, ill-health and ignominy, but only for our sanctification and to make us fit for heaven. However much we may have to endure in this life, our souls are kept safe. We can know the continual presence

of the Lord on a daily or even an hourly basis. This the ungodly do not know and would not enjoy. God has promised to guide his people to their eternal rest and receive them into glory. The wicked, in contrast, do not know the guidance of the Lord, and will only know God in judgement and justice.

Even when bodily weakness overtakes the godly, and they say “my flesh and my heart faileth,” they can still say “but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.” Those who do not seek the Lord and are far from Him shall perish and will suffer everlasting punishment. The godly should always look beyond merely temporal things which will cease, to spiritual blessings that last eternally. They know that the “chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever” and seek to put that knowledge into practice in their daily lives. They place their trust in the Lord God, and tell of all His works. The best things in this life are not a substantial bank-balance, or robust health, or high status, but concern for our precious souls and how well we know and love and serve the Lord. Let us draw near to God!

Bill Norton