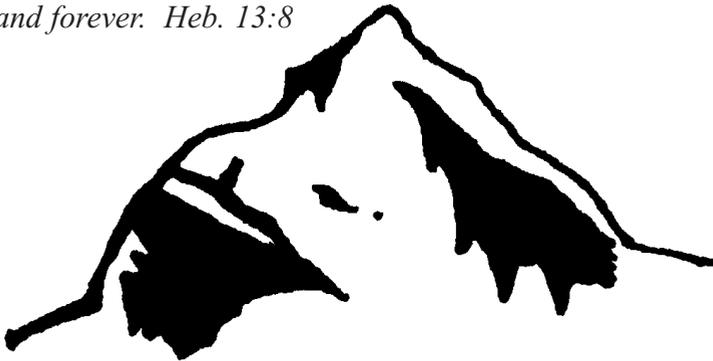


The Journal
of
The Church of England
(Continuing)

*Jesus Christ the same
yesterday, and today,
and forever. Heb. 13:8*



Issue No: 17
September 2000

The Association of the Continuing Church Trust. Registered Charity Number 1055010

CONSTITUTION

1 **Doctrine:** The doctrine of the Continuing Church shall be that of the 39 Articles of Religion understood in their original, natural and intended sense.

2 **Worship:** The worship of the Continuing Church shall be generally according to the Book of Common Prayer (1662).

The Authorised Version of the Bible shall be the only version used in the lectern and the pulpit and in public readings and expositions at all meetings of the Continuing Church.

3 **Ministry:** The consecration and ordination of ministers shall be according to the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer (1662). The Continuing Church believes in the ministry of women according to Scripture which does not permit them to teach or exercise authority, particularly as bishops, priests, and deacons.

4 **Discipline:** The church shall be episcopally governed. A general assembly shall be held not less than once a year consisting of the bishop and the ministers of the church and representatives of the local congregations to transact the business of the denomination and for mutual encouragement and edification.

5 **Membership:** New churches may apply for membership of the Continuing Church on the basis of their agreement with the doctrine, worship and discipline of that body.

Membership of the local church shall be on the basis of baptism and confirmation and approval by the local presbyter.

Any matters incapable of resolution shall be referred to the Ordinary.

Please note that the Continuing Church publishes a prayer letter, "Intercessions." It is available free of charge to those who would like to receive news and to pray for the various needs.

Please write to
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RG1 6NJ.

Would contributors please note that they can send their news via email, to
Journaleditor@fsmail.net

Contributions toward postage costs are gratefully received.

From the Presiding Bishop David N. Samuel

81, Victoria Road,
Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 1EU

Dear Friends,

I think we were all very much encouraged by our General Assembly at North Nibley. We had a day of good fellowship, and we were edified by the different addresses, from the Rev. Gordon Ferguson on 'The Holy Spirit and Protestantism', and Mr. Stephen Green on 'The Moral State of the Nation'. At our business meeting we passed a motion of support and fraternal greetings to brethren in the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The weather was good and we enjoyed the countryside and views. I pray that the Lord will continue to bless and strengthen us, as we seek to stand for His Word in these difficult days. I gave a short word at the beginning of the Assembly on 'Evangelical Religion'. In the hope that it might be helpful to others, and also to those who were there to have it in writing, I have included it in this issue of the *Journal*.

I wish to thank Bishop Malcolm who has in the past edited the magazine, for the excellent work he did, and also to thank the present editor, the Rev. E.J. Malcolm, for taking on this work, now that Bishop Malcolm has become editor of the *Gospel Magazine*.

I look forward, God willing, to conducting a confirmation service at St. John's, Wimbledon on Sunday 11th September when two candidates will be confirmed. Please pray for all the churches, and remember the clergy specially in your prayers, since their work of leadership makes them a special mark for the assaults of the enemy.

With Christian love and greetings.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'David Samuel'.

David Samuel.

EVANGELICAL RELIGION

An address given at the General Assembly, July 8th, 2000

by David Samuel

First, an Evangelical is one who believes the Holy Scriptures to be God's Word written.

He holds that not only the thoughts of the sacred writers were inspired, but the very words that they wrote are the words of God Himself. Here in the Bible we have the fully inspired revelation of God's truth to man. *Of the making of many books there is no end.* There are millions of volumes in the world, many of them good, most of them bad. But they are all the compositions of men. They all reflect thought from within the mundane, immanentist framework of this world. None of them rises above the level of human thought. There is only one volume that is unique, distinct, different from them all, and that is the Holy Bible. Therefore the evangelical believer makes this the rule and arbiter of all else. This is the beacon that guides him through the world. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.* This is his sole authority in all matters relating to the soul and eternal salvation. Dreams and supposed revelations, the teaching of ministers and the pronouncements of synods have no weight with him unless they can be proved by most certain warrant of Holy Scripture: *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them* (Isaiah 8:20). "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: So that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." (Article VI).

If you are not clear about it pray for guidance, seek God's face, read His word, *for in his light we shall see light.*

Second, an Evangelical is one who believes in and knows the reality of the new birth,

- that birth which is from above, of the Spirit of God. He has been born once naturally, into this world. But that is not enough if he is to be saved and equipped for heaven and the kingdom of God. For that he needs a second birth of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus; *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.* Do not be surprised, it is an absolute necessity. The Prophets spoke about it, and there is no other way to be saved. And this new birth is not merely being baptised, or joining the church. It is a great inward, spiritual change of heart and

mind and spirit. By it a man is made a new creature (or a new creation). Old things are passed away and all things are become new. He sees the world through different eyes. He embraces Christ by faith as his Saviour. He views God as his heavenly Father, and he recognises fellow believers as brothers and sisters in Christ. He is born into a new family, the family of the people of God. He knows new desires, aspirations; new affections, hopes and longings.

Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue
Christless eyes have never seen.

Third, an Evangelical is someone who believes in original sin, and the total depravity of human nature.

That may seem to be a difficult thing to believe and hold. Are we to think that all men, the best, and our friends and relations are incapable of any good? No it does not mean that. But it does mean that our best is not good enough for God. That sin, to which the whole human race is subject, taints and mars the best of human works. That nothing we do can measure up fully to the holiness and perfection of God's laws. That *there is none that doeth good, no not one*. And that we can never hope to save ourselves by our works and deservings. An evangelical believes that this must be taught and instilled into us because men and women cannot and will not see it for themselves, in the light of their own understanding. They will judge their works and thoughts on a comparative scale, in relation to sinful human beings like themselves, but not by the standards of God's Word. Therefore the absolute standard of God's holiness and righteousness must be taught. They must learn to see themselves as God sees them, in the light of Holy Scripture, and against the perfect life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only then will they be brought to understand their real condition, and to see that *the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*. Only then will they be brought to see their need to be saved, not by themselves, but by another.

Fourth, an Evangelical is one who believes in the complete sufficiency of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

That He is a perfect and unique Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost those who come to Him. The reason for this is, that He alone was born without sin; He alone lived without sin; He alone fulfilled the righteousness of the law of God; He alone satisfied the claims of God's justice. As the appointed head and representative of His people, He suffered and died for them upon the cross, He fully discharged the debt of their sins, made perfect satisfaction and atonement for them, in their place, as their high priest, and so set them free.

The work of redemption has been fully and perfectly accomplished. There is

nothing more to be done. *When he had by himself purged our sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the majesty on high.* That is what an evangelical believes. And if you ask him, he will tell you that there is no other Saviour but Christ. No other sacrifice but that which He offered once for all upon the cross. No other priesthood, but that which belongs to Jesus. No other advocate or mediator with God, but Christ.

If you ask him what you must do to be saved he will answer, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Nothing more, nothing less. It is a simple, clear, unmistakable message. A trumpet that gives no uncertain sound.

Finally, an Evangelical is one who believes in the final perseverance of the saints.

He believes in the indefectibility of grace. Once saved, saved forever. He will experience times of doubt and uncertainty, and he will be tempted to unbelief. He will often fall, and fail his Lord, and know much weakness, fear and trembling. But he will not and cannot fail and fall away completely, because *he is kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.* Which means that the power and grace of God are continually fortifying his faith, and undergirding him. Though Satan rages he is secure, because he is one of Christ's sheep for whom he died, and of whom he said, *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man (or thing or being in heaven or earth) is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* That is the truth upon which he can rely for time and for eternity. This is evangelical religion.

It is not much thought of today in the church. It has been largely eclipsed by other fashionable 'isms', - ecumenism, Anglo-catholicism, liberalism, charismaticism, modernism - but it is the religion of the Bible, of Paul, of Peter and John, of Augustine of Hippo, of Luther and Calvin, of Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley and Tyndale and all the Reformers. It is the faith of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. It is the true position of the Church of England, if she would but acknowledge it. But the great question is, Is it your faith? Do you believe these things? Are they written not just in the Bible, and in the formulae of the church, but upon your heart by the finger of God? I trust they are, and that at the general resurrection in the last day, all these things will be revealed, and we shall hear the voice of Jesus say, *Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.* Amen.

We should not be asking, 'How can we have a territorial church, how can we have unity and fellowship, or how can we find a formula to satisfy opposing views?'. We should be asking, 'What is a Christian? How does one become a Christian? How can we get forgiveness of sins?' and 'What is a church?'.

D. M. Lloyd Jones, November 1st 1967

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH (Pt II)

A paper delivered at the Day Conference, October 1999

By Edward Malcolm

3. Did Paul train converts differently to the way we do?

What did he teach his converts? It is clear, then, Paul did not set out merely to convert individuals, but to establish churches. Roland Allen points out, “The secret of success in this work lies in the beginning at the very beginning. It is the training of the first converts which sets the type for the future. If the first converts are taught to depend upon the missionary, if all work evangelistic, educational, social is concentrated in his hands, the infant community learns to rest passively upon the man from whom they receive their first insight into the Gospel. Their faith having no sphere for its growth and development lies dormant. A tradition very rapidly grows up that nothing can be done without the authority and guidance of the missionary, the people wait for him to move, and, the longer they do so, the more incapable they become of any independent action. Thus the leader is confirmed in the habit of gathering all authority into his own hands, and of despising the powers of his people, until he makes their inactivity an excuse for denying their capacity. The fatal mistake has been made of teaching the converts to rely upon the wrong source of strength. Instead of seeking it in the working of the Holy Spirit in themselves, they seek it in the missionary. They put him in the place of Christ, they depend upon him.”

This ruins the natural strength converts possess, forces any man with initiative to look outside the local church for opportunity, or suppress himself. Or put aside the spiritual desires implanted of God and go into secular employment because of a strong feeling of dissatisfaction with the subordinate position which is all that is open to him. It is of supreme importance that we discover, as far as we can, the method of training used by the Apostle.

First, are we establishing the C of E (C) or churches? For Paul this difficulty did not exist because he did not create it. “He set up no organisation intermediate between his preaching and the establishment of a fully organised indigenous church. It is interesting to speculate what would have happened if at the end of his first missionary journey, St. Paul had hastened back to Antioch to entreat for the assistance of two or three presbyters to supervise the growth of the churches in South Galatia, pleading that unless he could secure this help he would be unable to enter the open door which he saw before him.” The fact is that after preaching in a place for five or six months he left a church still need-

ing guidance, but capable of growth and expansion. The question is, how could he so train his converts as to be able to leave them after so short a time with any security that they would be able to stand and grow? If we did this we would be accused of mad desertion. Yet we would leave them with the whole Bible in the vernacular, unlike Paul's converts, who also had little acquaintance with the background of the Old Testament. In addition we leave converts a vast treasure of theological literature, then non-existent.

Moreover his supervision was minimal. He visited after eighteen months or more for short periods as and when he could. His helpers were sent to visit, not stay, to educate ignorant congregations incapable of maintaining their own life about fundamental truths. He was careful not to lose touch with new converts; to give them sorely needed visits and instruction, which they received. No doubt he was in constant communication with them by one means or another. But he did not remain in one church to exercise personal government, employing catechists as a stepping-stone to appointing a full ministry.

So we must consider what St. Paul taught his converts. Besides the elements contained in his preaching, he left a tradition to which he constantly refers. Christian practice and doctrine is set forth in some detail. Holy Communion involved a careful statement of the institution and practices to be observed. The resurrection involved the risen Lord's appearances. Hence we may infer that the preached doctrines were reinforced by teachings on the facts and life of Christ upon which the doctrine rested. We simply do not know if this tradition was written down at this time.

Further the Old Testament was transferred from the Jewish people to whom it was originally given, to another people and made their foundation stone. Churches even today regard this as an inconvenient textbook to put in new converts' hands. How could the Apostle teach this book in six months to the slaves and labourers, even if they could read when they came to him? Yet it is plainly used as his textbook in teaching them. And they quickly caught his method of interpreting it, so when the churches met, anyone who had seen a passage pointing to Messiah, or encouraging the hope that was in them, shared it. It was the source of all early Christian literature. How much better Paul's method was than sending an occasional preacher to conduct a service and preach to the new church. Some listen, or quickly get the habit of not listening, whilst local prophets are kept silent. Thus Paul elicited more and more capacities in church members, instead of settling a minister like Timothy upon them.

He emphasised the two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and it is taken for granted in the letters he wrote that all were familiar with these. Thus Paul must have left the new churches with a simple system of Gospel teaching, two sacraments, a tradition of the main facts of the death and resurrection, and the Old Testament. No service forms were left except the Lord's Prayer. We are

not even certain if they had a written Gospel or any form of Creed. Yet it is precisely the simplicity and brevity which constituted strength. "By teaching the simplest elements in the simplest form to many, and by giving them the means by which they could for themselves gain further knowledge, by leaving them to meditate upon these few fundamental truths, and to teach one another what they could discover, St. Paul insured that his converts should really master the most important things." You watch the zeal of a new Christian who has spiritual insight into one simple and necessary truth. You will be astonished by his clarity. He has mastered one truth, whilst our Christians have a smattering of the knowledge of all the faith. Paul's method was simplicity and brevity at the beginning.

By doing this he ran grave risks, as the Judaistic controversy in Galatia, the moral and eucharistic scandals in Corinth witness. The Galatians were lightly armed against the Judaizers, yet St. Paul knew that circumcisers existed and were out for mischief. Does he repent of his dealings with the Galatians? Or express regrets at leaving them in haste and vulnerably untaught? He expresses horror at the Corinthian excesses amongst the converts. But when you read the instructions on Communion that he sent them by letter, he says it is what he taught them at the first. He was a great teacher, therefore the more necessary for him not to stay long. His quick departure gave scope to local talent. The churches had to depend upon their own resources.

The effect was that his converts became missionaries. There are no exhortations to missionary zeal in Paul's epistles. Rather, *From you sounded out the word of the Lord*. Roland Allen quotes Dr. Friedlander, "While the Jews regarded the conversion of unbelievers as, at the most, a meritorious work, for the Christians the spread of the doctrine of salvation was the highest and most sacred duty." This is not surprising when you consider they received the Spirit of Jesus, who came into the world to bring back lost souls to the Father. The reason for our failure is largely due to the fact that we quench that Spirit.

We must then consider what training for Baptism St. Paul gave Candidates. For baptism, as with the Philippian jailer, once Paul was satisfied that a spiritual change had happened, that there was some sign of repentance, some profession of faith, that sufficed. Whole households were baptised. But it does not follow that the great body of believers were baptised without careful instruction. Neither was baptism administered with thoughtless generality, or leaving the baptised to make their own way in Christ. Far less with long courses of instruction beforehand. The requirements were repentance and faith. The question is still, who decides if the candidate is honest in his confession? In some cases, Paul himself decided, but in Corinth he only baptised a few. The inference seems to be that he took the first decisions, but then practiced the principle of mutual responsibility. Others might make mistakes, but a little mutual responsibility was worth a great deal of verbal teaching.

The same was applied to the admission of elders, both deacons and presbyters. Paul appointed elders (Acts 14.23), but emphasises ‘good report’, which must mean others’ opinions were valued and they took responsibility with him. Nor is there evidence that the congregations appointed elders by election alone. They had some say, but the appointment was by Paul or his representative, and very soon this was concentrated in the hands of a single local bishop. Further, they were appointed to the assembly to which they belonged, which maintained very close bonds between them and those to whom they ministered. What a difference it makes if the congregation feels a responsibility to those set over them, and those set over them feel a responsibility to the flock. Elders appointed were not young, but selected for integrity, sober, grave, of reputation. Yet nothing is said of a cleansed heart or an unfeigned faith. This is because we cannot judge other men’s spiritual state. Rather their inward state is judged by whether the man is moral and holds to the faithful word as he has been taught. Paul simply refused to set up a test of the candidate’s spiritual state before God. Note Paul did not go on returning again and again to ordain elders.

When St. Paul ordained younger men Timothy took them away with him to act as his assistants and ministers, that they might receive deeper training than they could at home. Thoroughness marked it all. There is little proof they were highly educated, knowing Hebrew or a foreign language, or even all the facts of Christ’s life or of Greek philosophy. Rather they had a limited general education and some acquaintance with the Greek Old Testament, together with basic doctrine and knowledge of how to administer the sacraments.

Finally St. Paul was not content with ordaining one elder to each church. He ordained several, thus not leaving all authority concentrated in the hands of one man. It ensured regular sacraments, and the church was not left weak because all its sustenance was drawn from a single individual. Responsibility was divided, many helped, all grew, one generation was able to pass on to the next naturally, and young men with gifts could exercise them. To select on grounds of educational qualifications in the first place is to silence the divinely gifted natural preacher and also the older men, its natural leaders.

4. Paul’s method of dealing with organised churches.

Authority. Churches established with elders, a ministry of both settled pastors and itinerant prophets, were no longer dependent upon the Apostle. He might go away or die, but they grew in grace and numbers, lights in the surrounding darkness of heathenism, gradually overcoming. In Galatia *the churches were established in the faith and increased in number daily* (Acts 16. 5). Yet they were not independent of him, and on occasions he did not hesitate to assert

his authority over those churches which he had founded. He claimed to have received this authority directly from the Lord (2 Cor. 10. 8; 13. 10). He could write, *So ordain I in all the churches, or If I come again I will not spare*. These all occur in the Epistle to the Corinthians, in the face of the outrageous conduct of one individual. Yet he repudiates the very idea that he has 'lordship over their faith' (2 Cor. 1. 24). He only exercises his God-given authority in extreme necessity. He prefers to plead rather than enforce obedience to rules. It is important we examine these carefully, says Allen, "because they give us a most valuable insight into the method of the Apostle and greatly help us to understand the secret of his success". The areas he exercised his authority over are: purity, litigation, and the eating of meats offered to idols.

Fornication. The impurity and the easy-going attitude towards it of surrounding society greatly troubled the Jewish party within the Church. They argued that if the Law of Moses were not enforced, morals in the church would soon be dragged down. Events soon proved them right. Paul had only just ceased preaching in Thessalonica, and had been in constant communication with the church there, when he wrote his first epistle. Already adultery and fornication had to be given first place in the exhortations. In Corinth within two and a half years of leaving he writes to those who excelled in the gifts, yet it is obvious fornication was a common offence.

He does not appeal to the Law or to the Jerusalem decrees, or suggest rules excluding this offence be drawn up. He does not even threaten punishment. He exhorts and beseeches the Lord's people to whom the Holy Spirit has been given to surrender themselves to the guidance of that Holy Spirit who has been given to them that they may be holy in body and soul. He says uncleanness necessarily offends against the Holy Spirit and incurs the wrath of God. See the same in 1 Thess. 4. 1-8. Exhortations come late in the Epistle, but these take the most important place amongst them. Precisely the same language is used in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians 5. 11. Like his Master, the Lord Christ, he inculcated principles and left his followers to apply them. Not leaving vague principles, but unmistakably accurately explaining them in his teaching. Again and again he expresses his firm conviction that the church knows the will of God and will surrender itself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. His Gospel was not a Gospel of law, but of spirit.

It may be argued the Corinthians had a proud spirit and would not have tolerated autocratic interference from anyone, so Paul was forced to adopt pleading. No, for if it had been inculcated into them from the moment of conversion that they must obey church rules, they would never have thought any other way. It would have been the first duty of every convert. The reason Paul did not adopt this approach was that it was precisely what Paul did not believe, and therefore could not teach.

Litigation could have been dealt with by decreeing no convert should do it.

Instead Paul argues it is unworthy of men who are to judge the world and angels, to drag their brethren before a heathen judge. It involves the whole church, and it would be better to suffer wrong than thus to publish the immorality of the church. Such do not inherit the kingdom of God. Is that the language of a legislator?

Eating things offered to idols is outlawed in the Jerusalem decrees. Corinthians not only ate but also attended feasts at idol temples, which often had associations with impurity. Why then not quote the decree as final? Instead he appeals to the highest Christian virtue in his readers. He contrasts knowledge with charity; that acts based on knowledge injure and mislead the weak, so are sinful. To appeal to law is to leave the people unconvinced and uneducated and teaches them the habit of unreasoning obedience, and they become those who delight in the minutia of laws. Thus their consciences remain sluggish, and instead of looking to the Holy Spirit they look to clergy as guides. Paul's method would have left strife and division, but he reckons that better than sullen or unintelligent obedience to a rule, and an outward dead-calm peace.

Tertullian in his work *de Idolatria* shows that there was scarcely a trade or a business which Christians could engage in without being mixed up in idolatry of some sort. Slaves had no choice but attend idol feasts. Now suppose Paul had laid it down as a rule that no Christian could enter an idol temple. No convert could have continued in his or her trade as members of a heathen guild or society. Most of his converts who were artisans would have suffered great loss. They would then have been drawn back into the gulf of heathenism from which they had escaped. Physical separation from surrounding society is not to be encouraged, even though that gives immunity from certain temptations. For then their religion does not appear to belong to the people and the church does not grow.

Marriage and Divorce. Some might say on this Paul does lay down the law, that in 1 Corinthians 7 he writes with a tone of authority. Yet is that not written in answer to a plea for guidance? And is not Paul very careful to distinguish between the commands of the Lord and his own counsel? And is not the treatment inconclusive and incomplete? For instance he lays it down that widows may marry again but *in the Lord*, yet does not deal with this in the marriage of virgins. Even where he lays down a law by Christ's authority (7. 10), yet he issues instructions for a person acting contrary to that law he has just asserted (7. 11). It seems he expresses what is desirable rather than legislates for the Church. That he is clear-cut but reasons his arguments as supporting his expression of opinion. This bears out all we have seen.

Discipline. He is unhesitating in the need for this in flagrant cases, and calls upon the conscience of the whole Church. Silence is a denial of the Church's claim to be moral. Great crimes shock the whole congregation so none dares move. Not so little crimes, which get severely dealt with. Thus in Corinth he says the church has a duty to perform and he waits to see if they will perform it. In

this case all excommunicate by a majority, the offender accepts the discipline, repents and is restored. All this is far from modern methods. A man may laugh at a bishop's excommunication. After all, his conscience is by then deadened. But he cannot when the whole congregation, his neighbours, excommunicate him. Society around also knows the Church of God has expressed its disapproval. Paul stays away from Corinth until the church has realised and executed its duty, thus clearing itself of complicity in the offence. It is the body and its members, something Westerners find hard to grasp. Eastern life is more corporate. Paul as a last resort threatens to intervene, but only after he had tried by every method to make intervention unnecessary. "Thus he succeeds by failure where we often fail by succeeding."

Unity. Paul set out not to teach a solitary religion of individualists, but to bring into being a Church and those who were in fellowship with that body. This is not the unity of convenience of those living in the same area, believing the same doctrine, who thought it would be convenient to form a society for mutual assistance. Rather by baptism they were members of one another, and to Christians everywhere by the communion of one Spirit, common rites and a common baptism. All suffered dangers and hardships and hopes together.

So also were the churches. They were not independent of their common founder, the great Apostle, nor of one another. Thus he constantly refers to the churches in any province as one. For the collection for Jerusalem, each province appointed its officer to act on behalf of the province. In this they recognised the Body existed before they came into it, but now they were each a part of that Body of Christ. This fact Paul uses especially over women speaking in the church or covering their heads (1 Cor. 14. 36; 11. 16). For Paul the Church was prior to the churches, and the Church established the churches.

They were established on the great trade routes and were in communication, travelling prophets spent their lives going from church to church. Visitors came frequently, hospitality was offered and accepted and it would seem they sent letters of commendation (2 Cor. 3. 1). But their real unity lay in their spiritual unity, all being part of that one visible Body, so liable to attack from its enemies. Apostolic authority was recognised by all. And that included churches of which Paul was not the founder. Thus Paul takes it as foundational that unity exists. The need is not to get united, but to keep united. Allen says, "There was no such thing as spiritual unity expressed in outward separation... Outward opposition is a certain sign that spiritual unity does not exist. Spiritual unity in proportion to its perfection and fullness necessarily issues in common, united, harmonious expression, whether of word or act;"

Thus to mar the unity were sin; separation and schism express self-assertion. This is a sin against the Holy Ghost, involving the dividing of Christ. Unity might be broken, for the Jews in Jerusalem carefully maintained Jewish tradition, whilst the four provinces were almost entirely ignorant of that tradition. Take a

Macedonian coming up to Jerusalem, where circumcision, the Jewish Sabbath, ritual slaughter and everyday life reflected the Law. Further many Jewish Christians barely tolerated the Gentile convert as a sort of proselyte. Going to church he found Jewish prayers, all modelled on Jewish patterns. The only real point in common was devotion to Jesus of Nazareth. Now reverse that for a Jewish Christian to arrive in Corinth. He would have been horrified and thought he was witnessing unbridled licence, with toleration of idol feasts and a strange Greek system of thought. He would have welcomed the party of Jews who were Christians who said the only answer was to enforce the Mosaic Law on the entire Church. To omit anything would simply be the thin end of the wedge. And even amongst the Greeks there was little real unity of thought, even on the resurrection which some held to be purely spiritual.

Unity might be maintained in one of two ways. Either to say that the mother church at Jerusalem was the pattern and all were to conform, or to say the very imperfect churches of the four provinces were part of the eternal Church, still incomplete, and both they and the Jerusalem Church was part of that Church of God, so each might have customs suited to their own needs, both Jerusalem and the Gentiles.

That is what Paul did.

- 1) He refused to allow the universal application of particular precedents. Jewish customs were not to be imposed on the Four Provinces.
- 2) He refused to have a central directive body set up, even though there had been precedent in the Jerusalem Council.
- 3) He refused to establish rules for orthodoxy. Plenty have always wanted them, to define what a church may or may not do, to see what can be done without ceasing to be a part of the Catholic Church. None can be found in Paul's writings.
- 4) He refused to allow the universal application of precedents. Each case is tried on its merits.

Thus he did not try for uniformity of practice, but a spiritual unity, expressed in outward unity. He maintained this by:

- 1) Taking it for granted as a fact of Christian experience, that all suffer or rejoice together, welcome each other into their homes.
- 2) Himself trying to maintain that unity, especially with Jerusalem.
- 3) Encouraging mutual acts of help to one another.
- 4) Encouraging constant communication between the various churches.

A NORTHERN IRELAND MINISTRY

at Erne West Chapel, from September 1999 to March 2000

by Richard Mortimer

Prior to arriving in Springfield, Enniskillen, I knew only John Gowan (the Elder), the bare bones of the congregation's history, and their 'Doctrinal Statement.' So, although I perhaps should have been less concerned about what to expect, it was understandable for a student fresh out of theological college, who had never preached three times a week, to be more than a little anxious; would the people benefit from my ministry? How would they react to an Englishman preaching in their church? But I need not have been concerned. Straightaway it was obvious that here was a wonderful gathering of God's people. I had the immediate impression that there was something unusual by today's standards, and certainly different from the experiences we have had in England.

Before my going out to Enniskillen John Gowan had agreed that the emphasis in the morning service would be evangelistic. The initial thought was to work through the five points of Christian conversion in the morning, and Romans in the evening. This worked very well to begin with because on the second Lord's Day evening there was a Harvest Thanksgiving service, which was well attended. My approach to Paul's great epistle was to move quickly, to get the thrust of his tight argument. This meant that the service coincided with the monumental verses in ch 1 - vv 16 & 17, 'Justification by Faith.' This sermon, that morning's on repentance, from Luke 13. 1-5, and that on the fifth morning, from John 3. 1-10 'Ye must be born again,' did seem to be blessed by our gracious God. If they were better than the others it is only because of the wonderful grace of God. All good things come from Him!

It must be admitted that that sense of blessing was never quite felt again! After Christmas I went back determined to preach through the Acts of the Apostles, Haggai, and the second half of Ephesians since Erne West are used to a consecutive expository ministry. With hindsight this was a mistake, but, as they say, we learn by our mistakes.

It was my considerable pleasure and privilege to minister to those lovely people. I will never forget them, and hope to visit again, to preach or otherwise. That leaves me with just two things: a little about my friend George Davis, and about the beautiful countryside. George heard about my visit at last year's PRS conference and promised to look after me, which he more than did. He lives near Enniskillen, and many a blessed hour was spent at his home talking of the things of God. George works as a 'bus driver, and is a wonderful Christian man of rare maturity. When my family came over at the end of February my brother and his wife stayed in his country cottage which he keeps for Christians to use. If anyone wished to go to out I am sure George would be delighted to make it avail-

able. You will really enjoy his company and the wonderful unspoiled region of Co. Fermanagh, Ireland's Lake District.

THE SENTENCES

from Morning and Evening Prayer

by John Boys

When the sentences are read by the officiating minister, the people rise, in token of their reverence for the word of God, and they remain standing during the following exhortation, out of respect for the sacred office of him, who addresses them in God's name. There is no part of the service which has more influence in promoting that decent behaviour, which distinguishes the congregations of the Episcopal Church from all others, than these sentences. It may be well to observe that it is the usage of the people of this Church to rise, and continue standing on three other occasions, viz.:

1st. The reading of the Gospel.

2nd. Whenever the minister addresses them.

3rd. Whenever they participate in certain parts of the service, as the Psalter, the Creed, and the Psalms and Hymns in metre.

[The Sentences, which first appeared in the 1552 BCP, were much the same as the 1662]

All these texts of holy writ, premised, are (as the bells of Aaron) to stir up devotion, and to toll all into God's house.

The whole consists of two notes: Man's misery, and God's mercy.

The which are two chief motives unto prayer, as we find,

Precept : Matt 6. 9 *Pray ye after this manner, Our Father which art in heaven, admonishing us of our divine adoption our father; and of our being strangers or wanderers on earth, who art in heaven; that we may feel our need of aid, because pilgrims; and at the same time we have faith in seeking it, because we are sons of God.*

And Pattern : Luke 15. Want and woe in the lewd son, pity and plenty in the good father, occasioned repentance, never repented of. *Of the one, it is commonly said, 'A prayer without ills is like a bird without wings.'* Of the other, *I will come into thine house even upon the multitude of thy mercy.* Ps 5. 7. *To thee will I sing, because thou art my refuge, and merciful God.*

Wherefore the minister, under a due consideration of both, exhorteth the people in an Apostolic style, to confess their sins humbly to the Lord, who is *able* to hear, because 'Almighty', and willing to hear because 'most merciful'.

From the Works of John Boys, 1571-1625. To be continued...

WHAT USE HYMNS?

An enquiry

by Ed Powell

Since the time of the Reformation, when the principle of *sola Scriptura* dominated the thinking and actions of the reformers, there has been a debate about the use of hymns in worship services. Does the use of hymns violate the Protestant-Reformed principle that worship must centre upon and be governed by the Word of God? Do ‘man made’ chants, songs, and music violate *sola Scriptura*? Perhaps an examination of the use of God’s word in ‘worship services’ might help to clarify these ‘muddied waters’.

We read in Nehemiah 8. 5-8 that *Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the People, ...and blessed the Lord. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground, ...and the Levites caused the people to understand the law... So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*

Matthew Henry’s explanation of these verses reflects the thinking of other reformers. He writes:

What they read they expounded, showed the intent and meaning of it, and what use was to be made of it; they gave the sense in other words, that they might cause the people to understand the reading, v. 7, 8. Note, it is requisite that those who hear the word should understand it, else it is to them but an empty sound of words (Matt. 24. 15). It is therefore required of those who are teachers by office that they explain the word and give the sense of it. Understand thou what thou readest? and, Have you understood all these things? are good questions to be put to the hearers; but, How should we except some one guide us? is as proper a question for them to put to their teachers (Acts 8:30-31). Reading is good, and preaching good, but expounding brings the reading and the preaching together, and thus makes the reading the more intelligible and the preaching the more convincing.

Observe the duties that fall upon those who learn and those who teach. First, the hearers of the word must be conversant with the word. They must prepare themselves for their lessons, that is, they must ‘do their homework’ (read the Scriptures) in order that they may be made ready for their ‘lessons in class’ (church). Second, those who preach must be able to teach, to explain the nature and intended meaning of the word. Third, both hearers and expounders must be

governed, not only by *sola Scriptura*, but by *tota Scriptura*; that is, they must judge all things by Scripture alone and by all of Scripture. It is incumbent upon all that one portion of Scripture be not set against another. It must be understood in its whole as well as its parts, not using one portion to negate another.

We can see these principles applied in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. This book is composed largely of Scripture quotes which have been arranged in a biblical and systematic manner in conformity to an overall view of the nature and intent of the Scriptures as a whole. Verses are read, these are expounded, and all have been placed in appropriate places in the service. Modern versions of this book also use Scripture quotes taken from perverted texts, expounded in regard to Romanist doctrine, and are then placed in inappropriate places in order to subvert the intent of Scripture. An example of this is the placing of the *Gloria in Excelsis* in the 1662 as compared with present revisions; in the latter it is placed so that the congregation is praising the elements ('host') which implants the Romanist doctrine of the 'real presence of Christ' in the bread and wine.

Note that the 1662 Book of Common Prayer is a 'man made device' created for the proper expounding of the Scriptures in its whole and in its parts. Where Scripture is not quoted, nevertheless, it rests upon the general teachings (doctrines) of Scripture because the intent of its framers was that it would reflect the Scriptures. Now if this book could be considered by the reformers proper for worship, why may not other materials that are conformable to the Scriptures be used? Why then may not chants, hymns, and music of man's contrivance be used if they too are expounding Scriptural doctrine? Why may not hymns be used to teach us all that God is a mighty fortress, a bulwark never falling, that the church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord, and that amazing grace has saved a wretch like me.

We live in a very miscreant age; an age where Scripture is twisted to serve the will of man, where pulpits are occupied by the ambitious, and where 'separation of religion and state' have made the open preaching of the Gospel a virtual crime. Yet, even in this age, the public performance of traditional hymns, Christmas carols, and anthems (e.g., the United States Naval hymn) still testify to the Almighty God, the Holy Trinity, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Formally Protestant churches, though they have abandoned the preaching of the word from the pulpit, still have hymns pricking their consciences.

The servants of the Lord are to sing His praises in this life to the world's end; and in the next life, world without end.

John Boys, Dean of Canterbury 1619-1625

THE BIBLICAL ANSWER TO THE NEW AGE

A sermon preached at the Lewes Bible Conference, Sussex, 10th September 1994

by David Samuel

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2. 8-9).

The Bible has many warnings against false teaching and false teachers. Our Lord said to the disciples, *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*, and by the leaven He meant their teaching. In the epistle to the Galatians Paul also warned the Church of the Judaising teachers, and said *if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*.

Here in Colossians we have the warning against philosophy and vain deceit. False teaching is a recurring problem and danger to the Church in every age and we shall never be free from it. I think that is the first thing that Christians ought to be aware of. They must not think that they will come into a time when the Church will never be threatened by false teaching and false teachers. There is a spiritual warfare going on, and will continue to go on. Paul in this epistle has much to say also in contrast to his warnings about false teachers. He writes about the fulness of Christ. In verses two and three he says that *all riches of the full assurance and understanding* are to be found in Christ and in Christ *are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. He contrasts this fulness with the emptiness and the vanity of the false philosophy and teaching that was current at that time in Colossæ. He contrasts fulness in Christ, fulness of wisdom and truth and grace and salvation, with the emptiness and vanity of the false teaching.

I have been asked to speak on the antidote to the teaching of the New Age. Here it is. It is to be found in the fulness of the Gospel of God's grace to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we have hold of that, then we shall have no need of the false teaching that is current today in the world and even in the Church. But where there is wealth and where there are riches they must be guarded and protected, and so Paul issues the warning: *Beware lest any any spoil you*. The word *spoil* means 'rob you'. Beware lest any man rob you, he says, through philosophy and vain deceit. The words here might be translated: Beware lest any man lead you away captive, lead you a prey. Of course if we are robbed of the Gospel then we ourselves are led captive. It is a spoliation not merely of property but of our very selves. If the Gospel is removed then we are robbed of the light and

the truth of it. Our minds are darkened, and such a plight affects the whole man. That is what false teaching does. It darkens the mind, it enslaves the soul. So Paul issues this warning: Beware lest any man rob you of the gospel, of the riches that are in Christ. Beware lest any man lead you away captive, lead you away a prey.

There are four things in particular in this text that I want to speak about, each of the parts or elements of this text. First of all, what is meant by Paul when he speaks of philosophy and vain deceit. Second, what he means by the traditions of men. Third, by the rudiments of the world, and last, the fulness of Christ.

1. PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT.

Paul was in a sense not opposed to all philosophy. By that I mean he was a man of intellect himself and he used his intellect. The epistles that he wrote to the many churches of which he had oversight are proof of his intellect and his powers of logic and discernment. Thus he was not against the proper use of the intellect. The definition of preaching that Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones gives in his book *'Preaching and Preachers'* is 'logic on fire'. The Christian must use his mind, and when it comes to the exposition of the Gospel and the preaching of the Word, it calls for the application of the mind. We must be able to distinguish things that differ. There must be discernment. There must be the use of logic. So indeed I think that definition is true. Preaching is 'logic on fire'. We see that is especially true in the case of Paul's epistles.

Nor indeed was Paul opposed to wisdom. He says in 1 Corinthians 2. 6ff: *We speak wisdom ... but [it is] the hidden wisdom which God ordained.* It is the wisdom of divine revelation. It is that which God has disclosed to man through His Word. Paul draws a clear distinction between the wisdom of the world, the philosophy of the world, and the wisdom which is in Christ Jesus. That wisdom of God is God's special revelation to us, and Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapters one and two that we see that wisdom revealed in opposition to all the wisdom of man. The wisdom of man is foolishness before God, and we see the wisdom of God specially revealed in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. *We preach, he says, Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* So there is wisdom to be found in the scriptures, but it is contrasted with the wisdom of the world which is foolishness in the sight of God. Paul is not against the proper use of the intellect, nor is he against wisdom, but all our thinking and all our philosophising must go on in the wake of the Gospel.

The revelation of God must come first. Then all our thinking must be subject to the Gospel. It must always be subordinate to the truth which God has revealed. That is the proper place of the use of man's intellect - within the sphere of revelation. That is why Paul says in the second epistle to the Corinthians that every thought must be brought into captivity to the Lord Jesus Christ. *The*

weapons of our warfare, he said, are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10. 4-5). So we must never allow our own thinking, our own speculation, to take over. That is when the trouble begins in the Church, where man in his pride seems to think that he can rise superior to the Word of God and to the revelation of God. Instead of being under the Word and under the judgment of it in all his thoughts, he assumes he can be over it and begins to try to put the Word of God and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the strait-jacket of his own philosophy. That was precisely the problem at Colossæ.

Paul wrote this epistle in order that he might remind the Christians at Colossæ and the teachers there that they must be subject to and under the authority of God's Word. There were certain false teachers in Colossæ who had arisen who wanted to give free rein to their ideas and their philosophy. They wanted to make that superior to the Word of God. Of course they wanted to be regarded as Christians, and they wanted to be a part of the Church. Yet they wanted the message to be controlled by human philosophy. That is why Paul says: Beware lest any man rob you, lead you a prey, lead you captive, through philosophy and vain deceit. The Christian faith was being corrupted at Colossæ by that kind of thing, and they wanted to mould and fashion the Gospel according to human wisdom. That philosophy which was becoming prevalent at Colossæ and throughout the ancient world at that time was called Gnosticism.

We have already heard the term Gnosticism which means, very simply, knowledge, a secret knowledge in the case of Gnosticism. Gnosticism is of course one of the roots of New Age teaching today. The early Gnostics taught that man is redeemed by this secret knowledge which they alone were able to communicate. The Gnostic redeemer who they claimed was Jesus had come into the world to communicate that secret knowledge. He was the bearer of it. All souls existed prior to their present existence in this world in a heavenly state, and now they were fallen and had become imprisoned in a material body. The secret of this Gnostic teaching was that by this knowledge men and women would be delivered from their bodies and would be able to resume their heavenly state. However, Christ's incarnation was one of the real problems the Gnostics had to face. The Gnostics taught that our Lord's incarnation was not a real one, but only an apparent one, because matter, the body, was evil. This revelation which was given, this *gnosis*, this secret knowledge to deliver men from their present enslavement and captivity in the body, would restore them to that heavenly pre-existent state. This knowledge came to them through Christ. Christ's office as Redeemer was not unique. When believers received this knowledge, they too became christs, just as Christ was. What we see here is something that is very current in the teaching of New Age at the present time, the divinisation of man.

He is a god. We are gods, just as Christ is God. There is nothing unique or special about the office of the Redeemer. We see here some very real affinities and resemblances to the New Age movement.

The New Age movement concentrates upon the year 2000 and it alleges that the year 2000 will mark the beginning of a New Age, the Age of Aquarius, and that the era that will then dawn holds out a great hope and prospect for the spiritual utopia of mankind, passing from one age to another. New Agers say we shall pass from the Age of Pisces, the fish, which was the symbol of Christianity, into the New Age of Aquarius, the water bearer. This is a New Age of group psychic spirituality. Man is casting off the old beliefs and the old ideas of Judaeo-Christian monotheism and its ethic. There will be a radical shift in understanding and emphasis at this time as we approach the year 2000.

Man will evolve into maturity for the first time in his existence. Man will become fully human, and indeed fully divine. He will cast off the old deities. He will cast off the subjection to the idea of a God who is transcendent and he will become conscious of the divinity within himself. Man will become god. That is the divine plan according to the teaching of the New Age. He will no longer speak of the God who is out there, the transcendent God, but of the God within. He will do this by tapping the occult forces and powers, and by the release of the powers within by the exploration of his own consciousness, and by transcendental meditation. He will become conscious of his divine nature. I think a lot of this sort of thing to which the New Agers look forward is something that they hope to achieve, not simply on their own, not merely by a frontal assault on the Church, but indeed by the infiltration of the churches by turning the spirituality of the Church to their particular way of thinking.

There are many people today in the churches who are susceptible to this kind of thing. In fact the liberalisation of the church which has been going on for 100 years and more, has made it ready for just such a sort of take-over as the New Agers are looking for.

Liberalism today in the main line denominations is generally in the ascendant. There are many indications of that. The way in which the General Synod of the Church of England voted for the ordination of women some years ago is an indication of the ascendancy of Liberalism in that church. There has been a battle going on in the Church of England for the last 100 years and more, between conservatives, particularly Anglo-Catholic conservatives, and Liberals. Whereas in the earlier part of the century the Anglo Catholics were themselves hopeful of winning that battle, and coming out on top, it has now clearly been won by the Liberals. This is the colouring of the thinking, and the teaching, not only in the Church of England, but in the other main line denominations in this country at the present time. There are many indications of it.

There is the case of the Reverend Anthony Freeman in the Diocese of Chichester recently who wrote a book called *'God With Us'*, in which he said

there is nothing out there. There is no transcendent God, or if there is we can have no knowledge of it. God, he said in his book, is within us. So you see how compatible this sort of Liberal teaching is, this Christian humanism which now seems to control the thought of many people within the Church. How compatible it is, and it fits in well with that of the New Age teachers themselves!

There is nothing new in a sense about all this because, as somebody said, the New Age is in fact the old lie. It is the old wisdom and the old philosophy of Satan, who said to the woman in the Garden, *Ye shall not surely die*. God had said to the man and to the woman that they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which was in the midst of the garden. *For*, He said to Adam, *in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*. But Satan counters that and says: *Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods...* You will be elevated. You will realise your divinity. You will recognise that you yourselves are gods. That is the old lie. That is the old wisdom and philosophy of Satan which has manifested itself at different times, in the pagan religions, and particularly in this subtle Gnostic teaching which was going on at Colossæ at the time that Paul was writing. We are seeing it now being revived in a very significant way by the New Age movement and its teachers. It is the same thing as we read about in the book of Isaiah where we have the description of Satan in chapter 14, verses 13-14. We have these words about Satan and his aspirations: *For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high.*

That is the wisdom. That is the pride, of Lucifer, of Satan, in his desire to aspire to the status that God Himself has. That is the sort of teaching that he has always tried to instill into mankind, at the beginning, and now at this present time. In the Book of Revelation we have the number of the beast which is Six, Six, Six. John said let him who can understand discern what this means. There are those who think that since the number of man is six, the triune six is a mark of the divinisation of man. Now this is the way that Satan thinks, and he seeks to draw man away from the truth and to instill in him this ancient philosophy of his, that man can be a god, that he can order all things according to his will. Man doesn't have to be subject to the transcendent God, Jehovah, to the God out there, for he is himself a god within. It is there that he has to look to understand his divinity. Tyndale said of philosophy, rather mockingly, that it is *philautia*. It is the love of self. That, I believe, is very true. Beware, says Paul, lest any man spoil you, rob you, of the riches of Christ in the Gospel through philosophy. Observe its origin. See where it has come from, from the pit, from Satan. Observe what an idol it is. It looks to be a very bright and shining idol, like that which Daniel saw in his vision. Yet its feet are feet of clay. When we look at

this philosophy, it is empty, it is deceitful. As our first parents discovered, instead of being elevated when they disobeyed the commandment of God, they were cast down, and they were expelled from the garden. So that is the first thing: *lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit*. The second thing Paul warns against is *the tradition of men*.

2. THE TRADITION OF MEN

Tradition played an important part in the Gnostic teaching. It was handed down by secret tradition, by oral tradition. It was confined to the few, and only the initiated were admitted to this superior and secret knowledge. However, it was a purely human philosophy and human knowledge. Here we have in a sense a parallel with Christianity, because of course Christianity also has its tradition. Where you have truth you will have the counterfeit of the truth.

The tradition Paul speaks about in his epistles is the apostolic tradition which is handed down. *For I have received*, he says, *of the Lord, that which also I delivered* (that is *paradosis*, the handing on, the tradition *unto you* (1 Corinthians 11. 23 & 15. 3). This is the apostolic truth, the preaching of the Gospel. Again he says: *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also* (2 Timothy 2. 2). Again, *Hold fast the form of sound words* (2 Timothy 1. 13). This apostolic tradition is not secret. It is committed to the elders of the Church. It is meant to be taught to the people, to the whole church publicly. It is not a human tradition like that of Gnosticism, but it is divine. It is from above.

There are two kinds of tradition. There is true tradition, the apostolic tradition. There is false tradition. There is open tradition, and secret. There is written tradition, and oral. There is apostolic tradition, and spurious tradition. The apostolic tradition has been committed to writing in the books of the New Testament. There it is. It is written down. It is sealed up. It is complete. Moreover it is final. We have a corpus of divine apostolic tradition and revelation given to us in the writings of the scriptures, in the writings of the New Testament, and it is distinguished in that way from all other tradition. That is the test. That is the yardstick by which we measure all other teachings and traditions. Beware of the traditions of men, says Paul, lest you be spoiled and robbed of the truth by them. And how can you do this? You can do it by bringing everything to the yardstick of Scripture. If it is not according to Scripture, then it is not true, and it is the duty of the Church to guard this sacred deposit and to hand it on uncorrupted.

The duty is given to the Church. This is why it is so important that we are careful about the Bible translations that we use. There are many translations of the Bible in circulation today. Many of them have been brought out and published under the influence of Liberal teachings in the Church. You can see them. They have been coloured and influenced by that Liberal teaching. If you com-

pare the Authorised Version, which is a faithful translation of the Textus Receptus, with more recent versions, you will see how those more recent versions deviate very often from the truth. It is the business then of the Church to be careful and to hand on this truth, this apostolic tradition, uncorrupted. We are to distinguish the true from the false as our Lord did when He warned His disciples to beware of the leaven, that is of the doctrine of the Pharisees. He said in His teaching, *In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold, he said to the Pharisees, the tradition of men.*

So we must distinguish between the doctrines of God and the tradition of men. This is what the great battle of the Reformation was fought about. This is what was at the centre of the whole thing, to distinguish the apostolic truth of God's Word from the traditions of men which had grown up in the Church and which were being fostered by the Church of Rome. Everything must be subjected to the test of God's Holy Word. That was Cranmer's great design. He wanted a Church that was truly reformed, and he said catholic teaching is Scripture teaching; If it is not the teaching of Scripture, it is not catholic teaching. That was his understanding of catholic truth, and that is surely what it must be. The same is true today with regard to all other traditions.

When we come to this question of New Age teachings we must apply the same principle to distinguish the traditions of men by which Christians can be robbed and spoiled of the truth of God.

New Age teaching is, as somebody has said, the perennial philosophy. That is it has been around for a very long time. It draws upon many different sources, Gnosticism, paganism, mysticism, astrology, theosophy, spiritualism, magic, witchcraft. It draws upon all these things. It is a corpus of tradition and of teaching that is informed from many different sources, and from many different authors such as C.G. Jung, Teilhard de Chardin the Jesuit philosopher, William Blake, Schopenhauer the atheistic philosopher of the last century, Blavatsky, Alice Bailey and Annie Besant. All of these people have contributed to this corpus of New Age teaching. It's a very difficult thing to get hold of, because it comes from so many different directions.

It is said today that there are 3,000 bookshops in the USA alone which are selling New Age books and writings, and there are 80,000 New Age books in circulation. There are many thousands of childrens' books which convey this sort of teaching, and if they were all brought together at the present time what an enormous bonfire could be made of them all! It reminds me of the bonfire of which we read in the Acts of the Apostles (chapter nineteen, verse 19), at Ephesus, because Ephesus was a centre of the magic arts and pagan teaching. Following the preaching of Paul, many of those who practised these curious arts and listened to this kind of Gnostic teaching, brought their books together, and they burned them. Those books contained incantations and spells and mantras

of one sort or another, just the kind of things which are being used today by the New Age movement. All the machinery and the instruments of the occult were in those books. They burned them and they counted the price of them. They found that it came to 50,000 pieces of silver.

These traditions and writings which were current in the age in which Paul lived, and which presented a threat to the churches at that time, are presenting a threat to the churches today, and are being revived in different ways. They must all be tested by the Word of God and confronted by the scriptures. *All things, says Paul, that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.* If we bring whatever it is to the Word of God, the Word of God is the true light and it will discover error. It will reveal the darkness of these things, and so it is to the Word of God that they must be brought, and by which they must be tested. Or as Isaiah put it in addressing the same kind of situation many years before, in Isaiah 8. 19-20: *And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

Seek not unto them that have familiar spirits, that is to the necromancers, to the spirit charmers, to those who evoke the dead by incantations and wizards. That is those who claimed supernatural knowledge, who peep (that is use ventriloquism), who pretend that these were the voices of the dead that were speaking. As we know today, in spiritualism, the very same sort of thing is used. Ventriloquists project their voices to give the impression that the dead are speaking, and mutter (that is speak from their bellies to make it seem that the spirits were talking). Now, says Isaiah, do not turn to these. Do not turn to the occult powers. Instead look to God, and look to His Word, *to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* So judge everything, all traditions and all teachings, by the Word of God, lest by philosophy and vain deceit and by the traditions of men the churches should be deceived.

3. THE RUDIMENTS OF THIS WORLD

Thirdly, Paul mentions in this verse *the rudiments of this world.* Or it might be translated 'elements,' or 'elemental spirits' of the world. Beware lest any man spoil you through the elemental spirits of the world, that is the non-christian rudiments of religion, Jewish or heathen. Do not be drawn away by these, says Paul. Do not return to them.

In the New Age movement we are seeing a great revival of paganism. That is one of its fundamental motifs, an appeal to the elemental or earth spirits. Schopenhauer, whom I have mentioned, who was the great atheistic philosopher in Germany in the last century, greatly influenced Wagner. Wagner's mission, as

he saw it, was to restore paganism to Europe, to oust Christianity, which he regarded as the new religion, to bring back 'joyful' paganism. Wagner considered that the Jewish/Christian God was the root of all evil. Europe had to be restored to the pre-Christian past and to pagan religion. 'The Ring Cycle', which he wrote, was intended to awaken the German people to this special mission which he thought belonged to them, to their destiny. They were to bring about the reinstallation of the pagan gods once more.

The New Age movement generally seeks to roll back the tide of Christianity in the western world. As I have said before, it regards this year 2000 as a sort of watershed, a transition from the age of Christianity and its Jewish past to the New Age of man's self-maturity and self-realisation. The old age is dying, the New Age of revived paganism is dawning, they say. They wish to see a paradigm shift, a shift in the whole understanding and emphasis from the Christian ethos in society to that of paganism. Surely there are many indications at the present time that that very thing is going on. We have seen how the whole ethos of a Christian ethic and Christian belief seems to be fading. At one time peoples' view of the world was conditioned by the teaching of the Bible, but today they seem to be in some sort of spiritual vacuum and they are open to these new ideas - which are old ideas - of revived paganism, of witchcraft, of the fertility cults, of the worship of nature, of the gods of nature, the worship of Baal and Astarte, and the earth spirits, the elemental spirits of the earth, which Paul is speaking about here in this verse.

One of the key understandings of paganism is that the earth is a sort of goddess. The earth mother mates with the sky father. Now a great deal of the present thinking about ecology is being drawn into this mystical understanding. Many people rightly feel that we must conserve the earth's resources, that we have a responsibility to future generations, now that we live as it were in a global village. We are all conscious that the earth's material resources are finite. People say we must do something about it. The New Age, and this revival of paganism, plays upon that goodwill, and leads people on to a mystical understanding of the world and of the earth. It gives it a spiritual dimension. People are told that the earth 'feels', that it is sensitive, and that it is a living thing. It is a short step from that to worshipping the earth, *thegaia*, as a goddess. There is about us all at the present time this consciousness of a reviving of these ideas and thoughts of paganism. One way of forwarding the revival of paganism, as I said a little earlier, is not by a frontal assault upon the Christian church, but by seeking to subvert and to paganise the Christian churches by drawing them subtly into that way of thinking.

Back in 1986, I don't know whether you remember, there was a gathering of all the leaders of the world's religions in Assisi presided over by the Pope and by the Duke of Edinburgh, and the explicit purpose of that gathering at Assisi was concern for the planet earth, for the conservation of its resources, to save our

planet, and to preserve its ecology. It was a gathering of religions. All religions were expected to come together in a sort of syncretistic way in order to further this purpose. Following that, in a number of cathedrals up and down this country, you may recall that there were services held initiating a rainbow covenant. The rainbow in those covenants was nothing to do with the symbol of God's mercy, of which we read in the book of Genesis, but the rainbow in the New Age movement is a means of access to the occult powers. So you see, getting these services, with this liturgy, held in these great Christian centres in this country, was seen as a means of infiltrating and paganising Christianity.

This last week or so there was the big so-called Christian festival of the Greenbelt in Bedfordshire. I read the account in the paper which said that the liturgy was written around the images of creation, the tree of life and the universal rhythms of nature. You see what is happening. There were 30,000 young people from Christian backgrounds brought together. Where else would you get a gathering of that sort? They were indoctrinated with these ideas of a paganised Christianity which has more to do with nature than it has with the revelation of God's truth in His Word. Well now all these things are pointers and indications of what is happening in the Christian churches at the present time.

Feminism also has brought in a very powerful influence into this sort of thing. Indeed, I think I can say that the decision to ordain women to the ministry of the Church of England is a major step in that direction, because in paganism, priestesses are devoted to the ceremonies and the worship of goddesses, or a goddess, and that is the necessity for female priests. In fact the Apostolic Constitutions say that priestesses were ordained for female deities and are heathen and not Christian. So you see what is happening. A major step like that has meant that a dominant Christian church in this country has taken a lurch in that direction. At the ordination retreat of a number of these ladies who were being ordained to the priesthood at Hereford Cathedral just recently, they all gathered together in a circle and joined hands and danced around in the churchyard outside the cathedral, and stroked the statues of bishops. Now what were they doing? This is all part of pagan practice. By holding hands and dancing in circles, you are raising the spirits of the earth, the elemental spirits. Now many people when they are challenged say they are doing nothing of the sort, but they are unconscious of the fact that these are the ideas, this is the sort of influence that is now being brought to bear upon the practice and the worship of the Christian church.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments, or elemental spirits, of the world and not after Christ. Then Paul goes on to say in verse nine: *For in him, that is in Christ, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* That is the answer to all these lies of philosophy, of tradition, of the rudiments of the world. The answer is the fulness of the truth that is found in Jesus Christ.

4. IN HIM DWELLETH ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY

Paul says to the Colossians that we believers are complete in the Lord Jesus Christ and so need none of these traditions, philosophies and rudiments of the world. In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. God is to be found in Him, personally, and nowhere else. Our Lord said, *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*. Like the rays of the sun concentrated in a magnifying glass, which are brought into a small compass and then radiate out again, so all the glory of Almighty God is to be seen in the person, in the face, of our Lord Jesus. It is there that we meet with God in contradistinction to all the other claims of false philosophies and traditions and of those who seek to revive the pagan teachings. God is to be found only in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be found outside Him. *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son* (Hebrews 1: 1-2). God spoke from heaven at the baptism of His Son, and said: *This is my beloved Son: hear Him*. Obey Him, hear His teaching and receive it. So God says to mankind in all the Scriptures: I will meet with you, I will deal with you, but it is through My Son alone. In the Lord Jesus Christ those of us who believe see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. There is communication. There is fellowship. There is traffic between heaven and earth, but it is solely through the one mediator, between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. In Him we have everything that we need. We are complete in Him, for He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. So He is all in all as the scriptures say. *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life* (1 John 5: 12). What more can we ask? If we have Jesus Christ we have all things. All things are yours, says Paul, *whether ... life, or death or things present or things to come; all are yours and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's*. So we need nothing more. As Charles Wesley has summed it up in that great hymn of his: 'Thou, O Christ art all I want. More than all in Thee, I find.' So what need have we if we rightly understand these things, if we keep in mind the fulness of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, for all that is needful is measured up for us in Him. What need have we of the beggarly elements of the world, the threadbare principles of earthly religion, the vain speculations of human philosophy, the counterfeit of human traditions? We have no need of any of these things.

We are full, replete with the riches of God's grace to us in Jesus Christ, and we have no need of such miserable fare. Nevertheless, Paul says: Understand these things. Understand what are your riches in the Lord Jesus Christ. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. Amen.

From **FAITH'S CHEQUEBOOK**

by **Charles Haddon Spurgeon**

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.” - (2 Peter 2:9).

The godly are tempted and tried. That is not true faith which is never put to the test. But the godly are delivered out of their trials, and that not by chance, nor by secondary agencies, but by the Lord Himself. He personally undertakes the office of delivering those who trust Him. God loves the godly or godlike, and He makes a point of knowing where they are, and how they fare.

Sometimes their way seems to be a labyrinth, and they cannot imagine how they are to escape from threatening danger. What they do not know their Lord knows. He knows whom to deliver, and when to deliver, and how to deliver. He delivers in the way which is most beneficial to the godly, most crushing to the tempter, and most glorifying to Himself. We may leave the ‘how’ with the Lord, and be content to rejoice in the fact that He will, in some way or other, bring His own people through all the dangers, trials, and temptations of this mortal life, to His own right hand in glory.

This day it is not for me to pry into my Lord’s secrets, but patiently to wait His time, knowing this, that though I know nothing, my heavenly Father knows.

“The prayer of the upright is his delight” - Proverbs 15:8

This is as good as a promise, for it declares a present fact, which will be the same throughout all ages. God takes great pleasure in the prayers of upright men; He even calls them His delight. Our first concern is to be upright. Neither bending this way nor that, continue upright: not crooked with policy, nor prostrate by yielding to evil, be you upright in strict integrity and straightforwardness. If we begin to shuffle and shift, we shall be left to shift for ourselves. If we try crooked ways, we shall find that we cannot pray, and if we pretend to do so, we shall find our prayers shut out of heaven.

Are we acting in a straight line and thus following out the Lord’s revealed will? Then let us pray much and pray in faith. If our prayer is God’s delight, let us not stint Him in that: which gives Him pleasure. He does not consider the grammar of it, nor the metaphysics of it, nor the rhetoric of it; in all these men might despise it. He, as a Father, takes pleasure in the lisplings of His own babes, the stammerings of His new-born sons and daughters. Should we not delight in prayer since the Lord delights in it? Let us make errands to the throne. The Lord finds us enough reasons for prayer, and we ought to thank Him that it is so.

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**MATERIAL FOR DECEMBER ISSUE OF *THE JOURNAL*
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We thank all those who sent the names and addresses of others requiring the Journal, or whose names needed deleting. We are very grateful to all who sent donations. Please note that all address details supplied to the Editor for mailing purposes are treated as confidential. We do not pass on addresses to anyone.

* We apologise to our readers for the word demon which we are obliged to use as it is the name of the internet provider (Demonstration), and has nothing to do with the occult.

CHURCHES

St. Mary's, Castle Street, Reading. Sunday Services: 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer (first Sunday Lord's Supper), 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer (third Sunday Lord's Supper). Tuesday 8.00 pm Bible Study. *Enquiries* 0118 959 5131.

Former Congregation of St. John the Baptist with St. Mary-le-Port, Chapel of the Three Kings, Foster's Almshouses, top of Christmas Steps, Colston Street, Bristol 1. Sunday Service: 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer. *Enquiries* 01934 712520.

Nuffield Congregation meeting with Nuffield Parish Church, near Henley-on-Thames, the Rev. John F. Shearer. Sunday Services: 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer, 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer. Lord's Supper 8.00 a.m. first Sunday, 6.30 p.m. third Sunday. Bible Study Wednesday 8.00 p.m. *Enquiries* 01491 641305.

St. John's Church, South London Meeting at the Shaftesbury Home, Trellis House (Mill Road (off Merton High Street), Colliers Wood, SW19), for 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer and 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer. Midweek as intimated. *Enquiries* 0208 642 7885 or 0208 742 0151

St. Silas Church, Wolverhampton, in Bethany Chapel, Lower Prestwood Road (junction Blackwood Avenue), Wednesfield. Sundays 12.40 p.m. Morning Prayer (followed by Holy Communion first Sunday); 4.00 p.m. Evening Prayer (Holy Communion third Sunday). Tuesdays (only in term time): 4.15 pm. Tuesday Class; 5.30 pm. Homework Club; 7.00 pm. Bible Study with 7.45 pm. Prayer Time. *Enquiries* 01547 528815.

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