

HERE WE STAND

**a contemporary record of
conscience captive
to the Word of God**

DEDICATION

**GLORY BE TO GOD THE FATHER,
GLORY BE TO GOD THE SON,
GLORY BE TO GOD THE SPIRIT,
GREAT JEHOVAH, THREE IN ONE
GLORY, GLORY,
WHILE ETERNAL AGES RUN!**

(Horatius Bonar - Scottish Seceder 1843)

FAITH

'... no alterations have been made but such as appear to be desirable to bring the Services of the Church into harmony with the Holy Scriptures, and the Protestant and Evangelical principles which are to be found, as we believe, in the same Scriptures, when rightly understood, and equitably construed...'

(The Preface, Free Church of England Prayerbook)

HOPE

'How will you escape if you neglect such a glorious offer of salvation? What would the damned spirits now in the prison of hell give if Christ was so freely offered to them? And why are we not lifting up our eyes in torments? Does anyone out of this great multitude dare say he does not *deserve* damnation? Why are we left, and others taken away by death? What is this but an instance of God's free grace, and a sign of His good-will toward us? Let God's goodness lead us to repentance. Oh, let there be joy in heaven over some of you repenting!'

(Reverend George Whitefield preaching to thousands on Kennington Common)

CHARITY

'The choice facing us all is stark: are we to engage upon an endless war of attrition which harms the gospel... or do we have the generosity and charity to give each other the space we all need?'

(Anglo-Catholic Bishop John Broadhurst on the publication of **CONSECRATED WOMEN?** A contribution to the Women Bishops Debate (Forward in Faith 2004))

HERE WE STAND

- a contemporary record of conscience captive to the Word of God

THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND (EVANGELICAL CONNEXION)

Introduction to a Church of England Evangelical Tradition

(a reply to Dr John Fenwick)

CONTENTS

A Puritan Prayer

Acknowledgements

Declaration of Principles

Foreword by The Reverend Angus Parnaby

Introduction: Why this book? - Rt Revd Dr J Barry Shucksmith

Chapter 1: A Theological and historical overview David Streater

Chapter 2: Then and Now - the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Free Church of England
Dominic Stockford

Chapter 3: The Disunited Church 1927-2004 (see Fenwick, chapter eight)
Barry Shucksmith

Chapter 4: New Blood for the FCE Barry Shucksmith & Dominic Stockford

Chapter 5: Putting the Record Straight Barry Shucksmith & Arthur Bentley-Taylor

Chapter 6: Standing or falling? What is the Gospel? Arthur Bentley-Taylor

Chapter 7: "This Church will maintain communion with all Christian churches"
James Lee Potter

Chapter 8: The Future Evangelical Connexion - Some lessons from George Whitefield
Barry Shucksmith

Chapter 9: The FCE (Evangelical Connexion) Barry Shucksmith

Concluding reflections Bishop John Charles Ryle (Edited by Barry Shucksmith)

Appendices:

1. Agenda for Renewal - Barry Shucksmith

2. Document - talks with the CofE

3. Analysis of the CofE/FCE talks - Arthur Bentley-Taylor

4. Episcopacy - Barry Shucksmith

5. Reply to the Bishop's "excommunication of the churches" - Barry Shucksmith

6. The Ecumenical movement - Reginald Burrows

Chapter Notes

Bibliography

Index

A Puritan Prayer

Truth In Jesus

LIFE-GIVING GOD,

Quicken me to call upon thy name,
for my mind is ignorant,
my thoughts vagrant,
my affections earthly,
my heart unbelieving,
and only thy Spirit can help my infirmities.

I approach thee as Father and friend,
my portion for ever,
my exceeding joy,
my strength of heart.

I believe in thee as the God of nature,
the ordainer of providence,
the sender of Jesus my saviour.

My guilty fears discourage an approach to thee,
but I praise thee for the blessed news
that Jesus reconciles thee to me.

May the truth that is in him
illuminate in me all that is dark,
establish in me all that is wavering,
comfort in me all that is wretched,
accomplish in me all that is of thy goodness,
and glorify in me the name of Jesus.

I pass through a vale of tears
but bless thee for the opening gate of glory at its end.

Enable me to realise as mine the better, heavenly country.

Prepare me for every part of my pilgrimage.

Uphold my steps by thy Word.

Let no iniquity dominate me.

Teach me that Christ cannot be the way if I am the end,
that he cannot be redeemer if I am my own saviour,
that there can be no true union with him
while the creature has my heart,
that faith accepts him as redeemer and Lord or
not at all.

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I should first of all like to express my gratitude to many Christians who have urged me to edit a reply to Dr John Fenwick's new ecumenical history of The Free Church of England. As they come from a variety of church backgrounds, it is an ecumenical venture in its own right.

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Reverend Reg Burrows kindly gave his permission to print his full and helpful statement on modern Ecumenism, as an appendix. As a former General Secretary of the Free Church of England, we much value his contribution.

Reverend David Page, St Giles Christian Mission, Islington, contributed the group photograph which was taken at a recent meeting of the continuing evangelical FCE churches, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Finally, my thanks go to Ross Thomson and Hetna Nayee, AuthorHouse, for their wise guidance and help in seeing through the process leading to the publication of our book. The contributors can genuinely say, our great desire is Soli Deo Gloria, for the Glory of God alone.

Barry Shucksmith

Declaration of Principles

The Free Church of England, otherwise called The Reformed Episcopal Church, which is a branch of the Holy Catholic Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, united by Faith to Him, who is the Head over all things to the Church which is His Body, and recognising the essential unity of all who, by a like Faith, are united to the one Divine and Common Head, doth make declaration of its Principles as follows:-

1. The Free Church of England, otherwise call The Reformed Episcopal Church, holding “the faith once delivered to the saints”, declares its belief in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and the sole Rule of Faith and Practice; in the creed commonly called “The Apostles’ Creed”; in the Divine Institution of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; and in the doctrines of grace substantially as they are set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion.

2. This Church recognises and adheres to Episcopacy, not as of Divine right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of Church polity.

3. This Church, retaining a Liturgy which shall not be repressive of freedom in prayer, accepts the Book of Common Prayer, as it was received, prepared, and recommended for use by the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, A.D. 1785, reserving full liberty to alter, abridge, enlarge, and amend the same, as may seem most conducive to the edification of the people, “provided that the substance of the faith be kept entire”.

4. This Church CONDEMNNS and REJECTS the following erroneous and strange doctrines as contrary to God’s word:-

First, that the Church of Christ exists only in one order or form of ecclesiastical polity:

Second, that Christian ministers are ‘priests’ in another sense than that in which all believers are a ‘royal priesthood’:

Third, that the Lord’s Table is an altar on which the oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ is offered anew to the Father:

Fourth, that the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper is a presence in the elements of Bread and Wine:

Fifth, that regeneration is inseparably connected with Baptism.

In accordance with the liberty given in Article 3 of the above Declaration of Principles, this Church accepts the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, with such revisions as shall exclude sacerdotal doctrines and practices.

This Church, as a Reformed and Protestant Church, doth hereby reaffirm its constant witness against all those innovations in doctrines and worship, whereby the primitive faith hath been from time to time defaced or overlaid, and which at the Reformation were disowned and rejected.

This Church will maintain communion with all Christian Churches and will set forward, so far as in it lieth, quietness, peace, and love, among all Christian people.

Forward

My credentials for writing this Foreword are derived from nearly fifty years ministry in the Free Church of England. I was a baptised and confirmed member of the Church of England before my conversion, which took place during service with the Royal Navy, in the Second World War.

It was through a greater knowledge of the Scriptures, and a close association with the Church of England in South Africa, that I came to an understanding of the doctrines of grace. This enabled me to disentangle myself from the errors of Anglo-Catholicism and Liberalism which had been the main influences formulating my beliefs, before I came to an understanding of the gospel, outlined in the Roman and Galatian epistles.

It was the doctrinal position of the Free Church of England, so clearly stated in her Declaration of Principles which, by the grace of almighty God, drew me into the ministry. After my ordination and during my first pastoral charge I came to realise, in order to maintain evangelical principles and biblical ministry, it was necessary to sustain constant resistance to the modern Ecumenical Movement. History has shown how modern ecumenism insidiously corrupts and undermines the true gospel of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

The events of recent years and the publishing of Dr John Fenwick's book, *THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND - Introduction to an Anglican Tradition* (2004), indicate a marked deviation from the clear position of the denomination, as secured by its founders. This book, now endorsed by present episcopal leadership, gives an interpretation of our historical position, alien to the Declaration of Principles and the scriptural principles expressed in our revised 39 Articles of Religion and Book of Common Prayer.

I, therefore, support my evangelical fellow ministers, who have contributed to this reply to Dr Fenwick and others, in the conviction that the Free Church of England, judged by the Declaration of Principles, stands firmly in true succession to the biblical and doctrinal position of the Protestant Reformers and the 18th century Evangelical Fathers. In doing so, I also support the challenge to Dr Fenwick's thesis that the Free Church of England, 'ought, one might suppose, to be at the forefront of ecumenical endeavour' (page 283, Chapter 13). To follow the modern ecumenical route, as advocated and endorsed by the present episcopal leadership, is a renunciation of our Church's fundamental loyalty to the Holy Scriptures. No traditional interpretation can be allowed to overrule the *Sola Scriptura* principle, which governs all matters of faith and practice, including communion with other churches.

Indeed, it is regrettable that those of us who firmly believe we are true to the historical and doctrinal position of the Free Church of England find ourselves taking issue with ministerial friends who have a different interpretation. But, as it is claimed Dr Fenwick's book is the authentic voice of the Free Church of England, we have no alternative. The first statement of our Declaration of Principles says we hold, 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' and 'declares its belief in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and the sole Rule of Faith and Practice...'

We have a true unity with all who hold the Doctrines of Grace and who seek to be, above all else, loyal to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, revealed in Holy Scripture. We are not against true evangelical ecumenism.

We humbly trust and fervently pray, what is presented in these pages, however imperfectly, will clarify this serious matter. Above all else, we desire our Great Eternal and Triune God may be glorified in this recorded witness, to the truth of His infallible Word.

Reverend Angus Parnaby
Llandudno
Wales

INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS BOOK?

We are aware that this book may well have a limited interest. Who has heard of the Free Church of England? Who is interested in episcopalianism, these days? What does one hope to achieve by such writings? Even assuming a growing audience or readership can be realised, where do we go from here? Can a denomination, with a mere twenty-five churches and just over a hundred and fifty years' history, command the attention of evangelical Christians, many of whom have abandoned the concept of denomination altogether, for the local church principle of sovereign independence? We hope so. We have a humble confidence that our brethren in Christ, whatever churchmanship they endorse, will spare a thought and prayer for their brethren in Christ, of another tradition and concern.

The Free Church of England claims an early separation from the Church of England in the interests of the gospel, while at the same time seeking to keep much of her heritage and tradition. It has roots in the 18th century Evangelical Revival and the first minister to put the word "Free" in front of the designation, Church of England, can be traced back to 1844. This was only a decade into the reign of Queen Victoria and a mere decade, or so, before the great "57-59 Revival," which swept the United States of America, Northern Ireland, and other significant parts of the United Kingdom, with such profound effect.

It has to be said immediately, the book was never planned in the proper sense of the word. It is a spontaneous response to the publication in July 2004 of another larger book, written by the Revd Dr John Fenwick and entitled, *THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND - Introduction to an Anglican tradition*. Dr Fenwick, who lectured in Christian Worship and Church History at Trinity College, Bristol and was Assistant Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 1988-92, presents a personal historical account of the denomination. The denomination is affectionately referred to as the Free Church of England, otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church.

In fact, it already has its own record, *THE HISTORY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*, assumed to be largely the work of the former revered Primus, Bishop Frank Vaughan. Most people familiar with the old book, which unlike the new work is authorised by Convocation, realise that Vaughan's volume is somewhat inadequate. Yet, it has served its purpose well for many years. We have no reason to think Frank Vaughan's lesser work unreliable, but only in need of additional material. Dr Fenwick's book claims to supply this new material. He relies a good deal on a PhD research thesis, written by the present Dean of Monmouth, Richard Fenwick who, incidentally, is not a relative.

What has caused alarm among the more evangelical, non-ecumenical members of the Free Church of England, is the amount of coverage and support in John Fenwick's book for engagement with modern ecumenically-compromised denominations. Indeed, Dr Fenwick's own interpretation for the Free Church of England's ecumenical involvement is vigorously set forward... 'A Church formally committed to set forth...quietness, peace, and love, along all Christian people ought, one might suppose, to be at the forefront of the ecumenical endeavour. The reality, as has been shown, is the precise opposite. Not only

has the denomination distanced itself from 'mainline' ecumenical activities, such as the British Council of Churches (BCC) or Churches Together in England (CTE), it has also failed to integrate in any significant way into any alternative network or grouping. While it has been a member of the Free Church Federal Council (now the Free Churches Group in CTBI) since 1954, it can hardly be said to have been an enthusiastic member. As seen in Chapter 8, some of the present leadership are unhappy even with membership of that body' (page 283 The FCE - John Fenwick). It also needs pointing out, at the time of our writing, Dr Fenwick has yet to celebrate his first anniversary as a recognised member of the Denomination.

Fenwick is basically right in his assessment. Although he fails to understand, membership of the Free Church Federal Council was always voted on annually and with considerable difficulty. If unity cannot be achieved in one's own denomination, it seems perverse, perhaps even hypocritical, to seek it elsewhere? Also, Fenwick, seems not to understand, the much-quoted ecumenical statement from the Declaration of Principles to, 'maintain communion with all Christian churches' was enshrined in 1927, when the Free Church of England united with the Reformed Episcopal Church. At that time, the ecclesiological world looked very different from what it does now and, as he himself notes, the Roman Catholic Church was not part of the process. The well-meaning Doctor also expects us to dislodge this peripheral statement from the far-reaching doctrinal confession, protestant, reformed, and evangelical, which precedes it. Surely, the context is fundamental to the interpretation? And above all else, he does not seem to understand the biblical doctrine of separation, the place for individual Christian freedom, the necessity of keeping a clean conscience before the Lord and men, and the supreme New Testament principle of unity in the Truth. Any other kind of unity can only be described as 'holding hands in the dark'. In any case, do we not need to re-define the sentence? What do we mean by such words as "Christian," "Church," "Quietness, Peace and Love?" And does not Paul's phrase, "as much as lieth in you" imply, there are circumstances in which to be at peace would be dishonouring to the Lord?

There is something even more important. The Book of Common Prayer Ordination Service and its oaths are very clear indeed. We are living in a fallen world. The Church herself is not exempt from the sphere of satanic activity. This is why the Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us to be on our guard. We are to avoid being led astray by false teachers and erroneous teachings, which, today, abound in bodies termed, "mainline denominations". So few seem to take these solemn warnings from the lips of our Lord and Saviour seriously. Nor, sadly, are episcopalian clergy renowned for keeping the vows they make in the solemn presence of almighty God, as deacon, presbyter, or even bishop. One has only to look at the present, disintegrating, Established Church, to see tragic illustrations of this. Sometimes, one wonders if the biblical doctrines of the Book of Common Prayer and the 39 articles, to say nothing of the Book of Homilies, are known to the present generation of clergy, let alone conscientiously adhered to.

For some of us it is a mystery, how allegedly protestant, evangelical, episcopalian ministers can take solemn vows to 'be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word; and to use both publick and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as the whole, within your Cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given,' and, then, purposely lead one's flock into naked exposure to so much poisonous teaching. Or, perhaps, most regrettably of all, to have a publicly self-confessed non-evangelical bishop, challenging incumbents on

the day of institution, to 'faithfully and constantly maintain the Evangelical and Protestant doctrines and practices of this Church,' as witnessed by myself, on more than one occasion. It was worst still, at my own ordination where the Bishop, in the presence of the ecclesiastical solicitor, to say nothing of the holy presence of almighty God, prefaced the clerical assent to the BCP and 39 Articles with these words (I paraphrase!), "Whether you believe these things or not, you must take the oath. But do not be worried about it, many of us are praying for the subscription to be removed as soon as possible." Sadly, it was removed soon after my curacy. What hope is there for any church where integrity matters so little?

So, the present writers of this little volume deeply regret having to write this book in the first place. We are simply responding to the initiative or misunderstanding of others. As Christians we have a duty to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves. This means that some kind of response is required. As well, the Christian has a wider duty. He has to '...be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is within him'... (1 Peter 3:15). While this primarily applies to salvation, it must surely have a wider significance? Almighty God is certainly in control of our circumstances but many of us have already been asked, 'What is going on in the Free Church of England?' Here is our attempt at a brief answer. We humbly pray, we can fulfil the rest of Peter's counsel to 'sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...with meekness and fear.'

There are a few other reasons which also need to be brought forward at this time.

First, there is the need for CLARITY. Christians are not people who act simply at the level of feelings. However important emotions or perceptions are, we cannot be driven simply by the mood of the hour, or the modern pressures all around us. The Apostle Paul said we are to take our discipleship seriously. We are to liken it to the sacrifice offered at a Jewish, or even heathen, temple. If we mean business with God we shall bring to bear upon all we do, our energy, will, and mind... 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God' (Romans 12:1-2). It would be the easiest thing in the world to follow the crowd and join in the ecumenical rush. But our concern is for the will of God, as revealed in Holy Scripture. At all times, we need clarity in our thinking and this book is an attempt to clarify our thinking, primarily for our own benefit, but we trust with wider consequences.

Second, there is the need for HONESTY. Sadly, some of the details in Dr Fenwick's book are not correct. The author never consulted Bishop Arthur Bentley-Taylor or myself with respect to our own files. One of the problems, certainly during my time in the Free Church of England, was the keeping of reliable or adequate records. There has been a difference of opinion about what was agreed in Convocation and subsequently understood in the General Council. As far as chapter eight of Dr Fenwick's book is concerned, there are definite historical inaccuracies, particularly in relationship to Bishop Bentley-Taylor and myself. Does not the Apostle counsel again, 'put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting

away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another' (Ephesians 4:22-25).

Third, there is the need for CHARITY. Repeatedly we are told today, God is a God of love. Yes, He is! But, in the very same epistle, He is shown to be also a God of light (1 John 1:5; John 4:8). The "God is love" slogan has negated so much necessary discussion and debate. The implication is, 'if you are loving you will say nothing, or do nothing which challenges the errant individual or the misguided church'. This is not the teaching of 1 Corinthians 13 and it is not the way our Lord Jesus Christ deals with the churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. No! we shall be truly loving and speak our minds, with kindness and courtesy.

Fourth, there is the need for POSTERITY. We are amazed at the help and support Dr Fenwick has received which has been often denied to evangelical leaders in the Free Church of England. He has the unqualified support of both present ecumenical bishops. He openly admits, 'a particular debt to Kenneth and Edna Powell and John and Betty McLean, without whose support this project might not have been possible'. He has been given access to private correspondence and sensitive documents, without consultation with or permission from, Bishops Bentley-Taylor and Shucksmith. Not even Convocation, the ruling body, under the Living and Written Word of God, has been consulted. Hurtfully, if we allow it to be so, he presents non-ecumenicals as unloving, hard-line Calvinists, who are backward in their theological views, while needing to be brought into this gloriously enlightened 21st century! I, for one, certainly own up to the crime of Calvinism! To have most of the English and continental reformers, as companions, is no great burden to bear. But some of us have Christian children and, by the grace of God alone, pray for our grandchildren to be Christian as well. It is important for their sakes, they have a more balanced historical picture of their loved ones. Especially they should be shown, by this record, a desire to be faithful above all else to Almighty God, and the only Saviour, Jesus Christ, our Lord. 'We are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith' (Romans 1:16-17).

Finally, there is the question of TRUE UNITY. As our Lord makes clear in John chapter 17, unity is not about mere physical or visible appearance. Real unity is a matter of truth and spirit. As Jesus said, 'Thy Word is Truth' (John 17:17), a passage which accords well with the repeated phrase, 'I have given them thy words' (John 17:6,8,14). True Christians are already united. What they endeavour is 'to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling' (Ephesians 4:3-4). Without the work of spiritual regeneration, dependent upon holy calling or vocation, by the electing grace of Jesus Christ, we are not even Christians (Ephesians 1:3-5 and 4:1). The desire of the present writers, and all whom they represent, is for closer relationship with those with whom they are already united in Jesus Christ. Our prayer is, this written work will help us to achieve it.

Rt Revd Dr J Barry Shucksmith, Royal Navy (Rtd)
Contributing Editor

Chapter 1

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Acts 20:26-32

Chapter 1

A Theological and Historical Overview

David Streater

I have been asked to write an introductory chapter in response to Dr John Fenwick's book the History of the Free Church of England from the position of a conservative evangelical minister within the Church of England. This is not an attempt to write an alternative history but rather to paint in some of the background of the nineteenth century in Evangelical circles which flowed around the establishment of the FCE. As a conservative evangelical my contacts with the members of the FCE have always been cordial and in 1996, I was asked to present the Rev Barry Shucksmith on the occasion of his consecration as a Bishop in the Free Church of England. Barry Shucksmith is a great friend and brother in Christ over many years who has suffered persecution for standing for the truth. Also at the consecration was the Rev Robert Smith, Rector of Christ Church Somerset West in the Cape, a constituent Church of the Church of England in South Africa. Together with the representatives from the Reformed Episcopal Church of the United States the consecration went forward as a truly evangelical ecumenical assembly because it was gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ under the Word of God.

It is interesting to note that all three denominations had been formed at various times in response to persecution from Tractarian, High Church or Latitudinarian teaching which had little time for the '*Word of God and the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.*' Bishop Cummins had been constructively removed in the United States, Bishop Gray had one object in mind in founding the Church of the Province of South Africa and that was to remove all evangelical teaching, and James Shore came under the censure of Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter leading to the formation of the Free Church of England.

The Genius of Evangelicalism

Dr Fenwick is right to trace the rise of the Free Church of England to the Evangelical Revival, but wrong to leave it there. The Evangelical Revival did not occur in a vacuum. It needs to be recognised that Reformation and Revival are not mutually exclusive. As Francis Schaeffer points out correctly:

Reformation refers to a restoration to pure doctrine; revival refers to a restoration in the Christian's life. Reformation speaks of a return to the teachings of Scripture; revival speaks of a life brought into its proper relationship to the Holy Spirit. There cannot be true revival unless there has been reformation; and reformation is not complete without revival.¹

The Reformation revived and recovered the doctrines that had been overlaid by the traditions of men and through the rationalising of the Schoolmen through the Middle Ages. While these biblical doctrines began to be put forward by Martin Luther in Germany and John Calvin in Geneva in the early part of the sixteenth century, the forerunners of the Reformation such as John Wycliffe of Oxford and Jan Hus in

Bohemia had laid a groundwork over a century before. Dr Broughton Knox demonstrates ably that, 'John Wycliffe was the first Englishman to teach clearly and fully the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper.'² That teaching was bound up with the supremacy of Scripture.

The English Church received teaching from both Wittenberg and Geneva and although there was disagreement as to how far the reformation of the Church should proceed, for the English Reformation was both expedited and hindered by the Crown at different times, it is clear that in its teaching on Scripture and justification by faith, with the associated doctrines, the Church had fully adopted the Reformed position based essentially on the teaching of the apostle Paul in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. After the Commonwealth break and the Restoration of 1662 the Puritans were ejected in the main and these doctrines fell into disuse although the formularies of the Prayer Book and the Thirty Nine Articles were retained. Ryle comments that the Church of England went to sleep in the dark and the nonconformists went to sleep in the light.

*The Church of England existed in those days, with her admirable articles, her time-honoured liturgy, her parochial system, her Sunday services and her ten thousand clergy. The Nonconformist body existed, with its hardly won liberty and its free pulpit. But one account may be given of both parties. They existed...; they were sound asleep.*³

In the middle of the eighteenth century a number of clergy in the Church of England rediscovered the doctrines of grace and proclaimed them in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amongst these were George Whitefield and John and Charles Wesley. Some less well known clergy were no less used and it is quite wrong to attribute the Revival either to the Wesleys or Whitefield. In the North of England William Grimshaw laboured in evangelism and supervising societies of those who had been converted to Christ but who were in parishes where no gospel message ever proceeded from the pulpit. Daniel Rowlands laboured in Wales with Howell Harris the layman. There were many others too numerous to mention. So a Revival began which changed the face of the land and continued in a missionary movement which reached out over all the world. Reformation and revival came together in the sixteenth century and again in the middle of the eighteenth.

It is clear that this was not popular with the authorities and and there was great difficulty in obtaining livings for evangelical clergy. In many cases men were barred either because they had not been to Oxford or Cambridge or the episcopal authorities were hostile. John Newton, the converted slave trader, who with Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect, was largely responsible for the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, although not a graduate of the universities, was eventually ordained and served a curacy at Olney in Buckinghamshire. There he ministered to a country congregation with house meetings and to William Cowper the poet and depressive. The house meetings provided the opportunity for the composition of some great evangelical hymns still sung with profit today. Among them, 'Amazing Grace', 'Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken' by Newton and from Cowper, 'Hark my soul it is the Lord.' For many others no door was opened and Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, converted in the Revival, opened chapels and Chaplaincies to maintain a gospel witness in the land. This particular group

survives today in the name of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and was involved closely for a time with the Free Church of England.

So the eighteenth century closed. In the British Isles the Industrial Revolution was well under way and the movement to the factories of the towns began with the overcrowding in back-to-back slums associated with poverty and disease. Across the Channel the French Revolution continued on its bloodthirsty path. The fact that the revolution did not spread into England may well be attributed to two factors. The first is that the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had laid down a Reformation system of democracy in which it was clear that Parliament was, '*not a junior partner but an equal partner with the crown.*'⁴ The Revival amongst so many sections of Society gave a Biblical base to law and order and in social justice which would be activated through the rest of the century by such men as Shaftesbury.

But the nineteenth century in the Church of England, both at home and overseas, proved to be a century of conflict. Evangelicals were never in the majority in the Church of England although faithfulness to the basic formularies was found amongst that group rather than in the Deist movement at the time or in the High Church Party. On the one hand the rise of the Tractarian Movement created a situation in which dogma and practices not seen in the Established Church since the sixteenth century began to reappear. In addition, there came the rise of Liberalism which sought to rationalise the faith so that it might be received by modern man with the greater insights allegedly proven by scientific discovery. By the 1830s the movement began which is closely associated with the name of John Henry Newman, the Tractarian, so called because of the series of tracts published regarding various disputed Church doctrines.

It is a fact that every age has its peculiar emphases. The Victorians, through the advent of Romanticism, aided popularly by Sir Walter Scott's Waverley novels, looked to the myth of Merry England. This had little relationship to the real life situation but Victorian romanticism aided the Tractarians. The reality is described by the historian V V H Green who writes that the mediaeval world was one of:

*Baronial castles and church spires, of great cathedrals and abbeys where brilliant decoration, coloured glass and gleaming vestments served to impress the worshipper...a world of basic poverty and great wealth, of gargantuan banquets and grating hunger.*⁵

This romanticism led to a widespread restoration of existing churches, sometimes described as 'Victorian vandalism,' as well as the building of many new churches as the ancient parishes were unable to cope with the growth of urban populations. Such churches were built along the lines laid down by the mediaeval restorationist architect, Pugin. Simple eighteenth century Hanoverian three-decker pulpits, box pews, west end musicians' gallery with the parson in his surplice for the liturgical service and in the black gown for the sermon, were changed. Thomas Hardy in his novel, 'Under the Greenwood Tree', touches upon some of the heartache felt by parishioners being forced into unusual worship forms because of the predilections of the incumbent. Morning and Evening Prayer (Matins and Evensong) with sermon gave way to a much more stylised liturgy. The swelling music of the organ with its solo performer replaced the village orchestra. Robed choirs sat in the chancel with candles set upon the Communion Table made to look like an altar. Soon to follow the extravaganza of light and sound was the tinkling bell to indicate the

consecration of the host and the movement of the parish churches towards a Roman ritual. It is with this background that some of the legal prosecutions must be seen with the rise of Protestant defence societies.

If that were not serious enough, in 1859 Charles Darwin published his thesis on the 'Origin of Species'. Undergirding this work was the idea of random selection taking away the possibility of design by a Creator God. Twenty years before, Lyell had issued his '*Principles of Geology*' accounting for the present condition of the earth's surface by gradual uniform development. The two ideas merged so that for many God disappeared from the equation. It is a natural selection. The corollary of this is that there is no providence because the creation is not going anywhere and of course there is no judgment morally because there is no judge. Again there is no redemption for there is nothing to be redeemed from and nothing to be saved for! Therefore who is Jesus of Nazareth? That may not have been the intention but it was certainly what many came to believe. In 1871, came the publication of Darwin's sequel, '*The Descent of Man*'. It was not to be long before this unbelief began to surface in the Church.

Liberal views on Scripture caused distress to both Tractarians and Evangelicals, both of whom held at least to some degree a high view of Scripture even if the Tractarians placed it below the traditions of the Church. For both groups the Creeds were important and there was, as there still is, a recognition of what may best be described as credal convergence and today a respect even if there is continuing disagreement on some points such as the efficacy of the sacraments. *Essays and Reviews* (1860) was an attempt to encourage essentially free thinking on religious topics. It was followed by *Lux Mundi*, a collection of essays edited by Charles Gore. Writing more definitely the essayists focused on the Incarnation. In so doing, they created what has for the last seventy years been the received theological position of the Church of England which might well be described as Liberal Catholic and much of the legislation passed through the General Synod can be seen in this light.

We return to the middle of the nineteenth century and Phillpotts' controversy with James Shore. The controversial subject was baptismal regeneration. The question may be stated in this way. When the priest⁶ baptises the infant is the child sacramentally or actually regenerate? Phillpotts held to baptismal regeneration, and that the Holy Spirit was given by action of the priest. James Shore did not hold to this and neither did George Cornelius Gorham of the parish of St Just Penwith in Cornwall, then part of the diocese of Exeter.⁷ The fact is that the Book of Common Prayer requires the priest to declare that the child is regenerate but the same Prayer Book also requires that the one baptised should be brought to 'repentance whereby they forsake sin and faith and whereby they steadfastly believe'. The manner in which this is to be done is set out in the same service in the final exhortation to the parents in these uncompromising words:

Ye must remember that it is your parts and duties to see that this infant be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise and profession he hath here made by you. And that he may know these things the better, ye shall call upon him to hear sermons; and chiefly ye shall provide that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar (common) tongue.⁸

Gorham's mistake was to advertise for a curate 'free from Tractarian error.' Phillpotts' attention was drawn to Gorham, an evangelical who had served a curacy in the parish of Clapham, the home of the evangelical Clapham Sect and when Gorham was appointed to the living of Brampford Speke outside Exeter, Phillpotts as the diocesan was required to institute him by the patron of the parish, the Lord Chancellor. Phillpotts had unwittingly chosen to challenge a clergyman who was remarkable for his knowledge of abstruse points of theology, not least of baptism. Gorham's main points were quite clear. They can be set out under three headings:

(1) Baptism is a sacrament generally necessary to salvation, but the regenerating grace of God is not absolutely tied to this ordinance. It may be granted before or after, as well as in, Baptism

(2) In either sacrament right reception is as necessary as due administration and where an infant receives worthily this must be due to a 'prevenient act of grace.'

(3) In no case in regeneration is baptism unconditional.⁹

Gorham was steeped in the views of the English Reformers and sat those exams set by the diocesan who declared that his views were unsound and that on those doctrinal grounds he would not institute Gorham.

While the Evangelicals as a party did not necessarily subscribe to all of Gorham's views, they did realise that their very existence within the framework of the Established Church was threatened. The Tractarians also realised that if they should win this case the position of Evangelicals would be untenable and that no one of their theological views would be able to hold preferment in the Church of England. The next legal step for Gorham was to apply to the Court of Arches to call on Bishop Phillpotts to show cause why he, Gorham, should not be instituted to the living. At this point E B Pusey, the leader of the Oxford Movement, stepped in to the aid of the Bishop, coaching the lawyers who were to present the case to such good effect that the Court of Arches ruled in the diocesan's favour. The last appeal now open to Gorham was to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. William Goode, the Rector of All Hallows, Thames Street, ably led the appeal which was successful. The Established Church remained open to Evangelicals. Balleine cites William Maskell, the Bishop's Chaplain, in a letter on the 'Present Position of the High Church Party':

As the case went on it was impossible not to feel more and more that the reasons and arguments of the Evangelical party had been too lightly esteemed.¹⁰

Balleine continues:

that the views which the Bishop had deemed heretical had not only been held by some of the greatest divines of the English Church, Jewell, and Nowell and Archbishop Ussher, Hooker and Jeremy Taylor but had actually been the views of the men who had compiled the Prayer Book.¹¹

Dr Fenwick aptly comments that the 'ruling was seen as upholding the precious doctrine of justification by faith.'¹² It most certainly did and that doctrine is essential to the wellbeing of the Church.

Against these Liberal and Ritual tides there stood a group of Christians both in and out of the Church of England who sought to continue in the old paths. Such were Charles Spurgeon of the Baptists standing against the Downgrade¹³ and J C Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool, fighting in word and practice against the reintroduction of ritualism. Lesser known men such as James Shore, who fell foul of Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter, who after Laud must be known as the most litigious of English bishops, also took their stand in England and in Shore's case effectively beginning the denomination known as the Free Church of England in 1844.¹⁴

Overseas in South Africa, Bishop Gray of Cape Town was doing his best to remove all traces of evangelicalism from the newly constituted Church of the Province of South Africa¹⁵ with its strongly Tractarian beliefs which led eventually in the 1930s to the constitution of the Church of England in South Africa, not recognised by Canterbury but deeply loyal to the reformed, Evangelical and Protestant doctrines of the 39 Articles and Book of Common Prayer. In the United States, Bishop Cummins stood down from the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America to found the Reformed Episcopal Church on Evangelical and Protestant lines.

What was the factor which united these men and many others in their stand for the faith, involving them often in loss of friends and members of their families. None of Ryle's family shared his faith or convictions.¹⁶ For Spurgeon, Ryle and others there was the conviction that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God. Such belief does not imply a dictation theory. Spurgeon, in his preaching at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, constantly warned the Baptists against the dangers of Modernism. Ryle, in his writings, called the Church to return to the writings of the Reformers and the Puritans. Peter Toon writes:

In the New Testament the Church is described as the 'pillar and ground of the truth' and part of the duty of the Visible Church, and therefore of its ordained ministry, is to pass on to future generations not only the Scriptures but also the doctrinal tradition received from earlier generations.¹⁷

This Ryle did although most of Ryle's writing ministry occurred while he was the incumbent of parishes in East Anglia.¹⁸ As diocesan of the newly formed diocese of Liverpool in 1880 his time for writing was severely limited although through his diocesan charges and addresses he maintained a steady evangelical conviction based on the writings of the Reformers and the Puritans.

For these men were not contending for the traditions of men, nor for the superiority of the human reason. Neither were they arguing for heretical novelties. They believed the Scriptures to be God's Word written and that all doctrines should be tested by them. For them, as indeed the Reformers and Puritans, conforming and nonconforming, the Scriptures were the formal principle of theology which determined its method, and justification by faith its material principle which determined its substance.¹⁹ For the

Anglicans the Thirty Nine Articles represented a moderate Calvinism which believed in the Scriptural doctrine of election, human responsibility and the free offer of the Gospel to all people.

Yet essentially, like the apostle Paul, these men had met with the Risen Christ and for them Christianity was not just a religion but a relationship with the living God in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures, although the work of men, were the living and abiding Word of God.

Faithfulness to its doctrines and precepts was a demonstration of loyalty and love for the Lord and Saviour who had bled and died for them on Calvary that they might not only be forgiven but freely justified through the righteousness of Christ being reckoned to them. Paul's experiences and his interpretation of Scripture in the Roman and Galatian Epistles is the life blood of the Christian faith as it is mediated in Christ. All those who hold to Christ and believe these doctrines are 'all one in Christ Jesus' which is a spiritual unity whatever the precise form of church government or the exact way of administering the sacraments.

It is only necessary to consider what the Church would have been without the New Testament by looking at the various sects which have arisen in spite of its witness to understand that it is the lifeline of God's revelation to man in Christ Jesus. Possibly St Luke states the matter most succinctly in the introduction to the Acts of the Apostles, '*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day that he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.*' (Acts 1:1,2)

Yet the New Testament does not stand alone. It stands on the foundation of the Old Testament as the Lord Jesus stated clearly in the Sermon on the Mount, '*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them*' (Matthew 5,17). He continues by warning the hearers, '*For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven*' (Matthew 5,20). It is clear that in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus is setting out his manifesto of ministry. Here, there is the explanation of what the Law of God truly means as against the traditions of men and the interpretation of that law. For the law to bring salvation to anyone there must be something greater than an attempt to establish one's own righteousness. How apt that in the grace and purpose of God it is a Pharisee of the strictest sect who is chosen, called and privileged to set out the righteousness of Christ by faith.

The letters of Paul are among the earliest writings of the Christian faith and their collection and placement in the Canon have exercised a huge influence in the development of the faith throughout the world. As Ziesler says, '*Despite the arrangement of books in the New Testament, the earliest gospel was written after the latest of Paul's letters, and it is Paul who lets us into the ground floor of the early church.*'²⁰ It is Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament which must have caused him to wrestle in prayer for the correct understanding. All his learning may not have had to be abandoned but it had to be revised with a new point of departure. Paul takes the faith back to Abraham and not to Moses.

It is the Abrahamic covenant which is central to the revelation of Christ. '*Abraham believed the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness*' (Romans 4:3). It was because of this revelation that Paul can

write to the Romans that he is, ‘... not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith’ (Romans 1:17). Such is the doctrine of justification by faith stated at its simplest. Yet the simplicity should not deceive us that this is simply what is known generally as ‘easy-believism’.

The doctrine of Justification rests upon three biblical presuppositions. The first is the divine authority of the Scriptures; the second is the absolute holiness of God and the divine wrath against all sin, and the third the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ. Yet even behind these truths lies the fact of God set out clearly in the Thirty Nine Articles stating that:

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be Three Persons of one substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.²¹

He is the God who is there, the Maker and Preserver of all things. He is the God who has spoken through the prophets and finally through his Son. (Hebrews 1:1-4) Any suggestion that God is unable to communicate with man which is a serious problem of today and has caused the question of biblical morality to be raised is the grossest heresy, not to say blasphemy. Such a liberal novelty in the Christian faith strikes generally at the doctrine of God in the Persons of the Holy Trinity and in particular at the incarnation of Christ and his two natures of God and Man. It is through Christ Jesus as the second Adam that the new creation is to be ushered in. Such is the genius of evangelicalism so that we may truly say with the apostle Paul, ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from first to last...’

It is interesting, to speculate that if the appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had confirmed Bishop Phillpotts’ ruling against Gorham that many of the evangelical clergy may well have seceded and joined the Free Church of England modelled as it is upon the Evangelical understanding of the Scripture and the Gospel. No doubt such an accession of deeply scriptural and spiritual men would have strengthened the cause, not least in the training for the ministry which has been one of the weakest features of the Church in its latter years. Churches could well have been planted around England for a gospel witness. One might also wonder if the premium which was placed on apostolic succession rather than the necessity of evangelism and the edification of the people of God might have advanced the Kingdom.

The twentieth century with its wars brought both opportunities and problems to Evangelicals. The opportunities related to inter-denominational cooperation in both mission and evangelism. For Evangelicals the Billy Graham Crusades of the fifties and sixties added many members to the Church of England particularly in the ordained ministry so that Theological Colleges such as Trinity Bristol and Oakhill Southgate, with conservative lecturers, trained many men for the ministry. Nonetheless, the underlying problems remained. The removal of the Subscription and Assent to the Thirty Nine Articles

in the seventies; the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure in the early nineties created a crisis of conscience for both Tractarian Catholics and Conservative Evangelicals. The manner in which the interpretation of Scripture was handled opened the door for the dispute concerning Biblical morality which, although dealt with by the 1998 Lambeth Conference, was reopened deliberately by the Episcopal Church of the United States in the consecration of Gene Robinson, thereby creating a crisis in the Anglican Communion. In these troubled centuries there is still the genius of Evangelicalism which seeks to proclaim Jesus Christ and him crucified, who is the sure hope of all true believers.

¹ Schaeffer, DEATH IN THE CITY, p.9, 1972, IVP, Aylesbury Bucks

² B Knox, THE LORD'S SUPPER FROM WYCLIFFE TO CRANMER, p.9, 1983, Paternoster, NSW

³ Ryle, CHRISTIAN LEADERS OF THE 18TH CENTURY, p.14, 1978, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh

⁴ Schaeffer, HOW SHALL WE THEN LIVE?, p.120, 1976, Fleming H Revell, New Jersey

⁵ Green, RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION, p.17, 1974, Edwin Arnold, London

⁶ Note - The word priest is not a translation of either hierus or sacerdos, the Greek and Latin word for a sacrificng priest. It is a translation of the word prester which is a shortened form of presbyter, an elder. This is confirmed by the Latin translation of the Book of Common Prayer into Latin for the benefit of the Reformed Churches on the Continent after the 1662 Restoration where the word for priest is ministerium.

⁷ Note. I can find no trace of the parish of St Just Pentwin in the Crockford Directory of 1994.

⁸ BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER - Public Baptism of Infants -1662

⁹ Balleine, HISTORY OF THE EVANGELICAL PARTY, p.148, 1911, Longmans and Green, London.

¹⁰ Balleine, HISTORY OF THE EVANGELICAL PARTY, p.149, 1911, Longmans and Green, London.

¹¹ Balleine, HISTORY OF THE EVANGELICAL PARTY, p.149, 1911, Longmans and Green Toon, London.

¹² Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, p.211, 2004, T & T Clark, Intl, London.

¹³ Downgrade is the name given to a dispute in the Baptist Union concerning the growth of liberalism in relation to its view on Scripture. Charles Spurgeon, the minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, led the defence of the Scriptures.

¹⁴ Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, p.10, 2004, T&T Clark, Intl, London.

¹⁵ Kearns, THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA, p.16f, 1913, Private, Johannesburg.

¹⁶ Toon, JOHN CHARLES RYLE, p 103, 1976, James Clarke & Co., Cambridge.

¹⁷ Ryle, CHARGES AND ADDRESSES (Address Our Position and our Danger), 1978, p.99f, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh.

¹⁸ Note: Ryle's two main incumbencies were at Helmingham followed by Stradbroke, both in East Anglia.

¹⁹ Packer Essay in Buchanan's JUSTIFICATION, p.1, 1961, Banner of Truth Trust, London.

²⁰ Ziesler, PAULINE CHRISTIANITY, 1986, p.1, O.U.P., Oxford.

²¹ THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES.

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Chapter 2

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Galatians 3:2-9

Chapter 2

The Reformed Episcopal Church of the USA and the FCE: Then and Now.

Dominic Stockford

Introduction.

In order to demonstrate adequately why it matters that we have now lost confidence in the current doctrine, direction and churchmanship of the Reformed Episcopal Church of the United States of America (REC) it is first crucial to understand why we had confidence in the first place, and what it was that denomination genuinely stood for. To that end it is imperative for us to look firstly at the issues of the founding of the REC, the reasons for its coming into existence, and the doctrinal positions taken up by those who were involved at that time.

Much current thought on this matter is coloured and informed by the book by Allen C. Guelzo, 'For the Union of Evangelical Christendom: The Irony of the Reformed Episcopalians'.¹ Unfortunately, from my reading of this book combined with discussion with others who have more knowledge of the history of the REC, and by using comparison with other available sources (books such as the one by the wife of George David Cummins, D.D.) it appears clear to me that although many factual, historical statements are correct the interpretation of them is seriously misleading. Indeed, I have had the book described to me, by a lifelong member of the REC who knows Allen Guelzo well from time they spent together at an REC Seminary, as 'a revisionist history'. It is not in my opinion, therefore, a wise move simply to accept this book as being in any way reliable in its interpretations, though we must exempt it from significant criticism on matters of historical fact with which it undeniably deals well.

One example should suffice to illustrate this point of interpretative licence. In a subdivision of Chapter IV Allen Guelzo deals with what he calls '*The Vestments Controversy*'. He writes:

*"Cummins had proposed to abandon the rochet and chimere to avoid having a bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church look too mighty. On the other hand, he had never intended, by that action, to make Reformed Episcopal bishops seem like anything less than bishops..."*²

If we then read from a letter written by George D Cummins' wife, we find that the facts about his wish not to wear Episcopal Robes are the same, but we hear a rather different story in the interpretation of his reasons for this decision. I tend to favour George Cummins' wife when it comes to accuracy on George Cummins' reasons for his actions, as among other things she relies on correspondence written by her husband. She wrote:

"When the Reformed Episcopal Church was founded, his first direction was that his Episcopal robes should be ripped up, saying to me, "The material may serve for some other use, and that he never wished to wear them again;" the Surplice he

never wore in the Reformed Episcopal Church. Accordingly the robes were taken apart and packed carefully away. When asked by me, at the time, why he had decided not to use them, he replied, "I earnestly hope no minister or bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church will ever wear them, as, judging from my own experience, the use of them fosters pride and vanity." Then he added, "whenever I put on those costly and elegant robes I was conscious of a feeling of superiority - as though the wearing of such a dress made me occupy a higher position than my brethren in the ministry, and this should never be felt in our own Reformed Episcopal Church."

At another time, in the latter part of the year 1873, he said to a dear friend:

"One of the foundation stones of the Reformed Episcopal Church must be that Bishops are not a separate order of clergy - but only holding an office by which certain work for the Church is to be done; then, why is an especial dress, thus making a difference where none really exists?" "For myself, I much prefer the simple black gown as worn by the Reformers in the Swiss and French Churches and also by many of the English Protestants."³

On its own these few words point clearly to a very different reason for his actions than the interpretation given to them that Guelzo gives in his book. However, even here we have more which leads us to see that Cummins is far further down the road *away* from wanting to 'appear Episcopal' than Guelzo is prepared to admit. In fact, far from wanting to see Reformed Episcopal bishops 'look like bishops' there are further words of Mrs. Cummins that make it clear that George Cummins' position on bishops was thoroughly New Testament and, dare I say it, nearer the Presbyterian idea of leadership than the view of Episcopacy (coloured by Roman Catholic teaching) that is held by most Christians in the world:

"In writing to the Rev. Edward Cridge, of Victoria, British Columbia, under date of May 24th, 1875, in reference to the consecration of Dean Cridge to the Episcopate, at Ottawa, Bishop Cummins uses these words: "The position of a Bishop with us is far different from that which he occupies in the Old Church. We regard him as not belonging to a third order divinely instituted, and appointed to rule as a Successor of the Apostles in their office. With us he is simply a primus inter pares, a presbyter elected by his brethren to discharge certain duties, as St. Paul committed the like offices to Timothy and Titus."⁴

This one matter indicates clearly why I hold that it would not be sensible for us to lean heavily on Allen Guelzo's book for our knowledge about the original doctrinal position and evangelical intentions of the REC. Guelzo's interpretation of George Cummins' behaviour does not hold true with Cummins' own words. This example is one that is repeated on other occasions and in interpretations of other events, affecting the whole of the book. For instance, Guelzo frequently uses the term 'ecumenical', with many references to this in his index. And yet the 'modern (and unbiblical) ecumenical movement', which is the clear context in which he uses this word, had not begun at the time of Cummins and Cheney and would

have been something that (as Evangelical Christians with belief in the inerrancy of Holy Scriptures) they would have abhorred.

I will refer to Guelzo, but only in order to use his facts and quotes. I will not do what J Fenwick has done in his recent book,⁵ which is to accept and use unquestioningly the *interpretations* that Guelzo places on events and statements about the foundation and doctrine of the REC.

The doctrine of the FCE.

A brief overview of the doctrine of the FCE is also helpful to the reader, as it will give some note of the foundations of the FCE. Other contributors will give a more detailed look at this. It is useful to have an independent view of the origins of the FCE, and I refer to the words of an outsider writing on the topic of anti-Catholicism in mid-Victorian England.

“Anti-Tractarianism also was expressed in the form of the Free Church of England. This schism of ultra-Evangelicals began with the case of James Shore, formerly curate of Berry Pomeroy, Devon. Shore’s ultra-Evangelicalism led Bishop Phillpotts to deny him a curate’s license in 1844; Shore proclaimed himself a Nonconformist in order to carry on his ministry, and got his chapel listed as a Dissenting place of worship. Phillpotts proceeded against him under the Church Discipline Act, and the case was in the Court of Arches and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council between 1844 and 1849. Meanwhile, a few other West Country ultra-Evangelicals, who opposed the wearing of surplices, seceded to found free churches: Christ Church, Southernhay, Exeter, was built in 1845-46; other free churches emerged at Totnes (1844), Ilfracombe (1845), Babbacombe (1852), near Torquay (1852), Boverly (sic) Tracey (1857), and a few other places. These chapels affiliated and disaffiliated with each other, with the Congregationalists, and with the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion. Finally a formal denomination was organized in 1863, and a bishop consecrated by a representative from the Reformed Episcopal Church of the United States in 1876.”

6

The footnote he writes about the REC is equally fascinating in what it reveals about how those outside evangelicalism view their doctrinal position.

*“A schismatic group that left the American Episcopal Church in the early 1870’s. The group rejected baptismal regeneration and the apostolic succession, eliminated sacramental and sacrificial language from its version of the Prayer Book, and accepted the validity of non-Episcopal ordinations.”*⁷

The birth pangs of the REC.

In the late 19th Century the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA found itself undeniably riven in two camps. A significant division had opened up, much as that which had caused so many problems within the Church of England only a few years earlier. With High Churchmen and Anglo Catholics on the one side and Reformed Evangelicals on the other, Mrs. Cummins records the words of horror George Cummins wrote in a letter to her that were inspired by entering a church in New York for a meeting during the Protestant Episcopal Church Convention of 1868:

“October 10, Saturday. – Last night I attended the meeting of the Board of Missions. You may judge of my feelings when, upon entering the church, I saw before me in the chancel an altar, with a super-altar, and on it in the centre a brass cross three feet high, and two brass candlesticks of the same height on either side, with candles in them, but unlighted. And just in front of the altar was the venerable Bishop McIlvaine, within a few feet of what he had all his life so earnestly protested against. The feeling of indignation is general, and very great among all evangelical men, and some will not again attend the meetings if they are held in that church. It seems unpardonable to have selected such a place for the meetings of the board, and thus compel us to countenance the very things we have so earnestly protested against in the declaration of the 28 bishops. There is intense feeling on all sides, and every day there are discussions bearing upon great questions - such as leaving out the term ‘Protestant Episcopal’ and using that of ‘The Church’ in the United States. You see that it touches vital points. This morning I went down to the E.K.S. and met Dr. C_, Dr. S_, Dr. Sparrow, and many others. I learn that the most advanced and extreme men among the low churchmen will not press their own views and plans, but unite with us on the great platform of Evangelicalism, and in an unbroken front towards the Romanizers.”^{8 9}

Not only do these words demonstrate the depth of the split caused in the Protestant Episcopal Church by the ritualists actions, and by their ignoring of the Reformed and Protestant doctrine and heritage of their denomination, they also place Cummins for us as being clearly evangelical, and therefore clearly, as a man of his time (before the modern dissembling of what evangelical really means by those who now use it as a hat to cover their liberal, charismatic and pentecostal positions) a clear believer in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and our sole rule for faith and practice. His description of the groups’ decision to stand on the ‘platform of Evangelicalism’ also indicates that the Biblical doctrine they held to was prime in their thoughts, over-riding any matters of liturgical practice or churchmanship and ecclesiastical polity.

This also shows for us the basis upon which George Cummins and Charles Cheney were to proceed in the setting up of the Reformed Episcopal Church. We are compelled to ask ourselves why these evangelical men would leave a denomination so thoroughly compromised unless it were to seek a pure biblical church? They knew the teachings of Scripture and held to them, they would most certainly have wanted to follow the instruction we are given in Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians to “...be pure and blameless for

the day of Christ.” (Phil. 1:10) They would most certainly have desired that goal for the Church of Christ and would only have seen it as possible through following the Word of God as their rule for faith, practice, and life.

The matters that finally triggered the birth of the REC were however, although doctrinal in principle, practical in their workings. From Biblical and historical perspectives George Cummins asserted that:

“The Church of England does not deny the validity of the orders of ministers of the non-Episcopal Churches because for many years after the beginning of the Reformation, Presbyterian divines were received in England and admitted to parishes without reordination, as Peter Martyr and Martin Bucer, who held seats as professors of Theology in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.”¹⁰

This position led him to hold, quite properly and utterly biblically, that to share in preaching the Word and in The Lord’s Supper with such men was not just ‘acceptable’, but a worthy thing to do, giving glory to God. Given that his own denomination was so compromised it became an especial privilege, and a compelling demand of Christ to him to share these key things with others who also held to ‘sola scriptura’.

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life for evermore.” Psalm 133

He clearly understood the importance of retaining unity and fellowship with those who also held the Holy Scriptures as inerrant and overruling, and that any fellowship must be light with light. ^{2 Cor. 6:14}

Issues of man-made style (robes, liturgical practice and ecclesiastical polity) were of necessity secondary to the need to:

“maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:3

This certain belief of the world-wide unity of fellowship of all those who are sincere believers in Jesus Christ held by Cummins and taught to him by God’s Holy Word (cf 1 Peter 5:9 etc.) led him to hold that when possible such unity should be openly enjoyed with disregard to the man-made style of different biblical groups in order that glory be given to God.

“There are two kinds of unity. The unity that matters is the unity of the new humanity God has created by the death of his Son, and that he is bringing into being by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This unity is unity in the gospel, unity in the Christ of the gospel. This unity is, by the grace of God, a spiritual reality. “You are all one in Christ Jesus.” And it is lived out by patience,

kindness, love and acceptance of one another in glad submission to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The other unity is what humans in their pride and arrogance create. It is the unity of man-made institutions and structures. In itself it is worse than worthless. It is Babylonian unity, and will fall under God's judgment. We must be for the first kind of unity, but profoundly critical of the second."¹¹

This 'unity in the Christ of the Gospel' was what became the turning point for Cummins and is what underlies the doctrine of the denomination that came out of his efforts to maintain that unity – which is of course the REC.

On October 12th, 1873, George David Cummins took part in a service of commemoration of the Lord's Supper in Reverend John Hall's church in New York. An act that was to set off seismic reactions and that was the direct cause of the eventual founding of the REC. The congregation was *not* one in the Protestant Episcopal denomination, neither were the ministers with whom he joined in this celebration. They were however evangelicals – members of the 'Evangelical Alliance' – at whose conference he was due to speak on 'Roman and Reformed Doctrines of Justification Contrasted'. Such an act of genuinely biblical ecumenism (joining in fellowship and communion with those with whom he shared true faith in Christ and true trust in God's holy Word) should not have drawn such opprobrium and 'bitter invective' (of such a nature that Mrs. Cummins refused to put any record in her '*Memoir of George David Cummins*'!¹²). However, this was the sad result.

For weeks afterwards the criticism continued from within the Protestant Episcopal Church and from most of the establishment press. Cummins was subject to attack from both the High Churchmen and the Anglo-Catholics within the denomination. Sadly many of his fellow evangelicals within the PEC did not publicly come out in print to support him in the face of the unbiblical and consciously destructive attacks that he was subject to. On November 10th, 1873 he wrote to Bishop Smith of the Diocese of Kentucky (whose assistant he was) a letter of resignation, not from the episcopacy but from the Protestant Episcopal Church. In this letter he wrote as follows:

*"First, then, you well know how heavy has been the trial of having to exercise my office in certain churches in the diocese of Kentucky, where the services are conducted so as to symbolise and to teach the people doctrines subversive of the 'truth as it is in Jesus,' and as it was maintained and defended by the Reformers of the sixteenth century. On each occasion that I have been called upon to officiate in those churches, I have been most painfully impressed by the conviction that I was sanctioning and indorsing [sic] by my presence and official acts the dangerous errors symbolised by the services customary in ritualistic churches. I can no longer, by my participation in such services, be 'a partaker of other men's sins,' and must clear my own soul of all complicity in such errors."*¹³

He went on to say one further significant thing in this letter (not that I deny the significance of the words he wrote about the Prayer Book), in reference to the service of The Lord's Supper that he had attended so fatefully on October 12th.

"It was practical manifestation of the real unity of 'the blessed company of all faithful people' whom 'God hath knit together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of his Son Jesus Christ.'

*As I cannot surrender the right and privilege thus to meet my fellow-Christians of other churches around the table of our dear Lord, I must take my place where I can do so without alienating those of my own household of faith."*¹⁴

These are not the words of a man who left the denomination where he had served for 28 years with a desire to follow or set out the principles of the 'modern ecumenical movement' and to engage in a search for a visible unity among Christians whilst disregarding their doctrinal position. These are the words of a man who was inspired by the Word of God to acknowledge as brethren in the Lord all those who:

*"...agree in the truth of Thy Holy Word."*¹⁵

The original Doctrine of the REC compared with the present situation.

I make no apology for now jumping forward to the matter of how the REC originally had its doctrine formulated and what that doctrine was – indeed, what it still is in one or two of the congregations who hold faithful to the origins of their denomination and to God's Word. For that purpose it is important to look at the 35 Articles of Faith adopted by the REC (now discarded for the 39 Articles of 1801). In Cummins' reasons for leaving the Protestant Episcopal Church, which we have looked at briefly, we can see clearly that he was opposed to ritualism, to 'Romanising tendencies', to 'prince-bishops' and to an unbiblical approach to Christianity. The Articles will show clearly how he saw the REC responding to the challenge of keeping to the faith 'once delivered unto the saints'.

It is quite clear, and is in opposition to what the current hierarchy of the REC claim, that the original articles were 35. Further, letters of George Cummins to his wife indicate that in conference they slowly worked their way through them, one by one, until they adopted them. They did not simply take up someone else's articles, but formed their own.

"Chicago, May 15th, 1875.

*Yesterday we had three sessions – morning, afternoon and night – and are in the midst of the discussion on the articles. Only about 10 are passed, about two-thirds are to be discussed."*¹⁶

And the next day he wrote:

“Chicago, May 16th, 1875.

We have only passed 12 of the articles, but I hope we will be able to finish by Tuesday night.” ¹⁷

In contrast, the current REC has discarded the 35 Articles ¹⁸ written then, and adopted at its third General Council, and replaced them with those written in 1801 by the Protestant Episcopal Church. ‘Why does this matter?’ I hear you ask. It matters greatly when we hear what has been lost, and also when we hear how those they now place in their current Prayer Book ¹⁹ are clearly not even kept to by present bishops of the REC.

What did George Cummins and his fellow Christians write? What has been discarded? One of the most significant is as follows: Article V as written by George Cummins and his colleagues reads:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: Holy Scripture is therefore the Word of God; not only does it contain the Oracles of God, but it is itself the very Oracles of God. And hence it 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 faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”

Compare that with the significantly weaker version (Article VI) from the 1801 Articles – now used by the REC and printed in their Prayer Book (identical to Article VI of the Church of England). Look at these words originally part of the REC set-up – Scripture ‘is itself the very Oracles of God.’ Why would any sincerely Evangelical denomination choose to remove these wondrous and true words from its articles of faith?

The current REC also choose to discard Article XIII of those written by Cummins and the other founders of the REC, which reads:

“The Repentance required by Scripture, is a change of mind toward God, and is the effect of the conviction of sin, wrought by the Holy Ghost.

The unconverted man may have a sense of remorse, or of shame and self-reproach, and yet he may have neither a change of mind toward God, nor any true sorrow; but when he accepts Christ as his Saviour, therein he manifests a change of mind, and is in possession of repentance unto life. The sinner comes to Christ through no laboured process of repenting and sorrowing; but he comes to Christ and repentance both at once, by means of simply believing. And ever afterwards his repentance is deep and genuine in proportion as his faith is simple and childlike.”

Why would they do so? The original 35 Articles of the REC included an additional section in Article XXIV – not present in 1801’s Article XXII. This is a very significant omission and that which is omitted reads as follows:

“That doctrine of ‘Apostolic Succession’, by which it is taught that the ministry of the Christian Church must be derived through a series of uninterrupted ordinations, whether by tactual succession or otherwise, and that without the same there can be no valid ministry, no Christian Church, and no due ministrations of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, is wholly rejected as unscriptural, and productive of great mischief.

This Church values its historic ministry, but recognizes and honors as equally valid the ministry of other Churches, even as God the Holy Ghost has accompanied their work with demonstration and power.”

The first part of this now omitted section is critical in today’s situation, where some bishops on both sides of the Atlantic are now acting in a manner contrary to this. To omit the second part is to undermine the very reasons for George Cummins’ departure from the Protestant Episcopal Church. This section, now omitted, defines the key reasons, as we have seen, for the founding of the Reformed Episcopal Church. How can we have confidence in a denomination that is denying its own ‘raison d’etre’?

On page 37 of Volume 11, number 1, of ‘Deus’, the Official joint magazine of the Reformed Episcopal Church and the anglo-catholic ‘Anglican Province of America’ with whom they seek union, above a picture of the said bishop of the REC wearing full Roman Catholic vestments ²⁰ the following news item appears:

“All Saints RE Church. All Saints Mission, Amarillo, Texas, made Bishop Ray Sutton’s Episcopal visit a family affair. Michael Curtis received the Sacrament of Baptism, while his brother Robert received the Sacrament of Confirmation.”

What are we to make of this in light of Article XXV (in both the 35 & the 39) and in the light of the clear institution by Christ of only 2 sacraments? The only possible conclusion is that having discarded the original 35 Articles of George Cummins and his colleagues, the 39 they have now adopted are merely regarded as an historical document – with no relevance to what they teach and say. This being so, it is a clear step away from the Reformed Evangelical position on the sacraments, and shows disregard for the teaching of scripture.

As earlier mentioned, the pictures of the ‘altar’, and the calling it by that name, at Holy Communion Church in Texas (whose presbyter is a bishop of the REC), show that they have rejected the Declaration of Principles of the Reformed Episcopal Church, adopted by the founders of the denomination on December 2nd, 1873 – which includes the statement:

“This Church condemns and rejects the following erroneous and strange doctrines as contrary to God’s Word;

Third, That the Lord’s Table is an altar on which the oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ is offered anew to the Father.” ²¹

I conclude this section with words written in the same publication of 'Deus' by Rev Jonathan Riches, Rector of St. Philip's reformed Episcopal Church, Warminster, Pennsylvania, and an instructor at the Reformed Episcopal Seminary, Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. Read them in light of Article V of the 35, VI of the 39:

"As ecumenical efforts go forward, we must lean on the foundation of Scripture, Tradition and Reason. The bible is God's inspired, infallible and inerrant Word. In this day when the bible is being dismissed as non-authoritative, it is extremely important for us to make clear that the foundation for the church and all Christians must rest firmly in Holy Scripture. It would be a grave mistake, however, to stop there." ²²

Current Practice and trends in the REC.

The REC is currently engaged in becoming more united with the 'Anglican Province of America'. The best way to describe what this denomination stands for, and to illustrate the doctrinal compromises involved by this growing union is to quote the words of the Presiding Bishop of the APA, the Most Rev. Walter H. Grundorf. On the APA website was to be found a copy of his 'Bishop's Epistle' of March 2nd, 2001. Here are some of his words:

"A final word on our Church and Province and how we are perceived by others in and out of the Continuum. I read in a recently published newsletter from one of the more insular of our continuing church bodies, that the APA, because of its talks and agreement with other non Anglo-Catholic bodies, is seeking to be the Low Church or Evangelical party of Anglicanism. This conclusion was drawn based mostly on partial or half true statements.

The final analysis which was drawn by this article is that the Episcopal Church will just be another Protestant Denomination bordering on Unitarianism; the APA, REC and AMIA will be the Low and Evangelical Anglican body and the church the article's writer represents would be the only unambiguously Anglo-Catholic Body where people could go to find the fullness of the catholic faith.

This definitely demonstrates a narrow view of what Anglicanism is, especially since the 16th century. There has always been the concept of the via media in Anglicanism which provides for an inclusiveness which is unique in this expression of Christianity.

We have Anglo-Catholic parishes in the APA and also Low Church or Evangelical ones. But, by and large, most of our congregations fall in the middle in their outward expression. (Historically, this is where most of the Churches in the

Episcopal Church of the past would have fallen, as well as the Anglican Communion as a whole.)

We all, however, hold dear and adhere to the formularies that have traditionally made the Anglican Way unique, with its adherence to the "faith once delivered to the saints."

Our identity is not "High Church" or "Low Church", "Anglo-Catholic" or "Evangelical" - it is "Anglican". PERIOD." ²³

Throughout their website can be found various other evidence that their position is not that of a reformed and Protestant denomination. In fact all the evidence points to their being precisely the sort of denomination that George Cummins originally left! One further quote from the APA will suffice to demonstrate what kind of denomination they are.

"Our worship is centered on the Holy Eucharist, or the Holy Communion, the Mass, as we affirm our faith in the Real Presence of Our Lord's precious Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament and His re-presentation of the One Perfect Sacrifice in the Sacrament of the Altar." ²⁴

I leave it to others in this book to describe the nature of 'ecumenical compromise', such as this proposed union with the APA evidences within the REC, and why such a path is leading away from the truth. I merely place this before you as evidence as to why we can have no further confidence in the REC and why they can no longer be truly called an evangelical church.

Further compromise within the REC can be found in many of its actions. One of the most significant, considering the biblical position they take up on episcopacy ²⁵ is to be found in their recent acceptance and signing up to the 'Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral', which contains the following statement that once again forces us to ask about the true churchmanship and doctrinal position of the current REC.

"...As inherent parts of this sacred deposit, and therefore as essential... we account the following... The Historic Episcopate..." ²⁶

As well as being contrary to their own doctrine – though they may deny that as they have now denied their original articles of faith – it is also a statement that runs contrary to Article XXXV of the Free Church of England that states

"That doctrine of "Apostolic Succession" by which is taught that the Ministry in the Christian Church must be derived through a series of uninterrupted ordinations from the Apostles themselves, and that without the same there can be no Christian Church, no valid Ministry, and no due ministration of the Sacraments, has no foundation in Scripture, and is productive of great mischief.' ²⁷

We have lost confidence.

This brief section will simply consist of a list of issues that have come up in the current REC, with no comment from myself, but that underline further the reasons we can have no confidence in the REC as an evangelical church. J Fenwick's book ²⁸ leans heavily on the REC for justification of what he claims the FCE is all about. These are some points that demonstrate why this position is not acceptable to us, and not, in my opinion, true to the original purpose and doctrine of the REC in the USA.

1. The 'new' Book of Common Prayer ²⁹ currently being trailed by the REC contains, in the Holy Baptism service for infants, the words:

"Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child (or this person) is regenerate..."

2. The same book ³⁰ now contains a list of 'collects, Epistles and Gospels' for 'Holy Days', including 'Saint Andrew'; 'The Annunciation of the blessed Virgin Mary'; 'All Saints Day'; 'Independence Day'; and 'Thanksgiving Day'.
3. "The Anglican Communion Network announced the alliance of six Anglican groups, joined in a pledge 'To be a missionary movement of Anglicans in fellowship with global Anglicanism, making disciples who make disciples of Jesus Christ in North America and to the ends of the earth.' ¹ The alliance is comprised of the Reformed Episcopal Church (REC), the Anglican Mission in America (AMIA), Forward in Faith North American (FiFNA), the Anglican Province in America (APA) and the American Anglican Council (AAC) as well as episcopal signatories from the ECUSA."

The official news article of the ACN is available at:

<http://www.anglicancommunionnetwork.org/news/dspnews.cfm?id=46>

4. The following statements come from 'Anglican Belief and Practice: A Joint Affirmation of the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Anglican Province of America, October 4th 2001.' ³¹

"Baptism It is through baptism by water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost that an individual dies to sin and rises to new life in Christ. Through this rebirth, or regeneration, baptism washes away original sin and opens the door to God's grace. At baptism, a person is grafted into the Church, the Body of Christ, and becomes a branch of the Vine. Furthermore, in Baptism a visible confirmation is given of God's forgiveness of the individual's sins, and one's adoption as a son of God and an heir of salvation."

“Affirmation It is therefore affirmed that Christ directly instituted only two sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist, for use in the Church, by means of which his people partake of the mystery of the Incarnation. These two sacraments are rightly considered ‘generally necessary for salvation’. Furthermore, the Church orders her life sacramentally in services, rites, and signs that are rooted in the baptismal and eucharistic mysteries. The Church through these ministrations is the instrument and channel of God’s grace. For this reason, it is permissible within Anglicanism to refer to the rites and ceremonies of confirmation, penance, matrimony, ordination, and unction as ‘minor or lesser sacraments’.”

The following are apparently words of Charles Edward Cheney, one of the founders of the REC, and the first ‘new’ bishop of the REC. They are not footnoted as I was sent them in a letter from the USA and cannot trace them in my own books and research.

“I warn you that the same fear of offending members of the Church from which this Church separated because of false doctrine and theatrical worship inculcating that doctrine, is likely to be the temptation of our ministers, vestries, and congregations in time to come. Resist that temptation. Allow nothing in the Church that can create the impression that you are striving to conceal the impassable gulf separating us from the Anglican Church as it is in the present day. Omit nothing which will make it manifest that we are first of all Christians, next Evangelical and Protestant Christians.”

Conclusion.

The original founders of the REC set up a truly evangelical denomination. In the last few years this has been thrown away in the search for some form of visibly unity, most probably as part of a desire to be involved in the modern and unbiblical ecumenical movement. The denomination hierarchy seems now to be more worried about its place ‘on the world stage’, and how it can be friends with other churches than with upholding the reformed doctrines of its beginnings. We can no longer have confidence or fellowship with a denomination that has returned to those very practices that were so abhorrent to its founders.

When the REC was set up there were many letters of support and prayer sent to Bishop Cummins by individual members of the FCE, and also by the official FCE itself. Messages of pride and pleasure that others had also stood up against ritualism, against errant doctrine (such as baptismal regeneration and the idea of three distinct orders within ministry), and had stepped away from the compromised Protestant Episcopal Church.

These doctrines and practices have now been returned to, albeit cloaked in clever language and confusing smokescreens. However, when a congregation of the REC cannot get a straight answer from their bishop to the question, “What is the status of an unbaptized adult who has made a sincere profession of faith in Jesus Christ?”³² they have clearly made a significant movement in their doctrinal position – and they are

now in a position in which we cannot possibly say we have fellowship with them, or confidence in what they stand for.

¹ Currently available from 'The Pennsylvania State University Press': ISBN 0-271-01003-7

² A C Guelzo: FOR THE UNION OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTENDOM: page 261: 1994: The Pennsylvania State University Press

³ Mrs. A. M. Cummins: BISHOP GEORGE D. CUMMINS, D.D. First Bishop and Founder of the Reformed Episcopal Church on Ecclesiastical Vestments: Written and Compiled by his Wife: Correspondence to Dr H.S.Hoffman: June 9th, 1890.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John Fenwick: THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND: 2004: T & T Clark International.

⁶ D.G.Paz: Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England: page 149: 1992: Stanford University Press, Stanford, California.

⁷ Ibid: page 149.

⁸ Mrs. A. M. Cummins: MEMOIR OF GEORGE DAVID CUMMINS, D.D.: page 290: 1878: E. Claxton & Company.

⁹ A look at the website and photographs of 'The Church of The Holy Communion', an REC Church in Texas, will show the reader that the current REC is now experiencing the same issues – though they now appear to have a tabernacle there!

¹⁰ Ibid: page 413.

¹¹ John Woodhouse: TRUTH MATTERS: THE BABYLONIAN UNITY OF THE CHURCH: 2004: Reform website.

¹² Mrs. A. M. Cummins: MEMOIR OF GEORGE DAVID CUMMINS, D.D.: 1878: E. Claxton & Company.

¹³ Ibid: page 418-9.

¹⁴ Ibid: page 420.

¹⁵ The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper: The Free Church of England Book of Common Prayer: page 194: 1956: Marshall Morgan & Scott Ltd.

¹⁶ Mrs. A. M. Cummins: MEMOIR OF GEORGE DAVID CUMMINS, D.D.: page 476: 1878: E. Claxton & Company.

¹⁷ Ibid: page 477.

¹⁸ Currently available on the website of the Church of the Redemption, Pennsylvania. To be found at www.RedemptionTREC.org.

¹⁹ 'The Book of Common Prayer; According to the use of the Reformed Episcopal Church in North America': 2003: The REC.

²⁰ Those being Alb, cincture, stole, mitre, episcopal ring, crozier and pectoral cross!

²¹ Ibid: page 623

²² Jonathan Riches: 'Embracing Ecumenism'; Deus: page 11: 2004: The Anglican Province of America and the Reformed Episcopal Church.

²³ Bishop Walter H. Grundorf: Bishop's Epistle: March 2nd 2001: APA website – www.anglicanprovince.org

²⁴ St. Albans Anglican Church, APA: Catholic Faith & Apostolic Order, Evangelical Witness & Orthodox Worship: 2003: www.saint-alban.org

²⁵ "That doctrine of "Apostolic Succession" by which it is taught that the ministry of the Christian Church must be derived through a series of uninterrupted ordinations, whether by tactual succession or otherwise, and that without the same there can be no valid ministry, no Christian Church, and no due ministrations of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, is wholly rejected as unscriptural, and productive of great mischief." Article XXIV of the 35 Articles of faith of the REC. 1873.

²⁶ The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America: The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral: 1886:

www.anglicansonline.org

²⁷ Article XXXV, The Articles of Religion: The Book of Common Prayer for use in the Free Church of England: page 523: 1956: Marshall, Morgan & Scott.

²⁸ John Fenwick: THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND: 2004: T & T Clark International.

²⁹ 'The Book of Common Prayer; According to the use of the Reformed Episcopal Church in North America': page 465: 2003: The REC.

³⁰ Ibid: page 245ff

³¹ To be found on the APA/REC Joint Website at www.anglicanprovince.org

³² From a private email to this author from a member of an REC Congregation in the USA. 17/03/2004

Chapter 3

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil...Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:26-32

Chapter 3

The Disunited Church 1927-2004 (see Fenwick, chapter eight)

Barry Shucksmith

In commending John Fenwick's book *THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*, Ian Cundy, Bishop of Peterborough comments. 'Anyone who is interested in the history of Anglicanism or the continuing influence of the Evangelical Revival on church life in this country will benefit from a careful study of this readable and helpful book.' One can hardly disagree with these comments, especially when applied to the Evangelical Revival. Fenwick is right to trace the roots of the Free Church of England back to the 18th century and specifically to George Whitefield, the great Church of England evangelist, ordained in Gloucester, 1736.

The priority of New Birth

Whitefield began his preaching with the necessity of "New Birth", not always the favoured doctrine of the Church of England, nor did he confuse this with the application of water baptism. The truth of the need for spiritual rebirth was later to be enshrined in the Confession and Constitution of the Free Church of England, 'this Church condemns and rejects the following erroneous and strange doctrines as contrary to God's Word...that regeneration is inseparably connected with Baptism.¹ Controversy on the same issue was to arise a century later in the legal case between Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter and James Shore, perceived, perhaps ingenuously by some, but helpfully not by Dr Fenwick, to be the first true minister of the Free Church of England?

Fenwick relies a good deal upon the doctoral thesis on the Free Church of England, by his namesake Richard Fenwick, Dean of Monmouth. The author is quick to identify him as not being a relative. Certainly, few have read the Ph.D thesis, or verified it in relation to the other material available. To be honest, one wonders how many present members of the Free Church of England would be able to either sustain a reading of this significant work, or give it the necessary historical, theological, and considered analysis, required. Few present ministers of the Free Church of England have had formal residential Anglican training, including the present two ecumenical bishops.

Dr Fenwick seems unaware of a new Oxford Theological Monograph, *ANGLICAN EVANGELICALS*, written by Grayson Carter and published as recently as 2001. Carter's work is to deal with protestant secessions from the via media, c.1800-1850. He devotes a whole chapter to the case of the Reverend James Shore. Here is new and thoroughly reliable material.

Fenwick develops his somewhat dubious ecumenical theme, for the Free Church of England, by a process of blending three strands:

The process of blending the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival tradition, as represented by the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, with post-1844 anti-Tractarian secessions from the Church of England, and with the North American-derived ecumenically inspired Reformed Episcopal Church had been tortuous and painful. But compared to the century or so leading up to 1927, the years that have elapsed since have been remarkably stable.²

Leaving aside, for the time being, the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, can we trace anything in the case of James Shore which would suggest inspiration for future ecumenical development?

The real significance of James Shore

James Shore was imprisoned for attempting to secede from the Church of England and officiate in his own chapel as a Nonconformist minister. The event coincided with the Gorham case. This centred around baptism and conversion. In some ways it could be described as the chief theological controversy of the early and mid-nineteenth century. The problem was, as expressed by David Bebbington:

'... one of reconciling the conviction of Evangelicals that conversion is the time when a person becomes a Christian with two statements in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England. According to the order for baptism, an infant is declared regenerate at the end of the ceremony; and according to the catechism, baptism is the occasion of our new birth. Evangelicals who were also Anglicans had a tangled knot to untie.'³

Shore had to contend with the cantankerous and litigious Bishop of Exeter. Fenwick has given us sufficient reliable coverage of the case between Shore and Phillpotts for us to pass over the laborious historical detail. Our concern is with the character and consequence of Shore's willingness to suffer, even to the point of imprisonment. Although Shore clearly played a major part in the advancement of religious liberty we are concerned to know what contribution, if any, he made to a growing ecumenical spirit. The answer must be, very little, and certainly nothing on the basis of the present evidence available. The considered judgment of Grayson Carter is in fact the opposite of Fenwick's general theme. Far from promoting a new spirit of unity among those of Anglican persuasion it served to illustrate a growing lack of confidence in a broad church. This is exacerbated further in today's Church, by liberal bishops, the unbiblical practice of ordaining women priests, the soon-arrival of women bishops, the argument for practising homosexual clergy, and the impending schism of the most evangelical sections of the Anglican Communion. Carter summarises:

'(Shore's) case was important. It disturbed the already troubled consciences of evangelical clergymen. Richard Spooner, speaking in the Commons on Shore's behalf, described how he had received a heavy pile of mail from sympathetic clerics, expressing regret that any person should be exposed to ecclesiastical

*censures on account of their Dissent from the doctrines of the Established Church...there can be little doubt that the Shore case added to the crisis of confidence which seized not only Evangelicalism, but Anglicanism itself, in the mid-nineteenth century*⁴

We must leave it to other contributors to deal more fully with the perceived ecumenical development of the Free Church of England. However, as a bridge in our build-up to the 1927 union of the Free Church of England and the Reformed Episcopal Church, it will not hinder our purpose to touch briefly on the two further strands of Dr Fenwick's book. Fenwick writes, 'this work (on the Free Church of England) is an introduction to what could be described as England's best-kept ecumenical secret.'⁵

Selina, Countess of Huntingdon

We now backtrack a century or so to consider again Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. In the authorised HISTORY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, Bishop Frank Vaughan rightly draws attention to the Evangelical Revival and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. In a purple passage, not quoted by Fenwick, but loved by a previous generation of conservative evangelicals, Vaughan compares the apparent irregularity of gospel preachers with the sticklers for church order and ritualistic orthodoxy. These latter can only be described as precursors to so much contemporary ecumenical discussion and arrangement. The quotation, which I shall refer to in a moment, comes from a FCE Convocation Charge given in 1872. This slightly preceded the consecration of Charles Cheney, Sunday 14 December 1873, at Christ Church, Chicago. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume the revival spirit still burned in some Free Church of England hearts!

Where was the zeal of the new nonconformists to be found in the 18th century revival movement? Was it, as some might suggest, in a growing respect for church order and ecumenical progress, or was it in evangelism, with a desire to save the lost? Certainly there was ecumenism of the evangelical variety, a desire to extend the boundaries of fellowship, whatever the preferred denominational, or governmental issue. The Free Church of England, although providing for episcopacy in its early constitutional framework, had managed without episcopacy for thirty years. This was to change in 1876 when Bishop Edward Cridge, Reformed Episcopal Church, layed hands on Benjamin Price, in Christ Church, Teddington. A furore followed with, on the one hand, attacks from High Churchmen and, on the other, enthusiastic support from those who wished the Free Church of England well, in the new direction it was about to take. Now, at last, it was becoming ecumenically respectable? Or, was it rather a move forwards, only to give order and credibility to the evangelical and evangelistic fervour of a century before?

Referring to the earlier period and the purple passage already described, Vaughan writes:

"The effect of this revival of evangelical truth was marvellous. We can scarcely imagine the stir it created, or the influence it exerted, or the persecution it evoked, or the change it produced in the life and manners of the people, and in the religion and literature of the country. It was like some wild fiery conflagration,

spreading consternation through the land, arousing the godless and the careless, alarming the guilty, stirring the apathetic, and exciting the attention of all. Multitudes fled from the wrath to come; others, in blank dismay, declared as of old, that the world was turned upside down.

"Infidelity quailed in its presence, unbelief was shaken to its foundations, and vice hid itself in the back slums. The cold and heartless morality of the day melted like snow in summer, and the barren orthodoxy of the pulpit shrivelled up like a bottle of smoke. Instead of unbelief, there sprang up a living faith; instead of a cold and formal religion, there was evoked the life and power of godliness; men felt and handled, and tasted of the Word of Life, and their fellowship was with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

*"As of old, indeed, the chief priests and Pharisees, with their officers, sought to lay hands on the apostles, and persecuted them in every city, but 'the power was from on high,' and resistance was fruitless. Never since the Apostolic age were there greater preachers or more consuming zeal exhibited in the cause of Christ. They were ready to preach anywhere and everywhere; 'in cathedral', says Mr Ryle, 'or barn, church, chapel, city or village, street or alley, in the market place or on the village green, on tub or table, bench or horse block, anywhere and everywhere where hearers could be gathered.' The sticklers for church order, cried, 'Irregular, Irregular,' and the orthodox were scandalised by all this fanaticism and wild fire; but the common people heard them gladly."*⁶

Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, had shared in the enthusiasm of the Evangelical Revival and been a great inspiration for it. In a new work by Faith Cook⁷ much new material, previously unavailable, comes to light, particularly Selina's own predilection for biblical Calvinistic doctrines. This is again confirmed by the Presbyterian historian, Iain Murray, in his extract from the pen of Henry Rack:

*'It is not surprising that many evangelicals should have developed Calvinistic and predestinarian views as a result of their conversions: revivals of a strong doctrine of sin and of grace always produce this result. The surprising thing is that, exceptionally within the Revival as a whole, Wesley did not.'*⁸

In tracing the growing split between some prominent members of the Revival, Faith Cook confirms Selina's undoubted Calvinistic beliefs. Beliefs which must have left their mark on the new Free Church of England, a century later.

*'Certainly there was a measure of misunderstanding, accompanied by lack of clarification, but if words are to be taken at their face value, we are not surprised that the Countess and many others from the Calvinistic wing of the revival should believe that there were indeed essential principles of the evangelical gospel at stake.'*⁹

We now have no hesitation in saying, if Dr Fenwick's ecumenical thesis is correct and the Free Church of England is predominantly an ecumenical church – to be understood by modern terms and contemporary shape – the same must be true. The evangelical gospel is at stake. The *raison d'être* of the denomination is threatened. Its future as a meaningful evangelical and evangelistic protestant church, with Church of England roots, is in jeopardy. Furthermore, whatever else the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion gave to the Free Church of England, it unquestionably passed on, in the Calvinistic teachings of the fifteen articles, a statement on the Church, which hardly accords with the present-day CHURCHES TOGETHER. Modern ecumenism is on a quest for visible unity which must, by its very nature, end in the unification of all Christendom, in the Roman Catholic Church. The recent acceptance by the Church of England's General Synod of the primacy of Rome moves this one step nearer. Yet, Article 13, of the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion doctrinal statement, professes:

*'The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof, and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The visible church consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. To which visible church Christ hath given the ministry and ordinances of the Gospel, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof, but is the Antichrist, the man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God.'*¹⁰

George Cummins, founder of an Ecumenical Church?

In his significant, although questionable chapter eight, Fenwick describes Cummins' new Church as the North American-derived ecumenically inspired Reformed Episcopal Church. George David Cummins (1822-1875) came under the influence of his mother's Methodism, soon after the death of his father. George was only four at the time. After conversion, he originally joined the Methodist Church. Eventually, desiring a more settled ministry, he was confirmed and ordained (1845). In the Episcopal Church, he served parishes in Norfolk, Richmond, Washington, Baltimore, and Chicago. He was elected assistant bishop of Kentucky (1866) but in 1873 seceded from PECUSA, after receiving heavy criticism. This was for participating in an interdenominational communion service. In December 1873, he found himself presiding officer in the new Reformed Episcopal Church but he survived for only two brief years and died in 1875.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, a major acclaimed authority on the church, does not even give him, or the Reformed Episcopal Church, mention. However, the New International Dictionary of the Christian Church¹¹ highlights his desire for relationships with evangelical nonconformists and his growing concern for the doctrinal departure of some in his own party. As a low churchman, he noticed

that even his colleagues were using the Book of Common Prayer to provide for a growing ritualism and sacerdotalism. This explains why he tried to have the Prayer Book of 1785 (now used by the Free Church of England) approved. For himself, he was moving in an even more evangelical direction. He could no longer obey the Church's mandates – its increasing popishness – and strictures against celebrating Holy Communion with non-Anglicans. It seems, what Cummins sought was the same in principle, as Bishop Shucksmith's AGENDA FOR RENEWAL, (see the appendix), proposed almost a century and a half later.¹²

Far from seeking union with those of another tradition and churchmanship, particularly those imbibed with tractarian or anglo-catholic views, a more mature and wiser generation of evangelicals kept their distance. Fenwick makes fun of this as if the threat was no longer a reality, or anglo-catholics had migrated to another planet, or the Apostle Paul had never written the Galatian Epistle.¹³ In his bid to advance the ecumenical argument, produce a broad church, and find a new reason for existence, the author ducks the real issue. For all their orthodoxy in some areas, the Tractarians virtually denied the Evangelical emphases by their sacramental theology. They still do! Why otherwise, are they for ever knocking on the door of Rome? How long will it be before a broader visible church, of the ecumenical kind envisaged by Dr Fenwick, joins the ranks of the move to Rome and, soon thereafter, swell the gadarene rush towards a one-world-religion, under the auspices of the Papacy? Peter Toon has discerningly commented:

*'Both held to the doctrines of the creed but in terms of their differing systems; what mattered was that for Evangelicals the individual sinner approached God directly through Jesus Christ the Mediator, in faith and prayer, while for Tractarians this direct route through Jesus Christ involved a detour through the visible Church with her apostolic ministry and efficacious sacraments. Thus for an Evangelical to become a Tractarian, be he a Newman, a Manning, or a Wilberforce, there had to be a basic change of theological reference in the doctrines of salvation and ecclesiology.'*¹⁴

Cummins managed to steer his new church clear of these threatening icebergs. His successors, by seeking a more adventurous journey, blissfully re-board the Titanic. We have no reason to reject the account as given in Bishop Vaughan's HISTORY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, or the original reasons given for Cummins' resignation. To promote evangelical communion, undoubtedly? But supremely to ensure a fidelity to the doctrine of justification by faith alone – articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiae.¹⁵ This is the test of whether a church is standing or falling. We cannot believe, even with the influence of William Augustus Muhlenburg's ecumenical evangelical Catholicism, Cummins would have allowed church order to overrule gospel priority. Dr Fenwick's broad bridge extends too far!

1945 Mission and Masonry

Fenwick acknowledges much good work was done at local church level during this particular period. Clearly, the problem for any writer is lack of source and significant information. Dr Fenwick, whom we

are seeking to reply to, has already acknowledged paucity this. He has cited the Luftwaffe's destruction of valuable material during the blitz on London. But, for the period 1927-1945, the author of the new history of the Free Church of England raises two issues which we consider to be important. First, there is the question of missionary support which could afford us some light on whether the Free Church of England was steadily developing in an ecumenical direction – the major theme of Fenwick's new work. Second, there is the issue of Freemasonry, which the author deals with in two short paragraphs. What is freemasonry? Is it still active and does it have a bearing on the decline and disunity of the receding church? We will begin on a positive note.

The support of overseas missionary work advanced during this period. This included both financial and personnel support. Fenwick believes the split with the Huntingdon Connexion (c.1920) turned the support of the denomination from Africa to China. Assuming there is no-one still living who can remember this decision, perhaps, unwittingly, we have been given a clue about the spiritual condition of the Free Church of England, in the 1920s. The author would like us to think, the denomination is gradually developing in a broader and more ecumenical direction, until it reaches the peak of present ecumenical maturity, today. Yet, after 1920, it is said, the denomination transferred its main missionary interest to the China Inland Mission for a number of years.¹⁶

Evangelical Anglicans have invariably supported the work of the Church Missionary Society or the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society. In a modern context, much missionary support has gone to the South American Missionary Society. While having Anglicans working within it, the China Inland Mission (Overseas Missionary Society as it is today) could be well described as a perfect example of ecumenical evangelicalism. The Mission had been founded by James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) who was born into a Methodist family. It was while reading a tract on the finished work of Christ in his father's study, he felt that he had finally understood what Christ had done for him.¹⁷ By the time Taylor died in Changsha, 1905, Christians from all over the world, agreeing to overlook denominational differences, joined the ranks of the China Inland Mission. By the end of the 19th century, half of the evangelical missionaries in China were from the Mission. Furthermore, as evidence of the strictly evangelical nature of the Mission, the historian Kenneth Hylson-Smith comments, Hudson Taylor reckoned that two-thirds of the missionaries in the China Inland Mission had come via Keswick.¹⁸ For the Free Church of England, to support this particular mission in 1920, is surely further evidence of the biblical and evangelical ecumenism preferred by Whitefield, Countess Selina, and George Cummins? Otherwise, it was a strange choice indeed!

Bishop Donald Thompson

We are now to consider a less savoury issue, that of Freemasonry. Bishop Donald Thompson left the denomination in 1942, believing Freemasonry to be incompatible with Evangelical principles. In fact, Thompson was the man responsible for theological training and ran a scheme, in his own Rectory, under the name of The Bishop Cummins Theological College. No doubt, serious efforts have since been made to compensate for this loss but nothing on the same scale has been achieved.

Under the leadership of Reverends Angus Parnaby and Bruce Burrows a process of education and examination had taken place for many years. As a result of increasing demand for the examination of new candidates to the ministry, the Free Church of England Examination Board, introduced a completely revised system. This was authorised by Convocation in the year 2000. An introductory booklet, along with the new examinations, for presbyters and deacons was presented to Convocation. Even layreaders, for the first time, were to undergo a course of training. It was also expected that clergy joining the Free Church of England from other churches, would be examined in Free Church of England history, canons and constitution, the 1785 prayerbook and clergy handbook, regardless of their previous experience and education. Unquestionably, this is inferior to what is expected of ministerial candidates in other denominations. Yet, it was the beginning of a serious effort. Perhaps, it was also the best one can do without financial resources? Certainly, Bishops Bentley-Taylor and Shucksmith, who were both members of the Examination Board, saw this as a priority and concentrated on it. As Angus Parnaby, Secretary to the Board, had written:

*'The recommendation of books which are faithful to the Reformed Faith is essential if candidates are to have a fundamental grasp of authentic Christianity. They need to be men who know, preach, and defend, what they believe, as all the Apostles were...it is a dangerous practice to use books which conflict with the Orthodox Faith. This is particularly so for the new or young Christian. Essential truths should be grasped before exposure to the deviations and heresies of the years. Otherwise, this leads, as it frequently has, to uncertainty about those things most surely believed among us.'*¹⁹

Whatever our feelings about Bishop Donald Thompson, or the stand he took against Freemasonry in the Free Church of England, one needs to recognise, the denomination lost a man of considerable ability and scholarly acumen. His contributions to the Bible League publication, TRUTH UNCHANGED, UNCHANGING indicate this.²⁰ They also reveal the kind of evangelical Thompson was. The Bible League came into existence as the result of C H Spurgeon's noble fight for the fundamentals of our Faith during the 'Downgrade' controversy of 1887-1892. Thompson's name, as a contributor to the Bible League volume, occurs alongside names like E J Poole-Connor, S. M Houghton, Campbell Morgan, Alan Stibbs, Dr D M Lloyd-Jones and Basil F C Atkinson. He was a thoroughly convinced "Bible man" too, for his three major contributions are, 'the Holy Scriptures: the task of the Translators and the Story of the Early Versions'.

1945-2004

Fenwick seeks to soften the reason for Thompson's departure as being also due to a diocesan reorganisation scheme.²¹ No one doubts this may well have played a part in his momentous decision. But, as a man of God, committed to an infallible view of Holy Scripture, we fear Freemasonry was the real driving force. This was a great loss, indeed, to the Free Church of England. One prayerfully speculates, where might the denomination have been today had this tragedy not occurred? Yet, sadly, this seems to be a recurring story in the history of a fragile and equivocating body, no longer contented with its evangelical and Calvinistic past.

What is it about Freemasonry that can raise such temperature? Why should a man separate from a denomination on what, after all, is supposed to be a private matter for the individual? The answer lies in the religious nature of the movement, although, naturally, this is denied by many masons. In a moment, we must give some consideration to the religious content. We shall do so, aware that many of the mainline denominations have already had the debate on freemasonry and reached the conclusion, it is incompatible with Christianity. Such debate is long overdue in the Free Church of England.

Dr Barry Shucksmith, later to be elected Bishop by one of the largest majorities in recent times, had been warned before joining the Free Church of England. Several close friends, among them a leading evangelical Bishop, had cautioned him against joining the Free Church of England. But where does a seceding episcopalian, conscientiously forced out by politically-correct decisions, find a spiritual home, outside the Church of England? Naively, Shucksmith replied, that's no longer a problem in the Free Church of England. It was fifty years ago. In fact, Shucksmith, a moderate in many matters, was neutral towards Freemasonry. He considered it to be a matter for the individual concerned. He had been brought up in a local Anglican Church virtually run by Freemasons and, on the surface, there appeared to be no real problems. Many Freemasons are decent, hardworking, businessmen and certainly, as far as the first three degrees of Freemasonry are concerned, the craft seems to have many sincere members.

Also, at this time, Shucksmith was unaware of a letter in response to an enquirer, from the British Evangelical Council.²² The work of the BEC is described, in the letter, as A Council of Evangelical Churches within the British Isles committed to promoting the cause of true evangelical unity at both national and local level according to the teachings of the Word of God and to seeking, in fellowship together, to make an uncompromised witness to biblical truths. Fenwick feels the Free Church of England should be at the forefront of ecumenical endeavour. An unbiased reflection on the Constitution and Canons of the denomination should leave the reader differently convinced. The Free Church of England ought to be spearheading a national and local campaign, for a return to biblical Christianity.

One of the issues raised by the British Evangelical Council, respecting the Free CofE, was Freemasonry. It was also the major reason for the departure of one of the denomination's most godly and able bishops, D A Thompson.

J Oswald Sanders, author of thirty world-renowned books, later to become the leader of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (1954-1969), and a trained solicitor by background, deals with Freemasonry in his book, HERESIES ANCIENT AND MODERN. He concludes, it is anti-christian. Having introduced the history of Freemasonry, he speaks of its abominations in terms of blood-curdling oaths, sworn secrecy and, most serious of all, oaths of secrecy. He maintains it is incompatible with Christianity:

While Freemasonry pays lip-service to a god, it is not the God of the Bible, nor does it give to the Bible a place of pre-eminence over the Koran or the Vedas. God is patronisingly acknowledged as the "Great Architect of the Universe," but W. Hoste asserts that the God of masonry is "a composite deity - Jehovah, Baal, and On, or Osiris rolled into one, under the initials J.B.O. Novitiates are kept in ignorance of this; they hear the descriptive title, the 'Divine Architect', and

imagine that it is the God of the bible who is meant. Whereas if Freemasonry be true, the very idol that Jezebel set up in defiance of Jehovah, and On - one of the Gods of Egypt against whom Jehovah 'executed judgment' - share the Godhead with Him." See Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 62:8.²³

Sanders continues his biblical analysis of the craft by pointing out, certainly in the lower degrees, the exclusion of the name of Christ, the emphasis upon good works, and the need for separation from religious traditions which are not apostolic – “now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). He also quotes the words of one of the greatest evangelists of the 19th century, Dwight L Moody:

“I do not see how any Christian, most of all a Christian minister, can go into these secret lodges with unbelievers. They say they have more influence for good, but I say they can have more influence for good by staying out of them, and then reproving their evil deeds. Abraham had more influence for good in Sodom than Lot had. If twenty-five Christians go into a secret lodge with fifty who are not Christians, the fifty can vote anything they please, and the twenty-five will be partakers of their sins. They are unequally yoked with unbelievers.”²⁴

Listed in the bibliography of our reply to Dr Fenwick are several helpful volumes, including a fairly new work, THE SECRET TEACHINGS OF THE MASONIC LODGE – a Christian Perspective, by John Ankerberg and John Weldon and the older reliable work, never answered, by Walton Hannah, called CHRISTIAN BY DEGREES. Would-be students should not bypass two excellent booklets from Church of England sources, the grove booklet, FREEMASONRY – A WAY OF SALVATION? and FREEMASONRY AND CHRISTIANITY – Are They Compatible? published by the Standing Committee of the General Synod of the Church of England.

Is Freemasonry a factor still to be reckoned with in the Free Church of England? In recent times, a release from the New Zealand FCE churches, for their local situation, was not well received, in the denomination as a whole.²⁵ At about the same time, 31 December 1997, eighteen months after his election to the Episcopate and while still not recognised, in any meaningful sense as a hands-on bishop, Dr Shucksmith raised the issue for General Council. In fact, he raised three questions, (1) What should our attitude be towards the present Church of England? (2) What is our official position, as a Christian Church, towards Freemasonry? (3) What is the authority and function of a non-Diocesan Bishop in relation to the whole denomination? The discussion never materialised on any single point. When Arthur Bentley-Taylor tried to encourage free discussion, to shouts of ‘bigot, bigot’, Shucksmith and Bentley-Taylor were told to leave the denomination. Readers must draw their own conclusions, but there are a considerable number of Freemasons in the denomination, when compared with the overall membership. Furthermore, what kind of a professing Christian Church is it, which will not allow discussion on any of the three points raised by the author? Shucksmith was neutral on Freemasonry, even after he discovered the two bishops who consecrated him were themselves Freemasons. But he ceased to be so, after a private meeting with these bishops, at the Fleetwood Rectory on 4th November 1997. This is why he raised the questions in Council.

As a result of his experiences in the Free Church of England, Dr Shucksmith has become a decisive campaigner for Christians not being Freemasons.

There is another factor here which may well bear on the ecumenical thesis of Dr Fenwick's book. Freemasonry is the most ecumenical of all movements. As the General Synod Standing Committee Report notes:

Freemasons may understand themselves either to be addressing the God of their own religion or to be addressing the God of different religions under one neutral name. Each position has its own theological problems. Like a good many other organisations, what Freemasonry offers and what its members take from it could depend on factors more personal than the official statements of its aims and objects can either envisage or control ²⁶

As far as the English expression of Reformed Episcopalianism is concerned, surely Freemasonry has helped to develop ecumenism of a non-evangelical brand. This may well be true also of Reformed Episcopalianism, the other side of the Atlantic. The vows and bonds of Masonry are strong. They can also rob the Christian Church of the loyalty and fellowship which belongs, first to the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then to professing believers united in Him. What we can say with some certainty is this. Although there has been a small numerical surge, and some real gains, during the time of the evangelical bishops, Shucksmith and Bentley-Taylor, nevertheless, with the departure of Bishop Donald Thompson in 1942, the denomination accelerated, in a downward spiral. And Thompson left, chiefly, over issues of Freemasonry.

The Decline of the Free Church of England

In two further quotations, seeking reasons for the decline of the Free Church of England, Fenwick cites the problems, as he sees them, of isolationism and Calvinism:

'Undoubtedly, the Free Church of England's isolationist stance was one of the main reasons for its decline. Despite the commitment to maintain communion with all Christian Churches explicit in its declaration of Principles, the Free Church of England at this period was as anti-ecumenical as the contemporary Roman Catholic Church... (also) as (Bishop) Ward put it: Within our ranks we had some who were opposed to Wesley's doctrine and were strongly for Calvinism and this upset the Wesley Reform Union and caused strained relationship...the surviving Calvinism mentioned by Ward was strongest in the Southern Diocese at this period, and Richard Fenwick attributes to it the fact that more churches failed in the south than in the less doctrinally narrow north. Theological attitudes inhibited the development of a wider social and community life, the lack of which contributed to the demise of the congregations.' ²⁷

One would expect an Arminian like Bishop Ward, who had come out of the Salvation Army without it coming out of him, to make such comments. But, it is difficult to see how the two Fenwicks, both scholarly men, could develop such theory without superficial caricature of Calvinism; a theological system which touches every area of national, social and moral life. Clearly, for example, they are not familiar with the works of Abraham Kuyper. Moreso is this true, when one notes the inconsistency of the argument. For the author has already shown, in earlier chapters, the profound influence exercised, by the case of George Whitefield. Calvinism is only doctrinally narrow to those who perceive it to be so. Furthermore, it is not even true, as far as the southern diocese of the Free Church of England is concerned. Emmanuel Church, Farnham, which previously had basically a pro-ecumenical, Arminian approach, almost closed its doors, having dwindled to three committed members. Today, as a consequence of a non-ecumenical, Calvinistic, and expository bible ministry, it is not only one of the strongest churches in the diocese, it is spiritually healthier than it has been, for well over half a century.

In chapter eight, Dr Fenwick gives his own record of the Conversations with the Church of England (1992-1997). Also, he describes the aftermath of the departure of Bishops Barry Shucksmith and Arthur Bentley-Taylor. It is in this section, particularly, that historical inaccuracies and inadequate factual detail occurs. It is, therefore, necessary to set the record straight and give this important period the weight it deserves. So, it will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter. But before closing this chapter we must mention two significant people who joined the Free Church of England in the last few years, the Reverend Dominic Stockford and Reverend Reginald Burrows. In doing so, we do not wish to imply other clergymen, or newly-joined laity, to be of lesser importance. We simply record the Lord's guidance and provision in recent days, all of which bear upon the ecumenical issues raised by the author.

Stockford and Burrows

Dominic Stockford was born on 24 August 1962 in Guildford Surrey. He was baptised 17 days later in the Roman Catholic parish church in Langley Green, Sussex and confirmed by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Clifton in 1976 at Downside Abbey. He was subsequently ordained priest in the Church of Rome, in Sacred Heart Church, Paignton, on 13th September 1986. Whether the reception of a Roman Catholic priest into the Free Church of England has occurred before must be left to other historians. It certainly was a significant event for the denomination when he publicly declared his belief in the supremacy of scripture and the 39 articles of religion. He was inducted into the living at Christ Church, Station Road, Teddington, Middlesex on 26th September 2001 and the current writer was able to witness the happy event. Subsequent to his conversion, he had married Gerardine and fathered two lovely girls, Anna and Ellen.

Like so many who have come from other churches, he brought with him considerable experience of the wider church, a quality not always recognised or appreciated by long-standing members of the Free Church of England. Before coming to the FCE, he served in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Paignton, and was on the staff of the Cathedral Church of St Mary and St Boniface, Plymouth. He also became Acting Cathedral Administrator for a short time, before moving as Parish Priest to St, Thomas More, Plymouth.

The Reverend Dominic Stockford tells his story in the short but moving account of his conversion, MORE THAN A SURVIVOR. His coming to the Free Church of England has been crucial at this stage, not only because of the important part he has played in understanding ecumenical issues but also for his pastoral work and commitment as the minister of Christ Church Teddington. It has to be said, with some shame and regret, that not everyone in the denomination welcomed his coming. This was due not to his previous Roman Catholic background, but his new-found faith and definite biblical, reformed, beliefs. Even while he was seeking the Lord, Dominic did not find all protestant churches helpful. Yet, eventually, the Lord led him to the right church:

*'The first few churches I tried did not 'work' and somehow was missing something...(then)...I attended St Andrew's Church in the centre of Plymouth. Although part of the Church of England they are members of the Reform group and are staunch evangelicals. The simple service and the clear message from scripture caught my attention and I began to attend regularly. I also attended another Reform church in Exeter, St Leonard's, where the same preaching of scripture struck a chord. However, although I knew that I had found the answer in the Scriptures I had not yet found my way to Christ.'*²⁸

Dominic goes on to show, in his exciting booklet, how God dealt with him. Eventually, he came right through to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, by the instrumentality of another Anglican evangelical minister. Then, during the singing of a gospel hymn, the full force of God's regenerating grace came home to him:

*'I understood that my sins are forgiven, through his death on the cross. I understood that for all those years that I had been told by the Church of Rome that I had earned such forgiveness through works and acts of my own and through the so-called sacraments of the Roman Church I had been living a delusion. "We...know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified". (Galatians 2:16). For weeks after this I found myself in this same position, weeping my way through much of the service - not tears of pain, loss or anger, but tears of relief and joy that finally I saw and I understood the words of Jesus when he says to us, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."' (John 14:6)*²⁹

The newly-converted RC priest, Reverend Dominic Stockford, has not only been a great inspiration to many of us but has taken us right back to the early days of the 18th century revival, to Whitefield and Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. Stockford has moved from Rome, through ecumenicalism, to true Evangelicalism. What a privilege to have such honesty, integrity, and reality in the one person. How refreshing for a dying Denomination. What is the Lord's providential message in all this, for the Free Church of England?

The Reverend Reginald Burrows like several before him came, as a fully-fledged Presbyterian of the Established Church of England. He has served the denomination faithfully over the last few years, until he stepped down as General Secretary in 2004. His ability as an administrator, coordinator, and cool debater of ecclesiastical matters, was early recognised. Burrows is best known for his time as Vicar of St Barnabas' and St Jude's Newcastle upon Tyne. But for a number of years in the 1970s and 1980s he was a member of the Church of England Evangelical Council. He also wrote a significant book, as a challenge to Anglican evangelicals. Present at the Keele Congress in 1967, he saw the evangelical downgrade taking place which has led to the sad situation in the Church of England today. In a book, edited by Bishop David Samuel, *THE EVANGELICAL SUCCESSION*,³⁰ he asks similar questions to those raised by Reg Burrows in his *DARE TO CONTEND*.³¹ In a few sentences, 'is external unity being bought at too high a cost? Can a creedless church be a teaching church? To what extent is evangelicalism still evangelical?' Both books should be read by those who seek fuller answers than our present book can give. We simply note them in passing, raising serious questions for any church which seeks a broader churchmanship, a wider ecumenism, and some kind of perceived ecclesiastical recognition. In the closing words of Dr David Samuel's sermon, "We do not want 'success' if God is not in it, and, if God is in it, it must be success. The fundamentally important thing is to know that God is with us, that he is at work in the church. When the outsider sees that of a truth God is amongst us, he will be convicted and convinced."³²

In his book, *DARE TO CONTEND*, chapter 15, Burrows made preparations for the conflict of the day, as he saw it. Written with an Anglican evangelical audience in mind he speaks about the need to reject ecumenical unity with non-evangelicals and other liberals. He challenges us to, 'Dare to be an Elijah'! This means understanding the scriptural principles of judgment and mercy that govern God's dealings with his people, preparing for the accusation of being trouble-makers, remembering that God protects his faithful servants, and submitting to the sovereign plan of God. For this, he continues, we need a programme of basic biblical education, we should be involved in synodical government at all levels and we must do all we can to develop and maintain genuinely friendly relations with those with whom we differ. Above all else, there should be, an exposure of the foolishness of the man-made gods and a re-establishing of scriptural worship. Although not written for a Free Church of England audience, Burrows, consistently and courageously, applied these principles.

With the support of Bishops Shucksmith and Bentley-Taylor, who, by now, was the Primus, Burrows wrote an exposition of Shucksmith's *AGENDA FOR RENEWAL*. Some churches were to use these biblical papers extensively. Others used them selectively. But, sadly, a small but vociferous number resented open discussion of ecumenical and other related issues. Included in the excellent material prepared and circulated by the Revd Reg Burrows, was a seven page document, self-prepared, on the Ecumenical Movement. Not only did this give an outline history of the world-wide ecumenical movement, it recorded some of the key ecumenical events in Britain, including the Anglican-Methodist Reunion Scheme which failed in 1972 and Growing into Union (1970), which forged a parting of the ways between Anglican and non-conformist evangelicals. Burrows did not dodge the issues of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (1982), or the arrival of Churches Together (1990). He dealt with the ecumenical understanding of Christian unity and truth, including its attachment

to visible union and necessary episcopacy. Finally, he helpfully wrote, commenting on the CofE and Free CofE, TALKS REPORT:

1. The doctrinal basis of the FCE sets us outside the ecumenical movement
2. We do not share the Report's insistence on episcopacy
3. We do not share the view that the church consists of the baptised
4. We regret the Talks with the CofE Report refers only to creeds, not protestant confessions of the Reformation...
5. We affirm that unity is in the truth of the gospel and the whole counsel of God in the Bible
6. We see God's truth, not the bishop, as the focus for unity
7. We reject the wrong idea that in the Communion Service we offer ourselves to God, joining in Christ's self-offering
8. We refuse to express our faith in terms that are not exclusive so that we can unite with those who believe the opposite.

A moment of challenge and opportunity had come to the Free Church of England. But, sadly, it was neither wanted, nor heeded. Modern ecumenism had, once again, ignored evangelical conscience and given birth to a real and visible division.

¹ Free Church of England, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, page 5, Declaration of Principles, paragraph 4:5, 1956, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London.

² John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 155, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

³ D.W.Bebbington. EVANGELICALISM IN MODERN BRITAIN, A history from the 1730s to the 1980s, page 9, 2000, Routledge, London.

⁴ Grayson Carter, ANGLICAN EVANGELICALS, page 390, 2001, Oxford University Press Oxford UK.

⁵ John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 1, 2004, T&T Clark, London. In fact, Fenwick likens the existence of the Free Church of England to that of the Non-Jurors - a body of bishops, clergy and laity who were deprived of their positions in the Church of England in 1691 for refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the new King and Queen, and who maintained an independent existence as an episcopally ordered community until the dawn of the nineteenth century. Fenwick's argument for this re-interpretation of English history lies in the comparison of both groups seeking to continue a purity that the Established Church had lost. But, in reality, as is shown by the cases of Whitefield and Shore, the Free Church of England was concerned for gospel purity, in keeping with the protestant settlement of the Established Church. The Non-Jurors refused to take the oath of Allegiance to the Dutch protestant William and Mary after the revolution of 1688. The six English Bishops, 400 English clergy and all the Scottish Bishops involved felt duty-bound to keep their oath to James II, a far less protestant churchman. Unlike the Free Church of England, committed in the early days to the evangelical message, the Non-Jurors set in motion a kind of High Church, episcopalian nonconformity, separate from the national church, but claiming to be the true historical Church of England. On the other hand, while separate from the Church of England, the Free Church of England has continued to respect those of a protestant, reformed, evangelical churchmanship, in the Establishment, and invariably chosen to pioneer work in non-evangelical parishes only.

⁶ Frank Vaughan, HISTORY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church, pages 8-9, 1936, Published by Authority of Convocation, Sharp and Son, Bath, UK.

⁷ Faith Cook, SELINA Countess of Huntingdon, Her personal role in the 18th century Evangelical Wakening, 2001, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh.

⁸ Iain Murray, WESLEY and Men Who Followed, p.68, 2003, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh.

⁹ Faith Cook, SELINA Countess of Huntingdon, Her personal role in the 18th century Evangelical Wakening, 2001, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh.

¹⁰ Ibid., page 446.

¹¹ F.L.Cross and E.A.Livingstone (Eds), THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, 1997, Oxford University Press Oxford, UK. The Oxford Dictionary, a leading reference book for scholars and academics does not even contain the briefest of articles on the Reformed Episcopal Church. Apart from giving to the Free Church of England episcopal orders one wonders what prominence it should have in relationship to the Free Church of England. Certainly, to build a whole theory of developing modern ecumenism from such tentative roots is open to question and serious challenge. Furthermore, in view of its increasingly closer relationship to the Anglo-Catholic APA continuing church, with a view to eventual merger, it will cease to represent the very principles which led to George Cummins seceding in the first place. It has already put the Free Church of England in a difficult position by its recent changes. The Free Church of England is constitutionally committed to being anti-tractarian, as well as pro-protestant, reformed and evangelical. This is yet another issue which Dr Fenwick seems to

want to hairbrush from Free Church of England theology and history. The Declaration of Principles are not subject to change. As a Reformed and Protestant Church (it)...hereby re-affirm(s) its constant witness against all those innovations in doctrine and worship, whereby the primitive Faith hath been from time to time defaced or overlaid, and which at the Reformation were disowned and rejected .

¹² J.D.Douglas, THE NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, p.275, 1978, Regency Reference Library Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

¹³ J.Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 166, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

¹⁴ Peter Toon, EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY 1833-1856, A Response to Tractarianism, Marshalls Theological Library, pages 209-210, 1979, Marshall Morgan and Scott, London.

¹⁵ Frank Vaughan, THE HISTORY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, pages 46-47, 1936, Published by Authority of Convocation, H Sharp & Sons, Bath.

¹⁶ J.Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 156, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

¹⁷ J.D.Douglas (Ed). WHO'S WHO IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY. article on Taylor, James Hudson. page 657. 1992. Tyndale House Publishers. Wheaton. Illinois. USA.

¹⁸ K.Hylson-Smith, EVANGELICALS IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND 1734-1984, page 219, 1988, T&T Clark, Edinburgh. Hylson-Smith adds the interesting detail of evangelical fervour for missionary work, sparked by special meetings for prayer, evangelistic challenge, and biblical teaching. The need for world missions was declared by Hudson Taylor and Reginald Radcliffe at Mildmay and other similar conventions. In Hylson-Smith's own words... this triggered off a spate of conferences specifically on the topic of missions. From 1886 missionary meetings were incorporated into the Keswick convention, and soon the call to service became the climax of the convention.

¹⁹ J.Barry Shucksmith (Ed), STUDY TO SHOW YOURSELF APPROVED BY GOD, page 3, Published by authority of the Free Church of England Examination Board - authorised by Convocation 2000, London. These words of Reverend Angus Parnaby seem strangely prophetic in view of the present division and difficulties within the Free Church of England. It may be further evidence that the (inadequate?) study course, proposed and accepted in the year 2000, was more needed than the Examination Board realised at the time. Albeit, coming too late in the day to alter the circumstances of a growing compromised ecumenism, or to repair the tragic loss involved, by the departure of Bishop Donald Thompson.

²⁰ The Bible League 1984, TRUTH UNCHANGED, UNCHANGING - A Selection of Articles from the Bible League Quarterly 1912-82, Published by the Bible League, Abingdon, Oxford, UK.

²¹ J.Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 157, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

²² Actually, the general Secretary of the British Evangelical Council had replied to the prospective FCE candidate rather fully... the rest of your letter poses a problem as my reaction could be misunderstood. However, I must have-a-go. As far as I am aware the doctrinal standards of the Free Church of England on paper are such as might make it possible for it to say it can accept our Council's; whether the Free Church of England would accept our aims, particularly the main anti-ecumenical one, I don't know. However, we would certainly want confirmation that it did adhere to both and was acting in practice so, and I think that could well prove a real problem. We certainly would not approach the Free Church of England asking them to apply. You may fairly ask why and that's where I am personally in some difficulty because over the years a number of men have gone into the Free Church of England ministry with high hopes like yours but have become disillusioned and sooner or later resigned; in fact, we have at least one ex-FCE church in associate membership with us. All have come to the conclusion that the situation was intolerable and hopeless in that, as one of them put it to me, tradition and expediency do overrule Scripture in the Free Church of England practice now. Well, I'm not really able to judge myself and obviously you must judge for yourself. Incidentally, we have an ex-Bishop of the FCE on our executive, Bishop D A Thompson. Also, I seem to recall one ex-minister telling me that Freemasonry had too great a grip in the Free Church of England ...

At the time of writing - 30 October 1980 - the General Secretary of the BEC lists the participating churches as the Fellowship of Independent Churches, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Northern Ireland, Strict Baptist Churches of the Cambridge and E. Midlands Union, the Suffolk and Norfolk Association and the Metropolitan Association., the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Movement of Wales, an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, the Apostolic Church and the Association of Evangelical Baptist churches.

²³ J.Oswald Sanders, HERESIES ANCIENT AND MODERN, page 133, 1954, Marshall Morgan and Scott, London.

²⁴ J.Oswald Sanders, HERESIES ANCIENT AND MODERN, page 135, 1954, Marshall Morgan and Scott, London.

²⁵ Notes: The New Zealand churches actually passed the motion that membership in Freemasonry (and other Secret Societies) be declared inconsistent with membership of the Christian Religion as understood by the REC/FCE in New Zealand, and that those who remain members be pastorally counselled accordingly.

²⁶ General Synod Working Group, FREEMASONRY AND CHRISTIANITY Are They Compatible?, page 26, 1987, Church House Publishing, London.

²⁷ J.Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, pages 158-159, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

²⁸ Dominic Stockford, MORE THAN A SURVIVOR, Life after the Catholic Priesthood, 2002, Salvation by Faith Alone Publications, London.

²⁹ Ibid., pages 13-14.

³⁰ D.N.Samuel, THE EVANGELICAL SUCCESSION, page 118, 1979, James Clarke, Cambridge, UK.

³¹ Reg Burrows, DARE TO CONTEND - A call to Anglican Evangelicals, 1990, Jude Publications, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.

³² D.N. Samuel, THE EVANGELICAL SUCCESSION, page 118, 1979, James Clarke, Cambridge, UK.

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Chapter 4

And as Saul journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do...

Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me...

Acts 9:3-15

Chapter 4

New Blood for the FCE

Barry Shucksmith and Dominic Stockford

*'Their belief in the importance of their disputations was not presumptuous. Nor were their bickerings and 'troubles' so scandalous as may appear in retrospect. These men were wrestling for the truth.'*¹

THE PRELUDE

It has to be recorded that this is not a chapter that we want to write. We would rather that it could go unsaid. But once a book is in the marketplace that gives either a false or inadequate picture the Christian thing to do is supplement what has been written. Honesty requires it and it is essential that the next generation are told the true story. This, by the grace and help of almighty God, we seek to give.

It gives us no pleasure to dwell upon the unpleasantness of confusion, division, and personal misunderstanding. It is undoubted that even Christians are human beings and they can easily get hurt and so it is not the intention of this chapter to be driven by low and unworthy motives. Christians should, above all else, be known for their love, honesty, and concern for the truth. Yet, the words of Bishop Eldridge in 1901, "we cannot erase the past; what we have written we have written; but we need not write again the same sad story of failure and sin," cannot be allowed to deflect us from a reply.² As Dr Fenwick has so poignantly shown, from the very beginning the history of the Free Church of England has been fraught with tension and division. Some might say that it is inevitable given the circumstances in which the secessions occurred and the denomination was born. It ought not to be. The New Testament abounds in illustrations of grace overcoming human difference and personality. Where there is a desire to honour the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of His Church and engage in the church's true calling, to identify and proclaim the gospel of saving grace, this should be even more so. However, where the gospel is concerned there can be no accommodation.

One thing is crystal clear to the discerning. We must pray that this book should be the final word on the sad divisions of the Free Church of England. The irreconcilable elements within the denomination need to carve out a new future. Individual Christians must, if they are to be true to the Lord Jesus Christ and His eternal word, give themselves afresh to Him, in repentance and trust. In this case it will be necessarily expressed by separate identity and different direction. How can two walk together except they be agreed? A Church cannot go on being controversial, divisive, and confrontational forever. In the interests of biblical truth and gospel purity it is sometimes inevitable that there be fractures, it may even be necessary, and can under God be the means of advancing the Kingdom of God. He can make even the wrath of man to praise Him (Psalm 76:10). Do we not all need again, 'to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Hebrews 12:2)? It is so easy for a professing Christian

Church to become romantic about its past or obsessed with its present. What is our true reason for existence? Charles Wesley challenges us:

*My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord, Into thy blessed hands receive; And let me live to preach thy Word, And let me to thy glory live; My every sacred moment spend In publishing the sinners' Friend.*³

These words cut a deep furrow into the hearts of many involved in this division as they sit at their desks looking at the mountains of paperwork, the bulging files, and think about the wasted hours spent at their computer, constructing one reply upon another. We can think of more exciting, more spiritual ways, to spend our time. Did not the Apostle say, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:14-18)? How much more might have been achieved for the Lord if we had been on our knees praying for a revival of the denomination, rather than on our feet, arguing for its preservation? In this respect, Fenwick's concluding comments on personalities touch a chord:

*'Part of the problem is the relatively few candidates who come from within the Free Church of England itself. The bishops in office in 2002 illustrate the situation. Only one of them (Powell) was a 'cradle Free Church of England man'; Bishop McLean had been in the denomination over half a century, having come from the Scottish Episcopal Church; Bentley-Taylor (who had been a layman in an independent Presbyterian Church and was ordained immediately on entering the denomination) first appears in the clergy list in the 1994-95 Year Book and Shucksmith (who resigned from the Church of England in which he had been an incumbent) the following year. The first two had over 120 years of experience in the Free Church of England; the latter two only 15.'*⁴

This is a strange way for an author to argue. He has already sought to present a full case for the Free Church of England being identified with the Established Church. Do not 'outsiders', whether coming from Presbyterian, Anglican, or, as more recently occurred, Roman Catholic stock, bring with them a wealth of experience, equal to the amalgamated 'wisdom' of those whose only experience is, the Free Church of England? When reflected upon, it is more serious. Those living in the days of Noah were given 120 years of grace before the judgment came (Genesis 6:3). But they learned nothing. Only Noah and his covenanted family were spared, when the full force of a watery judgment fell upon the earth. Surely, long experience in a church is no guarantee of ability or grace, particularly a church that is so tiny, insular, and impoverished, as the one that the author of the FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND portrays. Furthermore, his comments quoted above come in the paragraph immediately after the author has said that 'Current clergy training does not go very far towards addressing this issue,' – the issue referred to being 'the doctrinal and personal inadequacies of the clergy'. It seems to bear little relation to logic, to laud members who have had what the author describes as years of inadequate training whilst criticising those who have come from a systematically trained background!

Dr Fenwick loves to quote James Packer, a former principal at the College where he lectured. He would agree with the one-time Principal of Trinity College, ‘not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God’s holiness and sovereignty...acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours?’⁵

DEBUT

The time has arrived for some autobiographical detail of Shucksmith and Bentley-Taylor. Detail on this matter is noticeable by its absence in Fenwick’s *THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*. It becomes even more obvious when turning to the photo gallery. Shucksmith and Bentley-Taylor are missing. We simply wish to affirm that they do exist and that they did have a life before the Free Church of England! As we write we are mindful of the phrase, coined by a former much-loved Arminian preacher, A Lindsay Glegg... ‘if there is one thing I would like to have said of me by those who are left behind when I have gone into the glory land, it would be just this – that the overflow hid the vessel!’

Today, few men seem shy when it comes to publishing their biographies. John Shelby Spong, chooses Luther’s title for his, *HERE I STAND*. The blurb confidently reads... ‘his courageous efforts have made him an inspirational symbol of a Christian Church truly worthy of Jesus’.⁶ Perhaps we have more sympathy with a visually-impaired politician, our blind Home Secretary, David Blunkett, ‘I come to tell the story of my life, my struggle to overcome hurdles, obstruction and, sometimes, downright bigotry’?⁷ Others prefer the style of the rarely shy, George Carey. Certainly, those who prepare this record honestly share his doubts, ‘I have no wish to justify my actions, to defend my record or to hurt others.’⁸

In our writing, we may combine all three. As frail, weak, and sinful Christians, we will be found to have some arrogance, considerable blindness, and not a little trepidation in writing. But we seek to put the record straight, if only for posterity. In doing so, above all else, we should not forget the warning of the New Testament... ‘the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piecing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do’ (Hebrews 4:12-13). We are also aware, ‘it is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment’ (Hebrews 9:27).

ARTHUR BENTLEY-TAYLOR

Arthur Bentley-Taylor was born in 1942 to missionary parents working in China with the China Inland Mission. After the Communists excluded missionaries from China, his parents worked among the Chinese in Malaya and in Java among the indigenous population. Since they were now working in the tropics, it was advised that children remain in England and so it came about that from the age of nine, Arthur and his twin brother were separated from their parents for three years at a time. The twins

attended a boarding school during term time and a home for missionary's children in Chislehurst during the school holidays.

It was the crisis created by the prospect of separating from his parents that caused Arthur to turn to the Lord as his personal Saviour and in a service remembered fifty years later by members of the church, he was baptised at Putson Baptist Church, Hereford, on confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. From his teenage years, he experienced a profound sense of call to the ministry of the word of God that never left him. He is always grateful to his father for encouraging him to study New Testament Greek.

On leaving school, he trained to be a teacher. At the time he was accepted by Clifton College in Bristol for training for the Anglican ministry and it was required that he be confirmed. He attended Confirmation classes but withdrew on account of the theological liberalism taught in the class. Subsequently, he completed a course at the South Wales Bible College. Emerging from the College it was difficult for a man of paedo-baptist convictions, not attached to a denomination, to enter the ministry, so he returned to teaching. By the age of thirty-three, he was Headmaster of what is now known as Westbourne Schools, Penarth, Cardiff.

During this time he attended a Presbyterian Church and gained invaluable training for the ministry in the difficult Ely estate of West Cardiff. For twenty years, he functioned as a Preaching Elder and, on top of his secular job he was heavily involved in regular preaching, taking communion, weddings and funerals, as well as pastoral visiting. He made an important contribution to the setting up of a Church School in Ely, Cardiff. With the Minister's encouragement he took an external B.D. degree with London University and later an M.A. with the University of Wales. In January 1994, after receiving a unanimous vote of his Cardiff Church in recognition of his call to full-time ministry Bentley-Taylor tendered his resignation as Headmaster of Westbourne Schools (to take effect the following August) convinced that the Lord was calling him into the Christian ministry.

In the providence of God, Emmanuel Church, Workington heard of him as a man seeking opportunity for a biblical ministry. After preaching at Emmanuel, he and his wife were convinced that God had opened a door that no one could close. Subsequently, on the basis of unanimous votes, he received a formal call to take up the ministry at Workington, in succession to the Reverend Bruce Burrows. He was warmly received into the Free Church of England ministry by Bishop Cyril Milner, ordained Deacon in September 1994 and Presbyterian in September 1995, the year that Revd Dr J Barry Shucksmith joined the denomination.

At the time it was acknowledged openly that the Free Church of England needed fresh blood and that there was a dearth of men with such, with good theological education. Barry Shucksmith had never met Arthur Bentley-Taylor until this providential coming together in the Free Church of England. Both brought with them a wide background of Christian experience from Presbyterian, Independent, and Anglican sources. The Free Church of England claims to have inherited the best from all three governmental roots. Some maintain that an ex-Presbyterian cannot possibly be a good leader for the Free Church of England. What nonsense! Both Archbishop Tait, former Headmaster of Rugby⁹ and Cosmo Gordon Lang¹⁰, also later Archbishop of Canterbury, came from sturdy Presbyterian stock.

JOHN BARRY SHUCKSMITH

John Barry Shucksmith was born, 25 November 1937, at South Ferriby, on the banks of the River Humber. It is the northern-most spot on the map of the Southern Province. He moved to nearby Barton upon Humber, the site of two ancient parish churches, a year later. His first childhood memories are of Nazi bombs dropping on the city of Hull, just across the river. Although his mother had a primitive Methodist background, his father was a nominal Anglican and Shucksmith was brought up in the same formal way. He attended the St Chad's Church School and later the Barton Grammar School. His Headmaster despaired when, at the tender age of fourteen, he threw away an academic career for service in Her Majesty's Royal Marine Band. Little did the Headmaster realise, or Shucksmith, that he would spend the rest of his life obtaining academic qualifications. He was even undertaking degree work, at Portsmouth University, on the eve of his retirement!

After three years residential training, and successful graduation at the Royal Marines School of Music, Deal, he was transferred to Naval Establishments for adult duties. In 1957, he toured thirty-five countries, playing his trombone, showing the flag on the fading British Empire, and being paid for it! He spent time in the Mediterranean, visited all four sides of Africa, many of the Indian Ocean Islands, including Zanzibar, the Seychelles, and the Maldives. He was on active service in the Persian Gulf, and spent considerable time in India and Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, where he was based at Trincomalee. Before this mind-stretching experience, Shucksmith had been soundly converted in 1956, while playing in the mass bands of the Edinburgh Tattoo. Drunk on a Saturday night, by Sunday morning he was sobered up, and born-again, as he heard the Word of God preached, in a Baptist chapel. The text hit him between the eyes and pierced his soul... 'if any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink' (John 7:37). From this moment, he determined to be a decisive evangelical.

Leaving the Royal Marines, he first became a Salvation Army Officer until unable conscientiously to continue in Arminian beliefs. While preparing himself for GCEs and Theological College training he worked as a psychiatric nurse. Eventually, on recommendation of a CACTM selection board and supported by Bishop F Russell Barry of Southwell, he entered Oak Hill Theological College. He was in residence for four years, obtaining 13 subjects in the General Ordination Examination, as well as the London University Diploma in Theology. Later, he obtained two earned doctorates in theology, as well as an M.A. and B.D. He holds academic qualifications from three Universities. After being ordained 'priest' by Bishop Trevor Huddleston, Southwark, he worked in London, South Africa, and the Liverpool and Lincoln Dioceses. Between 1996-1991, he served as Assistant Chaplain of the Naval Base at Portsmouth. This was followed by two exacting appointments, Chaplain of the First Frigate Squadron and Chaplain of HMS Dolphin and the First Submarine Squadron. He left the Royal Marines Band Service in 1958 with first-class documentation. The official references, on his retirement from the Chaplaincy Branch, Royal Navy, are with the highest possible commendations. He became Rector of St Mary's Broughton, in his home diocese of Lincoln and would have remained there until full retirement, with the people he loved, and ministered to.

The unwelcome change to this pattern came suddenly, in 1994, when a politically-correct decision to ordain women priests was made by General Synod of the Church of England. Contrary to the teaching of

God's Word, this was soon to be followed by the related issue of practising homosexual clergy. By now Shucksmith had joined the Free Church of England, first as assistant Minister (then as Rector), Emmanuel Church, Farnham, on the retirement of Reverend Geoff Collins to the Isle of Skye. As a result of God's sovereign work, his predecessor's ministry and his own, he has seen the Church at Farnham revived in attendance and spirit. At Convocation 1996 he allowed his name, along with many others, to go forward for election as a bishop, although he did not expect anything to come out of it. The Lord had other purposes. He was elected by a comfortable majority, apparently much to the disappointment of some leading and longstanding members. After his consecration on English Martyrs Day, 16 October 1996, he was never invited, in any meaningful sense, to play a full part in the episcopal duties of a bishop in the southern diocese. But the ways of the Lord are always right and even in our disappointments, His will is best. Shucksmith possibly gained far more from the Lord, by not being functional, than he might have done in office. The assuring words of the saintly Horatius Bonar (1808-89) come to mind:

*Thy way, not mine, O Lord, However dark it be! Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose Thou the path for me; Smooth let it be or rough, It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it leads Right onward to Thy rest.*

*I dare not choose my lot; I would not if I might; Choose Thou for me, my God, So
shall I walk aright. Take Thou my cup, and it With joy or sorrow fill, As best to
Thee may seem; Choose Thou my good or ill.*

*Choose Thou for me my friends, My sickness or my health: Choose Thou my cares
for me, My poverty or wealth. Not mine, not mine the choice, In things great or
small; Be Thou my Guide, my strength, My wisdom and my all.¹¹*

THE DOCUMENT

Documents and Reports are notoriously difficult to analyse. They are not always clear in their intentions and often misrepresent the true position of the parties concerned. Moreover, they are frequently received with incredulity and scepticism by the general public. One thinks of the inquiries held and reports produced, surrounding Britain's recent war with Iraq. Or, as an even more perspicuous example, we have the documents relating to the European Union and Britain's part in it. As the late Lord Tonypany of Rhondda expressed it:

'Deceit in high places has brought us to our present plight, and it is vital that a united endeavour to get out of the iron grip of European politicians should now be made...it is clear that if we are to prove worthy of the men and women who laid down their lives to protect our right to self-government, we must call a halt to the defeatist submission to Herr Kohl's openly avowed intention where Germany is dominant.'¹²

At Convocation 1997, the Free Church of England was faced with a debate on a REPORT OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS 1992-1996. This came as a real surprise to many people. Little warning was given and, in fact, this involved a comprehensive document (see the Appendix), and was only put into the hands of delegates a few hours before the debate. No-one was more surprised than the newly consecrated bishop, Barry Shucksmith. Talks had been going on for many years and the sudden 'winding up' of the consultations seemed to be premature, as many had not been prepared for the debate. A document of such size, importance, and controversy, needed at least a year's local church analysis. How, otherwise, could the debate be as satisfactory as some hoped? The Report was under six headings (i) Co-Chairmen's Preface (ii) Introduction (iii) The Free Church of England in Context – an Historical Outline (iv) Our Common Calling to Full Visible Unity (v) What we can now agree in Faith (vi) Next Steps.

The Co-Chairmen were Ian Cundy, Bishop of Peterborough, and Cyril Milner, Bishop Primus of the Free Church of England.

Although conversations had taken place between 1992 and 1994 and reported on to the Archbishop of Canterbury by the Rt Reverend David Tustin, Bishop of Grimsby, and Chairman of the Council for Christian Unity, the matter was not closed. The Free Church of England Convocation gave permission for talks to continue. So a new group met in December 1995 which included, for the FCE, Dr Mark Gretason, who is not known as an evangelical, and Bishop Arthur Ward FCE, who, as Dr Fenwick shows in his book, believed this was the last hope for the survival of the Free Church of England.¹³ Apart from Bishop Milner and Dr Gretason, few of the remaining FCE men, if any, would claim to be trained theologians.

The Church of England representatives included Richard Fenwick, Dean of Monmouth, whose Ph.D thesis on the Free Church of England inspires much of John Fenwick's book. In fact, the report acknowledges, with gratitude, 'the expertise of Dr Richard Fenwick who was awarded a Ph.D by the University of Wales, Lampeter, in 1995, entitled THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, otherwise known as the Reformed Episcopal Church; a study of Church growth, development and change.' It is also significant that the Report openly acknowledges the 'group studied the multilateral text BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY, the ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE and looked at MEISSEN, PORVOO AND FETTER LANE COMMON STATEMENTS'. More significant still, is this sentence, 'the group has drawn heavily upon these texts in expressing its own agreement in faith'.

The Co-Chairmen prefaced the work, showing how much progress, as far as the representatives were concerned, had been made towards agreement, but, of course, the final decisions of a denomination would be made by Convocation:

'In accordance with our brief we have sought to follow the well-established ecumenical method of looking behind our formularies, often defined negatively to described beliefs we reject, to the biblical and early traditions, we hold in common in order to explore our current understanding of the theological issues which have now divided us. The theological agreement we are now able to affirm

*together encourages us to believe that we have moved through a position of recognising the historical forces which led to exclusive statements to one in which we can respect and understand our different emphases within the quest for the unity of the Church which is our common goal. We share a 'family likeness' and wish to see its common life and witness restored.'*¹⁴

Using such methodology, to 'look behind our formularies', perceived by our own representatives as 'defined negatively,' was bound to create difficulties in the Free Church of England Convocation, constitutionally committed to Sola Scriptura and biblical Christianity and also to the doctrines of grace, as represented in the reformed Prayerbook and 39 Articles of Religion. Furthermore, if our fathers had seceded in the 18th and 19th centuries to preserve the gospel of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, based upon the Roman and Galatian epistles and expounded in the 39 Articles of Religion, what had now materialised to alter this position?

Is the FCE partner to these talks now claiming the doctrines of these formularies to be more affirmed than previously? It would be strange reasoning to argue so. The CofE subscription to the Articles and Prayerbook was dropped, in any meaningful sense, thirty years ago. There are now countless numbers of ex-clergy and laity, worshipping in nonconformist churches, who maintain the Church of England has been on a steep decline every since. Furthermore, sadly, it may be for the same reason, that the Free Church of England's weakening in this respect causes an ecclesiastical death rattle to be heard. We must further consider this, and other related matters.

THE DEBATE

In chapter eight of his book, Dr Fenwick caricatures the opponents of the Talks with the Church of England Document. His account is also incorrect. For example, he castigates the language of Bishop Bentley Taylor's analytical paper:

*'The language of Bentley-Taylor's paper evoked that of the nineteenth-century literature of the denomination, suggesting that it was again involved in a life or death struggle. It is not surprising that many 'waverers' voted against the Report, believing that they were benefiting the Free Church of England'.*¹⁵

Dr Fenwick was not at the debate. Many of those involved in this book were. The part played by Arthur Bentley-Taylor, not at that time a bishop, was minimal. He was humble enough to acknowledge his limited knowledge and experience of the Church of England. Even more significant, Bentley-Taylor did not present his analysis of the Talks Document. It was not even in print at the time of the debate. This discussion had been sprung upon us at the last minute, and the Bentley-Taylor analysis was published much later, after Convocation 1997. But, Dr Fenwick is quite right to attribute the leading of the opposition to Bishop Shucksmith. What an impossible position to face a newly-consecrated bishop on his first significant public occasion? As someone who had recently seceded from the Established Church

because of its politically-correct choice, above scripture, to ordain women priests, what alternative was there? Does a man leave a denomination in order to build up a closer relationship with it?

And here appears a mysterious thing. Fenwick seems to write approvingly of the Talks with the Church of England. Yet he himself claims to have left the Church of England for the same reason as Shucksmith, with this slight difference. He waited until 2001 to do it! It is also a further mystery that having seceded from the Church of England such a capable and courageous man, apparently, has not recorded his reasons for doing so. There was, however, a brief editorial report in the mainly Anglo-Catholic Magazine, NEW DIRECTIONS, which speaks well for Dr Fenwick:

*'Dr John Fenwick has resigned under the women Priests Measure conscience clause. Fenwick joins the 500+ clergy who have left since General Synod, at Dr Carey's exhortation, set out on its schismatic path of biblical disobedience. Like all of those who remain, Fenwick has struggled to fulfil his calling in a Church which is increasingly characterised by the abandonment of orthodoxy on almost every front, and whose Catholic credentials have all but evaporated...Fenwick is in many ways an Anglican's Anglican. Even the smartest Lambeth's spin doctor could not caricature him as an extremist. He is, by tradition, an evangelical. Fenwick is also an expert on the Orthodox Church. But he is best known as a long standing colleague of Dr Carey, first as a lecturer at Trinity College, Bristol and then as Assistant Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs to both Runcie and Carey. Dr Fenwick's departure is an eloquent epitaph to the failure of Dr Carey's great experiment'...*¹⁶

At the time of the promulgation of Canon C4b (the canon allowing women priests), some evangelicals became members of the Orthodox Church, notably the charismatic leader and writer, Michael Harper, who counselled one of the authors of this book about the direction of his own ministry, following secession. John Fenwick, a highly-gifted orthodox scholar, chose not to follow this particular route.

The proposition before Convocation was, 'that the Convocation approve the continuation of the talks with the Church of England, with the object of achieving an agreement for closer fellowship and practical co-operation between our two churches'.¹⁷ This seems to go considerably further than Dr Fenwick allows, a mere exchange of pulpits and access to training facilities. Exchange of pulpits, limited to evangelical ministers only, is already dealt with in Canon 52 of the Free Church of England.¹⁸ Theological training can be undertaken at any Anglican Evangelical College by arrangement with the Principal. In reality, non-conformists now train at high-class theological institutions, like Oak Hill College, Southgate, London.

Dr Fenwick, relying upon the inadequate minutes of Convocation 1997, records wrongly, as has been shown, 'Bentley-Taylor spoke to his analysis'. Equally misleading, he reports, 'Bentley-Taylor was followed by seven other clergy, all of whom spoke passionately against the continuation of the Talks...followed by Revd Dr Mark Gretason, one of the delegates, with an eloquent and well-reasoned speech'¹⁹ The impression could be given that only Dr Gretason was rational in what was said. In reality,

Dr Shucksmith had two pages of A4, still in his files, which he read word for word on this significant occasion.

Shucksmith had three headings (1) The Strengths of the Church of England (2) The Past Eight Years History of the Talks (3) The CofE Report – Mystery of Salvation. Under point (1) he asked questions, what is the Church of England today? Is it REFORM? Is it FORWARD IN FAITH? Is it the THIRD PROVINCE MOVEMENT? Why are we not talking to CHURCH SOCIETY, the leading evangelical body? Since the ordination of women priests, there are TWO INTEGRITIES, which one are we following? Under point (2), he raised the present issues of what had actually happened during the time of the talks between the two churches.

This included the growing strength of General Synod over parish life, reorganisation of the Church under the chairmanship of the Archbishops, numerous Reports which question fundamental doctrines, new liturgy to further marginalise the 1662 Prayer book and Articles, the ordination of 2000 women priests contrary to Holy Scripture, the move towards women Bishops, the House of Bishops' totally unsatisfactory statement on Human Sexuality, the increasing presence of Anglican clergy, including the Archbishop himself, at multi-faith functions, the continuing search for the reunification of the Church of England and the Church of Rome, Anglican bishops humiliating themselves before the Pope, whom the reforming fathers, and some of us still, consider the anti-Christ of 2 Thessalonians and the Book of Revelation.

On the Report, MYSTERY OF SALVATION, Dr Shucksmith dealt with the central issue of the gospel itself and the incredible claim in the Report, 'there is no doctrinal statement anywhere in the New Testament, of how precisely the death of Christ atones for sin'.²⁰ Readers must assess for themselves, whether this amounts to Fenwick's picture of only one clergyman speaking 'with an eloquent and well-reasoned speech'.

WHY THE TALKS FAILED

Those who voted against continuing the Talks with the Church of England felt that, perhaps, it would be more fitting for the Church of England first to set her own house in order? On what authority can one Church counsel another 'separated' body on the issue of Church Unity, when it has just legislated for the division of its own Church? Far from being the fault of Shucksmith, Bentley-Taylor, and other 'impassioned speakers', (and why should a Christian not speak with passion?) the Church of England had contributed significantly to the collapse of these talks by her own questionable theory of 'two-integrities' – one for the orthodox, and another for the innovators. There was no genuine co-ordinated opposition to the Talks (although Bishop Shucksmith was accused by his Diocesan Bishop of organising it). The last-minute 'springing of the debate' upon Convocation and the inevitable inadequate preparation did not add to its success.

Significantly, the process was not helped by the sowing of a seed in the mind of one unfortunate protagonist – Bishop Shucksmith. On the eve of his consecration, while visiting his diocesan's Church in

Birmingham to preach the harvest sermon, he was told, 'there is some opposition to your election and consecration'. The Diocesan Bishop had been to London to see those involved in the talks with the Church of England and 'your election' is considered a hindrance to the whole process! A somewhat bemused Shucksmith, could not understand why his diocesan Bishop had been talking to the Church of England, a different denomination and jurisdiction, about his election to the episcopate. The speedy 'wrapping up' of the Talks, and the debate in Convocation, little more than six months after his consecration, raised for him important questions, and not a few serious doubts!

Perhaps, most significant of all, as Dr Fenwick himself recognises, 'a number of new men of very different views to Bishop Ward had joined the denomination'.²¹ These were not only those 'of a Calvinistic theological position... associated with unattractive, judgmental attitudes and bigotry,'²² they were, unlike the present cradled ecumenical bishops of the Free Church of England, men with recent painful experience of the Church of England. Furthermore, some of them had paid dearly over many years, like the founding fathers, in their stand for biblical truth.

One of the problems of third generation Christians, or, for example, those with long amalgamated experience of a denomination, is their sometime inability, to fully identify with the founders of their Movement. They may share the history without experiencing, firsthand, the reality of the cost.

We can compare the willingness of James Shore to go to prison for his evangelical beliefs with the ecumenical compromise of many in the present Free Church of England. The modern ecumenical movement, not content with seeking unity among so-called "mainline" denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church, has broadened its brief to include other religions as well. Take, for example, this innocently presented prayer which becomes the Devil's snare, for the undiscerning and ill-taught Church member...

O God, you are the source of life and peace
Praised be your name forever.

We know it is you who turn
our minds to thoughts of peace.
Hear our prayer in this time of War.

Your power changes hearts.
Muslims, Christians and Jews remember,
and profoundly affirm, that they are followers of the one God,
children of Abraham, brother and sisters;
Enemies begin to speak to one another;
those who were estranged
join hands in friendship;
nations seek the way of peace together.
Strengthen our resolve to give witness
to these truths by the way we live.

Give us:

Understanding that puts an end to strife;

Mercy that quenches hatred, and Forgiveness
that overcomes vengeance.

Empower all people to live in your law of love.

Amen.

Of course it all sounds so kind, loving, and right, in the interests of good relationships and a stable society. No-one wants to be in strained relationships with any member of society. And we certainly do not want to be caricatured as those who are involved in strife or are filled with hatred and vengeance.

Like James Shore, and George Whitefield before him, we are concerned for gospel truth. There is no hope without it. Yet, this Rock Group of Churches Covenant Service goes much further than being a societal or good neighbourly plan. It is a religious blueprint. It undermines the uniqueness of God's Son, rejects God's revelation in the Bible, and, like the foolish man in the parable Jesus told, builds upon sand (Matthew 7:21-29). For, as the Apostle Paul shows, in Galatians chapter one, there is only one gospel. Those who bring other "gospels" are to be accursed, even if they are angels (Galatians 1:8).

The God of Muslims, Christians and Jews is not the same God. For the true God is not merely one God but one God in three Persons – all equally God (Athanasian Creed).

And He is not the god Allah, but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:4-6).

Muslims, Christians and Jews are not followers of the one same God because Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life and no man comes to the Father except by Him (John 14:1-6).

We are not all children of Abraham because the word of God teaches us Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). The epistles to the Romans and Galatians show, quite clearly, the true children of Abraham are those, and only those, who are trusting Christ alone for righteousness and justification before God (Romans 4:1-13; Galatians 3:6-14).

Peace cannot come to the world simply by enemies speaking to one another or joining hands in friendship and nations seeking peace. It can only come when we make our peace with almighty God through repentance and believing the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the message of both John the Baptist and Jesus on commencing their public ministry (Matthew 3:2 and 4:17).

Because Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man, the prayer cannot be properly offered without Him (1 Timothy 2:5). Yet, there is no mention of His name, not even before the Amen.

Is it not significant that the prayer mentions love but not revealed truth, forgiveness but not repentance, brothers and sisters, but not being members of the church family? And why is the prayer offered to the impersonal God and not to our Loving Heavenly Father, as Jesus taught us?

The prayer really makes nonsense of the miraculous incarnation, the perfect life, substitutionary death, glorious resurrection, ascension and glorified Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ – the Saviour of the World (John 4:42) And yet the prayer was used in an act of covenant by the Primus of the Free Church of England (and afterwards printed in the Emmanuel Church Magazine, Alum Rock, Birmingham February / March 2004 – issue 182).

The Right Revd Kenneth John Wesley Powell, Primus of the Free Church of England in his address, not only ‘led us to think about the way professional footballers play together as a team,’ he also encouraged ‘us to emulate this practice’. Of course, the thing about a football team is, no single player dominates, each person brings his distinctive contribution. So we are left with this understanding, Jesus is just one possible player among ten others!

Is it not time for Christians to stand up and be counted for what they profess to believe before it is too late? There are not many Saviours, only One. And He has left on record, ‘whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of Him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels’ (Mark 8:38).

By hiding our light under a bushel, not only do we fail our Lord Jesus Christ, we are unfaithful to the Church of England / Free Church of England tradition we have received and, in the case of ordained ministers, committed to solemn ordination vows, fall into grievous sin:

“Of obtaining eternal salvation only by the Name of Christ”

They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the light of Nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.

Article 18 – Thirty-Nine Articles of CofE and FCE)

¹ A.E.Peaston, THE PRAYERBOOK TRADITION IN THE FREE CHURCHES, page 10, 1964, James Clark and Co, Cambridge.

² John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 171, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

³ HYMNS OF FAITH, Hymn 491, 1996, Christian Year Publications, Bath, England.

⁴ John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 290, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

⁵ John Blanchard, GATHERED GOLD - A treasury of quotations for Christians, page 334, 1987, Evangelical Press, Welwyn, England. Blanchard gives several more choice references from leading evangelical writers. Among them are these words of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a man who exemplified his own words... surely the essence of wisdom is that before we begin to act at all, or attempt to please God, we should discover what it is God has to say about the matter.

⁶ John Shelby Spong, HERE I STAND - My struggle for a Christianity of Integrity, Love, and Equality, 2000, Harper, San Francisco, New York, USA. One wonders what Martin Luther would make of Bishop Spong’s dedication, to forty-six people, including his first wife, his second wife, Bishop Tutu, Don Cupitt, J A T Robinson and Rabbi Jack Daniel Spiro. At least, Spong is refreshingly honest. You know where you stand with him. He has devoted himself to reforming the Church, as he sees it, by working to integrate women, blacks, gays, lesbians, and other marginalized Christians fully into the faith community. As the blurb continues... ‘he is the standard bearer for those who strive to be both contemporary, thinking persons and faithful, enlightened Christians’. Of course, the debate is in defining the word, Christian.

⁷ David Blunkett, ON A CLEAR DAY, page 13, 2002, Michael O’Mara Books, London.

⁸ George Carey, KNOW THE TRUTH - GEORGE CAREY - A memoir page x, 2004, Harper Collins, London.

⁹ J.D.Douglas (Ed.). WHO’S WHO IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY, page 655, 1992, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois, USA. Tait Archibald Campbell (1811-1882) was born in Edinburgh. Like Bentley-Taylor he lost his mother early, in his case from death. He was three at the time. After attending school in Edinburgh he went to Glasgow University (1827-1830). He won a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford and distinguished himself academically. He also made important connections

with men who were to become leaders in church and state. Among his personal friends were the leaders of the Oxford Tractarian Movement (which the Free Church of England opposed in its early days). While he sympathised with their call for a greater devotion and discipline by clergy, he could not accept their narrow definition of the Church as only Episcopalian. He had too many Scottish Presbyterian friends. Some, within and without the Free Church of England who adopt similar narrow views should learn from Tait. They might also copy his evangelistic zeal. He encouraged evangelistic effort and caused even Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral to hold popular preaching services on Sunday evenings.

¹⁰ John Fenwick thinks the problem of the leadership of the Free Church of England has been, not only hard and narrow Calvinists, like Shucksmith and Bentley-Taylor, but old men too! Clearly, he does not think much of Sir Winston Churchill's wartime, or post-war leadership? He must also think Jehovah somewhat mistaken in calling Moses, an eighty year-old shepherd, to undertake a wilderness trek, with considerable opposition from the Lord's rebellious people, for 40 years! Cosmo Gordon Lang was sixty-four when he came to Canterbury. He was the son and grandson of Scottish ministers. Edward Carpenter makes interesting comments: he was highly imaginative, at heart a romantic, given to dramatizing himself and seeing persons and things in exaggerated terms. Spiritually he may be described as schizophrenic, except that his was not a personality split into two but into a number of seemingly disparate parts. It is understandable that the Duke of Windsor should have mistaken a part for the whole and described him as too polished, too worldly. 'I see seven Archbishops,' Sir William Orpen is reported to have said when getting to work on his portrait; 'which of them am I to paint?' Cruelly, continues Carpenter, he selected that which was proud, prelatical and pompous. Alas, there are far too many people who may think of all bishops in the same way!

¹¹ HYMNS OF FAITH, 1996, Hymn 404, Christian Year Publications, Bath, England. Bonar was ordained in 1837. He became the minister of North Church, Kelso. He continued his ministry there, after seceding from the Church of Scotland in 1843. Later, he was called to the Chalmers Memorial Church, Edinburgh. He was a great writer. His famous brother was Andrew Bonar, who wrote a thoughtful, devotional, commentary on the Old Testament Book, Leviticus. This is still in print through Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh. The 19th century singer Ira Sankey, acknowledged his indebtedness to Andrew Bonar for many hymns, which he had written. Perhaps, his two most well-known hymns are: Here, O My Lord, I see Thee Face to Face, and, I heard the Voice of Jesus Say, often sung to the stirring, yet mournful minor-key tune, Vox Dilecti.

¹² Adrian Hilton, THE PRINCIPALITY AND POWER OF EUROPE - Britain and the emerging Holy European Empire Foreword, page 7, 1997, Dorchester House Publications, Rickmansworth, UK.

Hilton's book is a must for every Christian. It deals with the important issues of (i) national sovereignty (ii) the role of the Vatican and the political nature of the Papacy (iii) the threat to the Monarchy and the throne of the United Kingdom (iv) the nature of biblical government (v) the supremacy of the European courts over acts of Parliament (vi) the implications of monetary union (vii) the European propaganda machine (viii) the potential consequences for evangelical Christians of a European parliamentary debate and resolution on cults and sects. Rt Revd Dr David Samuel, retired Presiding Bishop of the Church of England Continuing, comments on the book... the British people have been misled about the religious and political dimensions of the federal superstate now being created. Hilton's book unmask its real character and makes imperative the need for our withdrawal.

¹³ John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 164-165, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

¹⁴ I.Cundy and C.Milner, A REPORT OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS 1992-1996, page 1, 1997, Joint Publication for CofE and FCE Convocation.

¹⁵ John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 167, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

¹⁶ Sara Low (Ed), NEW DIRECTIONS - Magazine of the Forward in Faith Movement - editorial, page 3, April 2001, Tufton Street, London, UK. The editorial also contains an interesting observation for those marking the decline of the Church of England. 'resignations of themselves, rarely undermine institutions. However, there are some which have more serious implications than others. As Margaret Thatcher discovered, one may comfortably survive, over a long period, the attacks of philosophical opponents who are out of power. But when allies and former colleagues begin to depart the game is very nearly up'. Perhaps, members of the Free Church of England should especially note this, in view of the recent development of the exodus of two leading evangelical bishops?

¹⁷ Agenda - Free Church of England Convocation 1997, Sunbury Court, London

¹⁸ CONSTITUTIONS AND CANONS ECCLESIASTICAL, Canon 52, page 39, (1983 edition), Published by Order of Convocation. Notes: The canon is prefaced, PULPIT EXCHANGES WITH OTHER MINISTERS TO BE ALLOWED and reads: Pulpit exchanges by Ministers of this Church with ministers in good standing of other Evangelical churches, and the occasional occupancy of the pulpits of this Church by such Ministers of other Churches, shall be allowed; and it shall be a fundamental principle of this Church that its clergy may partake of or administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in any Evangelical Church, at the request of its Minister.

¹⁹ John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 167, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

²⁰ Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, MYSTERY OF SALVATION, page 157, 1995, Church House Publishing, London. Notes: The aim of the Report THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION (1995) is fourfold. It is to make Christian faith more comprehensible, to write a non-technical exposition of the Christian doctrine of salvation, to express the Christian doctrine of salvation, to express the church's faith as received from holy scripture and to be true to the tradition received, as well as giving fresh expression to it (from the Foreword). Relying on experience alone is cautioned. It is too subjective and needs to be tempered by scripture and reason. The context of contemporary Britain is noted, where there are now 400,000 Sikhs, 300,000 Jews, 300,000 Hindus, 25,000 Buddhists and an estimated million, to a million and half, Muslims. The Commission maintains the incompatibility that a loving Creator can bring millions into the world to damn them. Because God is Creator of all people, it must be evident that He is also at work in people of other religions by His Holy Spirit. Scripture is quite clear, 'the true light...gives light to every man who comes into the world' (John 1:9). However, despite its outstanding

merits, the inadequacy of the Report is highlighted in the Appendix, Salvation and the Anglican Heritage. Here, the historic formularies of the Church of England, especially the Book of Common Prayer and the 39 Articles of Religion, are given short shrift. The Reporters are embarrassed by substitutionary atonement, central to the Christian gospel. Surely, if Christians are now embarrassed by the shedding of blood, they will soon be shamed out of keeping the Lords Supper? More important, our Lord Jesus Christ saw Himself coming, for this very purpose – ‘a ransom for the sins of many’ (Mark 10:45).

²¹ John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 165, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

²² John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, page 277, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

Chapter 5

Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself...Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets...And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Acts 24:10-16

Chapter 5


Putting the Record Straight

Barry Shucksmith

In considering further the division which occurred in the FC of E, it may be profitable to touch briefly on some of the theological issues raised, and supposedly settled by the Report, to which most of us had not contributed and for whom it is still a questionable document, today. We will limit these for now to (1) episcopacy (2) baptism and (3) the Lord's Supper. Justification will be dealt with in a separate chapter. The three mentioned are most important. Unity can only be achieved where Christian Truth is involved. In the words of Dr R B Kuiper, 'to strive without sacrifice of truth for the visible unity of the body of Christ is to enhance its glory'.¹

(i) EPISCOPACY

The Talks Report boldly proclaims... 'Both our churches have a common ecclesiastical order focused in the three-fold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon and believe it to serve as an expression of the unity we seek and also a means of achieving it. Within this threefold ministry the bishop signifies and focuses this continuity and unity of the whole Church. Continuity with the apostles' doctrine and fellowship (Acts 2:42) and unity in both our churches is expressed in the consecration of bishops in the historic succession as is clear from the preface to the Ordinal in each Prayer Book. Ordination in both our churches is always by a bishop, with the assent of the Community of the Church. Integrally linked with episcopal consecration is our common tradition that the bishop has a special pastoral care for the clergy as for the whole Church.'²

 Episcopacy may well be essential to Rome and Canterbury. The Lambeth Quadrilateral³ makes it essential for reunion. Yet, in comparison, the Free Church of England does not give episcopacy such a high priority. It actually declares in its principles, 'this Church, recognises and adheres to Episcopacy, not as of Divine right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of Church polity'. It allows for the reception of non-episcopally ordained clergy to its own ministry, without re-ordination, under such Regulations as Convocation may approve. (Canon 41).

Furthermore, if episcopacy serves as a symbol of the unity and continuity of the two churches concerned, there is little hope of unity ever being achieved. The Church of England is already in the unwelcome position of having to recognise non-diocesan 'flying bishops' as the only means of holding the fragile unity of its own church together. Whatever our representatives agreed, we certainly could not endorse, 'within this threefold ministry the bishop signifies and focuses the continuity and unity of the whole Church'... 'and also as a means of achieving it'. The Free Church of England declares, in Article 1:4, 'that this church condemns and rejects the following erroneous and strange doctrines as contrary to God's Word: that the Church of Christ exists only in one order or form of ecclesiastical polity'.

Could we, therefore, honestly seek a unity with the Church of England, which negates any possible unity, with our evangelical non-conformist brethren? Surely, the focus of unity is, not sinful bishops, but the infallible Word of God? Jesus Christ gave... 'pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ... but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into all things, which is the Head, even Christ' (Ephesians 4:11-15).

Even the English Reformer, Bishop John Hooper, before his martyrdom, had written: 'I believe that the church is bound to no sort of people or any extraordinary succession of bishops, cardinals, or such like, but unto only the Word of God.'⁴

(2) BAPTISM

We do not share the view that the Church consists of the baptised. We would be amazed if the late Bishop Arthur Ward, with his Salvation Army background, would want to exclude from the Christian Church, esteemed Christian brethren. To reduce the Free Church of England statement on baptismal regeneration as 'a reaction to some nineteenth century interpretations of the phrase' and to declare unity around the statement, 'both our churches recognise that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit and that the one baptised is incorporated into the One., Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church' (paragraph 48) is tragic to our minds. Our own statement, hardly dated by the passage of time and subscribed to annually at Convocation, is most relevant ... 'this church condemns and rejects...that regeneration is inseparably connected with Baptism'.

Baptism does not make a Christian. 'Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God' and 'we are begotten again, not of corruptible seed, (or evaporating water?) but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever' (Romans 10:16-17). This does not mean, disrespect for the sacraments or for the Lord's command in Matthew 28:19-20 to go and baptise in the threefold name. It is to recognise that neither Jesus, nor Paul, made a priority of baptism (John 4:2; 1 Corinthians 1:16-17). It is also to note, baptism is missing from the second half of Mark 16:16, implying faith saves, not water.

It is the nature of a sacrament that it is, 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.'⁵ The only exception can be children, baptised into the visible Church, on the basis of the covenanted faith of their parents, sponsors, and the gathered church.

Yet, there must be evidence at a later date, for the baptism to be affirmed... 'what is the inward and spiritual grace' A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace' (BCP Catechism). "Hereby", surely, does not mean, the application of water but the evidence of repentance and faith? Is it not also significant, to avoid the error of baptismal regeneration, the reforming fathers of the Free Church of England replaced the phrase 'sin after baptism' to 'sin after conversion' (Article 16)? Dr W H Griffith Thomas, in a recognised Free Church of England textbook, writes:

'These blessings are offered spontaneously and freely by God without any previous merit of ours, and are offered in themselves absolutely and not conditionally, though their nature is such that they cannot operate mechanically, and therefore require a response from us if they are to be enjoyed. There is a vital difference between offering a thing conditionally, and offering it absolutely while needing response to enjoy it'.⁶⁾

We conclude, the teaching on baptism between the two churches, is far from unified.

(3) THE LORD'S SUPPER

We cannot agree with the statement, which has been a cause of great mischief in the Christian Church over the centuries, 'in the Holy Communion Christ is truly present to share his risen life with us and to unite us with Himself in his self-offering to the Father' (Paragraph 49). It is significant in the Book of Common Prayer, also retained in the revised 1785 of the Free Church of England, there is no reference to the offering of sinful believers, until after the act of communion. We have nothing to offer! We come as sinners in need of constant grace.

The sacrifice of Christ was once for all offered at Calvary. It is explicit in his words, 'it is finished' - (John 19:30). Hebrews 10:10-12 is likewise specific, 'we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; But this man (Jesus Christ) after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God'. New Testament scholar and former Vice-Principal of Oak Hill Theological College, Alan Stibbs, comments:

'When we respond to the invitation of Christ and the gospel, particularly as it is visibly extended to us in the administration of the Lord's Supper, we do not find ourselves called to stand before an altar to continue offering Christ's sacrifice. Rather we are summoned to sit at His table, and to share in the feast which His finished sacrifice has permanently provided. This is the gospel which the sacrament is intended visibly to proclaim. Any offering Godwards at an altar of the consecrated elements contradicts this intended emphasis, and deprives the worshippers of the full assurance which the sacrament was ordained to provide. In the blunter words of the Reformers, ideas associated with such godward offering are 'blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits' (Article 31).⁷⁾

In fact, in a rather confused statement, The EUCHARIST: SACRAMENT OF UNITY, the House of Bishops tries to have it both ways, 'we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in thankful response to the sacrifice of Christ for us... we do not do this in our own strength or merits, for (as the BCP says) we are unworthy to offer any sacrifice to God ... (but) ... our self-offering is held within his'.⁸⁾

The Book of Common Prayer is quoted in support but the writers fail to explain, our offering comes only after having received Holy Communion. It is an inevitable view, given the contemporary Church of England has many members who embrace a fully-developed concept of the Roman Mass. There is no way in which the Free Church of England Remembrance Service of the Lord's Supper can be married to the concepts of self-offering. A former principal of Moore Theological College Sydney pinpoints, again, the problem for faithful evangelical Anglicans:

'The Lord's Supper is sometimes thought of as an offering we make to God. Since the offering made by Christ is the only offering that can be made on behalf of sinners which is acceptable to God, the Lord's Supper has been interpreted as an offering associated in various ways with the offering of Christ on Calvary. Article 31 severely condemns this notion. Christ's offering was made once for all and is complete in every respect'.⁹

THE DIVISION

The church is one in essence, because it is founded on one gospel, united to one Lord and indwelt by one Spirit. Its unity is under constant threat because of the tendency to division that is inherent in fallen humanity, and needs to be continually maintained and actively expressed in fellowship. When we consider the New Testament Church, we discover, even in the midst of revival, division was never far away. What are some of the reasons why division occurs?

Personal ambition can be a festering sore. We can think of the disciples arguing about who should be greatest among them and our Lord's response, 'if any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all' (Mark 10:33-35).

Sometimes, although certainly not in the Free Church of England, there is the problem of ethnic tension. The early church had to appoint seven deacons to deal with the 'festering sore' which arose between spoilt and neglected widows, 'there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration' (Acts 6:1-3).

Legal attitudes and desire for litigation against other believers can be a more serious cause among Christians. It is also evidence, not of spirituality, but of carnality, 'from whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not: because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts' (James 4:1-3).

One can similarly recall the solemn warning of Apostle Paul, not to take a brother into the pagan, secular, law courts. Such action is only evidence of how wrong the heart is, before the Living God. How much more Christian it is, when a wronged believer does not retaliate and adopts the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'forgive them for they know not what they do.' Remember, how Paul remonstrates, 'now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take

wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren' (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

How sad it is, when division springs from the very same root which caused our first parents to fall – pride and desire to be first, 'Diotrephes who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not...I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church' (3 John 9-11).

SOME DIVISION NECESSARY

But, sometimes, division is both inevitable and necessary. This is particularly so between issues of truth and heresy, or where the gospel is fundamentally affected. A reading of the 2 Corinthian epistle, on its own, will reveal how much Paul had to contend for what he knew to be revealed truth. Furthermore, although his name was 'dragged into the dust,' and he was vilified, it was not a personal matter. The revealed word of God was at stake and in order to defend the truth, he had also to fight for recognition, as the Lord's servant. To affirm his own ministry, defend his authority as an apostle, and refute the false teachers in Corinth, is really a summary of the whole Epistle. But the much misunderstood Paul was, in Bishop F.J. Chavasse's description of his predecessor, John Charles Ryle, 'a man of granite with the heart of a child'.¹⁰ 'Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly; and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ' (2 Corinthians 1:1-2).

As the present writer recalls forty years of Christian service, he sees parallels in the former Primus of the Free Church of England, Rt Reverend Arthur Bentley-Taylor. Some of us have known and served under many bishops but not yet found an equal to Bentley-Taylor. Like all of us, he is tainted and scarred by Adam's sin. Unlike many bishops, he is exemplary in his fidelity for the truth, consistent in his consecration vows, and desires a presenting of the church, 'as a chaste virgin to Christ'. To a godless world, a carnal church, and an undiscerning public, these have little value. But what are they to Almighty God before whose Judgment seat all must soon appear?

Dr Fenwick seeks to recall, record, and historically analyse what he describes as 'the Aftermath', of the failed talks with the Church of England.¹¹ It looks very much like an issue of personality clash or an account of difficult people pitching themselves against each other. The present writer is tarnished by the comment, 'as an immediate consequence of this (i.e. Shucksmith's re-election by Convocation for episcopal duties) Powell who had found it virtually impossible to work with Shucksmith, announced that he would therefore not stand for re-election as Primus that year'.

But we have already observed, in our brief New Testament overview, there can be many explanations for division among Christians. Visible presentations are not always evidence of the deep underlying causes. Oftentimes, people are wrongly assessed when their motives are perfectly legitimate before the God who sees and knows all.

One thinks immediately of Elijah. What a difficult man he must have been to work with, particularly when things were not quite going in the direction others wanted, 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' We should not miss Elijah's quick response (1 Kings 18:16-18). All the prophets, the apostles, and our Lord Himself, in one way or another, would have been described by some, as troublesome people. Even Paul and Peter clashed over gospel issues (Galatians 2:11-14)

As we have seen, at the 1997 Convocation, the proposal for closer links with the Church of England was turned down. The opposition to the talks, based on a serious concern for the preservation of the Free Church of England as inherited, was led by Bishop Barry Shucksmith. However, it is true that many months later, Arthur Bentley-Taylor prepared an analysis of the Report on the Talks but it is not true that his Analysis influenced the vote in May 1997.

RESIGNATION AND ELECTION

When Bishop Milner died in 1998, Arthur Bentley-Taylor had no expectation or desire to be the next Bishop of the Northern Diocese, yet at the Synod held in March 1999 he became Bishop Elect, obtaining the required two-thirds majority. His election was confirmed at Convocation 1999 by the required 51% majority. There is no doubt that he was elected a Bishop according to the Canons of the Free Church of England, as was confirmed at the time by the FCE Registrar. In September 1999, Bentley-Taylor and John McLean were consecrated Bishops at Christ Church Wallasey.

Meanwhile, Shucksmith who had earlier resigned, thinking he would never be invited to exercise meaningful episcopal duties in the United Kingdom, withdrew his resignation. This was on the appointment of a fellow evangelical presbyter to the Episcopate and following a flood of personal letters, requesting him to do so. The withdrawal of the resignation was also a test for himself. Was he really wanted in the denomination? Yet, the withdrawn resignation was turned into a canonical matter. The advice of Queen's Counsel was to be sought. The advice given was based on misinformation provided by Reverend W Lawler to the effect, 'that the FCE General Council had accepted Bishop Shucksmith's resignation on 3 February 1999'.

At Convocation, May 1999, members of the Council insisted that Bishop Shucksmith's resignation had NOT been accepted at the Council Meeting of 3 February. They refused to approve the Report on General Council until Convocation deleted reference to the supposed acceptance of the Bishop's resignation. At the time, there were numerous problems with the Minutes of Council and Convocation. The wording of proposals was not always written down by the Secretary but was written up afterwards.

It seems that when Bishop Shucksmith withdrew his resignation, those opposed to him made every attempt to ensure that his resignation stood. The alteration of the Council Minutes; the appeal to Queen's Counsel pushed through Convocation without debate, contrary to the Constitution; the misinformation given Queen's Counsel; the arbitrary exclusion of Bishop Shucksmith from General Council between Convocation 1999 and Convocation 2000; the refusal to count Bishop Shucksmith as a consecrating

Bishop on 11 September 1999 and the petty exclusion of him from photographs after the event, all testify to the determination to exclude a man of evangelical conviction from leadership in the Free Church of England.

QUEEN'S COUNSEL

At Convocation 2000, Bishop Kenneth Powell, the Bishop Primus, did not make Queen's Counsel's advice available to members of Convocation although they had funded it. The only information given Convocation was the SUMMARY OF ADVICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCIL prepared by Potheary and Barratt, the FCE's Solicitors with its misleading statement that Council had accepted the resignation on 3 February 1999. In the debate on the Advice, Bishop Bentley-Taylor read quotes from Queen's Counsel:

Point 8: "it is clear that a **Bishop may resign his jurisdiction; but it is also seems clear that he may only do so with the consent of Convocation... In Bishop Shucksmith's case, as a body convened under Article III, it did not accept his resignation.**"

Point 31: "It seems to me that a **resignation can be withdrawn at any time until it has been accepted by Convocation** (or Council acting on Convocation's behalf) as provided for by Canon 34. In this case, Bishop Shucksmith's resignation was acknowledged by Mr Lawler on 21 November 1998. I do not think that that acknowledgement had any legal effect; rather it is the acceptance of the resignation which has legal effect and, after which, Bishop Shucksmith cannot withdraw his resignation."

Point 43: "**If a bishop withdraws his resignation before it has been accepted by Convocation or Council on its behalf, he continues as a bishop as before. He will not have resigned.**"

Summary: Point 2: "Bishop Shucksmith's resignation was accepted by the General Council on 3 February 1999. It was therefore not open to him to withdraw his resignation on 23 April 1999".

But, surely, if the premise is untrue, the conclusion is invalid?

When the vote was put to Convocation, a substantial majority who had seen this, voted in favour of Bishop Shucksmith's episcopal ministry, for the second time. But, even after this distressing and difficult situation for Shucksmith and his family, to say nothing of several thousand pounds costs, nothing changed. Bishop Shucksmith was still not invited to episcopal acts, other than to consecrate three garden seats, in memory of the late Reverend Bill Lawler, who was sadly killed in a motor car accident.

After the proposal for Bishop Shucksmith to continue as an active FCE bishop was accepted overwhelmingly by Convocation 2000, Bishop Powell declared publicly that he would not stand for re-election as Bishop Primus because his 'policy' for the FCE had been rejected. Arthur Bentley-Taylor was then elected Primus. It has to be said, Bishop Shucksmith remained silent during the whole process and has said little since. Had it not been for Dr Fenwick's book, these details would never have appeared in print.

Earlier, we thought of the very imperfect Corinthian Church. Paul heard of their struggles and wrote his letters to address their problems, heal their divisions, and answer their questions. Paul, also, confronted them with their sin and their need of corrective action and clear commitment to Christ. 1 Corinthians, in particular, has a powerful message for us.

Christians have to be careful not to blend in with the world. They should not accept its values and lifestyles. Always, we must seek to live Christ-centred, blameless loving lives that make a difference for God. If this chapter does nothing else, it should cause the Christian to examine his own values in the light of a complete commitment to Christ. It should also drive us back again and again to the chapter of love... 'charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth' (1 Corinthians 13:4-6).

Unto WHOM all hearts be open

As we continue to write, it will not hinder the story to pause for prayer:

'Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name; through Christ our Lord.' Amen.¹²

From 2000, the most contentious issue was the Free Church of England's membership of the Free Church Federal Council and its successor, the Free Churches Group. The issue was over indiscriminate ecumenism. The Primus knew, from his University experience, the ecumenical movement had long since become an inter-faith movement. He could not in all conscience support indiscriminate ecumenism. However he and Bishop Shucksmith vigorously supported a biblical ecumenism, encouraging fellowship with like-minded believers, whatever their denomination.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

In 2001 Dr Fenwick applied to the Free Church of England and after one interview refused to attend further interviews, thus effectively withdrawing his application. He had declared himself to be opposed to the Sola Scriptura position of the FCE preferring what he called 'the three-legged stool – scripture, reason and tradition'. Of course, Sola Scriptura people use their reason and draw upon tradition and experience,

under subjection to the Word of God. Dr James I Packer is most helpful at this point. He speaks about (i) the sufficiency of Scripture (ii) the supremacy of Scriptures (iii) the subordination of the Church to Scripture:

'The Church... is charged to proclaim and preserve the bible and its teaching. Being 'a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ', it has therefore a duty to expound Scripture. In pursuit of its task of witness and conservation, it may impose on itself creedal standards on controverted issues (e.g. the Church of England may impose on itself the Thirty-nine Articles). But in such cases there are two caveats to be observed: 'what is imposed must neither go beyond Scripture, nor must it set Scripture against Scripture'.¹³⁾

The Free Church of England is not identical to the present Church of England in the matter of authority.¹⁴ It is a Sola-Scriptura Church. The word "sole" is actually used in the Declaration of Principles.¹⁵ Therefore, Bishop Bentley-Taylor was under ordination vows to uphold the Sola Scriptura identity of his denomination. He felt at the time unable to accept the former Ecumenical Advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The failure of this application became a constant source of friction.

During the Spring of 2002 an attempt was made to remove Bishop Bentley-Taylor as Presiding Bishop of the Convocation. Two disciplinary charges against the Primus, signed by the Wardens of Emmanuel Church, Morecambe, where Dr Fenwick was a member, brought the insistence of Bishop Powell that the Constitution automatically suspended the Primus, from all episcopal functions. Meanwhile, disciplinary charges against Bishop Powell had been submitted which were thrown out by Primus Bentley-Taylor.

Contrary to Dr Fenwick's perception, it is not true that Bishop Bentley-Taylor threatened legal action when faced with two disciplinary charges against him and they were subsequently withdrawn. It is more likely they were withdrawn because the Northern Diocese Synod passed a motion to call an emergency Convocation if these charges were not dropped by the end of the month. Bentley-Taylor submitted the two issues contained in the charges to Convocation 2002. He received overwhelming support for his position on both counts.

Sadly and disappointingly, for a professing Christian Church, this was not the end of the matter. In the Spring of 2003, an anonymous false complaint was made to the Charities Commissioners that Bishop Bentley-Taylor, Primus, had embezzled £2000. This was followed by an anonymous Press Release, sent to the local press in Cumbria, which appeared as headlines in his local newspaper. A similar anonymous press release against Reverend Ian Thatcher, St Paul's Fleetwood, who had stood with his bishop, was treated with the contempt it deserved by his local press. All this was followed, by hate mail and threats of legal action from those who wished to see Bishop Arthur Bentley-Taylor removed.

WHY THE CHARGES?

As a result of the Charities Commission investigation, the Denominational Solicitors cleared Bentley-Taylor altogether. Convocation by now recognised that a life-death struggle was going on for the future direction of the Free Church of England. Would it be broadly ecumenical, in the modern sense, or could it return to its primitive roots and be, unequivocally, evangelical, reformed, and protestant?

It is probably true to say, although this is a personal impression only (there are no statistics), the position of the Primus and Bishop Shucksmith had about one third support and the broader church view of Bishops Powell and McLean the same. The other third were confused, uncertain, and ecclesiastically disorientated! **On the exhortation of Bishop Powell, Convocation 2003 agreed to unite behind the Primus in observance of the Constitution. The bishops agreed to work together for the harmony and wellbeing of the Church, yet, within five weeks, 13 charges against the Primus were allowed, under the jurisdiction of the same bishop of the Southern diocese.**

☞ The present writer has the charges in front of him. He is not prepared to allow them in print. He can confirm they do not amount to the normal Anglican procedure, charges of heresy, or issues of morality. **In his estimation, they are unworthy for consideration, when placed alongside the previous inconsistencies of the denomination.** They were brought by a Minister who does not even serve a member church of the Free Church of England. Furthermore, in the writer's estimation, if the charges had been brought, the whole Free Church of England would have been on trial, including the present ecumenical bishops. In the event, Bishop Shucksmith resigned as a protest, to be followed soon by his chosen Primus, on the medical advice of three doctors.

☞ At a special Convocation, 4 October 2003, an exhausted, disillusioned, and yet still godly bishop, Arthur Bentley-Taylor, announced his retirement as Bishop of the northern Diocese and Bishop Primus, from the end of October. Unlike Bishop Shucksmith, he did not announce his retirement as bishop of the Free Church of England, or, minister of Emmanuel Church, Workington. His statements in October 2003 were misconstrued by certain members as a verbal resignation from the FCE. He never resigned formally in writing or verbally.

On the 15 November 2003, General Council voted in effect to resign him and he received Letters Dimissory. A covering letter, from the Bishop of the Southern Diocese also said he could not in good conscience remain as minister of Emmanuel Church Workington. The local Church had another opinion on this. They unanimously voted to keep their minister. But, the difficulties deepened. Ministers, Churches and faithful individual laity felt they could no longer recognize the jurisdiction of Bishops Powell and McLean. So, at the present time, there is an equal number of churches going in different directions. One is left asking the solemn, yet inevitable question, what kind of ecumenism is it that divides the people of God? Certainly not the unity outlined in the New Testament.

REFLECTION

Of course, it could be answered, the General Council had no alternative except to “resign” the Bishop Primus. It may even be a unique situation? One, who sincerely considers himself little more than a bruised reed and smoking flax (Isaiah 42:3; Matthew 12:20), who repeatedly has known the tender mercies and forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ to such an undeserving sinner, thinks otherwise. Was there not the rule book of 1 Corinthians 13, “CHARITY SUFFERETH LONG AND IS KIND” (v4)?

The Lord God Almighty gave to the Free Church of England an opportunity to prove whether its heart was still that of the self-sacrificing, founding, evangelical fathers, like George Whitefield and James Shore. There may even have been two opportunities, if Bishop Shucksmith is considered to have a part in the story? But we all failed the test, given by the Great God of Revelation chapters 1-3. There are inevitable consequences.

Graciously and courteously, I emphatically repeat, had Dr Fenwick’s inadequate chapter eight not been written, fully supported by the two ecumenical bishops, there would have been no response. But mercifully, there is another side to the story. This is it! Above all else, Christians should never forget, ‘we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose’ (Romans 8:28). No decision is ever final. We only think it so. God reigns supreme and His will always prevails!

¹ R.B.Kuiper, *THE GLORIOUS BODY OF CHRIST*, page 13, 1983, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, Scotland. Kuiper also comments on what so much ecumenical discussion seems to have forgotten, ‘let it be said emphatically, the church is where the truth is. Sound doctrine always has been, is today, and ever will be the foremost mark of the true church. But who dares to assert that there is today in the churches a rising tide of interest in doctrine. By and large people do not go to church to learn about God from His infallible word, but rather to be tranquilized. And that the glory of God is both the beginning and the end of common worship does not seem to occur to them’ (Ibid., page 14).

² Ian Cundy and Cyril Milner, *A REPORT OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS 1992-1996*, paragraph 54, 1997, Joint Report for the FCE Convocation and the CofE, London.

³ The Lambeth Quadrilateral (1888), sometimes called the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral. In the revised form of the four Articles agreed upon at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the United States, they were approved and presented as the essentials for a reunited Christian Church, from an Anglican standpoint. The text of the Articles is as follows:
A. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary to salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

B. The Apostles Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol, and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.

C. The two sacraments ordained by Christ Himself, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s Words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

D. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of the Church.

F.L.Cross & E.A.Livingstone (Eds.), *THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*, page 946, 1997, Oxford University Press, Oxford, England.

⁴ Philip E.Hughes, *THEOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH REFORMERS*, page 179, 1980, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

⁵ *The Book of Common Prayer, A CATECHISM*, page 294, (after 1968), Cambridge University Press, London.

⁶ W.H.Griffith-Thomas, *THE PRINCIPLES OF THEOLOGY*, page 376, 1978, Vine Books Ltd, London.

⁷ A.M.Stibbs, *SACRAMENT SACRIFICE AND EUCHARIST - The Meaning, Function and Use of the Lord’s Supper*, pages 36-37, 1961, Tyndale Press, London.

⁸ *THE EUCHARIST: SACRAMENT OF UNITY - An occasional paper of the House of Bishops*, paragraph 24, page 11, 2001, Church House Publishing, London.

This Church of England document is a response to the 1998 Catholic Bishops Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland and its published work, ONE BREAD ONE BODY. The full text of the Anglican Response, paragraph 24, reads:

The Teaching that in the Eucharist Christians are united sacramentally through the Holy Spirit with Christ's perfect self-offering or sacrifice to the Father (34).

Clearly, when in the Eucharist we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in thankful response to the sacrifice of Christ for us, we do not do this in our own strength or merits, for (as the BCP says) we are unworthy to offer any sacrifice to God. We are enabled to do this solely because he unites us with himself in his perfect offering to the Father – an offering or oblation that consecrated his whole life and ministry to the Father's saving purpose and culminated in the Cross. Our self-offering is held within his. We are drawn into the movement of his self-offering because we have nothing to offer outside his perfect and sufficient sacrifice. Both his sacrifice and our response receive sacramental expression in the Eucharist. This theme is strongly present in both the BCP (cf. the first Post Communion: "mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving... and here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee... through Jesus Christ our Lord") and in modern Anglican liturgies, as well as in the pioneering work of ARCIC.

⁹ David Broughton Knox, THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES - The Historic Basis of the Anglican Faith, Christian Foundation Series 20, page 38, 1967, Hodder and Stoughton, London.

¹⁰ Marcus L. Loane MAKERS OF OUR HERITAGE - A Study of Four Evangelical Leaders, page 54, 1967, Hodder and Stoughton, London.

¹¹ John Fenwick, THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, pages 168-171, 2004, T&T Clark, London.

¹² THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion - the first prayer in the rite, intended for the preparation of the people.

¹³ James I. Packer, THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES, page 19, 1964, Falcon Booklets, London.

¹⁴ Note: We have reason to believe that the Church of England position has changed over the years to accommodate non-evangelical and unbiblical teachings, such as the ordination of women priests, or support for the ordaining of practising homosexuals. Or, it may be bishops and others who deny the historic resurrection, or do not believe in the virgin birth. In the interests of a closer relationship with Rome, particularly, reason and traditions have been upgraded to the same level as scripture. This is not the position expounded in the long-since-forgotten masterpiece, THE DIVINE RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE - a defence of the Catholic doctrine that Holy Scripture has been, since the times of the apostles, the SOLE Divine rule of faith and practice to the church - written by Dean William Goode, late dean of Ripon (c.1841).

¹⁵ Free Church of England, CONSTITUTION AND CANONS ECCLESIASTICAL - THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, page 13, 1983 Edition, Published by Authority of Convocation, London.

The Declaration actually reads... The "Free Church of England otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland", holding "the faith once delivered unto the saints," declares its belief in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and the sole Rule of Faith and Practice; in the creed "commonly called the Apostles Creed"; in the Divine institution of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and in the Doctrines of grace substantially as they are set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. (Constitution, Article 1, Declaration of Principles, paragraph 1).

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Chapter 6

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed...For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ...And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Galatians 1:6-2:5

Chapter 6

Standing or falling? What is the Gospel?

Arthur Bentley-Taylor

John Calvin called justification the main hinge on which true religion turns. Martin Luther put it more dramatically: “This article of justification by grace alone, through faith alone is the head and cornerstone of the church, which alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves and protects the church. Without it the church of God cannot subsist but one hour.” It was over this Gospel that the Free Church of England split in 2004 and in defence of this Gospel that the Evangelical Connexion of the Free Church of England was set up.

The real issue in the FCE – the Gospel itself.

In my statement at the opening of the Special Convocation of the Free Church of England on 4th October 2003, I offered an analysis of the difficulties tearing the FCE. apart:

“...the issue between us was not incompatible personalities; nor has it been a power struggle despite appearances; the issues have always been biblical and theological. The difference is between a vision of the FCE as a broad inclusive church and a vision of the FCE as a church true to its theological constitution which is narrowly Reformed and evangelical in the *sola scriptura* sense. As I understand it, the Gospel of Grace itself is at stake.”

The divide was not over secondary matters but over non-negotiable Gospel issues, that is, over the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone, through grace alone, according to Scripture alone. Amos asked, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 1:3) Indiscriminate ecumenism undermines the *Sola Scriptura* position, which is foundational to the Gospel. As Dr Jim Packer put it, *sola scriptura* is “the *formal* principle of Reformation theology, determining its method and providing its touchstone of truth”; and justification by faith is “the *material* principle determining its substance”.¹

From its origins the FCE was a **Bible believing Church**. It declares “its belief in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (but not the Apocrypha) as the Word of God and the sole Rule of Faith and Practice”.² Article V of the REC’s Thirty-Five Articles answers the Barthian view of Scripture. “...Holy Scripture is therefore the Word of God; not only does it contain the Oracles of God, but it is itself the very Oracles of God.” This high view of Scripture as the infallible and inerrant Word of the living God, commits our Churches to preach the biblical Gospel without deviation.³

In preaching the Gospel we are called to please God, not man, because the Gospel is not our invention but we received it from Jesus Christ Himself via the Apostles through the Scriptures. The true Gospel is unalterable and is not to be modified to fit changing cultural preferences. Paul warned against abandoning the Gospel for “another gospel, which is not another”, by re-iterating the fearsome words, “Though we, or

an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:6-9.)

From its origins, the FCE was an **evangelical Church**. The word ‘evangel’ transliterates the Greek for **Gospel**. Despite the debasing of the term evangelical,⁴ we use it unashamedly in its older Protestant sense, which defined the Gospel in biblical terms. As John Stott put it in 1977, evangelicals are “Bible people and Gospel people”.⁵

In 1874 Bishop J.C.Ryle described an evangelical religion as that which has the following features: (a) the absolute supremacy it assigns to Holy Scripture; (b) the depth and prominence it assigns to the doctrine of human sinfulness and corruption; (c) the paramount importance it attaches to the work and office of our Lord Jesus Christ; (d) the high place it assigns to the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man; (e) the importance which it attaches to the outward and visible work of the Holy Ghost in the life of man.⁶

The FCE also used the word **Reformed** to clarify the content of its Gospel. In 1927, at the union of the FCE and REC in the UK, the word ‘Reformed’ was adopted into our title, ‘*The Free Church of England otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church*’. In this context, the word ‘Reformed’ indicates the content of the Gospel.

The Oxford Dictionary defines **Reformed** as ‘the altering for the better of some faulty state of things’. It has a wide spectrum of secular and religious uses. In Church History it has been used by groups to identify themselves with the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century whose continental leaders - Luther, Calvin and Zwingli - together with their English counterparts – Thomas Cranmer, Nicolas Ridley, Hugh Latimer – risked their lives to recover the biblical Gospel. At her Coronation in 1952, her majesty Queen Elizabeth II vowed to uphold ‘the Protestant reformed religion’, which words derive their meaning from the Coronation Oath of 1689.⁷

Before the end of the 16th century, the description, **Reformed Churches**, ‘ecclesiae reformatae’, was used “in a narrower and more accurate sense... specifically of the Calvinistic bodies, as contrasted especially with the Lutherans.”⁸ ‘Reformed’ came to be associated with those Protestants who (1) recognized the Real Presence of the Lord in the Communion as a spiritual presence in the individual believer and not in the bread and wine itself; and (2) adhered to the ‘Doctrines of Grace’ as set forth at the Council of Dort.⁹

In 1618 James I sent representatives to the Synod of Dort. It declared against Arminian doctrine.¹⁰ “The divines from England, having first entered a proviso in favour of episcopacy, testified their entire consent to the Dutch confession of faith, so far as matters of doctrine were concerned.”¹¹ As Rev Dr Jim Packer affirms, “These (five) points, the so-called ‘doctrines of grace,’ block in the shape of the sovereign action whereby God is held to save sinners. A handy way of remembering the ‘five points’ is to realize that their initial letters spell the word TULIP.”¹²

The FCE’s commitment to the Reformed Gospel is confirmed by The Declaration of Principles which speaks of the FCE declaring its belief in the Holy Scriptures; the Apostles’ Creed; the Sacraments of

Baptism and the Lord's Supper; "and in the Doctrines of grace substantially as they are set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion." The Thirty-Nine Articles are widely recognized as a Reformed or Calvinistic Confession. Every candidate for the ministry of the FCE is required to complete a questionnaire, Form C, which includes the question "What do you understand by the 'Doctrines of Grace'?" and state your views thereon."¹³

Thus the word 'Reformed' identifies the content of the Gospel which we preach. It is true that today not all the evangelical fraternity understands the Gospel in this way. What is indisputable is that the FCE is committed by its historic Constitution to preach this Gospel and none other.

C. H. Spurgeon insisted: "If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, 'He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord.' I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. 'He only is my rock and my salvation.' Tell me anything contrary to this truth, and it will be a heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rock-truth, 'God is my rock and my salvation.' What is the heresy of Rome, but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ - the bringing in of the works of the flesh, to assist in our justification? And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here."¹⁴

Charles Spurgeon continues: "I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; **Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.** I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor."¹⁵

At the same time, the FCE strongly opposes the hyper-Calvinism that was prevalent in the 19th century.¹⁶ Article XVIII of the REC's Thirty-Five Articles rejects hyper-Calvinism: "While the Scriptures distinctly set forth the election, predestination and calling of the people of God unto eternal life, as Christ saith: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" they no less positively affirm man's free agency and responsibility, and that salvation is freely offered to all through Christ. The Church... strictly charging them that God commandeth all men everywhere to repent and that we can be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ."

Let all who preach the Gospel take utmost care to declare the Scriptural truths of God's absolute sovereignty and man's abject helplessness in effecting his own salvation. It is the only way to establish a biblical unity among Christians.

Indiscriminate Ecumenism Threatens the Gospel.

Ecumenical Theology

In every generation the Gospel of 'Justification by Faith Alone', reaffirmed at the Reformation, has been under attack. Indiscriminate ecumenism is the driving force behind "Ecumenical Theology" which operates within the context of the modern ecumenical movement with the goal of contributing to the greater and more visible unity of the church.¹⁷ Its aim is **not** truth as such, but to achieve 'the level or sort of agreement needed for a common life within a single church' while allowing 'the diversity or disagreement which can continue to exist without destroying that unity.' Its 'emphasis has fallen more on a "dialogue of love," a growing together in church life and practice, than on more abstract theology.'¹⁸

According to Michael Root, the contributors to ARCIC¹⁹ shared a commitment to "the church's indefectibility" – 'the belief that the church will never so err that (it) would fail to proclaim the gospel and thus would cease to be the church.'²⁰ The reality is that though the universal Church has continued, local churches have erred, ceased to preach the Gospel and gone out of existence. This was happening even within the Apostolic age as Jesus Christ Himself warned in the Letters to the Churches, Revelation 2-3.

Yet Michael Root claims that by means of Ecumenical Theology, 'churches can come to agree on matters which in the past led to disagreements so basic that division was judged to be necessary' and cites as 'a good example' the ecumenical discussions of justification by faith. "Careful historical study has shown that mutual misunderstanding was rife during the Reformation period... Each side was rejecting positions the other side did not in fact hold." After analyzing the contrasting approach of Luther and of the Council of Trent to justifying faith, Alister McGrath agrees: "This is perhaps a classic case of a theological misunderstanding, resting upon the disputed meaning of a major theological term."²¹ Michael Root concludes, 'the differences that distinguish the two traditions on justification need not continue to drive the catholic from the Lutheran (and, by extension, from other Protestant or Anglican) churches.'²²

The claim that the separation of Protestants from Rome was due to misunderstanding, under-estimates the scholarship of those involved in the 16th century debates. James Buchanan comments: "The controversy between Rome and the reformation was carried on, with much keenness and with great ability on both sides."²³ At the time, considerable efforts were made to find a compromise. These efforts culminated in agreement at the Diet of Ratisbon.²⁴ Subsequently the agreement was not acceptable to either side. Far from being a case of misunderstanding due to the disputed meaning of a term – an ecumenical spin on history - the Rome-Protestant divide was an example of frank and intelligent disagreement over the nature of justification, the basis for justification and the means of its application.

The New Perspective

During the last twenty years the Gospel of Justification by Faith has again become the storm centre of scholarship. A mass of literature is being published on a complex movement commonly called "the New Perspective".²⁵ The New Perspective's re-interpretation of Justification by Faith is already reaching the pulpit and the pew and is popularized on the internet.²⁶

The movement was kick-started in 1963 by Krister Stendahl and developed in 1977 by E. P. Sanders and though it represents a broad spectrum of opinion, there are certain common features.²⁷ The New Perspective criticizes Martin Luther for an individualistic pre-occupation with his personal standing before God which controlled his understanding of justification; and accuses him of misreading the NT by reading the terms of his dispute with Rome back into our Lord's dispute with the Pharisees and Paul's with Judaism. Sanders charged 20th century scholars with reading Paul through Lutheran eyes.²⁸

Whereas Martin Luther argued that Jesus and Paul opposed the legalism of the Pharisees who sought salvation by law-keeping, Sanders and Wright claim to have re-discovered the historical Paul. At his conversion, Paul was saved from **Jewish exclusivism** - the view that God only had dealings with those who possessed the law of Moses. Sanders argued that the Jews were not legalists; they were '**covenantal nominalists**'. That is, they were not trying to get **into** the community of God's people by law-keeping for they were already inside by covenantal election. They kept the law of Moses not to attain salvation but to preserve their covenant status. In that, they were not wrong. Their mistake, which Paul targeted, was to identify themselves exclusively by their badges of identity, 'the works of the law', that included circumcision, dietary laws and observance of religious festivals.

As N.T. Wright sees it, Paul's message was that **Jewish exclusivism is wrong**; that Israel's exile reached its climax in the cross of Christ, by which He redeemed both Israel and Gentiles from spiritual exile. "Saul of Tarsus was not interested in a timeless system of salvation whether works-righteousness or anything else. Paul wanted God to redeem Israel."²⁹ "The cross was the decisive victory over the 'principalities and powers'."³⁰ The death of Jesus had the effect of liberating both Jew and Gentile from the enslaving force of the elements of the world. The culmination of Christ's great act of obedience is the means whereby the reign of sin and death is replaced with the reign of grace and righteousness. Paul understands Jesus' execution as the moment when the creator's love wins the victory over the rebellious creation. Jesus is king, Jesus is Lord."³¹

On this basis Wright takes issue with the Reformation Gospel. "The Gospel is supposed (by the older tradition) to be a description of how people get saved; a theological mechanism, whereby, Christ takes our sin and we his righteousness. Some others might say Jesus becomes my personal Saviour, or I admit my sin, believe that Jesus died for me and I commit my life to him."³² Wright redefines Justification by Faith. "Justification is not how people enter the covenant, but the declaration that certain people are already within the covenant. It is more about ecclesiology, the church, than soteriology, salvation. When God declares in the favour of a person he is acknowledging that the person is in the covenant community. Paul's doctrine of justification is about dealing with the problem of national pride, and attempting to stop grace being restricted to one nation."³³

This is certainly not an example of ecumenical 'consensus without repudiation'. Wright requires Protestants to repudiate the Reformer's understanding of the biblical meaning of justification and reject the need for the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.³⁴ At this point we should heed the warning of John Calvin: "Whenever the knowledge of it (justification) is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the Church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown."³⁵

Whereas at the Diet of Ratisbon, Rome moved towards the Reformers' position, the New Perspective is an attempt to move Protestants towards Rome. The New Perspective is used unashamedly in the interests of the ecumenical dialogue between Protestants and Rome.³⁶ Protestants are being asked to accept a redefinition of justification nearer to Rome's view that it is a process of infusing or imparting righteousness begun by the sacrament of baptism.

We are being asked to abandon the definition of justification in Article XI of the Thirty-Nine Articles: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings."

The Gate's too narrow for us!

Speaking to God's covenant people in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it," (Matthew 7:13-14). In effect, Jesus was telling people who considered themselves to be covenantal insiders, that the majority were outside the kingdom of God! Hence his Gospel exhortation: "Enter by the narrow gate." Paul taught the same: "they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel," (Romans 9:6).

How narrow is the gate? How difficult is the way? Jesus set the entrance standard impossibly high when He said, "I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven," (Matthew 5:20). No one could outdo the scribes and Pharisees for righteousness by the law. Paul was factual when he claimed, "If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the 8th day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," (Philippians 3:4-6).

When a young ruler of the Jews asked Jesus what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus said, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments!" Jesus listed commands 6, 7, 8, 9 & 5. The man protested, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus then challenged him on the 10th command, covetousness, and told him to sell up and give to the poor and follow Him. The man would not do so because he loved his possessions more than the poor and more than he loved Jesus, (Matt.19:16-21). Realizing that Jesus had set the standard too high and made the gate too narrow, the disciples asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible," (Matthew 19:26).

Paul came to the same conclusion. He insisted, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law," (Galatians 3:21). He reasons: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in

His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin,” (Romans 3:19-20). Paul concludes “both Jews and Greeks are all under sin,” (Romans 3:9; Galatians 3:22).

There is no way for sinners to justify themselves. Every Christian minister is tempted to alter this diagnosis of the human condition and thus to diminish the need for God’s free-gift of salvation. If salvation was by works, none would be saved, for “there is none righteous, no, not one!”³⁷ This universal negative is far too harsh for the natural man to stomach. Yet Scripture insists, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” (1 John 1:8).

Who preaches the law today as Jesus preached it to the Jews? Jesus provoked the question, “Who then can be saved?”, only to answer, “With men it is impossible!” Who still teaches that God is Creator, Law-giver and Judge and who warns of the Day of judgment and of wrath to come? Who warns of hell as did Jesus?³⁸ Who, like Jesus, warns of being cast out into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth?³⁹ Who warns God’s people as did Jesus, “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”?⁴⁰ It is this fear that gives incredible urgency to Gospel preaching: “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,” (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Without such preaching, the Gospel is irrelevant to people, for it is addressed to sinners in need of the Great Physician. The Prayer Book calls on insiders to confess their unworthiness in language that leaves no wobble room - “there is no health in us!”⁴¹ The best we do, even as believers, is spoilt by sin. Such prayers bring sincere worshippers into fellowship with Daniel’s blushing shame and David’s quest for thorough cleansing.⁴²

Terry Johnson says, “The Gospel teaches that whatever we do in order to get right with God will not work. Our obedience is not pure enough. Our love is not earnest enough. It does not matter how many times we go to church, or say the creed, or put money in the plate. All our attempts are futile. They are worthless. Our religion will not save us. Our morality will not save us. There is nothing we can do to escape destruction. Our efforts to make ourselves right with God are completely futile; he is too holy and we are too corrupt.”⁴³ The preacher of the true Gospel, a Gospel of grace alone, must rule out the possibility of salvation by our own works as emphatically as did the Apostle Paul: “if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work,” (Romans 11:6).

“It was reckoned to him for righteousness”

The content and urgency of preaching is determined by what the preacher believes. As Paul said quoting Psalm 116:10, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” (2 Corinthians 4:13). The Gospel preacher needs to believe that his hearers are doomed because they are on the broad road that leads to destruction and that they are not able to do anything to save themselves for “with man it is impossible”. He needs also to believe that he has been entrusted with the only message that, if mixed in the hearers with faith, is able not only to put away sin but to present the sinner faultless before the throne of grace with exceeding joy.

He will preach salvation by works – not ours, but Christ’s works! He will preach the impossibility of salvation by our works and the perfection of the works of the Lord Jesus Christ - both His active and His passive obedience to the Father.⁴⁴ Our only hope of salvation is by His works and His merits.⁴⁵

As in Adam all die, for He was the head of humanity, the representative man. When he sinned, all whom he represented sinned in him. So also, all who believe in Jesus Christ are united with Him. He is the Second Adam, the Head of a new humanity, the representative Man, Who when tempted remained faithful and did no sin. All He did He did for His people. By the sinless perfection of His life (His active obedience) and by His obedience unto death (His passive obedience), He earned, merited and purchased redemption on behalf of His people though they be slaves of sin and unrighteousness.

As Isaiah puts it, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” for God imputed our sin to Him that He might suffer its penalty in His body on the cross – the doctrine of penal substitution. Jesus Christ has not merely put away our sin, He has made us accepted in Him, for God has imputed His righteousness to all who believe in Him - the doctrine of justification by grace alone on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

There have always been some preachers who deny the need for the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. Most notable was the great evangelist, John Wesley. John Wesley asserted, “I believe justification by faith alone as much as I believe there is a God.” Yet over the years, under the pressure of controversy, he “reduce(d) the content of ‘justification’ to forgiveness only.”⁴⁶ In his 1766 sermon on Justification, he defined it as “pardon, the forgiveness of sins” and denied that “justification is the clearing us from accusation.”⁴⁷ In 1744 Wesley defined justification “To be pardoned and received into God’s favour” and added, “We do not find it affirmed expressly in Scripture that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any.”⁴⁸ Wesley’s fear was that justification based on the imputed righteousness of Christ would do away with the need for sanctification. Increasingly it led him to deny justification as a once-for-all event lest holiness of life be rendered unnecessary.⁴⁹ The criticism of Wesley is that without the imputation of Christ’s righteousness he tended to make faith a work. That is also a difficulty for N.T.Wright’s position.

Scripture affirms that the righteousness of Christ is reckoned, credited or imputed to all who are united to Him by faith, yet not on account of that faith. In Romans 4 Paul explains Abraham’s justification spoken of in Genesis 15:6, “Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness”, as an act of grace, not of debt and compares it with David’s beatitude concerning the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin, (Psalm 32:2). Paul claims that righteousness is imputed to all who believe.

What then did Jesus mean when He said to those He had healed, and to an immoral woman He had pardoned, “Your faith has saved you”? Certainly He did not mean that their faith had the power to heal or to pardon, for that power belonged to Him alone. Nor did He mean that their faith was the reason for His healing them, for that would turn faith into a work deserving a reward. Their faith was the instrument by which they laid hold upon the power of Christ. As such, faith is not an achievement or work of the natural man but is the gift of God worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Our faith is never the power that

justifies nor is it the reason for God's pardoning grace. It is the God-given means, the instrument, by which sinners lay hold on eternal life. Faith is, as Calvin stressed, union with Christ and not a meritorious work. Johnson sums it up: "It is not faith *per se* (the means) that saves, but faith in Jesus Christ (the ground) that saves."⁵⁰

In order to sum up a vast, multifaceted subject, let us hear the witness of some of God's servants.

AUGUSTINE

In Article VI of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 the claim is made, "The same (justification by faith) is also taught by the Fathers."⁵¹ Hear the voice of Augustine:

"Now he (Paul) could not mean to contradict himself in saying, 'The doers of the law shall be justified,' as if their justification came through their works, and not through grace; since he declares that a man is justified freely by His grace without the works of the law, intending by the term 'freely' nothing else than that works do not precede justification. For in another passage he expressly says, 'If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.' But the statement that 'the doers of the law shall be justified' must be so understood, as that we may know that they are not otherwise doers of the law, unless they be justified, so that justification does not subsequently accrue to them as doers of the law, but justification precedes them as doers of the law."⁵²

ANSELM

Adolf von Harnack insisted that had the medieval church followed its favourite teacher, Thomas Aquinas, on justification, the Reformation would not have been necessary. Before Aquinas, Anselm also taught salvation by faith alone. Speaking to a dying man, Anselm urged him to plead with God the merits and death of Jesus Christ as his only hope of salvation.

"Come then, while life remains in you; in His death alone place your whole trust; in naught else place any trust; to His death commit yourself wholly; with this alone cover yourself wholly; and if the Lord your God will to judge you, say, 'Lord, between Your judgment and me I present the death of our Lord Jesus Christ...' And if He shall say that you are a sinner, say, 'Lord, I interpose the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my sins and You.' If He say that you deserve condemnation, say: 'Lord, I set the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my evil deserts and You, and His merits I offer for those which I ought to have and have not.' If He say that He is wroth with you, say: 'Lord, I oppose the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between Your wrath and me.' And when you have completed this, say again: 'Lord, I set the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between You and me.'"⁵³

CRANMER

In 1986 David Samuel wrote, "The Homilies are the official sermons of the Church of England and are therefore of importance in determining its doctrine."⁵⁴

Elizabeth recognized that "all they, which are appointed Ministers, have not the gift of preaching sufficiently to instruct the people", and therefore "Her Majesty commands and straitly charges all Persons, Vicars, Curates, and all others having spiritual cure, every Sunday and Holy-day in the year,.... to read and declare to their Parishioners, plainly and distinctly, one of the said Homilies, in such order as they stand in the book, except there be a Sermon."

Hear the voice of the Homilies, thought to be penned by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer.⁵⁵

"The Apostle touches three things, which must go together in our justification. **Upon God's part**, his great mercy and grace: **upon Christ's part**, justice; that is, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his body; and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the Law perfectly and thoroughly: and **upon our part** true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ; which yet is not our's but by God's working in us....

"All the good works, that we can do, be imperfect; and therefore not able to deserve our justification: but our justification comes freely, by the mere mercy of God; and of so great and free mercy, that, whereas all the world was not able of themselves to pay any part towards their ransom, it pleased our heavenly Father, of his infinite mercy, without any our desert or deserving, to prepare for us the most precious jewels of Christ's body and blood; whereby our ransom might be fully paid, the Law fulfilled, and his justice fully satisfied. So that Christ is now the righteousness of all them that truly do believe in him. He for them paid their ransom by his death. He for them fulfilled the Law in his life. So that now in him, and by him, every true Christian may be called a fulfiller of the Law: forasmuch as that which their infirmity lacked, Christ's justice has supplied."

HOOKER

Among the Puritans there was debate as to whether faith is imputed⁵⁶ or Christ's righteousness is imputed.⁵⁷ Early Anglicans took the latter position.⁵⁸

Hear the voice of Richard Hooker preaching on Justification on 28th March 1586.

"The righteousness wherein we must be found, if we will be justified, is not our own; therefore we cannot be justified by any inherent quality. Christ has merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. In him God finds us, if we be faithful; for by faith we are incorporated into him (Christ). Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man which in himself is impious, full of iniquity, full of sin; him being found in Christ through faith,

and having his sin in hatred through repentance; him God beholds with a gracious eye, puts away his sin, by not imputing it, takes away the punishment due thereunto, by pardoning it; and accepts him in Jesus Christ as perfectly righteous, as if he had fulfilled all that is commended him in the law; shall I say more perfectly righteous than if himself had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say: but the Apostle said, 'God made him which knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Such are we in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself. Let it be counted folly, or phrensy, or fury, or whatever. It is our wisdom and our comfort; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, That man has sinned, and God has suffered; that God has made Himself the sin of man, and that men are made the righteousness of God."⁵⁹

BUNYAN

The great preacher and author, John Bunyan, wrote on "Justification by an Imputed Righteousness or No Way To Heaven But By Jesus Christ." He set out to prove from Scripture the proposition, "That there is no other way for sinners to be justified from the curse of the law in the sight of God than by the imputation of that righteousness long ago performed by, and still residing with, the person of Jesus Christ."⁶⁰

RYLE

Hear the voice of Bishop J.C.Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool.

"The true Christian is counted righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is justified because of the death and atonement of Christ. He has peace because "Christ died for his sins according to the Scriptures." This is the key that unlocks the mighty mystery. Here the great problem is solved, how God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. The life and death of the Lord Jesus explains all. 'He is our peace.' Christ has stood in the place of the true Christian. He has become his Surety and his Substitute. He undertook to bear all that was to be borne and do all that was to be done... Christ has suffered for sins, the 'just for the unjust'. He has endured our punishment in His own body on the cross. He has allowed the wrath of God, which we deserved, to fall on His own head... Christ has paid the debt the Christian owed, by His own blood... Christ has obeyed the law of God perfectly... Christ, in one word, has lived for the true Christian. Christ had died for him. Christ has gone to the grave for him. Christ has risen again for him. Christ has ascended up on high for him, and gone into heaven to intercede for his soul. Christ has done all, paid all, suffered all that was needful for his redemption. Who can tell the blessedness of the exchange that takes place between the true Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ's righteousness is placed upon him, and his sins are placed upon Christ. Christ has been reckoned a sinner for his sake, and now he is reckoned innocent for Christ's sake. Christ has been condemned for his sake though there was no fault in Him, - and now he is acquitted for Christ's sake, though

he is covered with sins, faults, and short-comings. Here is wisdom indeed! God can now be just and yet pardon the ungodly.”⁶¹

EDWARDS

After preaching on Justification by Faith Alone revival broke out at Northampton, New England, in 1734.⁶² He defines Justification as: “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ (which we have by virtue of our union with him) imputed to us, and received by faith alone.”⁶³

WHITEFIELD

Hear the voice of George Whitefield.

“Once more then: before you can speak peace to your heart, you must not only be convinced of your actual and original sin, the sins of your own righteousness, the sin of unbelief, but you must be enabled to lay hold upon the perfect righteousness, the all-sufficient righteousness, of the Lord Jesus Christ; you must lay hold by faith on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and then you shall have peace.... Before we can ever have peace with God, we must be justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ, we must be enabled to apply Christ to our hearts, we must have Christ brought home to our souls, so as his righteousness may be made our righteousness, so as his merits may be imputed to our souls.”⁶⁴

Justification by Grace alone through Faith alone - non-negotiable.

This brief study of the Gospel was occasioned by the division of the FCE over ecumenism. While we oppose indiscriminate ecumenism we believe in a biblical ecumenism, that is, in unity in the truth of the Gospel, a oneness in Christ among like-minded brethren and sisters.

With whom then should we seek fellowship? The question raises the issue of **Christian identity**. How are we to identify true Christians? John indicates that it is by profession of faith⁶⁵ and Jesus that it is by their works. Though evangelicals and Catholics are often united in opposition to ethical abuses, such as abortion, evangelicals cannot have fellowship with Rome because of their beliefs. In the 1960s, Vatican II re-affirmed the decisions of the Council of Trent and declared them to be ‘irreformable’.⁶⁶ How can we have fellowship with or worship together with those who affirm the infallibility of the anathemas of the Council of Trent against Justification by Faith?

Let the Council of Trent speak for itself. By its “anathemas”, Trent condemns those persons it deems to be guilty to eternal damnation.⁶⁷

“If anyone says that *by faith alone* the sinner is justified, so as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification . . . let him be anathema.”⁶⁸

“If anyone says that men are justified either by the **imputation of the righteousness of Christ alone**, or by the remission of sins alone, to the exclusion of the grace and love that is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit and is inherent in them; or even that the grace by which we are justified is only the favour of God—let him be anathema.”⁶⁹

“If anyone says that the guilt is remitted to every penitent sinner after the grace of justification has been received, and that the debt of eternal punishment is so blotted out that there remains no debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened—let him be anathema.”⁷⁰

Trent regarded works an essential part of justification. In doing so, according to Romans 11:6, “if it is by grace, *it is no longer on the basis of works*, otherwise grace is no longer grace”, they were left with a grace that is “no longer grace”. Trent turned Justification into a life-long process whereby the sinner is actually made righteous. Justification may be lost and regained by the Sacrament of Penance. And Purgatory is needed to blot out the eternal penalty of sin. Though Trent acknowledged the importance of faith, the sacrament of baptism was made *the instrumental cause* of justification.⁷¹ Trent’s justification is grounded on the sinner’s imperfect righteousness and not on Christ’s perfect righteousness.

From this brief survey, it is evident that the Gospel of Justification by Grace alone through Faith alone and the Gospel as preached by Trent are contradictory. Both cannot be the true Gospel. According to the Bible, God “reckons righteousness apart from works,” (Rom. 4:4-6). Paul counted all things as loss, as refuse and dung for the sake of a right doctrine of justification - “that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, *not having a righteousness of my own* derived from the Law, *but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,*” (Philippians 3:8-9).

Which anathema stands in the sight of Almighty God, Paul’s in Galatians 1:8-9 or Trent’s? Trent’s Gospel is ‘another Gospel, which is not another’ and the anathemas of Trent shall rebound upon their own heads.

The Gospel of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of the shed blood of Christ and the imputation of His righteousness is non-negotiable. We cannot have fellowship with those that both deny it and anathematize those who preach and believe the evangelical and Reformed Gospel. As Bishop Ryle said, “Let us take heed that we do not basely sell it (Gospel truth) for a mess of pottage, under the specious names of unity and peace.”⁷²

Jim Packer summarizes: “Salvation, said the Reformers, is by **faith** (man’s total trust) *only*, without our being obliged to work for it; it is by **grace** (God’s free favour) *only*, without our having to earn or deserve it first; it is by **Christ the God-man** *only*, without there being need or room for any other mediatorial agent, whether priest, saint, or virgin; it is by **Scripture** *only*, without regard to such unbiblical and unfounded extras as the doctrine of purgatory and of pilgrimages, the relic-cult and papal indulgences as

devices for shortening one's stay there; and praise for salvation is **due to God only**, without any credit for his acceptance of us being taken to ourselves."⁷³

We stand for this Gospel and we dare not modify it. We are not ashamed of it and believing it we will preach it. We seek fellowship with all who love this Gospel. We are not hardliners – we will be generous in seeking fellowship in Christ among all who profess His name in sincerity.

We must live for this Gospel. We will rejoice in it and give thanks to God for it daily. We hold fast to it tenaciously. We preach it constantly, though imperfectly. We count all things but loss for it and we will pay any price to maintain it. These are not idle words. In recent years, we have lost status and function within our denomination on account of it. We are ready to die for it. So God help us. There is no better cause in which to live and die than in the cause of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Who lived and died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Soli Deo Gloria.

¹ *Introductory Essay* by Jim Packer to *Justification by Faith*, James Buchanan, Banner of Truth, 1961, p.1

² *The Constitution of the Free Church of England*, Article I, Declaration of Principles. Note should be taken of Article XVIII entitled PRINCIPLES: "The Principles of this Church, as set out in the Declaration of Principles recited in Article I of this Constitution, are, and shall be, unalterable."

³ Jim Packer comments "Just as the church cannot stand without the gospel of justification, so that gospel cannot stand where its presuppositions are not granted. They are three: the divine authority of Holy Scripture, the divine wrath against human sin, and the substitutionary satisfaction of Christ. The church which loses its grip on these truths, loses its grip on the doctrine of justification, and to that extent on the gospel itself. And this is what has largely happened in Protestantism today." Ibid. Buchanan, p.3-4.

⁴ For an analysis of current divisions within the Evangelical fraternity see *Evangelicalism Divided, A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950-2000*, Iain H.Murray, Banner of Truth Trust, 2000.

⁵ J.R.W.Stott, *What is an evangelical?* (1977), 6 & 10.

⁶ Quoted from *The Evangelical Succession in the Church of England*, chapter IV *From Laud to Waterland*, P.H.Buss, p.44. J.C.Ryle, *Knots Untied*, (1874), Chapter 1.

⁷ Act Establishing the Coronation Oath, 1689. III. 3rd Question: The archbishop or bishop shall say, "Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the laws of God, the true profession of the gospel and the Protestant reformed religion established by law,..." King and Queen, "All this I promise to do." After this, the King and Queen laying his and her hand upon the holy Gospels, shall say, King and Queen, "The things which I have here before promised, I will perform and keep: So help me God." Then the King and Queen shall kiss the book.

⁸ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, F.L.Cross, OUP, 1957, p.1146.

⁹ Luther himself adhered to the Doctrines of Grace as is evident in his debate with the Erasmus, see his *Bondage of the Will*.

¹⁰ "His majesty nominated four very eminent dignitaries, to represent the Church of England, in the synod, and one divine to represent the Church of Scotland. *The Complete Works of Augustus Toplady*, Sprinkle Publications, 1987, p.238. They were as follows: Dr George Carleton, bishop of Llandaff (afterwards of Chichester); Dr Joseph Hall, then dean of Worcester, (afterwards bishop of Exeter, then of Norwich); Dr John Davenant, then master of Queen's College, Cambridge and Margaret professor, (afterwards bishop of Salisbury); Dr Samuel Ward, master of Sydney College and archdeacon of Taunton. The Scottish representative was Mr Balcanqual, fellow of Pembroke-hall.

¹¹ *The Complete Works of Augustus Toplady*, Sprinkle Publications, 1987, p.244.

¹² "Serving The People of God, Collected Shorter Writings of J.I.Packer' Vol.2, Paternoster Press, Ch.17, "A Calvinist – and an Evangelist!", p207. "Their emphasis reflects not only their principle of acknowledging God's sovereignty everywhere, but also their certainty that sinners cannot do anything to save themselves. This certainty, under the technical name of Total Inability is the first of the famous 'five points of Calvinism' – actually, the five points of Reformed teaching which were reasserted at the Synod of Dort (1618) in the face of the denial of each by the school of Arminius. The other four points are Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement (better, definite atonement or particular redemption), Irresistible Grace (better, effectual calling), and Preservation of the Saints through the covenanted perseverance with them of their Saviour."

¹³ *Constitution and canons Ecclesiastical*, 1983 Edition, Form C, p.81.

¹⁴ *A Defense of Calvinism* by C.H.Spurgeon.

¹⁵ Rev Jim Packer comes to the same conclusion in "A Calvinist – and an Evangelist!" ch.17 "Serving The People of God, Collected Shorter Writings of J.I.Packer' Vol.2, Paternoster Press, p205-210.

¹⁶ For a critique of hyper-Calvinism see, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism, The Battle for Gospel Preaching*, Iain H.Murray, Banner of Truth Trust, 1995.

¹⁷ *The Modern Theologians*, editor David F.Ford, Blackwell, 1997. Ch.27 *Ecumenical Theology* by Michael Root, p.538.

¹⁸ Ibid. Ford, p.541; p544. Michael Root calls this "an internally differentiated consensus."

¹⁹ ARCIC –The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission.

- ²⁰ *The Modern Theologians*, Ford, p.543, based on the promise that the church will continue till Christ's return, Matt.16:18.
- ²¹ *Christian Theology, An Introduction*, Alister E.McGrath, Blackwell, 1994; 2nd edition 1997, p.446.
- ²² *The Modern Theologians*, Ford, p.547-548
- ²³ *The Doctrine of Justification*, James Buchanan, 1867, reprinted by Banner of Truth Trust, 1961, Lecture V, p.141.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, Buchanan, p.146.
- ²⁵ *Paul & Palestinian Judaism*, E.P.Sanders, Fortress Press, 1977; *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, E.P.Sanders, 1983; *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, James D.G.Dunn, Westminster, 1990; *The Justice of God*, James D.G.Dunn and Alan M.Suggate, Grand Rapids, 1993; *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays*, Krister Stendahl, Fortress Press, 1976; *The New Perspective on Paul*, Michael B.Thompson, Cambridge, 2002; *What St Paul Really Said*, N.T.Wright, Eerdmans, 1997..
- ²⁶ See <http://www.angelfire.com/mi2/paulpage> for a list of Articles, Book Reviews, Book lists. "Over the last two decades, a revolutionary breakthrough in New Testament scholarship has been rocking the academic Christian world. The scholars at the forefront of the revolution – E.P.Sanders, James D.G.Dunn, N.T.Wright, and others – have been pioneering a new approach to the letters of the first-century apostle to the Gentiles, Paul of Tarsus. What is this new perspective? At its core is the recognition that Judaism is not a religion of self-righteousness whereby humankind seeks to merit salvation before God. Paul's argument with the Judaizers was not about Christian grace versus Jewish legalism. His argument was rather about the status of Gentiles in the church. Paul's doctrine of justification, therefore, had more to do with Jewish-Gentile issues than with questions of the individual's status before God."
- ²⁷ *The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West*, Krister Stendahl, Harvard Theological Review, 56, 1963, pp.199-215.
- ²⁸ "This view (that Paul criticised a totally misguided attempt on the part of Jewish legalists to find favour and acceptance in the sight of God by earning righteousness through performing works of the law), Sanders argued, coloured the analysis of such Lutheran writers as Ernst Kasemann and Rudolf Bultmann. These scholars, perhaps unwittingly, read Paul through Lutheran spectacles, and thus failed to realise that Paul had to be read against his proper historical context in first-century Judaism." *Christian Theology, An Introduction*, Alister E.McGrath, Blackwell, 1994; 2nd edition 1997, p.447-448.
- ²⁹ N.T.Wright, *What Saint Paul Really said: Was Paul of Tarsus the real founder of Christianity?*, Eerdmans, Michigan, USA, 1997, p.32.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.47.
- ³¹ This summary of Wright's position is taken from John Stott's paper presented to the EPECW Conference 2004 shortly to be published.
- ³² N.T.Wright, *What Saint Paul Really said: Was Paul the real founder of Christianity?*, Eerdmans, Michigan, USA, 1997, *Ibid.*, p.41.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p.119.
- ³⁴ From the Glossary at the back of N.T.Wright's NT Commentaries: "justification: God's declaration, from his position as judge of all the world, that someone is in the right, despite universal sin. This declaration will be made on the last day on the basis of an entire life (Romans 2.1-16), but is brought forward into the present on the basis of Jesus' achievement, because sin has been dealt with through his cross (Romans 3.21-4.25); the means of this present justification is simply faith. This means, particularly, that Jews and Gentiles alike are full members of the family promised by God to Abraham (Galatians 3; Romans 4)."
- ³⁵ Calvin's Reply to Sadoletto Tracts 1:41.
- ³⁶ www.angelfire.com/mi2/paulpage comments: "The new perspective on Paul promises to help us Better understand Paul and the early church; Reconcile contemporary biblical scholarship with theology; Build common ground between Catholics and Protestants; Improve dialogue between Christians and Jews; Flesh out a theological foundation for social justice."
- ³⁷ Romans 3:10 quoting Psalm 14:1 & 53:1, "There is none who does good."
- ³⁸ Matthew 5:30 hell fire; 10:28 body and soul in hell; 11:23 hell; 13:42 furnace of fire; 18:9 hell fire; 23:15 Pharisees as children of hell; 23:33 damnation of hell.
- ³⁹ Matthew 8:12 – a warning to Jews, the children of the kingdom; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; .
- ⁴⁰ Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 8:12: "the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- ⁴¹ The General Confession used in Morning and Evening Prayer: "Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devises and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders..." The Confession used in the Communion: 'Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us...'
- ⁴² Daniel 9:7,8 and Psalm 51.
- ⁴³ *The Case For Traditional Protestantism*, Terry L.Johnson, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004, p.81.
- ⁴⁴ See p.88 of Johnson's *The Case For Traditional Protestantism*.
- ⁴⁵ Article XI of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion refers to the Homily on Justification, presumably a reference to the third Homily, "The Salvation of Mankind". Part III says: "We put our faith in Christ, that we be justified by Him only; that we be

justified by God's free mercy, and the merits of our Saviour Christ only; and by no virtue or good work of our own... Christ himself only being the cause meritorious thereof."

⁴⁶ *Wesley and Men Who Followed*, Iain H Murray, Banner of Truth Trust, 2003, p.218.

⁴⁷ "Least of all does justification imply, that God is deceived in those whom he justifies; that he thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not; that he accounts them to be otherwise than they are. It does by no means imply, that God judges concerning us contrary to the real nature of things; that he esteems us better than we really are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteous. Surely no. The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth. Neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom, to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more, in this manner, confound me with Christ, than with David or Abraham." Text from the 1872 edition.

⁴⁸ The Minutes of his private 1744 Conference, *Ib.* Murray, p.218.

⁴⁹ In 1765 Wesley defended himself in a sermon on *The Lord our Righteousness*: "I always did and still continually affirm, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer. *The Works of John Wesley*, vol.1, p.242. (Reprinted, Baker, 1998). See discussion in *Wesley and His Followers*, Iain H Murray, p.220f on his inconsistencies on the point.

⁵⁰ *The Case For Traditional Protestantism*, Terry L. Johnson, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004, p.83.

⁵¹ See the Third Homily, 'Of the Salvation of All Mankind', Part III, p.19: "The old ancient Fathers of the Church, ... have uttered our justification with this speech; Only faith justified us." Berith Publications, 1986.

⁵² Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 26:45 (A.D. 412), in NPNF1,V:89. The problem arises in the next sentence for Augustine defines justification as being 'made righteous' rather than 'declared righteous'. Yet it is clear that he distinguishes initial justification from sanctification, which he also refers to as justification.

⁵³ Quoted by John Gerstner in *History of the Doctrine of Justification*, see <http://www.apuritansmind.com/Justification>. (Highlighting mine.)

⁵⁴ Foreword to The Homilies republished by Berith Publications, 1986,...

⁵⁵ *Sermons or Homilies, Appointed to be read in Churches*, 1562; republished by Berith Publications, 1986, Book 1, Ch.3 Of the Salvation of all Mankind, p.14-15. The first of the "Book of Homilies" was published by Edward VI in 1547, the second by Queen Elizabeth II in 1563.

⁵⁶ Baxter, Woodbridge, Goodwin.

⁵⁷ Owen, Eedes, Gataker, Walker.

⁵⁸ Hooker, Andrewes, Downname, Davenant, Donne, Ussher and Hill.

⁵⁹ Richard Hooker, *The Works*, Vol III, (1888), Sermon ii, section 6, Vol.iii, p.490-491, Ed. Keble; Hildesheim, 1877. The sermon was entitled, "Justification, Works, and How the Foundation of Faith is Overthrown."

⁶⁰ From a manuscript found in John Bunyan's papers after his death in 1688.

⁶¹ *Old Paths*, John Charles Ryle, D.D., 1st published 1878; The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999, Ch.viii, p.220-221.

⁶² Jim Packer comments: "Justification by Faith has been the central theme of the preaching in every movement of revival and religious awakening within Protestantism from the Reformation to the present day. The essential thing that happens in every true revival is that the Holy Spirit teaches the church afresh the reality of justification by faith." *Collected Shorter Writings of J.I.Packer* Vol.1, p.137.

⁶³ Quoted by John Gerstner in *Edwards on Justification*, see <http://www.apuritansmind.com/Justification>.

⁶⁴ George Whitfield preaching 'The Method of Grace' from Jeremiah 6:14, "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

⁶⁵ 1 John 4:2-3: "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." Matthew 5:20: "Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

⁶⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, 25, in Walter M. Abbot, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1966).

⁶⁷ Other examples include the following. Trent, Sixth Session, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 12. "If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema." Canon 8. "If anyone says that by the said sacraments . . . grace is not conferred through the work worked but [says] that faith alone in the divine promises is sufficient for the obtaining of grace, let him be anathema." Canon 24. "If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema."

⁶⁸ Trent, Sixth Session, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 9. (Highlighting mine).

⁶⁹ Trent, Sixth Session, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 11. (Highlighting mine).

⁷⁰ Trent, Sixth Session, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 30.

⁷¹ Trent, Sixth Session, Chapter 7.

⁷² *Warnings to the Churches*, 1877, Banner of Truth, 1996, p.128.

⁷³ *Collected Shorter writings of J.I.Packer, Honouring the People of God* Paternoster, 1999, Vol.4, Ch.13; *Justification in Protestant Theology*, p.220.

Chapter 7

...Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are...I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

John 17:11-17

Chapter 7

Communion with All Christian Churches

James Lee Potter

Is the Free Church of England required to be ecumenical by its Declaration of Principles or is this a serious misreading of a statement that has been taken out of context to undermine the biblical witness of the denomination?

This Church will maintain communion with all Christian Churches, and will set forward, so far as it lieth, quietness, peace and love, among all Christian people. That sentence comes at the end of the Declaration of Principles and must be seen in the light of what comes before it. It does not stand in isolation but comes after the doctrinal platform of the Free Church of England which is presented in clear and unambiguous terms.

What is the context of the statement? The Church 'declares its belief in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and the sole Rule of Faith and Practice'. **Sola Scriptura** is the guiding principle. This is in express contrast to Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy, who place tradition alongside the Bible, as well as modernism, which gives human reason a veto over the Bible. The Free Church of England by upholding the supremacy of Scripture is an heir of the Reformation.

The denomination declares its belief 'in the Doctrines of grace substantially as they are set forth in the 39 Articles of Religion'. Dating from 1562, the 39 Articles are the Anglican confession of faith, although sadly denigrated, ignored and relegated to the lumber room of history by many in the Anglican Communion. Concise statements of biblical truth, especially regarding matters of controversy, are timeless. The definition of a visible church in Article 19 is important. 'The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.'

The local church or parish is the key unit, not the diocese or denomination. It is a congregation of believers in Jesus Christ. Ancient buildings, impressive services, musical traditions, famous worshippers are not what matters. If the pure Word of God is not preached, it is not a true visible church. There must be no addition, subtraction or distortion of God's Word. The Gospel Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are to be administered according to Christ's ordinance.

Doctrines of the Church of Rome are repudiated in Articles 19, 22, 24, 25, 28, 30, 31, and 32. In the 39 Articles biblical truth is not only proclaimed but error is exposed, something highly unfashionable in these days of compromise.

Building upon the Bible as the supreme authority and the 39 Articles as the confession of faith, the Church goes on to condemn and reject some erroneous and strange doctrines as contrary to God's Word.

It rejects the belief 'that the Church of Christ exists only in one order or form of ecclesiastical polity.' Non-episcopal churches can be recognised. Episcopacy is regarded as 'a very ancient and desirable form of Church polity'. The sacerdotal view of the Christian ministry is repudiated. The Roman doctrine of the Mass and the Lutheran one of the Real Presence are denied. 'That Regeneration is inseparably connected with Baptism' is rejected. The sacraments do not impart grace in themselves alone. That grace is not tied to the sacraments is the teaching of the 39 Articles, particularly Article 25.

The Free Church of England accepts the 1662 Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, 'with such revisions as shall exclude sacerdotal doctrines and practices'. Liturgically its manual of worship reflects the biblical doctrine of the 39 Articles.

This Church, as a Reformed and Protestant Church, doth hereby re-affirm its constant witness against all those innovations in Doctrine and Worship, whereby the primitive Faith hath been from time to time defaced or overlaid, and which at the Reformation were disowned and rejected.

Almost word for word this follows the Declaration of the General Convention of the Church of Ireland adopted in 1870 and found in the Irish Prayer Book. Here is a specific repudiation of Roman doctrine and an affirmation of the principles of the Reformation.

The historical context of the Declaration of Principles is significant. In 1927 the Church of Rome did not present a smiling face and speak of 'separated brethren'. Rather it spoke of heretics and schismatics and the need for all to submit to the Supreme Pontiff, whose jurisdiction in England is specifically repudiated in Article 37. Rome's tactics may have changed but its aim remains constant: universal jurisdiction and universal submission.

The Declaration of Principles highlights the identity of the Free Church of England as a Reformed and Protestant Church, upholding the supremacy of Scripture, biblical doctrine and the principles of the Reformation. It is clearly Evangelical and in the Anglican tradition, holding to the 39 Articles and the Book of Common Prayer.

The Church will maintain communion with all Christian Churches cannot mean any movement towards Rome as it fails the definition of a true visible church in Article 19. Modernists who subtract from Scripture likewise fail the definition. Rome promotes ecumenism as a means of gaining universal jurisdiction step by step. Modernists, who control major denominations, are alarmed by their steep numerical decline, caused in large part by conformity to the world and departure from the supremacy of Scripture. Anything that might halt that decline is worthy of attention. Pragmatism, not the Bible, determines their actions. A clergywoman in the Diocese of Massachusetts (Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.) said: 'This is the 21st century. The Church must reflect society as it is.'

The Declaration of Principles presents the doctrine of the Free Church of England in a coherent way. This is essential for in divided Christendom doctrine is central. According to Acts 2:42, doctrine comes first and determines fellowship: 'And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers'. Doctrine is teaching, which is to be obeyed (Romans 6:17),

received (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), held firmly (2 Timothy 1:13) and adorned (Titus 2:10). It must be biblical.

The danger of false doctrine is made clear in many places in the New Testament. A few examples will suffice. 'As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:9). St Paul's strong words are necessary because the truth of the gospel is at stake. Purity of doctrine was essential, not optional. Salvation was at stake. The modern concept of pluriformity, in which contradictory theologies are regarded as acceptable, beloved of the ecumenical movement, finds no place in the Bible. The Apostle wrote in 1 Timothy 1:10 of 'any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.' He wrote that 'the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine' (2 Timothy 4:3), which appears to be especially true in the 21st century. 'Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines' (Hebrews 13:9). Our Lord, St Peter, St John and St Jude warned against false teachers. In the Old Testament the prophets warned against false religions and the danger of syncretism.

Although the statement that the Free Church of England will maintain communion with all Christian churches is clear in its doctrinal and historical context, it is worthy of amendment in the 21st century, when indifference to doctrine is widespread. **This Church will maintain communion with all Christian churches of like precious faith** would prevent any misreading of the aim by those who want to promote indiscriminate ecumenism. Of like precious faith refers to churches that believe in **Sola Scriptura** and Reformation Confessions. This means those who uphold justification by faith and not a mixture of faith and works or salvation by niceness. It would make Article 19 with its clear definition of a visible church more than a forgotten statement in a biblical confession of faith.

Long before the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, which is regarded as the start of the modern ecumenical movement, theologians such as Dr R. L. Dabney and Dr W.G.T. Shedd had foreseen that the ecumenical movement with its desire to unite churches would gain its momentum from an indifference to doctrine.

Ecumenism places expediency before doctrine. If the authority of the Bible is not supreme, something else will take its place. It may be the traditions of men, such as the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1854), Papal Infallibility (1870) and the Corporeal Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1950) promulgated by the Church of Rome without any biblical evidence. This is adding to the Word of God. It may be denial of God's Word by modernists, such as rejection of the Virgin Birth and rejection of the resurrection. This is subtracting from God's Word.

A prime example of ecumenism in action is the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). In the interest of 'unity', our 39 Articles were jettisoned as they expose Roman errors. Although there was some ambiguity in ARCIC reports, no Roman doctrines were given up or even modified. Anglicans capitulated on the sacraments, Papal Supremacy, and the nature of the church. It was a repudiation of the Reformation.

'Doctrine divides but experience unites' could be the slogan of the ecumenical movement. A common baptism rather than a credible profession of faith is all that is needed. Participation in ecumenical evangelism, such as the Billy Graham crusades, is regarded as desirable, even by modernists, as they increase the visibility of churches. For decades those crusades have been ecumenical. What answer does that give to inquirers?

The popularity of the Alpha Course in ecumenical circles is understandable. It is weak on repentance and justification, unbalanced on the work of the Holy Ghost. It lacks a firm doctrinal base.

If we take a closer look at the variety of churches participating in The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we cannot help but notice the variety of doctrines, creeds and confessions represented. How can this be? May I suggest that it is not a week of prayer for Christian Unity, but rather a week of prayer for the ecumenical movement.

The unity of which our Lord speaks in St John 17:20,21 is not man-made but God-given. It has nothing to do with organisational union or submission to the Pope but is a gift of God's grace that unites true believers and transcends secondary difference such as the nature of baptism and church government. 'The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3) is not the work of ecumenical bureaucrats or committees but is a divine gift.

As membership contracts, the ecumenical quest becomes more frantic. Status and money count. Being well regarded by other churches, whatever they believe, is seen as positive. Experience rather than doctrine is what matters in ecumenical circles.

The Free Church of England is a member of the Free Churches Group of Churches Together in England, having joined its predecessor, the Free Church Federal Council in 1954. The FCG is dominated by churches in numerical decline that are filled with modernists and ordain women. If present trends continue, Methodists in England will be extinct by 2034.

Why is the Free Church of England in the FCG? It is a matter of status and money. Doctrinal considerations have no part in it whatever. It is important to be well regarded by other churches. The opportunity to sit in a clergy stall in a cathedral at a special service, speak to a bishop of the Established Church, exchange pleasantries with Roman Catholic priests, and discuss the Alpha Course with clergywomen are splendid occasions. A man with no recognised theological training and less discernment who ministers in a little-known denomination that is geographically dispersed, with 963 communicant members (2004 statistics), often in a building on a back street, will feel that he is being appreciated by the wider world. Why should he be seen as a theological dinosaur or a relic of a bigoted past? What relevance has the Reformation to the 21st century? People with recognised theological training and advanced degrees who are his ecumenical colleagues stress the need for flexibility. If they attract larger congregations, perhaps he can, too.

Then there are financial considerations. If the ecumenical Free Church of England clergyman is retired from secular employment, the minimum FCE stipend of £4,000 can be a pension supplement scheme.

But he does not stop there. Hospital chaplaincies arranged by Churches Together in England can be lucrative for an energetic man: 10 funerals in a week mean £800. Anyone with a financial interest in remaining in the ecumenical movement should declare it.

The deep divisions in the Free Church of England over the ecumenical movement are not new. Now they are out in the open. There are those who favour a broad church, with full ecumenical involvement and the use of the doctrinally deficient **Common Worship**, regarding the Declaration of Principles as an historical document. On the other side are those who believe in the supremacy of Scripture and the Declaration of Principles as a fixed point, the charter of a monochrome evangelical church, using the Book of Common Prayer and staying outside the ecumenical movement. The two standpoints cannot be reconciled.

Compromise and complacency kill churches. Blessing is contingent upon obedience. The Free Church of England must leave the Free Churches Group and extricate itself from the ecumenical movement if it is to be faithful to the Lord and his Word.

Chapter 8

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus...

Philippians 3:7-14

Chapter 8

The Future Evangelical Connexion – Some Lessons from George Whitefield

Barry Shucksmith

In a most illuminating first chapter, Dr Fenwick deals with the Evangelical Revival of the 18th century. He introduces us to the Holy Club, a pre-1735 group which gathered for a few years at Oxford University. John and Charles Wesley had been its inspiration, although future significant leaders in the Christian Church were to pass through its ranks, notably George Whitefield. In fact, Fenwick wishes to take the Free Church of England back a century and to see the deep roots and evangelicalism of the denomination, not in James Shore's secession (1844) but in the great movement of the Holy Spirit which swept America and the United Kingdom in the early 18th century. We have no reason to challenge Dr Fenwick's assessment at this point. He summarises tersely:

'... from the very moment of its formal inception, the Free Church of England saw itself in direct continuity with (and to some extent a fruit of) the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. This fact has been surprisingly neglected by the Free Church of England itself which has tended to fix on 1844 as the year of its inception. Without an appreciation of this older strand, however, it is impossible adequately to understand the processes that led to the constituting of the Free Church of England as a distinct body, or the debates and tensions that characterized much of its existence up to the early decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, it is an important corrective to the oversimplistic view of the Free Church of England simply as an anti-Tractarian reaction'.¹

This is undoubtedly a true assessment, as Dr Shucksmith records in his AGENDA FOR RENEWAL. There is a dual character to the denomination. 'We also believe it essential, in view of modern trends, to re-emphasize that our church is not only singularly evangelical, but evidently anti-tractarian.'² Primus Frank Vaughan in his history of THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND – Otherwise Known as The Reformed Episcopal Church has, similarly, brought evangelicalism and anti-tractarianism together by further tracing the link between Reformation, Evangelical party, and the Continuing Church:

From this great revival movement of the eighteenth century sprang that body in the Church of England known as the Evangelical party and, which, at the opening of the last century, had so grown in numbers and influence as to become the predominant section of the English Church...Evangelicals, as a body, held closely to the true Protestant principles of the Reformation - wrote and preached against High Church claims to Apostolic succession and sacerdotal power, repudiated the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, and held firmly to the spiritual signification of the Lord's Supper.³

Fenwick gives us a thumbnail sketch of George Whitefield which is helpful to the main subject of our study. We will build upon this foundation and seek to trace some of the elements in Whitefield's life and character. These could serve as pointers to the future and give a new sense of direction for the more evangelical disenfranchised churches of the Free Church of England, as the denomination deviates in the direction of the modern Ecumenical Movement. Such change is not necessarily new.

PRECEDENT FOR CHANGE

In the history of the Free Church of England there has been considerable change of direction, one way and another, as faithful people have sought to exercise their consciences before God, and on matters of Christian and biblical principle. For example, on February 21 1878, a meeting of church officers was held in the Girl's Schoolroom, Station Road, Teddington, at which Bishop John Sugden tendered his resignation, as Minister of Christ Church. He had left the Free Church of England in preference for the Reformed Episcopal Church and wanted to lay this matter honestly before the lay leaders. It made no apparent difference to the position of the local church. It was proposed by Mr T McComas and seconded by Mr Taylor and unanimously adopted, 'that the thanks of this meeting be presented to Bishop Sugden for his frank explanations; and we wish further to add that the Trustees and Church Officers see no reason to take any action in the matter'⁴ Clearly, where the Spirit of God is at work, He will not always be confined to man-made structures. Indeed, this is really the lifelong story of George Whitefield.

George was born in the Bell Inn, Gloucester, on 16 December 1714. His father, Thomas Whitefield, was a wine merchant in Bristol. His mother, also of Bristol, was Elizabeth Edwards. Although there were seven children, she cared for him with singular interest when his father died in 1716. His mother did not allow him 'to draw beer' but he was much affected by the surroundings in which he found himself. It was not long before his fallen sinful nature showed itself. He confesses to lying, evil speaking, and petty thefts from his mother's pocket. He was so reckless on one occasion as to rush into a Dissenting meeting-house and make mockery of the minister, whom he describes as 'old Cole'. Thankfully, the Spirit of God was at work in his heart from these earliest days, and he read his bible and other devotional books, paid for from stolen money! Despite the increasing poverty of his mother she managed to promote and encourage his education at Oxford and in 1732 he entered Pembroke College, as a servitor.⁵

Whitefield was greatly influenced, as several of his contemporaries were, by William Law's **SERIOUS CALL TO A DIVINE LIFE**. The same writer's **PRACTICAL TREATISE UPON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION** stirred him still more deeply, although he never embraced Wesley's later concept of complete holiness. Although he much valued and greatly benefited from members of the Holy Club – Charles and John Wesley in particular became close friends – they were not directly responsible for his conversion. Charles lent him Scougal's little book, **THE LIFE OF GOD IN THE SOUL OF MAN** and George records: 'When I read that true religion is a union of the soul with God, or Christ formed within us, a ray of divine light instantaneously darted upon my soul and, from that moment, but not till then, did I know that I must be a new creature.'⁶ At first he sought to justify himself by acts of deprivation until his health failed. Only then, while under medical supervision for several weeks, could he eventually record:

*'Having undergone innumerable buffetings of Satan, and many months' inexpressible trials by night and day under the spirit of bondage, God was pleased at length to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold on His dear Son by a living faith, and by giving to me the Spirit of adoption, to seal me, as I humbly hope, even to the everlasting day of redemption. But oh! with what joy, joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of and big with glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off; and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith broke in upon my disconsolate soul!'*⁷

The need to be soundly converted never left George Whitefield. We find it there in all his work as an ordained minister and evangelist, a beneficent builder and supporter of orphanages and other social ventures, to say nothing of his records, writings, and magnificent sermons. It ought to be there as central to the life and work of the Free Church of England, too, and all who claim an interest in reformed episcopalianism. The evangelical experience based upon the evangelical gospel is central to all a true Christian claims. Without this, the name 'evangelical' is mere window-dressing. Would it not be better to discard the title altogether, than tarnish it in this manner?

We see the same emphasis upon conversion following his first sermon. Although under the required canonical age, he was ordained by the Bishop of Gloucester, 1736. His first sermon was preached on 27 June 1736, in St Mary de Crypt, Gloucester, to a large congregation. A complaint was made to Bishop Benson that it had driven fifteen persons mad; the Bishop replied that he hoped the madness might not be forgotten before another Sunday! Reading between the lines, it seems they had undergone the same radical experience of new birth as the preacher.

When opposition to his evangelistic ministry grew and churches closed their doors to Whitefield, he pioneered open-air preaching. As an itinerant preacher he was tireless. In his nearly thirty-four years of ministry he spoke more than fifteen thousand times to literally millions of people. C. Mitchell, in WHO'S WHO IN CHURCH HISTORY, brings forward staggering, almost humanly impossible, facts:

*'In addition to Wales, Ireland, and his own England, he made fourteen visits to Scotland and seven trips across the Atlantic to the American colonies (1738, 1739-1741, 1744-1748, 1751-1752, 1754-1755, 1763-1765, 1769-1770) where he died in Newburyport, Massachusetts, in 1770.'*⁸

Roger Steer further endorses this assessment by making Whitefield, in some ways, more important to America than the United Kingdom. He quotes Mark Noll, not an Anglican, but a sympathetic evangelical who argues, 'it was an English Anglican Evangelical who was the defining figure in the history of American Evangelicalism.'⁹ If this is so, then even the Cummins connection can be traced back beyond the PECUSA/Scottish Episcopalian Church, to the influence of our own Free Church of England founding father, the incomparable George Whitefield.

DR FENWICK'S CRYSTAL BALL

In a final chapter, Dr Fenwick works through a number of possible scenarios for a remodelled Free Church of England, presently on the point of extinction. Most of these are unacceptable to us. They involve a change of the Free Church of England's historical, doctrinal, settlement. He takes us through scenes of possible further shrinkage, degeneration into episcopus vagans status, modest growth by modern means, a non-provincial diocese attached to the Church of England, the nucleus of a Third Province, even the possibility of a United Church of England. The one most attractive to conservative evangelicals, wishing to be true to the reformation and evangelical roots of our heritage, while at the same time embracing evangelical ecumenism separate from the modern Ecumenical Movement, is described in Fenwick's, 'Unravelling of the Strands'. We quote in full:

*'It would, nevertheless, be possible to envisage the current Free Church of England splitting along Anglican/Non-Anglican lines as it did in 1877 and nearly did again the following year. The Non-Anglican section would be free to pursue its own vision of the Church. The 'Anglican' section would be able to explore unimpeded the breadth of its heritage and perhaps engage ecumenically. Whether either section would have the resources or energy to pursue these paths is an open question.'*¹⁰

Christian charity requires such a separation to be orderly, gracious, and fairly endowed. It also requires the recognition that individuals and churches need to be respected and free from long-term ecclesiastical warfare, while allowing freedom of conscience in beliefs held and practices endorsed. Neither church (nor fellowship/connexion) would be helped by continual sniping. Mutual respect, courtesy, and freedom, are the very essence of New Testament teaching without, of course, compromise of the gospel itself. At its most basic ethical level, all local churches should retain their own buildings and all monies raised by local, sacrificial giving. There is also a substantial argument for equal division of the total assets, depending on the final number of churches involved. This would go some way to answering Dr Fenwick's own self-imposed question, 'whether either section would have the resources or energy to pursue these paths?'¹¹

Many of us believe the way of the modern Ecumenical Movement is the inevitable route to Rome. But we could surely bring ourselves to say, 'God bless you if this is the route you choose'? It is not and could never be our way. We have drunk too deeply at the wells of the reforming and evangelical fathers. We believe our nation has never been in greater crisis. Our hearts accord with another evangelical leader, speaking on the eve of the 1982 Papal visit to England ... 'this is the nature of the spiritual crisis we face. It constitutes the most serious challenge to evangelical Protestantism in this country since the Reformation. We could be near the end of four hundred years of Protestantism.'¹² Surely, the real answer is in a revived and conservative Evangelicalism? This we seek, and George Whitefield is our model!

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AS EVANGELICAL EPISCOPALIAN

In the HISTORY OF ANGLICANISM, edited by Stephen Sykes and John Booty, the writers trace the episcopalian roots of our evangelical fathers. Whitefield is incontrovertibly placed within a definite Anglican context, although having more than often to work outside the established churches:

*'The spiritual deficiencies of the Hanoverian Church left a vacuum that was largely filled by the Evangelical Revival. An international phenomenon, embracing German Pietism and the American 'Great Awakening', in England it had three strands: Arminian Methodists following John Wesley, Calvinistic Methodists following George Whitefield, and those who remained within the Church of England. Anglican Evangelicalism was, therefore, no 'off-shoot' as has often been asserted. With its own origins, doctrinal emphases and methods it was a parallel movement. Its leaders looked neither to Wesley nor Whitefield, and were often critical of them.'*¹³

We have already noted Whitefield received ordination at episcopal hands. Although he had to face considerable criticism, even downright opposition at times, from Anglican bishops, he does not appear to have denied episcopacy, or to have copied his close friend John Wesley in introducing a moderated episcopacy, for the American churches. Wesley was an organiser. Whitefield did not have to face such challenges. But those things common to episcopalians he readily accepted and used for the work of evangelism.

There is no doubt, Whitefield was wide in his sympathies and had no difficulty extending the hand of fellowship to evangelicals of another persuasion, presbyterians, congregationalists, and baptists too, though fewer in number. Yet, he never rejected his belief in episcopacy as a rightful form of church government or as a way to proceed in matters of the gospel. We have no reason for believing he cringed at his own ordination, when the Service began, 'Reverend Father in God, I present unto you these persons present, to be admitted to the Order of the Priesthood'. He understood, as most would do at this period in history, the mind of the reformers – 'father as leading pastor of the church family' and 'priest as a contracted form of the word Presbyter'. The sacerdotal term 'hieus' is never used in the New Testament for the Christian minister.

For good reason, the Reformed Episcopal Church once and for all removed the possible misunderstanding of these titles but, in doing so, would not wish to unchurch all true evangelical episcopalians, and certainly not one so biblical as George Whitefield. There is nothing incongruous between being evangelical and episcopalian, when the mischievous doctrine of apostolic succession has been put to one side. We do not recognise now the princely and diocesan form of episcopacy. We do not believe that the Church of Christ exists only in one order or form of ecclesiastical polity. Yet, we have every good reason for retaining the principle "this Church recognises and adheres to Episcopacy, not as of Divine Right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of church polity".¹⁴ George Whitefield is a model for us.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AS NONCONFORMIST

George Whitefield was a Free Church of England man long before the word was used by James Shore in 1844. He was both conformist and nonconformist at the same time. He fits the mould of conformity to the anglican teachings of prayer book and articles. These could be well described as his staple diet. His life is shaped by them. His sermons are constructed around them. His motivation and method is rooted in them. He conforms to the laws of the Church wherever he can. He does not intentionally go out of his way to irritate or upset the authorities of the day. Sometimes inevitably because the Church is asleep, apathetic, or unconcerned for the lost, he allows the urgency of the gospel to drive a wedge through canonical procedure. But, then, canons are not intended to be absolute, like Scripture.

Two Welshmen highlight the conformist and nonconformist in the one man, George Whitefield. Derec Morgan recalls the rupture which occurred in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland (1733-1740). Ebenezer Erskine, along with a small number of other ministers, left the mother church and set up their split church. They invited Whitefield to Scotland in the hope he would promote their cause but Morgan records:

*'Whitefield had no wish to interfere with the old Scottish Established Church, just as he would not choose to do anything to weaken the Established Church in his own country.'*¹⁵

But this has to be contrasted with Whitefield's equal nonconformity. Martyn Lloyd-Jones takes it further than Derec Morgan. He sees him as the instigator of much nonconformity, still visible in our own society:

*'This great Revival came, and the whole face of England was entirely changed. The Church of England, in many respects, was revived; Nonconformity was revived; a new body came into being called Methodist Societies, and the repercussions in a wider area were really quite amazing and astonishing. The case has often been made out, and it can be proved, it seems to me, that the Trade Union Movement in this country rose indirectly out of that Revival. It was because men, who had formerly been ignorant and had been living a drunken and besotted life, were changed and born again, that they began to realize their dignity as men and to demand education and better working conditions, and so on - that is where the Trade Union Movement came from...those were some of the profound changes produced by the Evangelical Awakening. Very well; in all that, George Whitefield was the leader, he was the first. This is where the neglect of this man and the corresponding over-prominence of John Wesley is scandalous...'*¹⁶

What could be more nonconformist than Trade Unionism, certainly in its early history? And yet, the 'father of the Free Church of England' has even this attributed to him, by one of the leading nonconformist authorities in recent times. Again, George Whitefield can be a model.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD WAS BOTH LITURGICAL AND FREE IN WORSHIP

The Free Church of England in her reformed Prayer Book and Declaration of Principles sees no difficulty in holding together both liturgical worship and free. It has done so for many years and, again, is only copying the example of the fathers of the Evangelical Revival. It also envisages the need, with the passage of time or changing circumstance, to allow revision where necessary. It would not be inconceivable for the newly constituted Church or Association of Churches to authorise a modern liturgy, such as AN ENGLISH PRAYERBOOK.¹⁷ This is unquestionably the spirit and intention of the present authorised liturgy:

*'This Church, retaining a Liturgy which shall not be repressive of freedom in prayer, accepts the Book of Common Prayer, as it was revised, prepared, and recommended for use by the General convention of the Protestant Episcopal church, A.D. 1785, reserving full liberty to alter, abridge, enlarge, and amend the same, as may seem most conducive to the edification of the people, 'provided that the substance of the faith be kept entire.'*¹⁸

We know Whitefield was not only happy to use the Book of Common Prayer, but found strength and inspiration from it. Arnold Dallimore, in his fine two-volume life of Whitefield, records his use both of formal liturgy and extemporary prayer. Following his ordination he began:

*'...immediately to perform his ministerial duties. That afternoon he ministered to the prisoners and in the evening read prayers at a church service. On the Monday he 'christened an infant', on subsequent days read prayers two or three times and on Thursday performed a marriage'...*¹⁹

And, yet, his preparation for ordination had included much extemporary prayer and seeking of the Lord with open Bible – 20 June 1736:

*'As a further preparation Whitefield spent the whole of Saturday in prayer and fasting and 'in the evening retired to 'a hill near the town and prayed fervently for about two hours'. On the Sunday he 'arose early and prayed over St Paul's Epistle to Timothy, especially that precept, 'Let no man despise thy youth'...'*²⁰

We see no reason for copying the general nonconformist practice of using only extemporary prayer. Both written and free prayer were used by our Lord and the Apostles, who continued to attend the Temple until the destruction of Jerusalem. Another outstanding evangelical leader at Cambridge in the late eighteenth century, Charles Simeon, counselled against interfering with the Prayer Book altogether. He feared the result would be worse than the remedy. Sadly, we have long since gone beyond his counsel. Clearly, some modern liturgy for the twenty-first century is needed. So is much extemporary prayer for private, as for public use. George Whitefield, precursor for the Free Church of England is again our example.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AS CONNEXIONALIST

Methodism arose in several Calvinistic forms. John Wesley's preaching gave rise to a formation of local groups which met for prayer and fellowship. Wesley professed to be a loyal son of the Church of England, as did George Whitefield, but it was not always possible for new converts to have the support of the local Incumbent. It was worst still in the denomination as a whole. Wesley resisted calls for separation and sought to keep a tight hand on his religious organisation but after his death (1791) there was lay pressure for greater autonomy. This led to the formation of the Methodist New Connexion in 1797.

Long before this, George Whitefield's preaching had given rise to societies which adhered to reformed teaching. Under his direction, the Moorfield's Tabernacle (1741) and the Tottenham Court Chapel (1756) were erected. Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, had been converted as early as 1739 and found her life's work in supporting evangelical clergy, otherwise in difficulty with the established Church. This was no mere ephemeral work but a substantial movement of the Holy Spirit giving rise to a new Connexion. Bebbington shows the breadth of the work:

*Selina ... 'appointed gospel clergymen as her chaplains, directing them as firmly as Wesley treated his assistants, and erected chapels for their eloquence in fashionable resorts such as Brighton (1760), Bath (1765) and Tunbridge Wells (1765). In 1768 she created at Trevecca, under the superintendence of Howell Harris, a college to train candidates for the ministry, and in 1777 a chapel at Spa Fields, London, which soon attracted a wealthy congregation. By her death in 1791 there were between 55 and 80 congregations supplied with preachers trained at Trevecca. She had already, in 1782, reluctantly seceded from the Church of England, but she failed to make adequate provision for the government of the new denomination. Only seven chapels were transferred to the continuing Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Whitefield's Connexion disintegrated even more catastrophically. He had been moderator of a Calvinistic Methodist association in 1743, the year before Wesley held the first meeting of his equivalent conference.'*²¹

Faith Cook in her well-written, refreshing, volume, SELINA, COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON – Her pivotal Role in the 18th Century Evangelical Awakening,²² not only gives us more interesting information on the Connexion but appends the fifteen Articles of Religion. These reflect much of the 39 Articles of the Church of England. Of course, there is no reference to an Established Church. The wording is different in many places. Yet, the doctrinal content bears much similarity. Article 7 in particular is an outstanding statement on the Mediatorship of our Lord and would rejoice any truly born-again child of God and faithful church member.

Our interest in the Connexion is not only historical. It shows a way forward for churches cut adrift from their denomination who understand the argument against individualism and isolation, characteristic of modern times. We are again indebted, not only to Selina, but her much-loved and revered chaplain, George Whitefield.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AS A GOSPEL MAN

There can be little question about where to find the heart of George Whitefield. Episcopalian, Nonconformist, Liturgist and Connexionalist may well describe him thus far. But he saw his chief work in proclaiming the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He could say, with the apostle Paul, 'so, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you...for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth...for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith' (Romans 1:15-17).

Unlike many of his contemporaries, and ours, he was clear what the gospel is. For preparation of his ordination, he had made a further study of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. He knew they form the sum and substance of the gospel revealed in Holy Scripture. W J Conybeare, as noted by the Church of England Record Society, identifies the watchwords of the Evangelical Camp as first, 'the universal necessity of conversion,' and secondly, 'justification by faith.' To this a third is added, 'the sole authority of Scripture as the rule of faith.'²³

The contemporary Anglican scholar, Stephen Sykes, is more specific about the Evangelical Revival. He shows its chief doctrinal characteristics as embodied in men, like George Whitefield:

*'The evangelical Revival recovered the Protestant emphases on conversion, the supremacy of scripture, and gospel preaching in reaction to the prevailing rationalism. Anglicans, in common with other Evangelicals, sought to reassert the doctrine of justification by faith and to revive the Augustinian strain in theology. While they appealed to experience rather than to intellect, Anglican Evangelicals nevertheless possessed a simple and practical theology usually called 'moderate Calvinism'. Its foundation was the doctrine of total depravity, from which followed the necessity of conversion, justification by saving faith, the centrality of the atonement and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Most refused to make predestination a central tenet or to teach predestined reprobation. Grace was for all. For the source of their doctrine they looked to Scripture and the Anglican formularies rather than the less accommodating logic of Calvin's Institutes.'*²⁴

We do not entirely agree with Bishop Sykes. In another context, arguments could be brought forward for the influence of Calvin on the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. We accept the general premise – this was moderate Calvinism. But Whitefield and his contemporaries in the main preached a pure gospel and called needy sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, 'for holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved' (Article 18). This was Whitefield's message. It is hardly the 'gospel' of ecumenical churches today, although, we pray, it will be true for some. A Church, claiming direct descent from the Evangelical Revival, must not lose this central feature.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AS AN EVANGELIST

It is one thing to hold a creedal statement and to do so with sincerity and conviction. It is another to act upon it. In a well-argued address, *WHAT IS AN EVANGELICAL*, covering fifty-six pages in print, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones comes to a final point:

*'My last point is that the evangelical is a man who is always concerned about evangelism. There are people who are orthodox, but who are not concerned about evangelism. To that extent they are not evangelical. The evangelical is a man who, because of what God has done for him, is anxious that others should have the same. Not only that, he sees something of the glory and the majesty and the sovereignty of God; he believes in hell, eternal punishment; and he is concerned about those men dying in spiritual darkness round and about him. They become a burden to him, and he is not satisfied until he has done his utmost to bring them to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.'*²⁵

George Whitefield was a man of similar conviction and burden. In the last sermon which Whitefield preached in London, on Wednesday, 30 August 1769, before his final departure to America, he closed:

'... as Christ has given us eternal life, O my brethren, some of you, I doubt not, will be gone to him before I return; but, my dear brethren, my dear hearers, never mind that; we shall part but it will be to meet again for ever. I dare not meet you now, I cannot bear your coming to me, to part from me; it cuts me to the heart, and quite overcomes me, but by and by all parting will be over, and all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes.

*'God grant that none that weep now at my parting, may weep at our meeting at the day of judgment; and if you never were among Christ's sheep before, may Christ Jesus bring you now. O come, come, see what it is to have eternal life; do not refuse it; haste, sinner, haste away: may the great Good Shepherd draw your souls. Oh! if you never heard his voice before, God grant you may hear it now; that I may have this comfort when I am gone, that I had the last time of my leaving you, that some souls are awakened at the parting sermon. O that it may be a farewell sermon to you; that it may be a means of your taking farewell of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. O come! come! come! to the Lord Jesus Christ; to him I leave you...'*²⁶

With preaching like this, let no-one say a Calvinist is cold and hard. What feeling, what energy, what deep concern for the conversion of fellow sinners. Evangelicals are evangelists, gospel people. To be evangelical is to be evangelistic. This is not the preserve of the Arminian or the modern charismatic. The true Calvinist loves His Lord above all else but he loves his fellow man too. He knows also that some must be saved by his witness, or preaching. 'Other sheep Christ has, which are not of this fold: them also He must bring, and they shall hear his voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd (John 10:16).

What is the Church for? To glorify God? Yes! But also to glorify Him, in bringing others to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD A TRUE ECUMENIST

As we come briefly to consider the unity of the Church, we are immediately faced with different viewpoints.

The Roman Catholic concept of church unity is perceived to be an hierarchically-organised ecclesia. The unity of this Church manifests itself in an imposing world-wide organisation. It seeks the embracing of all churches under its own umbrella. It considers all 'other christians' as separated brethren needing to be brought back to the one true Roman fold. On analysis, its true centre is not found in the believers but in the hierarchy with its concentric circles. Or, it can be thought of as a pyramid capped by the Pope, the visible head of the whole organisation. But once you remove the layers of priests, bishops and cardinals, the whole structure collapses. Regardless of the extraordinary claims of Rome, this cannot possibly be the Church of Jesus Christ, revealed in Holy Scripture.

The Protestant concept is very different. We assert that the unity of the Church is primarily not visible but internal and spiritual. There is only One Head, who controls the Church, by the Holy Spirit. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. This unity implies that all those who belong to the church share in the same faith. They are cemented together by the common bond of love. But this inner unity seeks outward expression in Christian conduct, worship, and sacramental participation. By sacraments, we mean two, ordained and instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ – baptism and the Lord's Supper. The figure of the Church in 1 Corinthians 12:13-31 implies unity already exists but needs encouraging and protecting. More importantly, Ephesians 4:4-16 teaches a visible unity for the apostle deals with the appointment of office bearers in the Church, essential for the building up and strengthening of true Christian unity.

When the Reformers broke with Rome, they did not find the bond of unity in the visible structures of the Church. They developed the important concept of 'visible and invisible' and located unity in the substantial preaching of the word of God, the right administration of gospel sacraments, and the exercise of godly discipline. Professor Louis Berkhof answers the critics who press for unification of all Christendom in external structures:

*'The question may well arise whether the one invisible Church ought not to find expression in a single organization. It can hardly be said that the word of God explicitly requires this, and history has shown this to be infeasible and also of questionable worth. The only attempt that was made so far to unite the whole Church in one great external organization, did not prove productive of good results, but led to externalism, ritualism, and legalism.'*²⁷

Such an able historian as J R H Moorman castigates Whitefield for the promotion of disunity. He feels Whitefield has little to commend apart from his oratorical skill:

*'... apart from his great preaching powers Whitefield had little to recommend him. He suffered from an inferiority complex, and was touchy and difficult. Impulsive, censorious, and dogmatic, he found it almost impossible to live at peace with his fellow-men. At first Wesley and Whitefield worked closely together, but it was almost inevitable that they should differ before long, and in 1739 the beginnings of conflict appeared. The issue was a theological one, for Whitefield was a Calvinist believing passionately in predestination, while Wesley was what was then called an Arminian believing in free salvation for all. Each was profoundly convinced that he was right and that he owed his assurance to the direct inspiration of God. There was therefore no possibility of their reaching any kind of doctrinal agreement, and neither was of the type which can agree to differ.'*²⁸

This incident serves as an illustration of how the finest of historians can get it wrong. This is particularly so where one understands little of evangelical doctrine and character, or carries any sympathy for it.

Whitefield loved all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. He had actually gone out of his way to avoid disunity with John Wesley on issues of fundamental doctrine. After all, Wesley, at his ordination had given assent to Article 17! Bishop J C Ryle provides a corrective...

*'...to (this) catholicity of spirit he adhered all his days. If other Christians misrepresented him, he forgave them; and if they refused to work with him, he still loved them. Nothing could be a more weighty testimony against narrow-mindedness than his request, made shortly before his death, that, when he did die, John Wesley should be asked to preach his funeral sermon. Wesley and he had long since ceased to agree about Calvinistic points but Whitefield, to the very last, was determined to forget minor differences, and to regard Wesley as Calvin did Luther, "only as a good servant of Jesus Christ."' "*²⁹

We have no doubt in saying Whitefield is a true ecumenist, drawing his inspiration from the teaching of the New Testament. He would not have thought of Church Unity in terms of outward structures and ecclesiastical organisation. He spent too much time preaching in the open-air, in barn and house, and even open fields, to hold such views. His fellowship broke the bounds of all denominational affiliation. He gave the right hand of fellowship to all who cared about the true Head of the Church. However, his comment 'if the Pope himself would lend me his pulpit, I would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Christ in it' should not be separated from the context in which the words were spoken. He was reacting to the Erskinites who wanted him to preach only for their own denomination. He responded, 'if all others were the devil's people, they certainly had more need to be preached to'.³⁰ Dr Fenwick surely understands and so must Dr Packer whom he quotes, that there is all the difference in the world, between going to Rome to preach the gospel, and recognising it as a true Christian Church?³¹

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AS A CHRIST-CENTRED MAN

On the occasion of the death of George Whitefield, one of his converts, R Elliot, gives a concise yet full summary of the gospel doctrine taught by Mr Whitefield. This invaluable material can be found recorded in the 1959 edition of SELECT SERMONS OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD. Elliot says Whitefield taught the scripture doctrines of original sin, the need for regeneration, justification by faith in Christ alone, the final perseverance of the saints, and God's eternal unconditional election. But Whitefield was above all else a Christ-centred man. Justification, which the apostle Paul sees as central to the gospel and, indeed, a summary of the true gospel, the rejection of which brings God's curse (Galatians, chapter one), was never merely for Whitefield a theological theory:

'He held faith not as our justifying righteousness, but only as the instrument of our justification, which some that profess to teach the same doctrine absolutely deny: we are justified, said Mr Whitefield, three ways, viz.: (1) Meritoriously by the blood of Christ; (2) Instrumentally by the faith of Christ; and (3) Declaratively by our good works. And when speaking of being justified by faith, he would always direct the sinner to Christ's blood and righteousness as the only proper procuring cause of his justification. He did not, as some others, put man's free will in the room of God's free grace, and our act of believing in the place and stead of Christ's obedience. 'For the sake,' saith he, 'of Christ's righteousness alone, and not for any thing wrought in us, doth God look favourably upon us; we must look for a righteousness with us, even the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whosoever teacheth any other doctrine doth not preach the truth as it is in Jesus.'"³²

We are asked to consider reasons for the decline of the Free Church of England. Both John and Richard Fenwick wish to attribute these in the main, to ecclesiological, sociological, and even psychological traits, such as a negative attitude towards Tractarianism.³³ Is it not also possible, the decline which is entirely overruled by the sovereign hand of an almighty God, might be found in failure to make Jesus Christ totally central to all belief and practice? Does not God honour those who honour Him and those who despise Him shall they not be lightly esteemed (1 Samuel 2:30)? Are these words not spoken in the context of the 'glory of God departing from Israel' (1 Samuel 4:19-22)?

What part have the false teachings of Freemasonry and British Israelism played, in undermining the vital spiritual life of a declining denomination? While the latter can claim a more Christian adherence, both centre little upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Freemasonry claims a Christian connection but it puts Jesus Christ on the same level as Buddha, Vishnu, Osiris, and Adonis. While Colossians 1:18 is hardly a text to be found adorning a Masonic Hall... 'Christ in all things must have the pre-eminence',³⁴ British Israelism claims to make much of the new covenant of Jesus Christ, not as a gospel for all sinners, but to prove the British people in a special relationship with God.³⁵ Where is the spirit of George Whitefield, father of the denomination? Is the Lord Jesus Christ central to our Convocations and Synods? He must be in the continuing Church, if there is to be any future blessing from the One True God.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AND THE GLORY OF GOD

Few stories are as moving as the record of Wesley's death³⁶ but it is J W Bready's comment on Whitefield's earlier words which are interesting. 'Do you think we shall see John Wesley in Heaven?' inquired an over-aggressive Calvinist of Whitefield. 'I fear not,' replied the fellow evangelist, musing. 'No! – he will be so near the throne, and we at such a distance, that we shall hardly get a sight of him.'³⁷

Such words are not the mark of false modesty but clear indication of the humility of George Whitefield. He was a man obsessed with the glory of God. He had no difficulty coming to terms with the first question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, 'the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever'. His whole spirit and life seemed absorbed in Christ. It is demonstrated in his wish to have no epitaph upon his grave stone – only the initials, G.W. Contrary to his personal wishes, many of his admirers have ignored this and raised memorials to the great man, whose chief desire was to leave living stones for the glory of his Lord and Saviour.

☞ Calvinism breeds humility; at least it should. The Calvinist understands all is subjected to Divine sovereignty. Even the disintegration of a denomination and the opening chapter of a new movement are absolutely dependent upon the One True Living God. Nations rise and fall at the finger of God. How wise is the believer who has come to Nebuchadnezzar's experience, '... seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will... I lifted up mine eyes to heaven and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praise and honour Him for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation' (Daniel 4:32-34).

James Shore must have known this as he waited in jail for justice. Whitefield knew it as he sailed the stormy and dangerous ocean seas. Previous generations of reformed Episcopalians, both sides of the Atlantic, proved it often. So did George Cummins when he decided to 'take his ministry to another branch of Christ's Church'. Indeed, what is Christianity without the sovereignty and glory of God?

☞ Christians should not be ashamed of holding the God-glorifying doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture. They should not be embarrassed if desire for gospel purity brings misunderstanding, or holy separation is caricatured as outmoded, outdated, even outrageous. What should shame the redeemed people of God is to follow the paths of compromise, of self-glorification, or ecclesiastical preferment, as though such things exist in the true Church of Jesus Christ. Let George Whitefield be our model for the future, however many times we fail to live up to his high standards. Let us never be ashamed of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

'Oh, let us live the life of the righteous, that our future state may be like His. Nothing but a living faith in Jesus Christ can support us in the dying hour. What would the self-righteous Pharisees of this generation give for this pearl of inestimable price when God takes away their souls? Oh, my dear friend, it is worth being laughed at. It is worth ten thousand worlds. You will not think then of renouncing one world for it. You have put your hand to the plough: I know you will scorn to look back. Your carnal relatives will do their utmost to make you

ashamed of the cross of Christ; but be not ashamed of it, it is the power of God unto salvation. Neither be ashamed of His disciples, though men of low degree, and accounted fools for His sake. No, rather, choose to suffer affliction with His people; for, if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him'.³⁸

¹ John Fenwick THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND page 10 2004 T and T Clark London

² Barry Shucksmith AGENDA FOR RENEWAL 2002-2012 page 2, prepared for and presented to Convocation 2002 and 2003 but rejected and recommended for committee-level discussion.

³ Frank Vaughan A HISTORY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND Otherwise Called the Reformed Episcopal Church pages 15-16 1936 Published by Authority of Convocation.

⁴ Church Meeting Records 21 February 1878 Christ Church Teddington

Notes: In fact, there was also an Annual Meeting of seat holders where Bishop Sugden gave a fuller account of himself and the reason for this change of heart in denominational affiliation:

"Some of the older members of this church however know well that this church was founded as an episcopal Church and Church of England except that instead of its recently developed Sacerdotalism it re-affirmed the principles of the Reformation, protested against Ritualism and Rationalism and was to be free from state control, an episcopal Liturgical Church in friendly association with Nonconformists. It was for the first six years of its history unallied with the Free Church of England...I should never have left the Council of the Free Church of England if there had been a possibility of carrying out fully and honourably the objects for which the Church was founded...I repeat that it is the necessary condition of my holding the office of your minister that I shall be at full liberty to serve as my conscience may dictate the best interests of the two federated institutions..."

Mr T L Wilson, who provided the ground and much of the money to build Christ Church, Teddington, records further words of Bishop Sugden and the congregational response ... "if this was properly explained to the congregation they would in future care little or nothing whether their Bishop or minister belonged to one or other (FCE or REC) as long as he was a faithful minister of Christ." The congregation responded accordingly, as minuted, 1 April 1879, "The congregation assembling in Christ Church hereby affectionately request Bishop Sugden to withdraw his resignation as Pastor of that Church he has so efficiently served for the last 14 years. And they pray that his future labours amongst us may be abundantly blessed by God." It is further edifying as well as interesting to note the place of individual freedom, conscience and biblical fidelity allowed, in the final reply of Sugden, who changed denominations without it affecting the local church at all. All this was agreed as long as Sugden "be allowed free liberty to act as his conscience might dictate for the benefit of the two institutions...and in all official duties". What a contrast to the situation facing so many today where episcopal obedience seems to ride above conscience and scripture. Here, in the history of Christ Church, Teddington, we have a bishop who puts both first. It does not even affect his relationship with the local church, let alone the denominations concerned.

⁵ A servitor is a person who acts (or once acted) as a servant or attendant to another student and is thus enabled to raise some of his own support to cover the costs of education and board while at University.

⁶ George Whitefield JOURNALS pages 46-47 1960 Banner of Truth Trust London

⁷ J P Gledstone SHORT BIOGRAPHIES FOR THE PEOPLE – George Whitefield page 4 1886 Religious Tract Society London

⁸ C. Mitchell WHO'S WHO IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY – George Whitefield pages 716-717 1992 Tyndale House Publishers Wheaton Illinois

⁹ Roger Steer CHURCH ON FIRE – the story of Anglican Evangelicals page 371 1998 Hodder and Stoughton London

¹⁰ John Fenwick THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND pages 295-303 2004 T and T Clark London

¹¹ Ibid., page 297

¹² David Samuel (Ed) A TIME TO CHOOSE page 17 1981 The Harrison Trust East Ravendale Lincolnshire England

¹³ Stephen Sykes and John Booty (Eds.) THE HISTORY OF ANGLICANISM – From the Early Eighteenth Century to the Present pages 32 1988 SPCK London

¹⁴ The Free Church of England CONSTITUTION AND CANONS Article 1 page 13 (1983 Edition) Published by Authority of Convocation

¹⁵ Derec Llwyd Morgan THE GREAT AWAKENING IN WALES page 15 1988 Epworth Press London

Notes: Morgan's work is a translation from the Welsh by Dyfnallt Morgan. At the time of writing the author was Reader in Welsh Language and literature and Director of Research Centre Wales at the University College of North Wales, Bangor. It claims to be a refreshingly new look at the Revival and its effects. It is a complete study of the beginnings, the psychology, the theology, the spiritual and social aspirations, and the literary imagination of the eighteenth-century Methodist Revival in Wales. Many aspects of the Methodist Revival in Wales had been dealt with before 1981, of course. But no one had treated of them in their relation to each other to offer a manifold definition of its complex and rich contribution to the making of Modern Welsh civilization. So claims the author in his introduction.

¹⁶ Martyn Lloyd-Jones THE PURITANS: Their Origins and Successors page 108-109 1987 Banner of Truth Trust Edinburgh. In the present writer's opinion, the above book is one of the best of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones printed works and one of the most useful. It contains an historical and theological survey of Revival, John Owen on what constitutes Schism, a comparison of the Calvinism of John Calvin and George Whitefield, important lessons from history, John Knox as the founder of Puritanism and William Williams, Howell Harris and the Welsh revival. There are even papers delivered on the French Revolution, Jonathan Edwards and John Bunyan and Church Union. These addresses, delivered at the Puritan and Westminster Conferences 1959-1978 not only show the 'Doctor' at his best but true evangelicalism in its broadest of sympathies and what can only be described as true evangelical ecumenism. This is pure gold in print.

¹⁷ Roger Beckwith AN ENGLISH PRAYER BOOK 1994 Church Society Published by Oxford University Press Oxford. Notes: It was published as a response to the ASB, now withdrawn from public worship in the Church of England. 'An English Prayer Book aims to show, in practical terms, what such a change of policy might mean, though using the modern language of the ASB, and including many detailed features of the ASB, where these have proved valuable, it aims throughout to give clear expression to the doctrine of the Prayer Book (1662) and to show proper respect to its liturgical usages. It restores the doctrinal items which are conspicuously absent from the ASB (the Catechism, the 39 articles and the Athanasian Creed), it conforms to the calendar of the Prayer Book and to its incomparable set of collects, and in many other respects it attempts to bring the ASB closer to the Prayer Book, where there had been no adequate reason for moving away' (from the Preface).

¹⁸ THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER (not dated) For Use In The Free Church of England page 5 Declaration of Principles Marshall Morgan and Scott Edinburgh

¹⁹ Arnold Dallimore GEORGE WHITEFIELD pages 95-96 1970 Banner of Truth Trust Edinburgh

²⁰ Ibid., page 95

²¹ D W Bebbington EVANGELICALISM IN MODERN BRITAIN pages 29-30 1989 Routledge London

²² Faith Cook SELINA COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON pages 442-453 2001 Banner of Truth Trust Edinburgh

²³ Stephen Taylor (Ed.) FROM CRANMER TO DAVIDSON: A MISCELLANY pages 262-263 1999 Church of England Record Society, volume 7 Boydell Press Suffolk. Notes: Dr Stephen Taylor, who edits the volume, is a Lecturer in History at the University of Reading. This first miscellany volume published by the Church of England Record society contains eight edited texts covering aspects of the history of the Church from the Reformation to the early twentieth century. The longest contribution is a scholarly edition of W J Conybeare's famous and influential article on nineteenth-century 'Church Parties'; other documents included are the protests against Archbishop Cranmer's metropolitan powers of visitation, the petitions to the Long Parliament in support of the Prayer Book; M. and Randall Davidson's memoir on the role of the archbishop of Canterbury in the early twentieth century.

²⁴ Stephen Sykes and John Booty (Ed.) THE STUDY OF ANGLICANISM page 32 1988 SPCK London

²⁵ D Martyn Lloyd-Jones KNOWING THE TIMES – What is an Evangelical? Page 335 1989 Banner of Truth Trust Edinburgh

²⁶ J C Ryle and R Elliot SELECT SERMONS OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD – A Farewell Sermon page 119 1959 Banner of Truth Trust London

²⁷ L Berkhof SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY page 573 1981 Banner of Truth Trust Edinburgh

²⁸ J R H Moorman A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND pages 304-305 1958 A and C Black London

²⁹ J C Ryle CHRISTIAN LEADERS OF THE 18th CENTURY page 59-60 1990 Banner of Truth Trust Edinburgh

³⁰ Ibid., page 59

³¹ John Fenwick THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND page 277 2004 T and T Clark London

³² J C Ryle and R Elliot SELECT SERMONS OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD page 37 1959 Banner of Truth Trust London

³³ John Fenwick THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND – Reasons for failure pages 276-287 2004 T and T Clark London. Notes: In contrasting the so-called narrow views of calvinists, Fenwick quotes another who, in recent times appears to have taken a more modern view towards ecumenical issues – Dr James Packer. Packer had been a contributor to GROWING INTO UNION which ultimately brought about a split, on fundamental evangelical issues, between Dr Packer and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones. The proposed growing into union was written by two anglo-catholics and two evangelicals. Fenwick quotes Packer in ANGLICANISM FOR TOMORROW... Anglo-Catholicism, which incurred such hostility for its Romanising style...has its heart love for Christ as Saviour and Lord, and a high view of the Bible, which sets it with Evangelicalism against relativism, pluralism and agnosticism regarding the fundamentals of faith. We are infinitely closer to Anglo-Catholics than we are to liberals, radicals, people who want to reconstruct and restate the faith in the way that so many do today...All who are concerned to (maintain biblical orthodoxy) must be regarded as friends. Fenwick thinks, 'if the Free Church of England were able to follow Packer's lead then much of the anxiety and fear that characterize some of its members would ease away'. He seems not to face up to the reality. Anglo-Catholicism, like Romanism, is dependent upon a sinful priesthood. But the heart of the gospel is there can only be one Priest in Christendom – the sinless Lord Jesus Christ. Those who wish to pursue these new evangelical ideas, which have torn the present evangelical world apart, should read Robert M Zins 1998 ON THE EDGE OF APOSTASY - The Evangelical Romance with Rome, White Horse Publications Alabama

³⁴ W C Irvine HERESIES EXPOSED page 98 1980 Loizeaux Brothers B McCall Barbour Edinburgh

³⁵ Ibid., page 39

³⁶ J Wesley Bready 1939 ENGLAND: BEFORE AND AFTER WESLEY Hodder and Stoughton London

³⁷ Ibid., page 285

³⁸ George Whitefield LETTERS OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD (1734-42) Letter 20 To Mr Ebenezer Blackwell, written on board the ELIZABETH, going to the Downs (16 August 1739) page 503 1976 Banner of Truth Trust Edinburgh

Concluding Reflections

Bishop John Charles Ryle was born at Macclesfield. He was educated at Eton and Oxford. He was a strong evangelical and evangelical leader during the 19th century. His evangelical convictions can be traced back to a crisis caused by the collapse of his father's bank and a deep personal conversion on hearing Ephesians chapter two read in public. Ephesians 2:8 is engraved on his gravestone.

In 1844, John Ryle became the incumbent of Helmingham, Suffolk. About the same time, James Shore first used the title "Free Church of England" in the West Country. Ryle also wrote a brief biography of George Whitefield, a major character in this book. Ryle became the first bishop of Liverpool, a much sought-after evangelical leader, and the founder of forty churches in his new diocese. Bishop F J Chavasse, the second bishop of Liverpool referred to his predecessor as, 'a man who lived so as to be missed'.

We close our book, with an extract (prepared & shortened by the Editor) from Ryle's : *KNOTS UNTIED*. – Being plain statements on disputed points in religion from the standpoint of an evangelical churchman (pages 255-265) 1896 published by The National Protestant Church Union and Charles Murray.

Chapter 9

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Barry Shucksmith

There is a Church, outside of which there is no salvation – a Church to which a man must belong, or be lost eternally. I lay this down without hesitation or reserve. I say it as strongly and as confidently as the strongest advocate of the Church of Rome. But what is this Church? Where is this Church? What are the marks by which this Church may be known? This is the grand question.

The one true Church is well described in the Communion Service of the Church of England, as the mystical body of Christ. It is composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus. It is made up of all God's elect – of all converted men and women – of all true Christians. In whomsoever we can discern the election of God the Father, the sprinkling of the blood of God the Son, the sanctifying work of God the Spirit, in that person we see a member of Christ's true Church.

It is a Church of which all the members have the same marks. They are all born again of the Spirit. They all possess repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and holiness of life and conversation. They all hate sin, and they all love Christ. They worship differently, and after various fashions. Some worship kneeling, and some standing. But they all worship with one heart. They are all led by one Spirit. They all build upon one foundation. They all draw their religion from one single book. They are all joined to one great centre, that is Jesus Christ. They all, even now, can say with one heart, Hallelujah, and they all can respond with one heart and voice, "Amen and amen".

It is a Church which is dependent upon no ministers upon earth, however much it values those who preach the Gospel to its members. The life of its members does not hang on church-membership and baptism and the Lord's Supper, although they highly value these things, when they are to be had. But it has only one Great Head, one Shepherd, one Chief Bishop, and that is Jesus Christ. He alone, by His spirit, admits the members of this church, though ministers may show the door. Till He opens the door, no man on earth can open it, neither bishops, nor presbyters, nor convocations, nor synods.

Once let a man repent and believe the Gospel, and that moment he becomes a member of His Church. Like the penitent thief, he may have no opportunity of being baptized. But he has that which is far better than any water-baptism – the baptism of the Spirit. He may not be able to receive the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper but he eats Christ's body and drinks Christ's blood by faith every day he lives, and no minister on earth can prevent him. He may be excommunicated by ordained men, and cut off from the outward ordinances of the professing Church but all the ordained men in the world cannot shut him out of the true Church.

It is a Church whose existence does not depend on forms, ceremonies, cathedrals, churches, chapels, pulpits, fonts, vestments, organs, endowments, money, kings, governments, magistrates, or any favour whatsoever from the hand of man. It has often lived on and continued when all these things have been

taken from it. It has often been driven into the wilderness, or into dens and caves of the earth, by those who ought to have been its friends. But its existence depends on nothing but the presence of Christ and His Spirit and so long as they are with it the Church cannot die.

This is the Church to which the titles of present honour and privilege, and the promises of future glory especially belong. This is the body of Christ. This is the bride. This is the Lamb's wife. This is the flock of Christ. This is the household of faith and family of God. This is God's building, God's foundation, and the temple of the Holy Ghost. This is the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

This is the royal priesthood, the chosen generation, the peculiar people, the purchased possession, the habitation of God, the light of the world, the salt and the wheat of the earth. This is the "holy Catholic church" of the Apostles' Creed. This is the "One Catholic and Apostolic Church" of the Nicene Creed. This is that Church to which the Lord Jesus promises "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" and to which He says, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 16:18; 28:20).

This is the only Church which possesses *true unity*. Its members are entirely agreed on all the weightier matters of religion, for they are all taught by one spirit. About God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and sin, and their own hearts, and faith, and repentance and the necessity of holiness, and the value of the Bible, and the importance of prayer, and the resurrection, and judgment to come. About all these points they see eye to eye. Take three or four of them, strangers to one another, from the remotest corners of the earth. Examine them separately on these points. You will find them all of one mind.

This is the only Church which possesses *true sanctity*. Its members are all holy. They are not merely holy by profession, holy in name, and holy in the judgment of charity. They are all holy in act, and deed, and reality, and life, and truth. They are all more or less conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. They are all more or less like their great Head. No unholy man belongs to this Church.

This is the only Church which is *truly Catholic*. It is not the Church of any one nation or people. Its members are to be found in every part of the world where the Gospel is received and believed. It is not confined within the limits of any one country, nor pent up within the pale of any particular forms or outward government. In it there is no difference between Jew and Greek, black man and white, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, but faith in Christ is all. Its members will be gathered from north, and south, and east, and west, in the last day; and will be of every name, and denomination, and kindred, and people, and tongue – but all one in Christ Jesus.

This is the only Church which is *truly apostolic*. It is built on the foundation laid by the apostles, and holds the doctrines which they preached. The two grand objects at which its members aim, are apostolic faith and apostolic practice; and they consider the man who talks of following the apostles without possessing these two things, to be no better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

This is the only Church which is *certain to endure* unto the end. Nothing can altogether overthrow and destroy it. Its members may be persecuted, oppressed, imprisoned, beaten, beheaded and burned. But the

true Church is never altogether extinguished. It rises again from its afflictions. It lives on through fire and water. When crushed in one land, it springs up in another. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros, the Julians, the Diocletians, the Bloody Marys, the Charles the Ninths have laboured in vain to put down this Church. They slay their thousands, and then pass away and go to their own place. The true Church outlives them all, and sees them buried each in his turn. It is an anvil that has broken many a hammer in this world, and will break many a hammer still. It is a bush which is often burning and yet is not consumed.

This is the only Church of *which no member can perish*. Once enrolled in the lists of this Church, sinners are safe for eternity. They are never cast away. The election of God the Father, the continual intercession of God the Son, the daily renewing and sanctifying power of God the Holy Ghost, surround and fence them in like a garden enclosed. Not one bone of Christ's mystical body shall ever be broken. Not one lamb of Christ's flock shall ever be plucked out of His hand.

This is the Church which *does the work of Christ* upon earth. Its members are a little flock, and few in number compared with the children of the world, one or two here, and two or three there, a few in this parish, and a few in that. But these are they who shake the universe. These are they who change the fortunes of kingdoms by their prayers. These are they who are active workers for spreading the knowledge of pure religion and undefiled. These are the life-blood of a country, the shield, the defence, the stay and the support of any nation to which they belong.

This is the Church which *shall be glorious* at the end of all things. When all earthly glory is passed away, then shall this Church be presented without spot, before God the Father's throne. Thrones, principalities, and powers upon earth shall come to nothing. Dignities and offices and endowments shall all pass away but the Church of the first-born shall shine as the stars at the last and be presented with joy before the Father's throne, in the day of Christ's appearing. When the Lord's jewels are made up, and the manifestation of the sons of God takes place, Episcopacy, and Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism will not be mentioned. One Church only will be named, and that is the Church of the elect.

This is the Church for *which a true minister of the Lord Jesus Christ's Gospel chiefly labours*. What is it to a true minister to fill the building in which he preaches? What is it to him to see communicants come up more and more to his table? What is it to him to see his party grow? It is all nothing, unless he can see men and women "born again," unless he can see souls converted and brought to Christ, unless he can see here one and there another, "coming out of the world", "taking up the cross and following Christ", and thus increasing the numbers of the one true Church.

This is the Church to which a man must belong, if he would be saved. Till we belong to this, we are nothing better than lost souls. We may have the form, the husk, the skin and the shell of religion, but we have not got the substance and the life. Yes! we may have countless outward privileges. We may enjoy great light and knowledge and opportunities. But if we do not belong to the body of Christ, our light, and knowledge, and privileges, and opportunities, will not save our souls. Alas, for the ignorance that prevails on this point!

Men fancy if they join this Church or that Church, and become communicants, and go through certain forms, that all must be right with their souls. It is an utter delusion: it is a gross mistake. All were not of Israel who were called Israel, and all are not members of Christ's body who profess themselves Christians. *Never let us forget that we may be staunch Episcopalians, or Presbyterians, or Independents, or Baptists, or Wesleyans, or Plymouth Brethren – and yet not belong to the true Church. And if we do not, it will be better at last if we had never been born.*

Appendix 1

THE FREE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Agenda for Renewal 2002-2012

“Where there is no vision the people perish”
Proverbs 29:18

Prepared for Convocation 2002

Rt Revd Dr J Barry Shucksmith PhD DMin Royal Navy (rtd)

SUMMARY

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR CHURCH RENEWAL

1. WE DESIRE to re-affirm Sola Scriptura
2. WE DESIRE to affirm the priority to proclaim the Gospel
3. WE DESIRE to re-affirm evangelical comprehensiveness
4. WE DESIRE to seek a biblical ecumenism
5. WE DESIRE TO PROMOTE a traditional/biblical ethic
6. WE DESIRE TO MOVE from maintenance to mission
7. WE DESIRE and will seek a highly-trained Clergy
8. WE DESIRE to re-affirm biblical episcopacy
9. WE DESIRE greater use of our Laity
10. WE DESIRE modern but sound liturgy, as a supplement

PREAMBLE

HISTORY

A Body of Christians called the Free Church of England assembled and worshipped in this Country in 1844 and was registered in Chancery by Deed Poll, 13 August 1863. The historic episcopate was conferred, by the Reformed Episcopal Church, 30 August 1876, and both churches were originally similar in character and government – episcopal, liturgical and evangelical. In June 1927, the Free Church of England and the Reformed Episcopal Church united as one Church and accepted the 18 Articles of the Constitution and 126 Canons, the Book of Common Prayer (revised), with the Rubrics and Instructions contained therein, as the Constitution and Canon Law of the United Church. These are binding upon all the Bishops, Ministers, and Members of the Church and they must remain so in any new venture, or twenty-first century renewal.¹

Since 1927, the Nation and Established Church of England have changed beyond recognition. This is equally true of all the so-called mainline denominations. The Free Church of England has also witnessed steep decline and today there are only twenty-five churches and one mission church, in the United Kingdom. At the present rate of decline, the Free Church of England could disappear within two decades, leaving only a few stronger, but isolated, churches. After 8 years of talks about “talks” with the Church of England, the Convocation decided in 1997, with a 61% majority vote, that reunion with the Church of England is no longer an option. The Church of England is in more serious doctrinal and moral decline than when our Founding Fathers seceded.

Clearly, some action is needed, not only in terms of maintenance, but to strengthen what remains (Revelation 3:2), to inspire vision for new pioneer work, and to ensure a reformed, episcopal, and evangelical presence, for the next generation. We also need to take seriously the missionary mandate in Matthew 28:19-20. Without making new converts we have no future.² Above all else the Free Church of England, like many other Christian Institutions, needs a biblical renewal, prompted by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. These matters are in the gift of a Sovereign God. But the means given can and should be employed – a vigorous application of biblical principles at every level of church life and consistent seeking of God’s face in prayer. Today, many churches try to resolve their problems by an ever-encroaching ecumenism, rooted not in biblical principles, but in visible structures. History shows this to be disastrous and productive only of more division. I commend the following ten objectives as worthy of consideration and support.

AGENDA FOR RENEWAL

1. WE DESIRE TO RE-AFFIRM SOLA SCRIPTURA

We are not ashamed of the Constitution of the Free Church of England. We do not believe that we are lacking something which other Churches need to give to us. We are happy to be independent of the Established Church of England and believe our forefathers to be right in their separation from the “Mother Church”, even more so in view of modern developments.

We acknowledge the Established Church of England to be a comprehensive church which (now) relies for her authority upon a threefold basis of scripture, tradition and reason. Whereas, the Free Church of England is a one-party church whose adherents must be protestant, reformed, and evangelical.

Furthermore, while valuing the Book of Common Prayer (revised), the 39 Articles of Religion, and the Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, we believe it necessary, for survival as a denomination, to re-affirm our belief in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God and the sole rule of faith and practice.³

We also believe it essential, in view of modern trends, to re-emphasize that our church is not only singularly evangelical, but evidently anti-tractarian.

We believe it necessary to forge a new identity, by subjecting all we do, as individual churches and as a denomination, to biblical scrutiny. This is only to be what we profess to be in our Constitution.

2. WE DESIRE TO AFFIRM A PRIORITY TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

After the general principle of *solus gloria* – to glorify God, we see it as the church’s primary function, to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Today, there is confusion as to what this is. For some, it is a programme of social action, for others a man-centred self-improvement, for many modern evangelicals it has become a simple decisionism. Yet, according to the Roman and Galatian Epistles, the gospel is the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. This is something which God does, not ourselves, to be received by faith. In a sentence, it is justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The Prayerbook and 39 Articles bear witness to this and so has the Free Church of England for over 150 years. We believe it necessary to re-affirm this truth.

3. WE RE-AFFIRM OUR EVANGELICAL COMPREHENSIVENESS

Evangelicalism has always been comprehensive in its churchmanship. A HISTORY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND takes note of the evangelical revival and the variety of instruments used by Almighty God.⁴ Among those mentioned are Whitefield, Grimshaw, Romaine, Rowlands, Berridge, Venn, Harvey, and Fletcher. The Countess of Huntingdon Connexion is also acknowledged as part of our history. Again, variety of belief and expression is noted here. What is not allowed is sacerdotalism... ‘a principle equally precious to the Free Church of England, because no less preservative against the assumptions of sacerdotalism, is the maintenance of pure sacramental doctrine’.⁵

As already noted, we wish to maintain our church as anti-tractarian but positively evangelical. We cannot endorse anglo-catholic, central church, or simply, low-church views, unless by low-church, we understand “evangelical”. The Free Church of England is not a (smaller) clone of the Church of England. Our forefathers did not have to secede to preserve high, central, or low views, but, as the legal case against James Shore proves, to maintain evangelical integrity.

We believe, without promoting the evangelical nature of our denomination, we have no future and, therefore, to be “evangelical” is not only to be faithful. It is to survive and grow.

4. WE WISH TO SEEK A BIBLICAL ECUMENISM

The present Ecumenical Movement is preoccupied with seeking unity without biblical and doctrinal consideration. Its emphasis is upon visible organic union which must end, by its very nature, in reunion with Rome. Those who have engaged in the process have already conceded a great deal of ground. For example, the Church of England has just published its Report, THE GIFT OF AUTHORITY, in which the universal primacy of the Pope is accepted.

We desire to have relationships with all evangelical Christians who are committed to the same position on Scripture as ourselves. We see no logical reason, for not embracing evangelical nonconformists, like ourselves, as well as Anglican evangelicals worldwide. We would like to reach out to such bodies as Sydney Diocese Australia, the Church of England in South Africa, the Church of Uganda, Reform UK, Church Society, etc. etc.

5. WE WILL SEEK TO MAINTAIN AND PROMOTE A TRADITIONAL / BIBLICAL SEXUAL ETHIC

In the last two decades there has been abandonment, among episcopalians, of moral and sexual ethics as we have always understood them. We wish to identify with the growing number of biblically-committed Christians who feel it necessary to re-state the teaching of our Lord and the Apostles.

1. That sexual intercourse should take place only between a man and a woman who are married to each other.
2. That fornication, adultery, and homosexual acts are sinful in all circumstances.
3. That Christian leaders are called to be exemplary in all spheres of morality, including sexual morality, as a condition of being appointed or remaining in office.
4. That the Church is called upon to show Christ-like compassion to those who have fallen into sin, encouraging them to repent and receive forgiveness, and offering the ministry of healing to all who suffer physically or emotionally as a result of such sin.⁶

6. WE RECOGNISE THE NEED TO MOVE FROM A MAINTENANCE TO MISSION - MENTALITY

We consider there is an urgent need to investigate how we can “revive” the dying churches in our denomination and also inspire new work. We do not have the time for the luxury of ecclesiastical introspection which invariably leads to division and even schism. This means, for example, challenging the stronger churches to look outwards, encouraging Free C of E members to consider starting a home meeting where they live, investigating the possibility of scattered members starting a work, producing helpful material on how to “grow” a church, and creating a category for mission stations, or pioneer works, to be in recognised fellowship, until able to apply for full membership.

7. WE RECOGNISE THE NEED TO PROVIDE BETTER TRAINING FOR OUR CLERGY / READERS ESPECIALLY IN-SERVICE TRAINING

No episcopalian Church can be better than its clergy. We believe in an educated and biblically-literate ministry. We desire to raise the standards for ordination and to encourage more serious study, especially in the field of biblical theology.

We want to promote, by internal circulation, informed papers on historical, biblical, theological, ethical, pastoral, and contemporary subjects, and train the clergy we already have, to a more effective and wider-ranging ministry.

8. WE WISH TO RE-AFFIRM THE VALUE OF EPISCOPACY BUT NOT AS SIMPLY AN ADMINISTRATIVE / POWER STRUCTURE

It is quite clear, from our Lord’s washing of the Apostles’ feet, that ministry is about service, not power. Our forefathers were most astute in adopting a form of episcopacy which majors on the preaching/pastoral functions and which is emphatic in declaring, ‘we adhere to episcopacy, not as of divine right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of Church policy’. We desire to see much more team spirit among the bishops; for the time being, the removal of diocesan boundaries, and consultation with

all the clergy. This means a much more practical outworking of our claim to uphold “primus inter pares”. We also wish to have one means of selecting future ordination candidates and Convocation involved in their authorisation.

9. A MECHANISM TO INVESTIGATE GREATER USE OF OUR LAITY AND POSSIBLE RESTRUCTURING IN CERTAIN AREAS

The Body is not one, but many.⁷ While preserving the use and ministry of Lay Readers, we desire to encourage greater involvement of our gifted lay people. For example, does the General Secretary have to be ordained? Are there denominational administrative tasks which could be taken over by a lay person? In everything, we wish to see more openness and accountability, as scripture requires. We would like to consider the possibility of a Bi-Annual Convocation and to introduce more informed debate and longer discussion on the issues of the day. This also means using the present committees, or new committees, for in-depth study purposes and using our most articulate members, lay and ordained.

10. THE PROVISION OF MODERN LITURGY TO SUPPLEMENT THE TRADITIONAL, WITH CONVOCATIONAL APPROVAL.

The majority of our clergy are over the age of 60 years. Very few future clergy are likely to be 1662 (revised or otherwise!) clergymen. The modern generation are not attached to the traditional Prayerbook, as many of us are.

There needs to be a mix of liturgy – one mandatory traditional service each Sunday. But there is also scope for experimentation/use, on a regular basis, of modern liturgy. This could mean using, for the time being, AN ENGLISH PRAYERBOOK,⁸ or we should ask someone / some committee to provide modern liturgy, as a matter of urgency.

A denomination, committed solely to traditional language, cannot survive another decade. What we need is modern liturgy, soundly written, and in keeping with the doctrine and spirit of our Prayerbook and Articles of Religion. This is not to replace what we already have, but to supplement it.

I submit these ten propositions/principles, not as an end in themselves, but as the beginning of a process to renew and revitalise the Free Church of England, for the 21st Century, to ensure a continuing evangelical episcopal witness, independent of the Church of England, and to be more effective as a “Gospel” Church.

Rt Revd J Barry Shucksmith
Convocation - Free Church of England
May 2002

¹ Constitution and Canons, Free CofE, pages 3-6

² Matthew 28:18-20

³ Constitution, Free CofE, Article 1 (1) page 13

⁴ A History of the Free Church of England (1994) p19

⁵ A History of the Free Church of England (1994) page 26

⁶ The Reformed Episcopal Church - Statement on Sexuality

⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:12

⁸ AN ENGLISH PRAYERBOOK Church Society (1994) published by Oxford University Press

Appendix 2

A REPORT OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS 1992 -1996

- I CO-CHAIRMEN'S PREFACE
- II INTRODUCTION
- III THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND W CONTEXT – AN HISTORICAL OUTLINE
- IV OUR COMMON CALLING TO FULL VISIBLE UNITY
- V WHAT WE CAN NOW AGREE IN FAITH
- VI NEXT STEPS

PREFACE

The following report is the product of two series of discussions between representative members of the Church of England and the Free Church of England. These conversations have taken place over a five year period following contacts between the Bishop Primus of the Free Church of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1992. We have greatly enjoyed the opportunity for theological and ecclesiological reflection together and have come to value our growing understanding and friendship as well as recognising the wealth of common history which we share.

Through our dialogue we have become aware of examples of growing together of our churches at the local level - the regular meeting of local clergy of our churches, the invitation to Free Church of England clergy to join local Church of England chapters and the presence of bishops of each church at significant events in the life of the other - e.g. the celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the Free Church of England in 1994, the enthronement of the Bishop of Peterborough in 1996 and the installation of the Dean of Monmouth in 1997.

In accordance with our brief we have sought to follow the well-established ecumenical method of looking behind our formularies, often defined negatively to describe beliefs we reject, to the biblical and early traditions, we hold in common in order to explore our current understanding of the theological issues which have now divided us. The theological agreement we are now able to affirm together encourages us to believe that we have moved through a position of recognising the historical forces which led to exclusive statements to one in which we can respect and understand our different emphases within the quest for the unity of the Church which is our common goal. We share a 'family likeness' and wish to see its common life and witness restored.

We commend this statement to our churches for discussion in the conviction that we have provided a significant basis for further work. We hope that others will share our joy at the agreements and convergences we have been able to record, and that given their reception within our churches they will become the foundation for the next stage of rebuilding our common life in Christ.

We would wish to record our thanks to Dr Mary Tanner who both acted as Secretary to the group and also freely shared with us her perceptive knowledge of other ecumenical discussions. This has enabled us to benefit from the work and insights of others who are travelling along a similar road. We hope and pray that the Report will deepen our fellowship in the gospel, further the following co-operation between us and lead us together, on the next stage of our common journey following the One who prayed that we 'might be one, so that the world might believe ...'

Ian Cundy
Bishop of Peterborough
Church of England

Cyril Milner
Bishop Primus
Free Church of England

INTRODUCTION

Conversations between 1992 and 1994

1. As a result of contact between the Rt Revd Arthur Ward and the Archbishop of Canterbury it was agreed to explore the possibility of holding some informal discussions between the Church of England and the Free Church of England in order to investigate ways in which the two churches might draw more closely together. The Archbishop of Canterbury invited the Council for Christian Unity to appoint representatives for the Church of England and the Bishop Primus, acting on the mandate of the Free Church of England Convocation appointed representatives from the Free Church of England.
2. The representatives met on three occasions between December 1992 and December 1993 on an informal and exploratory basis. Members of the group were the Rt Revd Cyril Milner, the Rt Revd Ian Cundy, the Revd Mark Orelason, the Rt Revd Kenneth Powell, the Rt Revd Arthur Ward, the Revd Bill Lawler, the Ven. David Hawtin, the Revd Dr Richard Fenwick, Dr Mary Tanner. As a result of the informal conversations, the Co-Chairmen prepared a report for the parent bodies. The report included sections on: what we hold in common; the faith we share; practical steps to be encouraged now. The report included the proposal for setting up formal conversations to prepare an agreed statement as a framework for developing relations.
3. The Council for Christian Unity considered the report of the conversations at its meeting in May 1994. It was encouraged by the progress of the conversations and endorsed the taking of the immediate practical steps outlined in the report. It invited the Local Unity Committee of the Council to follow this up. Rather than move into formal conversations, the Council advised the setting up of a small group to work at the theological issues identified in the Co-Chairmen's report in order that by 1997, if the Free Church of England wished to continue talks on a formal basis, a response could be made.
4. The Chairman of the Council for Christian Unity, The Rt Revd David Tustin, communicated this to the Archbishop of Canterbury and to the Primus of the Free Church of England. The Primus of the Free Church of England welcomed the suggestion for exploratory theological talks. The Free Church of England Convocation gave permission for talks to continue.

The Talks from 1995 to 1996

5. A new group met in December 1995:

Free Church of England

Cyril Milner (Co-Chairman)	Bishop Primus and Bishop of the Northern Diocese, also Rector of St Paul's Church, Fleetwood.
Mark Gretason	Rector of St Judes, Balham.
Bill Lawler	General Secretary.
Kenneth Powell	Bishop of the Southern Diocese and Incumbent of Emmanuel Church, Birmingham.
Arthur Ward	Formerly General Secretary of the Free Church of England and Bishop of the Southern Diocese and Incumbent of Christ Church, Teddington.

Church of England

Ian Cundy (Co-Chairman)	Bishop of Peterborough.
Philip Down	Member of FOAG, Rector of St Stephen's, Canterbury.
Richard Fenwick	Canon Residentiary and Precentor, Guildford Cathedral 1990 -1997, Dean of Monmouth 1997.
Donald Reece	Local Unity Secretary, CCU (not all meetings).
Mary Tanner (Secretary)	General Secretary, Council for Christian Unity.

The group reviewed developments in closer relations that had already taken place and identified two matters for discussion: the goal of 'visible unity'; outstanding theological issues.

6. In the course of its conversations the group studied the multilateral text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, consulted many bilateral ecumenical reports including those of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, and looked at the *Meissen, Porcoo and Fetter Lane Common Statements*. The group has drawn heavily upon these texts in expressing its own agreement in faith. We have been encouraged to discover the extent of our common inheritance which springs from our common history up until the middle of the last century. We have also been aware that in the years since the separation both our churches have developed. The situation in which the conversations have taken place from 1992 until 1997 are very different from the situation in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the modern ecumenical movement has led all churches to express matters of faith and order in fresh ways. It is also evident that the theological issues that divided us look different in the context of the life and witness of our churches today.

7. The group was grateful for the expertise of Dr Richard Fenwick who was awarded a Ph.D. by the University of Wales, Lampeter, in 1995 entitled *The Free Church of England, otherwise known as the Reformed Episcopal Church, a study of Church growth, development and change*.

8. The report from these informal talks is in four parts. The first section is an account of the history and current relationships of the Free Church of England. Part II contains a statement of our shared understanding of the full visible unity of the Church. Part III sets out what we can now agree in faith. This chapter includes reflections on the three issues which in the last century were the major cause of division namely, the understanding of baptism, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the understanding of the priesthood of the ordained ministry. A final section offers suggestions to our parent bodies about how we might seek to develop relations between our two churches in the immediate future.

I. THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN CONTEXT – AN HISTORICAL OUTLINE

9. The Free Church of England was born out of the impassioned anti-ritualist controversies of the 1840s and 1850s. During the latter half of the 19th century, the new ritualist movement seemed tolerated, or even encouraged by Anglican leaders. But ritualism was met by increasingly sharp opposition from a nervous population. Very many saw ritualism as part of a strong move for the re-conversion of England by the Roman Catholic Church.
10. As a movement, broadly speaking, the Free Church of England originated in the Diocese of Exeter during the 1840s; for Bishop Henry Phillpotts was a 'high church' Tory who took naturally to litigation.
11. One of the casualties of his rigid and Erastian authoritarianism was the Reverend James Shore, Curate of Bridgetown Chapel-of-Ease, at Tames. In 1849, although he had taken the oaths needed to declare himself a dissenter, Shore was actually imprisoned for preaching in a non-conformist chapel – the Chapel of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection at Spa Fields in London. Phillpotts claimed the legality of this on the basis of the indelibility of Orders. But what the celebrated 'Shore Case' really did was to weld firmly the relationship between Shore and this small but distinguished 18th century off-shoot from the Church of England. Whilst Calvinist in inspiration and with presbyteral ordination, the Connexion used much of the Book of Common Prayer, and its services were liturgical – though strictly evangelical.
12. The result of the dispute in Devon was the growth of an idea; and under the aegis of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, new 'Free Liturgical' churches spread through other parts of England.
13. The new 'Free' churches were formally registered as the 'Free Church of England' in the High Court of Chancery in August 1863. But, the whole 'Free Liturgical' movement itself had become something of a cause-celèbre; for its vigorously Protestant yet liturgical style had attracted the support of highly influential Anglicans including the Duke of Somerset, Sir Culling Eardley, Lord Ebury, Lord Sidney, the Hon. and Reverend E.V. Bligh (Lord Darnley's second son), and the Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Lucius Curtis. Like the Connexion, the Free Church of England used the Book of Common Prayer for its worship.
14. However, largely under the influence of Lord Ebury (one of the leading figures in the movement for Prayer Book reform within the Church of England) the books used were those produced by his movement. These were 'protestantised' by removing certain of the terms used in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer which were the source of contemporary controversy amongst the anti-ritualists of the day. Obvious examples included the substitution of the word 'Presbyter' for 'Priest', and also the removal of reference to certain specifically priestly functions, such as that of absolution after confession in the Visitation of the Sick. It is difficult to tell which versions were used because there were a number of different publications in use at the time. Indeed, it was not only the new Free Church of England which provided a market for such Prayer Books, but also the Connexion, a number of 'unaligned' independent liturgical churches – and evidently a number of churches within the Establishment also. (This matter is dealt with more fully in para. 29).
15. As the Free Church of England developed, it saw increasingly the need for a conventional system of episcopal oversight. In fact, the provision for an episcopally ordered system had been enshrined within the official Poll Deed in Chancery in 1863. The first time the title was actually used was in an Order of Service when the elected President of the Free Church of England Convocation, the Reverend Benjamin Price, officiated at the consecration of the new church of St. John at Tottington, Bury, near Manchester. This was in the Spring of 1868. Thus, during these early days of the denomination the position was seen essentially as an elected one, and Price became known as either 'Bishop' or 'Bishop-President'. However, his own considerable stature, together with the fact that his presidency ceased to be dependent upon annual election, meant that the position of 'bishop' was very soon seen within the denomination in traditional Anglican terms.
16. During the years immediately following 1874, a relationship was forged between the Free Church of England and the new Reformed Episcopal Church of the USA. The Reformed Episcopal Church was itself an evangelical breakaway from PECUSA when David Cummins, Assistant Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Kentucky, conscientiously resigned to take his work 'to another sphere of labour'. In the August of 1876 the Free Church of England then received mainstream Anglican Orders in the ancient Episcopal succession when both Benjamin Price and the minister newly elected, John Sugden, were consecrated for the denomination by Bishop Edward Cridge. Sugden, a graduate of the University of London, had been a missionary in India for many years –

he received traditional consecration. Price, a distinguished minister who had been ordained presbyterally within the Countess' Connexion, had misgivings about such a consecration when he had already been exercising the office of bishop for some years. Consequently, at his consecration, the gifts of episcopate were confirmed in him – a nice point, but he was an honest man, and particularly scrupulous on such points.

17. The results of the Consecrations were significant. The fact that the new Free Church of England had 'valid' orders and an ecclesial polity very similar to that of the Established Church caused increasing confusion in Britain. This became even more pronounced when a separate branch of the Reformed Episcopal Church was set up in Britain in the late 1870s and in the early 1880s when an even more 'Anglican' branch, the Reformed Church of England came out of the Reformed Episcopal Church (these two re-united in 1894).

18. Here it must be pointed out that among Free Church of England, Reformed Episcopal Church, or Reformed Church of England clergy were a number of distinguished and educated men who did much, both for their churches and for their local communities. Bishop Thomas Hubbard Gregg (Reformed Episcopal Church) in particular, as a tireless social reformer and a qualified physician and surgeon had much to offer. Bishop John Sugden (Reformed Episcopal Church) had a fine reputation following his missionary work in India. After the turn of the century. Bishop Richard Brook Lander (Free Church of England) was an ex-Harroviaian who was well known as a trainer of many clergy. More recently again, Bishop Forbes-Smith (Free Church of England) was a prizeman of St. Catharine's College, Cambridge.

19. The challenges of the earlier part of the 20th century, together with the cataclysmic social effects of the Great War, and then the following Depression, placed great demands upon the religious institutions of the Country. But the Free Church of England and the Reformed Episcopal Church with their tiny size, their chronic and abiding poverty could not undertake the sort of great religious and social projects of the larger denominations. The most that could be done was for all available forces to be put towards the moulding together of the two denominations to produce the denomination as it now stands. The Act of Union took place in 1927.

20. The Union of 1927 provided considerable impetus and strength within the life of the Free Church of England. Consequently the years 1927 to 1941 saw a steady increase in numbers of churches. Indeed, the high point was just after 1940 when it had 61 congregations – in Britain, Canada, and even the remnants of a small community in Poland.

21. After the war, an increasing population meant that, as at the end of the last century, there were large new areas of housing and industry which the far more versatile Established Church, and the larger non-conformist denominations, were able to serve – and in which they were to find considerable growth. But the Free Church of England, with its small size, continuing problems of central finance, and the consequent need of congregations to be self-supporting was largely unable to address any project other than the maintenance of its work within a decreasing number of church communities.

22. This pattern of slow decline has however been reversed since the mid-1970s. As of 1996, there are 27 churches in England – 14 in the Northern Diocese under the Primus, Bishop Cyril Milner, and 13 in the Southern Diocese under Bishop Kenneth Powell. In addition to these, there are 6 Free Church of England communities in New Zealand, one in St. Petersburg in Russia, and two in Australia – all under the jurisdiction of the two bishops in England.

The Free Church of England and ecumenism generally

23. The great Ecumenical drives, such as that which united the various branches of Methodism, and later produced the United Reformed Church, have largely passed the Free Church of England by. This was simply because of shortage of manpower, abiding poverty, and the inevitable isolation of the small numbers of church communities widely spread. Nevertheless, the ecumenical imperative underlay the continued attempts to re-unite with the Connexion – until, by the end of the second decade of the present century it was clear to all that the Connexion had actually become virtually indistinguishable from Congregationalism. It was also this ecumenical imperative which was at the heart of Bishop Eldridge's unsuccessful attempt at uniting the Reformed Episcopal Church with the Church of England in 1920.

24. It must be noted that, long before this, the fundamental cause of the withdrawal of Cummins from PECUSA in 1873 was very much his concern for ecumenism, and the perception that those who would not 'unchurch' other Christian communities would suffer marginalisation within PECUSA. Cummins, the Dean of Canterbury, the Very Revd Dr R. Payne Smith and Canon Freemantle of London had attended the Evangelical Alliance Service which was held in New York on 12 October at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church – more than this, they had received communion. But whereas the Dean and Freemantle were far enough from home to escape censure, Cummins was vigorously rebuked.

25. Again, it is important to see that in both the Free Church of England and its American sister the Reformed Episcopal Church, the efficacy of the ministries of other Protestant denominations have always been recognised. Nevertheless, although regularly ordained ministers of non-episcopal denominations are accepted as deacons, if they are to work within the Free Church of England or Reformed Episcopal Church then they are ordained to the presbyterate.

26. Recognition of the ecumenical imperative continues within the Free Church of England at present. However, continuing financial restrictions have meant that the denomination is not a member of the World Council of Churches – though some within the Free Church of England have requested the possibility of this. Again, it was agreed to send an observer to Churches Together in England, but since there is a financial obligation upon those having Observer status this has now been found to be too costly. However, the Free Church of England is a member of the Free Church Federal Council, and it has asked the Council to act on its behalf as observer.

The Free Church of England and Anglicanism.

27. Clearly, from the first there was a very Anglican character to the Free Church of England. It sprung from the Church of England, most of its influential early sponsors were 'highly placed' Anglicans, and, again, at the very start, an episcopal polity was firmly written into the founding Poll Deed registered in Chancery in 1863.

28. Again, despite the insistence upon a 'low church' style of worship (in accordance with its anti-ritualist roots), the Free Church of England has continued to see the evangelical wing of the Church of England as providing normative values. Official Free Church of England worship is always liturgically ordered; the Prayer Book used is basically the Protestant Book of Common Prayer of William III; clergy dress during services is that of customary Anglican Choir habit (cassock, surplice, scarf and hood) – and the interior designs of the Free Church of England churches are identical with those from the Anglican 'low church' tradition. Once again, as in the Established Church, the liturgy of the denomination depends upon its clergy, or, for choir services, upon its 'Lay Readers'. These are trained, vested and licensed in exactly the same way as are the Readers of the Church of England. Thus in all aspects, there is a significant commonality of thinking and practice between the two churches.

29. It is worth noting here that there were a number of protestantised versions of the Book of Common Prayer in use in Britain during the 19th. century. Nearly all these versions traced their origin back to the protestantised Prayer Book of William III of 1689 – never actually made legal in Britain at the time. The present Book of Common Prayer used by the Free Church of England has an interesting history, for it is largely based on the Prayer Book of Bishop T.H. Gregg of the Reformed Episcopal Church in the United Kingdom in 1878. This was a 'British' version of the current Prayer Book used by the Reformed Episcopal Church in America – itself derived in the mid 1870s from the American protestantised Prayer Book of Bishop William White in 1785 (popular, but never officially adopted by PECUSA). The White Prayer Book had, like so many of the different versions current at various times, been derived from the unadopted William III book of 1689.

30. Further, it is clear that, from early days, many Anglicans regarded the Free Church of England as a closely related family member in the general work of evangelical witness. In the Free Church of England Magazine in February 1873, an open letter of support for the work of the Free Church of England was published under the signatures of no fewer than 51 Anglican clergy – a number of them distinguished men such as the Hon. and Rev. E.V. Bligh (Lord Darnley's son).

31. Later, in 1920, as the result of the Archbishops' 'Call to all Christian People' to unity, a substantial part of the Northern Diocese of the Reformed Episcopal Church in Britain (under the Presiding Bishop Philip Eldridge) wished to return to Anglican. The Southern Diocese under Bishop Frank Vaughan was opposed to this however,

and the ecumenical work was consequently poured rather into the process of uniting with the Free Church of England – completed in 1927.

32. At this point it is important to emphasise the fact that, apart from local ritual disputes long ago, and part from the general confusions of the 1870s and 1880s because of the essentially Anglican nature of the Free Church of England and Reformed Episcopal Church, the denomination has never seen itself in opposition to the Church of England. Evangelicals like Bishop Ryle of Liverpool were held in great reverence by both the Free Church of England and the Reformed Episcopal Church. On numbers of occasions in the denominational magazines, it was pointed out that where there was an evangelical tradition in a parish, there was no need for any work by the Free Church of England. Indeed, where there was radical action by the Kensingtonites, the Free Church of England assiduously refused to involve itself with the activities of those it considered to be extremists. Further, it is worth noting that at no time was any 'free' congregation ever set up in Ireland. The Irish Church was regarded by both the Free Church of England and Anglican Evangelicals alike as being an ally in the fight against 'Romanising' and ritual excess.

33. Again, in looking at the local church units of both the Free Church of England and the Church of England, it is significant to see that there has ever been a commonality in the 'congregational' thinking which is found within them. The general pattern of life and thinking for the vast majority of faithful members of the Church of England throughout the 19th and early 20th century has tended to focus itself upon the local church community. This was no different from the ethos within many of the Free Church of England or Reformed Episcopal Church congregations – as had been the occasional complaint of Bishop Philip Eldridge during the early years of the present century.

Recent closer relations between the Free Church of England and the Church of England.

34. Following the contact between the two churches in the latter part of the 1980s, even before the 'talks about talks' were started in 1992, certain practical steps were taken which have resulted in the disappearance of many old barriers in thinking.

35. First, the similarity of both Episcopal polities and liturgical worship within both churches made it particularly appropriate for the Free Church of England to join with other mainstream denominations in being 'designated' by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York for the Ecumenical Relations Measure to apply. This Measure, in the provisions of Canon B 43, enables members of the Free Church of England and the Church of England to take part, by invitation, in each other's worship. It also enables a parish church to be made available for Free Church of England worship. In accordance with Canon B 44, the Measure provides for the Church of England to enter into a Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Free Church of England. This was accepted by the Convocation of the Free Church of England in May 1991, and the instrument authorising it was subsequently signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. On 15 October 1991 it was officially 'designated'.

II. OUR COMMON CALLING TO FULL VISIBLE UNITY.

36. God's intention, revealed in the Holy Scriptures, is to reconcile all things in Christ, in, through and for whom they were made.

37. For this purpose God called Abraham, chose Israel, sent Jesus Christ and commissioned the Church for the blessing of all the peoples. The servant of God will not only restore the scattered people of Israel; he is given as a 'light to the nations, to bring salvation to the end of the earth' (Is. 49:6). In Christ God was reconciling the whole world to himself through the blood of the cross (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1: 15-20), whereby our sins are forgiven (Eph. 1:7). The letter to the Ephesians recognises the implications of the work of Christ for the mystery, the call and the mission of the Church when it says, 'God... has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing ... He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph. 1: 3,9 & 10). 'But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift ... And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of

ministry, for building up the Body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4: 7, 11-13).

38. The Church, the Body of Christ, must always be seen in this perspective as instrumental to God's ultimate purpose. The Church exists for the glory of God and to serve, in obedience to the mission of Christ, the reconciliation of humankind and of all creation. Therefore the Church is sent into the world as an instrument and foretaste of a reality which comes from beyond history as the Kingdom or Reign of God. It is already a provisional embodiment of God's will, which is the coming of the Kingdom and awaits in hope the time when Christ will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). The Church is a divine reality, holy and transcending present finite reality. At the same time, as a human institution, it shares in the sinfulness, all the ambiguity and frailty of the human condition, and is always in need of repentance, reform and renewal.

39. Today we are re-discovering, together with other Christians, the character of the Church as communion. Underlying many of the New Testament descriptions of the Church, such as 'the people of God', 'the body of Christ', 'the bride', 'the temple of the Spirit', is the reality of a *koinonia* – a communion which is grounded in the life of the Holy Trinity, in which all the baptised share and in which all are joined to one another in that divine life. This community – *koinonia* – according to the Scriptures is established by a baptism inseparable from faith and conversion. The vocation of all the baptised is to live as a corporate priesthood offering praise to God, sharing the good news and engaging in mission and service to humankind. This common life is sustained and nurtured by God's grace through word and sacrament. It is served by the ordained ministry and also held together by other bonds of communion.

40. The Church is the community (*koinonia*) of those reconciled with God and with one another. It is the community of those who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, believe in Jesus Christ and are justified through God's grace. It is also the reconciling community because it has been called to bring to all humankind God's gracious offer of redemption and renewal. Because the *koinonia* is also a participation in Christ crucified, it is also part of the nature and mission of the Church to share in the sufferings and struggles of humankind in a world alienated from God and divided within itself by our disobedience to his will.

41. The disunity of the Church impairs Christ's mission in the world. It is within a missionary perspective that we can begin to overcome the divisions which have kept us apart. As our churches grow in faith into the fullness of Christ, so they will themselves grow together in Unity. The unity we seek as members of the Church of England and the Free Church of England is none other than that unity we seek with all Christians in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. This unity will reflect the different gifts God has given to his Church in many nations, languages, cultures and traditions. The unity we seek must at one and the same time respect these different gifts and manifest as fully as possible the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ. 'In communion diversities are brought together in harmony as gifts of the Holy Spirit, contributing to the richness and fullness of the Church of God'.

42. In God's kingdom, all will be completely obedient to God and therefore totally reconciled to one another in God. But in a fallen world we are committed to strive for the full, visible unity of the Body of Christ on earth. We are to work for the manifestation of unity at every level, a unity which is grounded in the life of the Holy Trinity and is God's purpose for the whole of creation. All our attempts to describe or realise this vision are bound to be provisional. We are continually being led to see fresh depths and riches of that unity and to grasp new ways in which it might be manifested in word and life. Every experience of unity is a gift of God and a foretaste and sign of the kingdom.

43. As the churches grow together, the understanding of the characteristics of full, visible unity become clearer. We agree that full, visible unity would include:

a common confession of the apostolic faith grounded in Holy Scripture and set forth in the historic creeds, expressed in word and life. This one faith has to be confessed together, locally and universally, so that God's reconciling purpose is everywhere shown forth. Living this apostolic faith together, the Church helps the world to attain its proper destiny.

the sharing of one baptism, the celebrating of one eucharist and the service of a reconciled, common ministry in the historic episcopal succession. This common participation in one baptism, one eucharist and one ministry unites all 'in each place' with 'all in every place' within the whole communion of saints. Every eucharist is the act of the risen Christ, in whom the whole Church, local and universal, is

mysteriously present. Through visible unity the healing and uniting power of the Triune God is made evident and effective amidst the divisions of humankind.

bonds of communion which enable the Church at every level to guard and interpret the apostolic faith, to take decisions, to teach authoritatively, to share goods and to bear witness in the world. These bonds of communion will possess personal, collegial and communal aspects. At every level, they are outward and visible signs of the communion between persons who, through their baptism and eucharistic fellowship, are drawn into the fellowship of the Triune God.

III WHAT WE CAN NOW AGREE IN FAITH

44. In view of what we have found we share in common in our discussions we can now record the following points of agreement grounded in our common tradition.

45. We accept the authority of Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testament. Holy Scripture has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error; for reformation of manners and discipline in right living (2 Timothy 3:16ff). Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation (Article 6). Each church provides a lectionary and in the course of the Church's year appropriate scriptures are read to mark the festivals and seasons.

46. We accept the Nicene-Constantinopolitan and Apostles' Creeds and we confess the basic Trinitarian and Christological dogmas to which these creeds testify as sufficient statements of the Christian faith.

47. We celebrate the apostolic faith in worship, and centrally in liturgical worship which is both a celebration of salvation through Christ and a significant factor in forming the *consensus fidelium* (the common mind of the faithful). We share a common liturgical tradition grounded in the Book of Common Prayer as the work of the sixteenth century reformers in seeking to restore the worship of the early Church. We use common texts, hymns, canticles and prayers.

48. Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift in repentance and in faith (*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, B, para. 8). It is a sign of God's gracious activity in the life of the person baptised. Baptism in the name of the Triune God is the sacrament of union with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both our churches recognise that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit and that the one baptised is incorporated into the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Although the Free Church of England removed reference to baptismal regeneration from the Book of Common Prayer in reacting to some nineteenth century interpretations of the phrase, we are united today in our affirmation of the language of the Baptismal service in the Alternate Service Book. Baptism is related not only to a momentary experience, but to life-long growth into Christ. Both our churches offer baptism to adults and infants and regard it as unrepeatable. We take seriously our catechetical task for the nurture of baptised children to mature commitment to Christ. The life of the Christian is necessarily one of continuing struggle yet also of continuing experience of grace. In both our traditions baptism is followed by a rite of confirmation, administered by the bishop, which includes invocation of the Triune God, renewal of the baptismal profession of faith, prayer that through the renewal of the grace of baptism the candidate may be strengthened now and forever together with the laying on of hands by the bishop.

49. We believe that the celebration of the eucharist (or the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion) is the feast of the New Covenant instituted of Jesus Christ in which we set forth his life, death and resurrection and look for his coining in glory. In the eucharist the risen Christ gives his body and blood after an heavenly and spiritual manner (Article 28) in the receiving of the consecrated elements by the faithful in the Lord's Supper. The elements, after consecration become 'sure witnesses and signs of grace' (Article 25). In the Holy Communion Christ is truly present to share his risen life with us and to unite us with himself in his self-offering to the Father, the One, full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice which lie alone can offer and has offered once for all. In the Holy Communion, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church experiences the love of God and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ and proclaims his death and resurrection till he come (cf. BEM, E, para.1).

50. We believe and proclaim the gospel, that in his great love God, through Christ, redeems the world. We share a common witness in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion to the renewed understanding of the doctrines of grace from the Reformation period and a loyalty to this inheritance of faith as our inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation. We share a common understanding of God's justifying grace, i.e., that we are accounted righteous and are made righteous before God only by grace through

faith because of the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not on account of our works or merits (cf. Article 1 and the Report of ARC 1C II, Salvation and the Church). Both our traditions affirm that justification implies 'good works', authentic faith issues in love (James 2; 24)

51. We share a common hope in the final consummation of the kingdom of God, and believe that in this eschatological perspective we are called to work now for the furtherance of justice and peace. Our life in this world and in the Church is governed by the obligations of the Kingdom. The Christian faith is that God has made peace through Jesus 'by the blood of his cross' (Col. 1:20) so establishing the one valid centre for the unity of the whole human family (cf. Article 19).

52. We believe that the universal Church is manifested and sustained where a congregation gathers under the calling of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel is preached and the sacraments duly ministered (cf. Article 19). It is not a creation of individual believers. We believe that the Church is sent into the world as a sign, instrument and foretaste of the Kingdom of God. We also recognise that the Church being at the same time a human organisation stands in constant need of reform and renewal under Scripture and the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

53. We believe that all members of the Church are called to participate in its apostolic mission. The various gifts of the Holy Spirit are given for the building up of the community and fulfilment of its calling. Within the community of the Church the ordained ministry exists to serve the ministry of the whole people of God (Eph. 4:11). We hold the ordained ministry of word and sacrament to be a gift of God to his Church and therefore an office of divine institution.

54. Both our churches have a common ecclesiastical order focused in the three-fold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon and believe it to serve as an expression of the unity we seek and also a means of achieving it. Within this threefold ministry the bishop signifies and focuses the continuity and unity of the whole Church. Continuity with the apostles' doctrine and fellowship (Acts 2:42) and unity in both our churches is expressed in the consecration of bishops in the historic succession as is clear from the preface to the Ordinal in each Prayer Book. Ordination in both our churches is always by a bishop, with the assent of the community of the Church. Integrally linked with episcopal consecration is our common tradition that the bishop has a special pastoral care for the clergy as for the whole Church.

55. A ministry of oversight (episcopate) is a gift of God to the Church. In both our churches it is exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways. This ministry takes place within the Church as God's gift to the Church. The bishop focuses and expresses the unity and continuity of the Church and links Christian communities with each other. In our age the gift of persons in a ministry of oversight serves as a means of making our spiritual unity visible. Both our churches are committed to the maintenance of the historic episcopate and in our age believe it to hold a necessary place in safeguarding the visibility of unity and apostolic teaching of the Church. The structure and distribution of oversight are essentially the same, though locally adapted. In both our churches consecration to the episcopate is normally for a diocese.

56. Jesus Christ is the unique priest of the new covenant. Jesus' life was given as a sacrifice for all. Derivatively, the Church as a whole can be described as a priesthood (1 Peter 2: 9) for all members are called to offer themselves as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1) and to intercede for the Church and for the salvation of the world. Within the priesthood of the universal Church, the Holy Spirit sets apart those whom he has called and whose call is recognised and ratified by the Church. They are ordained to fulfil a representative function both in relation to Christ and in relation to the community of faith. Ordination is for life and is a gift of God to the Church. The Church of England retained the word 'priest' and continues to use it, agreeing with *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* that ordained ministers 'may appropriately be called priest because they fulfil a particularly priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful through word and sacraments, through their prayers of intercession, and through their pastoral guidance of the community'. The Church of England acknowledges that the New Testament does not use the word 'priest' to describe ministers, though Paul does refer to his ministry as 'priestly' (Rom. 15:16). In the Alternative Service Book the words 'priest' and 'presbyter' are used synonymously. The Free Church of England continued its witness to the pastoral nature of the presbyteral ministry in the face of nineteenth century attitudes. It maintains a concept of ordained ministry which is firmly rooted in Scripture.

57. The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry, nevertheless, a threefold pattern became the established pattern in the early Church and has been retained by our two churches and by many churches today. Both our churches find the

statements concerning the threefold ministry in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, consonant with their own understanding and historic formularies. We believe that the threefold ministry can serve today as a means of expressing our unity in Christ.

58. *Bishops* preach the Word, preside at the sacraments, and administer discipline in such a way as to be representative pastoral ministers of oversight, continuity and unity in the Church. They have pastoral oversight of the area to which they are called. They serve the apostolicity of the Church's teaching, worship and sacramental life. They have responsibility for leadership in the Church's mission. They relate the Christian community in their area to the wider Church, and the universal Church to their community. They, in communion with the presbyters and deacons and the whole community, are responsible for the orderly transfer of ministerial authority in the Church.

59. *Presbyters* serve as pastoral ministers of word and sacrament in a local eucharistic community. They are preachers and teachers of the faith, exercise pastoral care and bear responsibility for the discipline of the congregation to the end that the world might believe and that the entire membership of the Church may be renewed, strengthened and equipped in ministry. Presbyters have particular responsibility for the preparation of members for Christian life and ministry.

60. *Deacons* represent the work of the Church, both in their function in liturgy and in their service within the believing community and to the world. (Cf. BEM, para, 31). In this they reflect the interdependence of work and worship. Both churches are today discovering further depths in the distinctive ministry of deacons. Both churches ordain deacons for life and deacons enjoy a special relationship with the bishop of the diocese.***

61. In the substantial agreement in faith we have set down we have reflected agreement on those three issues which were areas of dispute between us in the last century: the understanding of baptism, the presence of Christ in the eucharist and the understanding of the priesthood of the ordained ministry.

IV NEXT STEPS

62. The common exposition of the goal of visible unity and the setting out of agreements in faith (including agreements in the three areas once a matter of dispute between us) have persuaded the group that the way is open for farther steps to be taken in closer fellowship on the way towards the full reconciliation of our churches.

63. In making the following recommendations the group has been increasingly aware of the family likeness that stems from our common history. We believe that:

- we have expressed a level of agreement which our churches have not set down together before;
- we have found sufficient agreement on the three theological issues that were areas of dispute and which led to division in the past to bring about a closer relationship.

64. We therefore recommend to the Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England and the Convocation of the Free Church of England that:

1. this report be sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop Primus of the Free Church of England as the initiators of these conversations;
2. this report be sent to all bishops of our two churches as those who have a particular responsibility for the unity of the Church;
3. at local level churches take deliberate steps to pray, worship and study together and to co-operate in furthering the mission of the Church. Full advantage should be taken of the provisions for shared life made by the existing canons of both churches including:
 - (i) welcoming communicant members of each other's churches to receive communion in our respective churches (cf. Canon B15A of the Church of England and the rubric of the Book of Common Prayer of the Free Church of England;
 - (ii) encouraging the invitation of authorised ministers of our churches to minister in each other's churches according to Canon B 43 of the Church of England and Canon 52 of the Free Church of England, and thereby to express the degree of communion that exists between us;
4. an annual informal meeting be held of representatives of our two churches, in order to discuss matters of relevance to both our churches;

5. bishops communicate and liaise on matters of mutual concern, especially regarding the ordained ministry and the extension of church work, including that in continental Europe,
6. where appropriate candidates for the ordained and lay ministries be trained together and participate in continuing ministerial formation together.

65. **If theological agreements set out in this report are affirmed, we recommend that both churches consider setting up formal conversations to build upon this agreement. In setting up formal conversations sensitivity would need to be shown to the disparity in size between our two churches.**

66. We understand the close relationship developing between our two churches is part of the movement towards the full visible unity of all Christian people in England, throughout the world and in all ages.

1 *Signs of the Spirit, Official Report*, WCC Seventh Assembly, ed. M. Kinnamon, Geneva, 1991, pp.172ff: 'The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling'.

2 Cf. Preface to the Ordinal in the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England and in the Book of Common Prayer of the Free Church of England.

3 While deacons have sometimes presided at the eucharist in the Free Church of England on behalf of the bishop, we are united in believing that as our churches grow together the need for this will disappear.

FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND / CHURCH OF ENGLAND TALKS CONCERNING CLOSER FELLOWSHIP 1992-1997

As a result of contact between the Rt Revd Arthur Ward and the Archbishop of Canterbury it was suggested that talks be held to investigate ways in which the two churches might draw closer to each other. Acting on a mandate from Convocation the Bishop Primus appointed a committee. Those who have served on this committee are the Bishop Primus (Chairman), Bishop Powell, the late Bishop Ward, the Revd W Lawler and the Revd Dr M Gretason. The Anglicans were led by the Bishop of Peterborough and assisted by the Very Revd Dr Richard Fenwick. As a result of the first few meetings Convocation and the Church of England Council for Christian Unity supported further discussion and the results were produced in a draft statement and report. This document was studied in detail in a two day session by a group appointed by the Bishop Primus which consisted of the serving committee plus the Revds A Fryer, J McLean, W Baker, P Hunt and K Parkinson. Mr Dennis Harvey, though unable to be present, submitted a paper. The extended committee unanimously accepted the draft report of which this is a summary.

The report is in four parts.

1 The Free Church of England in Context

This sets out in brief the history of the FCE and REC, charting the problems evangelical anglicans experienced with the intolerance of some Anglo Catholics for Reformation Anglicanism. It notes the positive attitude of the FCE towards the ministers of non-episcopal churches and the history of our special Prayer Book. More recently the FCE became a 'designated Church' by a vote of Convocation in 1991 which extended the recognition the FCE receives.

2. Our Common Calling to Full Visible Unity

The Church which Christ founded is described as the Body of Christ (Eph 4: 7, 11-13). It serves to unite all things in Christ (Eph 1:3, 9-10). In this context the fellowship and communion Christians ought to have with one another is now become more visible. All Christians are called to serve God as a corporate and royal priesthood. They are served by an ordained ministry given by God and by grace through Word and Sacrament. The Church is not a human organisation but the community of those who believe in Christ and are justified through grace. The disunity of the Church impairs Christ's mission to the world and also evangelism. The unity we seek is a goal which will reflect the different gifts God has given to the churches and to those people. It is diversity yet unity, bringing into harmonious working the different gifts of the Holy Spirit given to different churches and people. Because we are sinners we must work, under the power of the Spirit, to witness to our common Christian calling. This involves a shared faith, lived out grounded in Scripture and as expressed in the historic Creeds, a mutual recognition of the ordinances of the Churches (Baptism, Communion, Ordination) and structures for working together.

3. What we can now agree in faith.

This section lists what we have in common:-

- (a) We both accept the authority of Scripture
- (b) We both observe the Church's year
- (c) We both use Prayer Book worship
- (d) We both accept the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds
- (e) We observe the two biblical sacraments, Baptism and Communion
- (f) We see Baptism as part of Christian initiation which involves life long growth into Christ. Christianity involves personal commitment to Christ and the nurture of the baptised. Both churches practice confirmation as part of Christian initiation.
- (g) We accept Holy Communion as instituted by Christ. In it he gives himself 'after an heavenly and spiritual manner' to the faithful (Art 28). Communion is one of the 'sure witnesses and signs of grace' (Art 25). In it Christ unites us with himself so that we can share in this unique, once-for-all offering.
- (h) We accept our heritage in the renewed understandings of grace from the Reformation that we are accounted righteous only by grace through faith (Article 11). We acknowledge that authentic faith issues in love (James 2:24)
- (i) We look for the coming of the Kingdom of God when Christ will be all in all.

(j) We believe that the Church is to be found where a congregation gathers under the call of the Spirit and Word and Sacrament are maintained (Article 19).

(k) We accept the threefold ministry as historic and as a means of the expression of unity. Continuity with the apostles' doctrine and fellowship is expressed by the historic episcopate. Episcopal oversight is a gift of God to the church. Locally, the ministry of Christ is experienced through the work of Presbyters. The ordained ministry is given by Christ to the church though there is no blueprint in the New Testament in terms of patterns of ministry.

4 Next Steps

We believe that the level of agreement we have reached ought to be affirmed by our churches. There is sufficient agreement on the three issues that were areas of dispute in the last century for us to work more closely together. At local level we recommend that we should cooperate as fully as locally possible, encouraging exchange of pulpits, welcoming each other's communicant members, liaising at episcopal level on matters of mutual concern and sharing training resources for ordained and lay ministries. We believe we should now enter into further discussions to build on this agreement.

Appendix 3

ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF “A Report of the Free Church of England and the Church of England Informal Conversations 1992-96”

This document was presented to the members of Convocation on the first day of the 1997 Convocation. Each Church was given one copy and all its representatives present were required to read it before the vote on the Wednesday. The Report was read hurriedly and yet it had an impact on many persons present.

May I express sincere gratitude to the authors of the Report for providing us with so thorough a synopsis of their thinking. The document does make it abundantly clear where the FCE is being led. The issues are now out in the open and if in future, those who take the route recommended by the Report, find themselves involved with and committed to courses of action long since repudiated by the founders of the FCE, they can hardly complain. All has been made clear.

The Report reveals that the FCE is under radical reconstruction. If its recommendations are ever implemented, the Church as we have known it will cease to exist. Without altering the Constitutional Documents of the FCE, the Report commences a transformation of the FCE from a Protestant and Evangelical cause into a pre-Reformation, Sacramental Church.

Firstly, the Report itself undertakes a profound revision and re-interpretation of the History of the FCE. Secondly, the Report, by means of a declaration, re-defines and so re-constituted the Church, transforming the present church from a Word-based Church into a Sacrament-based Community, in which the role of the Bishop is radically upgraded. Thirdly, the Report, again largely by means of declaration, surrenders the doctrinal ground that constituted the distinctives of the FCE in the 19th century and in doctrinal terms, makes the FCE a ‘Broad Church’.

The fallacy that runs through the whole Report is its representation of the current situation within the Anglican Church. There is what has to be called an anachronistic misrepresentation of the modern Church of England. That body is represented in the Report as adhering to the Apostles Creed and to the 39 Articles. It maybe that the members of the Report are unaware that the Church of England, without altering its Constitutional Documents, has undergone a radical reconstruction. While the 39 Articles and the 1662 Book of Common Prayer are still officially recognised, there are vast numbers of bishops, clergy and people within the Church of England who no longer adhere to their doctrinal content. Bishops swear to uphold the 39 Articles at their consecration and thereafter proceed to write books denying them. That is hypocrisy of the worst kind. The Report is recommending that the FCE get on board with such people, who adhere in name to Protestant and Evangelical truths while in practice they deny them. It is not as though the talks were with ‘Reform’ or some other Evangelical Group within the Anglican Church.

1. THE HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FCE.

A comparison of the official History of the Free Church of England and the re-construction of that history undertaken in this Report reveals that those who stand by the Report are committed to a profound re-evaluation of the origins of the FCE. The founders of the FCE are transformed from persons of integrity and strong Protestant faith and conviction into nervous and emotional reactionaries to the ritualistic movement of the day.¹

To label these persons as ‘anti-ritualists’ may serve the purpose of the authors of this report but is at the least a purely negative and one-sided description of them and at worst a deliberately misleading and factually inaccurate description. The aside, placed in brackets, in paragraph 28 ‘(in accordance with its anti-ritualist roots)’ falls into the second category. These persons’ roots belong firmly in the Reformation and go deep into the Protestant convictions of many in this country. They were forced out of the Church of England by those of its members who reconstructed that Church from a wholly Protestant Church in 1800 to a mirror image of the Catholic Church by 1875.

By repeatedly using the term 'anti-ritualists' for the founders of the FCE, the authors of this Report deny to our forefathers the right of self-identification. They identified themselves at the time as Protestants. As a matter of factual accuracy, their 'roots' long pre-date the ritualist movement of the 19th century.

I have a list of other historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations contained in this Report but the above is sufficient to make the point and sound the alarm.

In view of the ecumenical character of the talks that have been held already and the acknowledged ecumenical methods adopted in those discussions, it may be helpful to point out a further inaccuracy and serious misrepresentation of the facts.

Twice the astonishing claim is made that the FCE has not involved itself in ecumenical drives or in the WCC on account of its financial restraints.² This must be news to many members of the FCE. Admittedly there are two parties in the FCE, one keen to engage in ecumenical activities on any basis and the other cautious lest it sacrifice truth in the process. The authors of the Report clearly identify with the first group. But their own preferences do not justify a misrepresentation of the facts. The FCE has not rushed into ecumenical activity for good doctrinal reasons least we fudge issues of principle and truth. In addition, some members of the FCE are aware that the ecumenical movement has long since become an inter-faith movement and that with the approval of some of the leaders of the Anglican Church.

This particular mistake in the Report does give the impression that its authors are prepared to ride roughshod over the sincere convictions of those in the FCE who wish to pursue unity on a sounder doctrinal basis.

The claim that Bishop Cummins' withdrawal was due to his concern for ecumenism fails to distinguish between his desire for fellowship with other evangelical and Reformed Christians on the basis of wide agreement in doctrine with the modern ecumenical movement. The Report is deliberately confusing things that differ.³

2. THE ECCLESIASTICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FCE.

This Report undertakes a radical ecclesiastical reconstruction and transformation of the FCE from an evangelical and Reformed Protestant Church into a Sacramental Church.

It is noteworthy that the Report gives a great deal of space to the Episcopacy. In Sacramental Churches the role of the Episcopacy is greatly increased. The distinction hitherto preserved between the concept of episcopacy in the FCE and the practice of the Church of England is obliterated by this Report.

The re-definition of the Church from a Protestant and Reformed Church into a Sacramental Church is achieved on page 21, para 39.⁴ The claim is made that according to the Scriptures, the Church is a fellowship, grounded in the life of the Holy Trinity, established by baptism inseparable from faith and conversion! The Scriptures teach no such doctrine of the Church. In Scripture, the Word always takes priority over the Sacrament. Apart from the Word, the Sacrament has no meaning. If Church-membership is viewed 'covenantally', it is the word of promise that makes persons, even children, heirs of the promises of God – but not necessarily inheritors.⁵ The sacrament came later to confirm the word of promise. It is not the Sacrament that makes persons members of the Church but the Word of God. In terms of adult membership of the Church community, profession of faith is essential requirement. None should be confirmed unless they make a credible profession of faith. This profession of faith is confirmed by participation in the Sacrament. Again, the Sacrament does not establish the Church fellowship, it confirms it.

Equally disturbing is the reference to 'baptism inseparable from faith and conversion'. This radical claim is hardly ever made even by proponents of "believers' baptism"! The implication is that every baptised person, irrespective of age or conviction, is by baptism constituted a converted believer. This is neither the teaching of Scripture nor the doctrine of the FCE. In point of fact, this is one of the very teachings in opposition to which the FCE was originally established. Hitherto the FCE has always resisted and repudiated any suggestion of baptismal regeneration. Yet, this Report, in a brief statement reverts to a Sacramental view of the Church, based on the concept of baptismal regeneration. Thereafter the authors of the Report are able to refer to the local Church, now redefined, as "a local eucharistic community".⁶

Page 23 commits the FCE to unity on the basis of this ecclesiastical reconstruction. “The sharing of one baptism, the celebrating of one eucharist and the service of a reconciled, common ministry in the historic episcopal succession.” At present baptism as practised in the FCE is far removed from that practised in many parts of the Church of England; the ‘eucharist’ practiced in many an Anglican Churches today is nothing short of the Mass; the common ministry assumes that the FCE accepts the priesthood of the clergy and the Anglican view of the episcopacy.

The issues raised are not merely a difference of emphasis or verbal niceties. What we have here is a deliberate and radical reconstruction of the FCE. Let it not be foisted upon us unawares. Those who want to belong to such a Sacramental Church are free to do so. They should do the honourable thing and leave the FCE and not attempt to subvert the FCE from within.

3. THE DOCTRINAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FCE.

On page 2 it is said that the doctrinal formularies of the FCE are “often defined negatively” and these doctrinal statements are described as “exclusive statements” and as “different emphases”.⁷

These expressions serve to soften the reader up for complete reversal of the doctrinal position of the FCE. In fact and reality it is **not true** that our formularies are *often defined negatively*. The doctrines of the Prayer Book and 39 Articles are stated generally in positive terms. Where necessary a position is also expressed negatively. Again, to reduce different doctrinal positions to ‘differing emphases’ is at least an understatement of the fact of real and substantial differences in understanding and conviction. The expression “exclusive statements” is **ecumenical double-speak** for clear statements of truth that are not open to differing interpretations. The fault found in the doctrinal propositions of the FCE is that they are clear enough to exclude the opposite positions. Thank God for that!

The bold claim of page 2 regarding “the theological agreement we are now able to affirm together” pre-supposes a radical reconstruction of the doctrinal position of the FCE. In the first place, it must be asked, what is meant by “to affirm together”? Or, what does it mean to say, “We accept...” as in para 45, 46?⁸ The Report claims that the FCE and the Church of England hold “a common confession of the apostolic faith grounded in Holy Scripture and set forth in the historic creeds, expressed in word and life”.⁹ It sounds great, but what does it mean in these days? Many in the Church of England affirm these things in their ordination under oath and go on to deny them in teaching and in practice. Is that how we also are to affirm these doctrines? Are we to be as hypocritical as so many of them? Are we also to pay lip-service to the Scriptures and the historic creeds of the church while denying them in our teaching and in our living?

The ecclesiastical reconstruction summarised on page 23 commits the FCE to a doctrinal reconstruction of massive proportions. Black is now white; error is now truth. The authors of the Report are not asking members of the FCE to abandon their doctrinal position, only to express it in terms that are **not exclusive**, so that we may enter into visible union with those who hold the opposite opinion. But that is precisely what men of faith, conviction and integrity cannot do.

There are three doctrinal areas in view here, in particular: “we have reflected agreement on those three issues which were areas of dispute between us in the last century: the understanding of baptism, the presence of Christ in the eucharist and the understanding of the priesthood of the ordained ministry.”¹⁰

At this point a separate paper needs to be written on each of these three major issues.

The statement on Baptism,¹¹ contains declarations that are untrue biblically and incorrect as statements of fact. The relation of baptism and faith is incorrectly formulated in so far as it is formulated at all. The status of the baptised person as a member of the church is inadequately stated. The claim that the FCE ‘removed reference to baptismal regeneration from the Book of Common Prayer in reacting to some nineteenth century interpretations of the phrase’ is highly misleading and reveals an ignorance of the difficulties many had with the expression over the preceding 200 years. The language of the Alternative Service Book on Baptism is widely acknowledged to be open to opposite interpretations – it was deigned to that end. It is certainly not ‘exclusive language’ and that is not acceptable to the FCE according to its Constitution.

The statement on the Lord's Supper also requires a fuller examination. The adoption of the term 'eucharist' is new in the FCE and is open to challenge.¹² The statements made differ from the FCE Prayer Book in that they avoid "exclusive language" and define the presence of Christ in the Supper in very clear and precise terms. This statement fudges the issue. The FCE rejected that fudge last century and should not return to it now without being unfaithful to Scripture and to the Constitution of our Church.

It is somewhat of a relief to find mention of the 39 Articles of Religion.¹³ Hitherto the Report speaks only of the Creeds of the Early Church.

Finally there is the issue of whether Ministers should be called Priests. The basis for this alteration is laid down on page 29, in para 56. The ordained ministry is said to have "a representative function both in relation to Christ and in relation to the community of faith". This statement needs to be unpacked. Distinctions need to be made between the prophetic function that represents God to man and the priestly function that represents man to God. To describe the activities of a minister – the word and sacraments, prayer and pastoral guidance – as priestly functions is open to serious challenge. It seems to threaten both the priesthood of all believers on the one hand and the unique priesthood of Christ Jesus on the other hand. It claims for the minister more than God has vested in him. But this Report has adopted well-established ecumenical procedures and it is not aiming for **clarity** but for **non-exclusive language** which each user may interpret as they see fit, so as to achieve the overriding aim of unity irrespective of truth. The FCE in its Constitutional documents sets its face against calling ministers 'priests' and we should not be prepared to compromise that position. A Presbyterian is an ambassador of Christ to the people in so far as he speaks the truth but he is not a mediator between the people and God and a wise Presbyterian will avoid that position at all costs for it belongs to Christ Jesus and to Him alone.

There are many other doctrinal issues that require clarification. What precisely is meant by "bonds of communion" on page 23? The lack of depth in the Report at this stage is alarming.

As stated above, the aim of the Report is not to alter our convictions so much as to express them in non-exclusive language so as to make us in doctrinal terms a 'broad Church', ready for union with modern Anglicanism. If we ever agree to such a re-construction of our doctrinal position, we will inevitably cease to exist for we will have entirely lost our distinctive identity.

This Report is nothing less than a blue-print for the demise the FCE. Let us stand by our Constitutional positions, holding fast to the faith, unmoveable and unshakeable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

¹ Page 9, para 9: "The FCE was born out of the impassioned anti-ritualist controversies of the 1840s and 1850s... But ritualism was met by increasingly sharp opposition from a nervous population."

² Page 14, para 23: "The Ecumenical drives... have largely passed the FCE by. This was simply because of shortage of manpower, abiding poverty, and the inevitable isolation of the small members of church communities widely spread." And Page 15, para 26: "However, continuing financial restrictions have meant that the denomination is not a member of the World Council of Churches – though some within the FCE have requested the possibility of this."

³ Page 15, para 24: "It must be noted that, long before this, the fundamental cause of the withdrawal of Cummins from PECUSA in 1873 was very much his concern for ecumenism..."

⁴ Page 21, para 39: "...the reality of a koinonia – a communion which is grounded in the life of the Holy Trinity. ..This community – koinonia – according to the Scriptures is established by a baptism inseparable from faith and conversion."

⁵ "I shall be your God and the God of your children after you."

⁶ Page 31, para 59.

⁷ Page 2, para 3: "The theological agreement we are now able to affirm together encourages us to believe that we have moved through a position of recognising the historical forces which led to exclusive statements to one in which we can respect and understand our different emphases within the quest for the unity of the Church which is our common goal."

⁸ Page 25.

⁹ Page 23, para 43.

¹⁰ Page 31, para 61.

¹¹ Page 26, para 48.

¹² In the Lord's Supper, Jesus as Head of the Church offers His people bread and wine. The direction of the 'offering' is from Him to us. In the Catholic Mass, an offering is made to God, the reverse direction. The term 'eucharist', thanksgiving, is a half-way house and crucially reverts to the Catholic direction of the offering as though the essence of the Holy Communion were an offering from us to God. That is dangerous.

¹³ Page 27, para 50.

Appendix 4

EPISCOPACY: ITS CHARACTER AND FUNCTION.

Rt Revd Dr J Barry Shucksmith, Free Church of England (Evangelical Connexion)

The Septuagint (LXX) gives EPISKOPOS the generic meaning of “superintendency”, “oversight”, “searching” (Numbers 4:16, 31:14) in matters pertaining to the Church, the State, and the Army (Judges 9:28, 2 Kings 12:11, 2 Chronicles 34:12,17).

Nor is EPISKOPOS unknown to Classical Greek. Thus Homer, in the Iliad applied it to the gods (xxii 255). In Athens the Governors of conquered states were given this title.

THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND.

When we come to the New Testament we find the word once applied to Christ Himself, “the shepherd and bishop (RSV Guardian) of your souls”. (1 Peter 2:25 AV).

The word abounds in Pauline literature and is used as an alternative for PRESBYTEROS translated “elder” (Titus 1:5,7: 1 Timothy 3:1, 4:14, 5:17,19).

The earliest ecclesiastical offices instituted in the Church were those of elders and deacons. As early as A.D. 50, Paul appointed “elders” in every church, with prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23).

But in writing to the Philippians (1:1) he speaks of “bishops” and “deacons”. In the Gentile Christian Churches this title evidently had been adopted; and it is only in the pastoral epistles that we find the name Presbyters applied. The name presbyter or elder, familiar to the Jews, signifies their age and place in the church, while the other term bishop refers rather to their office; but both evidently refer to the same persons.

Their office is defined as ruling (Romans 12:8), overseeing (Acts 20:17, 28, 1 Peter 5:2), caring for the flock of God (Acts 20:28: 1 Peter 5:2). But the Greek ARCHEIN, to rule, in the hierarchical sense, is never used. Each church had a college of presbyter – bishops (Acts 20:17, 28, Philippians 1:1, Timothy 4:14). During Paul’s lifetime the Church was evidently still unaware of the distinction between presbyters and bishops. It has to be said that the distinction between presbyters and bishops can be maintained only by a forced exegesis of the scriptures.

Whether the bishops referred to in the New Testament constitute a separate group or again denote a function that might be exercised by others is much debated.

Some contend that according to Paul’s address in Acts 20, all the Ephesian elders are obviously bishops, or exercise an episcopal function (v 17). Others argue that, while all bishops are elders, not all elders are necessarily bishops.

The term EPISKOPOS occurs so rarely in the New Testament, that we can enumerate the occurrences:-

In Acts 20:17,28 the elders of Ephesus are addressed as bishops. In Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy salute the bishops and deacons. In 1 Timothy 3:1 and Titus 1:7 there are references to the appointment and qualifications of bishops. And in 1 Peter 2:25 Christ himself is called the “Bishop of Souls”.

In summary, quoting G. W. Bromiley, we can say:

From the New Testament, under Christ the Head, there is a ministry or function of pastoral oversight for the nurture of the Churches. No clear information is given, however, on the many questions raised in subsequent discussion, for example, whether there is a distinct order of bishops, whether this inherits the authority of the apostolate, what is its relation to the eldership, how many bishops there ought to be in one place, how they should be appointed and ordained etc. The probability seems to be that as yet there is only the function of oversight, which might be exercised by apostles, prophets, elders etc. On the other hand there is a distinct New Testament tendency (i) for one man to emerge as at least the supreme overseer, possibly on the model of the order of the Synagogue (cf:

James, Timothy, Titus) and (ii) for the various functions of prophecy, teaching and even perhaps Evangelism to be assimilated to that of oversight in more settled congregational conditions.¹

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

When we come to the Apostolic Fathers the situation is no clearer. The data, in the immediate post-apostolic age, is as uncertain and contradictory as in the New Testament.

In the DIDACHE we still have reference to itinerant apostles and prophets.

In 1 CLEMENT we hear again of bishops and deacons, as also of elders, although there is the famous passage, again disputed, on the theme of apostolic succession. Does Clement really mean that the Apostles arranged for successors to the Bishops already appointed by them? Either way, his concern is not with the transference of grace and prerogatives, but with orderly continuation in ministry.

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH poses a more difficult problem, for in six of his epistles he presents us rather suddenly, with a developed threefold structure of one bishop supported by elders and deacons. There now seems to be (i) a clear differentiation of terms and (ii) the emergence of a single bishop as Head of the Church and true focus of its unity. Ignatius is in the 2nd century but strangely, the picture presented by Ignatius is not uniformly supported by other writings of that period.

Even POLYCARP, to whom Ignatius wrote, mentions only two orders of Ministers and the same is true of HERMAS.

Even as late as A.D. 755 the debate still continued. What about presbyters? Were they simply delegates of the bishops, in whom alone true ministry was invested, or were they ministers in their own right, although under episcopal supervision for the sake of good order?

Serious attempts were made to enforce the view that presbyters were simply delegates of the bishops, at the Council of Vern in A.D. 755. The great JEROME – who was probably a disappointed candidate for the Roman Bishopric, emerged as a champion of the parity of essential ministry. This was the view that finally prevailed in medieval theology.

BISHOP J. B. LIGHTFOOT AND EPISCOPACY

As far as we are concerned one of the defining moments, in Church History, was the publication of Bishop J. B. Lightfoot's brilliant and scholarly work: THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY, which carefully analyses these apostolic and sub-apostolic documents.

Lightfoot lays the charge at CYPRIAN'S feet! The corruption of a single biblical concept of episcopacy into a necessary foundation-stone of the ecclesiastical edifice is due, in no small measure, to this Bishop of Carthage (200-258). Cyprian is known for his advanced view of the Church and his statements:

He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother

And again:

There is no salvation outside of the Church.

His high view of the Church is mirrored in an equally developed view of the Episcopate! As Lightfoot states it:

Though the presbyters may still have retained the shadow of a controlling power over the acts of the bishop, though the courtesy of language by which they were recognised as fellow presbyters was not laid aside, yet for all practical ends the independent supremacy of the Episcopate was completely established by the principles and the measures of Cyprian.²

THE REFORMED EPISCOPATE

We must now turn to consider Episcopacy and the Church of England. Let us consider, for a brief moment, the reformed Episcopate.

There is remarkable agreement among the reformers both on the Continent and in England, for all their differences of emphasis, that the primary task of the Church is the preaching of the Gospel and that this task is constitutive of the Christian Ministry. Questions of polity or of church order are therefore definitely secondary, peripheral and even indifferent.

LUTHER'S VIEW OF BISHOPS

Both Luther and Melancthon make a fundamental distinction between the pastoral office which includes the preaching of the Gospel, the cure of souls, and the exercise of the keys, on the one hand and matters of polity and order on the other.

For Luther, the Church clearly precedes the Ministry in the logic of divine grace. The Church is not dependent on the ordained Ministry, as in traditional Roman Catholic theology; rather the Ministry is dependent on the Church.

Luther consistently and characteristically lays the emphasis not on the office but on the GOSPEL that creates the office:

*"Wherever the Church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists and the right to proclaim the Gospel carries with it all other necessary authority, for all the various ecclesiastical functions are subservient to that of preaching the Gospel."*³

John Calvin follows the German reformers in holding that polity is a secondary matter. He is more specific. In the New Testament, bishops and presbyters are synonymous, but it was inevitable, Calvin thinks, that a moderatorial system should have developed whereby one of the presbyters presided over his brethren. Calvin dislikes the word hierarchy but revealingly adds: If, disregarding the term, we look to the thing, we shall find that the ancient bishops had no wish to frame a form of Church Government different from that which God has prescribed in his Word (Institutes IV, iv.4; cf iv.2, iv.8; cc Titus., 357 ff: Acts 2:183; Phil. 227).⁴

Richard Hooker (1553-1600) is perhaps the greatest theologian that the Church of England ever had. His major work is ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY. This is an important work, even 400 years later, because of its immense historical importance and also its continuing relevance in defining the principal ethos and practice of the Church of England. This is uniquely true at a time when many Anglican values are being called in question, not least within the Church itself.

What did Hooker believe about Episcopacy? How did the Church of England perceive the office in that period of reformation and reformation?

Book VII Chapter 3 on the OFFICE OF BISHOP

A bishop is a minister of God, unto whom with permanent continuance there is given not only power of administering the Word and Sacraments, which power other presbyters have; but also a further power to ordain ecclesiastical persons and a power of chieftly in Government over presbyters as well as laymen, a power to be by way of jurisdiction a pastor even to pastors themselves. So that this office, as he is a presbyter or pastor, consisteth in those things which are common unto him with other pastors, as in Ministering the Word and Sacraments: but those things incident unto his office, which do properly make him a bishop, cannot be common unto him with other pastors.

Book VII Chap. xiii 3; xviii 4-6 on the value of Episcopal Authority.

The cause wherefore (bishops) were so soon universally appointed was, for that it plainly appeared that without them the Church could not have continued long. It was by the special providence of God no doubt so disposed that the evil whereof this did serve for remedy might first be felt and so the reverend authority of bishops be made by so much the more effectual, when our general experience had taught men what it was for churches to want them. Episcopal authority was even in a manner sanctified unto the Church of Christ by that little bitter experience which

it first had of the pestilent evil of schisms. Constitutions and canons made for the ordering of church affairs are dead taskmasters. The due execution of laws spiritual dependeth most upon the vigilant care of the chiefest spiritual Governors; whose charge is to see that such laws be kept by the clergy and people under them: with those duties which the law of God and the ecclesiastical canons require in the clergy...

Book VII xiv 11 on Episcopal Succession

*Where the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain; in case of such necessity, the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes and may give, place. And therefore we are not simply without exception to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of bishops, in every effectual ordination.*⁵

BISHOP JOHN JEWEL

That other architect of the reformed Church of England, Bishop John Jewel, is no less adamant. No doctrine of a crude apostolic succession for him!

In his APOLOGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, Bishop Jewel writes:-

*For a bishop, as saith Augustine, 'is a name of labour and not of honour', because he would have that man understand himself to be no bishop who will seek to have pre-eminence and not to profit others. And that neither the Pope, nor any other worldly creature, can no more be head of the whole Church, or a bishop over all, than he can be the Bridegroom, the Light, the Salvation and Life of the Church: for these privileges and names belong only to Christ and be properly and only fit for Him alone.*⁶

But far more important was the contention of the reformers that the true succession of the Apostles lay in the faithful handing down of their teaching. A Ministry which preserved and passed on the Apostolic doctrine and manner of life was indeed genuinely an Apostolic Ministry. This Rome had failed to do and so the claim to have maintained an unbroken line from the Apostles was spiritually worthless.

THE 39 ARTICLES OF RELIGION

When we turn to the 39 Articles of Religion, the studied breadth and generality of statement, concerning the Ministry, is recognised by all and it is significant that amid the acute controversies of the reformation period, the terminology of these Articles was never modified. Bishop Gibson recognises the fact that these documents are remarkably silent on the question of episcopacy, even when they might have been reasonably expected to shed some light.⁷

Article 36, for example, says that Episcopacy is not in itself superstitious or ungodly. This amounts, says Bishop Gibson, to no more than saying that it is an allowable form of Church Government and leaves open the question whether it is the only one.

This question is not decided for us elsewhere in the Articles; for even where we might have reasonably expected some light to be thrown upon it we are met with a remarkable silence. The Articles, then, leave us without any real guidance on the question whether Episcopacy is to be regarded as necessary.

With further regard to the 39 Articles we should note the following:

- (i). The opening Preface comes from the pen of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, who was in constant fellowship with non-Episcopalians and while maintaining episcopacy for the Church of England did not insist on it for the Church Universal.
- (ii). The wording of the Prayer Book Preface is marked by caution for there is no definition of the apostles, no reference to a distinct order of bishops as superior to presbyters, no reference to any universal establishment of the three orders from the apostles' time and entire silence as to the crucial point of the method of ordaining bishops.

(iii). It must never be forgotten that the act of Ordination infers authority to perform duties, not power.

(iv). It is well known that Cranmer, the author of the first sentence and nearly the whole paragraph of the Preface, expressly maintained that presbyters and bishops were originally identical and that the development that made them distinct and gave bishops rule of presbyters was of human origin.

(v). In the original Ordinal, before 1662, there was no difference in the word for ordaining bishops and presbyters and the same passages of scripture were used for both.

(vi). The doctrine of no bishop, no Church did not come into the English Church as part of the heritage from the Medieval Church of Rome. It was not heard of for fifty years until after the time of Cranmer
The late Dr. Pocock, a well known High Church Historian wrote in the Guardian, 23rd November, 1892,

*The belief in the Apostolic Succession in the Episcopate is not to be found in any of the writings of the Elizabethan Bishops.*⁸

The Ordinal

It is abundantly evident in all parts of the Prayer Book with what reverend estimation the Ministry is held in the Church of England and the Ordinal or Form and Manner of ordaining the Ministry, has been drawn up by the Church for the purpose of continuing the Orders of Ministry. A careful study of the Ordination Services should afford clear proof of what the Ministry is and is intended to do.

So, what is the character and function of Episcopacy according to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer?

The difference between the form for bishops and for presbyters seems to be rather a difference of degree than of kind. There is one exception to the bishop alone is given the power of Ordination.

This surely, points to the primitive idea of Episcopacy as having originally arisen out of the Order of the Presbyterate.

The presbyters, who in the New Testament are also called bishops or overseers (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3:1), originally appointed one of their number to act as elder or president, to whom the title of bishop gradually became applied and limited.⁹

The Questions and Answers which follow the exhortation indicate the work of a bishop as principally apologetic, didactic and pastoral. This can only be maintained and furthered by constant reference to Holy Scripture, in preaching and teaching.

Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?

Are you determined out of the same Holy Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge?

Will you faithfully exercise yourself in the same Holy Scriptures and call upon God by prayer for the true understanding of the same?

Be you ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word?

The bishop is nothing if he is not a dedicated student of scripture, a master of biblical theology, a preacher/teacher, and a doughty Defender of the Faith. All else is secondary and peripheral!

EPISCOPACY AND THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

A body of Christians called the Free Church Of England assembled and worshipped in this country in the year 1844 and continues as a religious body to this day, being registered in chancery by Deed Poll dated 31st August, 1863.

In the year 1873, a Body of Christians called the Reformed Episcopal Church was formed in America by the Right Reverend George David Cummins, D.D., a duly consecrated Bishop of the Church of God, and in episcopal succession derived from the ancient See of Canterbury.

The historic Episcopate was conferred upon the Free Church., of England, by the Right Reverend Edward Cridge, D.D., of the Reformed Episcopal Church, on 30th August, 1876, and ever since “this Church recognises and adheres to Episcopacy, not as of Divine Right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of church policy”.¹⁰

How does the Free Church of England further crystallise its views on Episcopacy? Basically in its HANDBOOK FOR THE CLERGY – Part 1, (pages 16-24). This can be summarized as following:

*The phrase “Apostolic Succession” does not always mean the same thing. As it was first used, the meaning was vastly different from what it now connotes. The phrase Historical Succession means no more than the faithful continuance of Apostolic custom and practice; the perpetuation of offices established in the most primitive time, as set forth in the New Testament it means that Bishops are “successors of the Apostles” in the sense that they perform the same duties as the Apostles exercised in their times. Of any idea that their spiritual gifts depended upon transmission from the Apostles, or that they in turn transmitted grace to others which had come to them from the Apostles, there is no evidence at all.*¹¹

THE BISHOP – A PRESIDING OFFICER

The same theme is taken up by Bishop Charles Edward Cheney in a useful book entitled WHAT REFORMED EPISCOPALIANS BELIEVE. Dr. Cheney was one of that small group, who for conscience’ sake, met with Bishop G. D. Cummins on 2nd December, 1873, and founded the Reformed Episcopal Church; he was consecrated by Cummins after a unanimous election by the Synod of Chicago, as its first Bishop.

While rejecting an unbiblical theory of Apostolic Succession, Bishop Cheney argues for the practical value of having in the Church a presiding officer. No Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church can ever be “a lord over God’s heritage”. But as an adviser and friend, he stands among his fellow ministers as a presiding officer. Dr. Cheney elucidates further:

- (i)..... The Reformed Bishop should be a mediator and arbitrator, when differences spring up between ministers and their congregation.
- (ii). Moreover, he can “stir up the stronger parishes to support the weak” .
- (iii). While Reformed Episcopalians do not hold episcopacy as necessary to a valid ministry and a true Church –nevertheless it links up with the glorious reformers of the English Church. Their polity is ours.

On the question of Canon Law and the so-called requirement of “three bishops to consecrate”, Cheney cites Dr. Pusey, a high churchman of the last century:-

“Consecration by one bishop is valid”.

Canon Liddon is also quoted:

“A consecration by one bishop is valid. All orders conferred by a bishop so consecrated are undoubtedly valid.”

These, and other important aspects of the historic episcopate are to be found specifically in two additional documents relating to the Free Church of England, (i) the sermon preached in Christ Church, Chicago, on Sunday, 14th December, 1873, by Bishop Cummins at the consecration of Dr. C. E. Cheney (now Appendix 1 in a History Of The Free Church of England), and (ii) the booklet on THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE (1965) produced by the Free Church of England publications committee. The concluding paragraph (page 11) is a fitting summary of the Free Church of England/Reformed Episcopal position:-

In conclusion, the Episcopacy to which we adhere is not of Divine Right or of direct Apostolic institution, but is a primitive Episcopacy, the development of the practice and custom of the Apostles; the Episcopacy of Polycarp and Ignatius and not of Irenaeus and Cyprian, found existing almost universally in the churches of the second century; our Episcopacy which is the bond and centre of unity, which claims no prerogative of containing in itself the only Divine order of Christ's Church; a polity which, limited and controlled by wise safeguards, is admirably fitted to promote the well-being of the whole visible Church of Christ. ¹²

SOME MODERN IDEAS NOT BIBLICAL OR REFORMED

We must draw to a conclusion but not before noting some shift of emphasis in the modern Episcopate, a movement all too evident in the Mother Church but, hopefully, not to be found in the Free Church of England or the Reformed Episcopal Church.

We have seen how, originally, episcopacy had been defended as the normative, developing and approved order of the Church, with the one absolutely indispensable mark of a church taken to be its continuance in Apostolic and Scripture teaching. Today, there is a serious drift.

MANAGERIAL IDEAS CONTRADICT SCRIPTURE

Now, episcopacy has come to count as a factor that grounds the identity of the Church. It is this high church tradition which was not only reasserted by the Tractarian movement and its posterity, but encouraged by the thoughts of F.D. Maurice, who saw in the episcopal institution, as he put it, one of the appointed and indispensable signs of a spiritual and universal society. ¹³

This moves the discussion to a debate between *esse* and *bene esse* or *plene esse* (full being), as some see it! Additional problems have also recently surfaced in the issue of collegiality, i.e. the relation between the bishop's role as one who speaks to the Church and his role as one who speaks for the church and with it.

Anglicans also have become aware of the cultural and social models that shape, and to some extent distort, their perception of the episcopal office. It is easy, in modern Western societies, for the bishop's authority to be modelled on that of the expert manager who gets results, or on that of the political representative who is elected to forward the views and interests of a particular constituency. ¹⁴ For this reason episcopacy and concepts of episcopal character and function must be rigorously scrutinized in the light of biblical teaching and the purer period of apostolic innocence.

As far as the Free Church of England is concerned this is not even a debate. The Constitution (Article 1) is both adamant and perspicuous, the word of God the sole Rule of Faith and Practice. This Church cannot, without constitutional irregularity, develop an episcopate outside the biblical norms. It notes, for example, that managerial gifts and administrative ability, however desirable, are no part of the required qualifications for a bishop, outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

Furthermore, the gift of government or administration in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 12:28; cf. Romans 12:8), appears before the early church's organisation, and it took the form of sound advice and wise judgment in directing church affairs. It, therefore, has little parallel with modern managerial technique. There is also the important Acts 6 passage in which apostolic organisation, in the appointment of Deacons, was specifically to safeguard their own ministry of prayer, study, and preaching. It is noteworthy that even this piece of charitable administration was handed over to the Church: "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts. 6:2-4).

BISHOP SOLELY A RULING/TEACHING ELDER

Bearing in mind that the Bishop, in function, is still a ruling/teaching elder, we may quote R.B. Kuiper, with approval:-

*Although the minister is both a ruling and a teaching elder his central task is to teach men the Word of God ... in fact, if he performs those duties faithfully, it is difficult to see how he can find time for much besides. Therefore, if he is wise, he will relate his work as ruling elder directly to his work as teaching elder. The most valuable contribution that he can make to the rule of the Church is to inform himself and the other ruling elders concerning the teaching of Holy Scripture on the subject of Church Government.*¹⁵

¹ G.W.BROMILEY. International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia – Episcopacy, P.517, 1988. W.B.Eerdmans Grand Rapids, USA

² J.B.LIGHTFOOT. The Christian Ministry, P. 97, 1901. MacMillian and Co. London.

³ P.D.L.AVIS. The Church in the Theology of the Reformers, P.111,1981. Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London.

⁴ P.D.L.AVIS. Op. CIT., P115.

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Appendix 5

IS THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND A CHRISTIAN CHURCH? A REPLY TO BISHOP KENNETH J W POWELL'S CIRCULAR LETTER

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

From the Bishop Primus 17th April 2004

Dear Council Clerk,

The Free Church of England Council met at St Andrew's Church, Bentley on the 13th April to discuss the status of those refusing to accept the jurisdiction of the bishops of this church. I was asked by Council to send this letter to you in my capacity as Bishop Primus, as a Church in good standing, with the request you communicate its contents to the officers and members of your Church.

I have also been asked to send a copy to those congregations from which notice in writing has been received that the Minister and/or Congregation do not accept the jurisdiction of the bishops of the Free Church of England.

At the above mentioned meeting Council considered the advice given by the Denominational Solicitors, which was that those dissenting that they do not accept the jurisdiction of Bishop Powell and Bishop McLean, cannot be allowed to sign the Clergy and Lay Declarations under Article IV because they have effectively placed themselves outside the Free Church of England, as they cannot make the statement within that declaration that they "*will pay true and canonical obedience to the lawful authorities of the said Church*". Nor can they make the statement within the declaration in Form 'G' that they will, "*by God's help, pay true and canonical obedience to the Bishop having jurisdiction, in all things lawful and honest.*"

At the Special Convocation, held on the 6th March all "dissenters" were offered the opportunity to withdraw their dissent and take their seat in Convocation, non present accepted that offer.

Regretfully Council at its April 13th Meeting passed a resolution that those who do not accept the jurisdiction of Bishop McLean and Bishop Powell, have by their actions placed themselves outside the Free Church of England and are unable to hold any Clerical or Lay office of this Church, Denominational or Synodical or to attend Convocation or Synodical Meetings.

Speaking personally, it is with considerable regret and sorrow that this situation has so developed and I wish it to be known that in my capacity of bishop Primus, these restrictions on the few to whom they apply, does not mean that our churches are closed to them, there is no restriction on their freedom to worship in their local church or elsewhere within the FCE, if they so wish.

Bishop McLean and I deeply regret this situation and wish to treat individuals in as pastoral manner as possible, but it must be understood that legal clarity must be applied if we are to move forward. In the light of these difficulties, all clergy concerned will receive individual correspondence from their Diocesan Bishop with by the Diocesan Bishop. Finally, proceedings relating to any affected properties and trusts will be dealt with by Central Trust.

Yours sincerely,
Kenneth Powell
Bishop Primus

THE REPLY – IS THE FREE CHURCH A CHRISTIAN CHURCH? BY RT REVD DR J BARRY SHUCKSMITH WORSHIPPING MEMBER EMMANUEL CHURCH FARNHAM

I have, above, reproduced the letter, without grammatical correction, as originally written. I will not deal with the issues raised by Bishop Powell, relating to his position as Primus, the position of Council in relationship to Convocation and Synod, or to the other important matters raised by the General Secretary, in his letter of 30 March 2004. But I attend to matters far more important than these.

The Free Church of England claims to be a Christian Church, “a branch of the Holy Catholic Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, united by faith to Him Who is the Head over all things to the Church which is His body” (Constitution Article 1). It also claims to be a Church “holding the faith once delivered unto the saints”, declares its belief in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and the “sole Rule of Faith and Practice”... My reply will examine these claims, in the light of Bishop Powell’s letter.

No human traditions, not even Constitution and Canons, however good, can be allowed to usurp the position of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, or the place and authority given to the written Word of God. It is written, ‘*Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*’ (Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4). This is as much true for the Christian Church, as it is for the individual Christian. The words of men must not only be tested by the Word of God but rejected if they conflict with it.

1. The Head of the Church cannot be a sinful human being but is the sinless Sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15-20). However highly we esteem our Christian leaders, *we cannot give to them the absolute obedience which belongs to Jesus Christ alone*, Lord and King. Even Christian leaders are under the authority of the One who shed His blood for us (Colossians 1:15-20).
2. Christian leaders are to exercise *their leadership in relationship to other leaders*. The Apostle Peter recognised this principle, “to the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder...be Shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be...*not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock*” (1 Peter 5:1-3). The Free Church of England recognises this, in its own Constitution, by describing the episcopate to be ‘an office proceeding from the Presbyter:- Primus inter pares and not an order in succession to the apostolate, and maintains the ecclesiastical parity of Presbyters’. How, then, can bishops, in the Free Church of England, function against the wishes of other presbyters? Indeed, by what authority can they make decisions which exclude the very ministers upon which the episcopal function depends?
3. *Christian leaders are sinners who can be wrong and need to repent*. For example, our Lord addresses the “angels” of the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. As most scholars would recognise, the “angels” are the leaders of the Churches but they are not exempt from the chastisements and corrections of our Lord (Revelation chapters 2-3). *Bishop Powell’s letter implies only the bishops are right and does not seem to allow for his own sinfulness and fallibility*.
4. The Bishop’s letter asks that we “will pay true and *lawful* obedience to the lawful authorities of the said Church” and the need to “pay true and canonical obedience to the Bishop having jurisdiction, in all things *lawful* and honest”. But what is *the lawful authority* of the Church? Surely it is Convocation, under the Headship of Jesus Christ and the sole authority of the Word of God? Bishops are as much subject to this authority as any other member. Otherwise, the Free Church of England makes false claim to be a Christian Church. The Apostle Paul addresses his letter to the Philippians, ‘to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the *bishops* and

deacons' (Philippians 1:1). In the Constitution of the Free Church of England, Convocation is given precedence over all else (Canon 1-17). Bishops are not introduced until Canon 20 and only then in relationship to the overriding principle, 'this church recognises and adheres to Episcopacy, not as of Divine Right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of Church polity' (Constitution Article 1 para 2). By acting against the wishes of Convocation, the bishops have lost the right to be obeyed.

5. This leads to a further biblical issue. Christians are not ultimately called upon to submit to one, or to another, individual. They are to submit *to one another* – a mutual submission. Ephesians (a Pauline epistle on the doctrine of the Church) chapter five, gives the evidence of true Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, who submit to one another (Ephesians 5:17-21). The remaining verses (22-33) show that mutual submission is the mark of the true Christian in worship, home and church. What have the bishops, who demand submission to themselves done, to show their submission to the Church? Far from submitting to those who disagree with them, they have "excommunicated churches" and in doing so, fulfilled the prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:1-3). While we are called to cast false teachers or unruly elders out of the Church (3 John 9-12) we should never excommunicate those who desire above all else to please Jesus Christ, and who are seeking to be faithful to Him. Despite the pastoral comment in the Bishop's letter, this will be the effect, if churches have to follow legal procedure and lose their buildings. It is unlikely, in the present climate, that bible-believing, evangelical Christian ministers, to say nothing of laity, would wish to join such a Church.

6. The Bishop's letter also appears to make no allowance for *Conscience*. Throughout the New Testament, there is concern for Christians to act according to their consciences and conscience will be as varied as church members. The apostle Paul speaks about 'striving always to keep my conscience clear before God and men' (Acts 24:16). The Bishop refers, in his letter, to the "few" who are dissenting. The New Testament also speaks of the "weak" and the "strong". So what thought, provision, compassion, has been shown towards those, like myself, who cannot accept the jurisdiction of Bishops McLean and Powell? Romans 14:1-22 deals not only with eating laws, but general principles of conscience. The apostolic conclusion is, "therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way...let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Romans 14:13,19).

7. The Bishop's letter also breaks another important New Testament principle – equality before the Lord. It creates second-class citizens i.e. those who can attend worship but not participate in the full life of the church. The whole of 1 Timothy, chapter three, deals with the question, how Christians and Christian ministers in particular, should conduct themselves in God's Household. There are many requirements but *absolute obedience* to a bishop is not one of them. As far as an Overseer is concerned, the requirement is, the *Overseer must be above reproach* (1 Timothy 3:2). At least, this should humble all who hold office in the Church, bearing in mind, office is not status, but function (1 Corinthians 12:21-31). Granted, according to Hebrews 13:17 we are to obey and submit to those who have the leadership over us. But the command is preceded by, 'remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever' (Hebrews 13:7-8). But it is not the Word of God the bishop's letter quotes, but the words of men – flawed canons, constitution, and denominational solicitors.

Conclusion:

There are many other reasons in Scripture why absolute obedience to men or a man cannot be right. This is not the identity mark of a Christian Church but the danger signal of an unchristian sect. It is certainly not protestant, reformed, or evangelical, which the Free Church of England claims to be. It breathes much more, the spirit of Rome. It is not even the practice of the Established Church of England, where contemporary bishops have to exercise their ministry by consent of Synod and people. Even now, the Church of England co-exists in two major

sections by Act of Synod, authorising dissent from the Diocesan Bishop and continuing episcopal oversight by “flying bishops”.

Most crucial of all, for our own peril, we forget the jealousy of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the true Bishop and Shepherd of our souls (1 Peter 1:24) and He is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). He alone will give the crown of glory to those who are faithful to Him. We are to follow men, insofar as they follow the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 4:1-5). Such Bishops lead by humility, love, faithfulness to the gospel, preaching and teaching, pastoral care, gentleness towards the weak, and supremely by their own submission to other Elders (1 Thessalonians 2:1-13). Otherwise, far from strengthening episcopal churches, this will only create more presbyterians, baptists, and independents. In the end, anarchy is not created by those who seek to be true to the Lord Jesus Christ, by submission and obedience, to the Living and Written Word. Anarchy is brought about by forced submission and obedience to fallible documents, enforced by sinful men (Romans 15:1-8).

Rt Revd Dr J Barry Shucksmith

Appendix 6

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Reg Burrows

1. An outline history of the world-wide ecumenical movement

The word 'ecumenical' comes from the Greek word *oikumene* ('inhabited'). The ecumenical councils of the early church, beginning with Nicea in 325, were gatherings of representatives of churches throughout the known world.

The modern ecumenical movement began with *a missionary thrust*. It dates from the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 which was concerned with spreading the Christian gospel throughout the world. Previous missionary conferences had been *nondenominational*. This conference was *interdenominational*, with 1,355 delegates from all churches except the Roman Catholic Church. Its only decision was to form a continuation committee. From this conference sprang international organisations which eventually merged to become the World Council of Churches in 1948.

In 1920 the ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople was the first church to appeal for the creation of a body bringing all churches together in fellowship. The Eastern Orthodox churches have been members of the World Council of Churches from its beginning in 1948.

The International Missionary Council, comprising 17 national missionary organisations, was set up in 1921 to co-ordinate missionary work.

In 1925 the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work took place in Stockholm, aiming to apply the gospel to social, political and international questions. The ecumenical movement was beginning to embrace *the social gospel*. The slogan was 'service unites but doctrine divides.' It was easier to unite in social work; about which there could be agreement, than in missionary work, where there were serious differences about belief and church order. That is why much of the energy of the ecumenical movement has been given to supporting relief work. Sometimes this work has had serious political implications, as in the case of 'relief' given by Christian Aid (linked to the then British Council of Churches) to supporters of the African National Congress during the years of their armed struggle against apartheid.

The quest for agreement about doctrine led to the First World Conference on Faith and Order in 1927. The conference concluded that 'God wills unity... and... however we may justify the beginnings of disunion, we lament its continuance.' In 1937 there was another *Faith and Order* Conference, in Edinburgh as well as another *Life and Work* Conference at Oxford. Delegates at both conferences agreed that their work should be co-ordinated. In 1938 a committee was set up to establish 'a body representative of the churches'. This was the beginning of the World Council of Churches, originally planned to come into being in 1941, but whose inauguration was delayed until 1948 because of the Second World War.

2. Who has been involved in the ecumenical movement?

After the formation of the World Council of Churches ecumenism flourished among the Orthodox Churches and the mainline Protestant denominations. The Roman Catholic Church rejected the movement, for her historic position is that she is the sole guardian of God's truth and that outside membership of the Roman Catholic Church there is no salvation. For her the only solution is for the schismatic 'sects' to return to the 'one true church.' Roman Catholics were forbidden to attend the second assembly of the *WCC* in 1954.

3. Some key ecumenical events in Britain.

Events show that the quest for unity changes what people believe. When we look at what has happened in the United Kingdom, and particularly at evangelical attitudes to the ecumenical movement, we must consider briefly Billy Graham. It was his *Harringay Crusade* in London in 1954-5 that gave new heart to evangelicals. The success of that crusade impressed many non-evangelicals, who began to think, 'These evangelicals may have a crude theology, but we can learn about evangelism from them.' Many evangelicals adopted the policy of trying to influence non-evangelicals by avoiding being negative at all costs. 'Accentuate the positive' was the unspoken motto. Liberals and people of a Catholic persuasion could be won over as long as we did not attack their errors. In going this way evangelicals were forgetting the New Testament teaching that sometimes we cannot avoid being negative. Paul had to confront Peter when what he was doing clearly implied a denial of the gospel (Galatians 2). The Lord Jesus Christ himself confronted error in the churches. (Revelation 2-3).

The Anglican-Methodist Reunion Scheme failed in 1972. The problem was that most Anglicans and most Methodists had departed from the faith of Wesley and the 39 Articles. Scripture was no longer seen as the only authority in the church. The scheme foundered on the issue of the ministry. Methodists had traditionally allowed laymen to conduct the Communion service. The scheme did not allow this. Methodist ministers had to accept episcopal ordination, thus denying their previous ordination and calling. They had to receive the laying on of episcopal hands in the proposed Service of Reconciliation. The service did not say that this was reordination, but that is how many Anglicans viewed it. As Roger Beckwith wrote at the time: 'To make full fellowship at the Lord's Table conditional upon Methodist ministers submitting to the laying-on of episcopal hands is unbiblical and sectarian.' Things have moved on since then. In a recent report it is said that a major obstacle to union between the two churches is the objection by Methodists to the fact that in the Church of England women may not be bishops. Both churches tolerate practising homosexuals as ministers.

In 1977 the *United Reformed Church* came into being, the result of a merger of the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Union. At their foundation these two churches were thoroughly Reformed and biblical. Presbyterian doctrine was expressed in the Westminster Confession of 1646, while the Congregationalist standard was the Savoy Declaration of 1658. These two great Confessions are virtually the same. They differ only on the important secondary matter of church government. Presbyterians held to rule by elders and to connexionalism; the elders and ministers of the congregations in a particular area

meet as a presbytery. Congregationalists held firmly to the complete independence of the local congregation. They did not even call their association a church only a *union*. For the first time in their history they were now willing to belong to a *church*. There were those who would not join the new church because of its form of government and its devaluation of God's truth. The subsequent history of the *URC*, with a comparatively weak evangelical witness and the acceptance of homosexuals as ministers, shows what can happen after a marriage of convenience when unity is put before truth and conscience.

Between 1971 and 1987 came the statements by the *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*. The first statement dealt with eucharistic doctrine (the meaning of the Communion service), the second with ministry and ordination, the third and fourth with authority in the church and the fifth with salvation and the church. The order of the statements shows the confusion that surrounded the Commission's work. The doctrine of the Lord's Supper was tackled before the question of authority upon which everything depends, and before the doctrine of salvation. The statements were full of problems - the wrong idea that at Communion we offer ourselves to God as Christ is now said to be offering himself to the Father; the wrong idea that in some sense the bread becomes the body of Christ; the error that the minister may be called a priest, which word is never used of him in the New Testament; the fact that Rome regards Anglican ordinations as null and void; the failure to deal with the false teaching about the Virgin Mary, her supposed immaculate conception and bodily assumption into heaven; the hopeless confusion between justification (which means in the Bible that God *declares* believers to be righteous) and sanctification (whereby God *makes* more righteous those already justified by faith). The confusion did not bring the churches any closer to union. Indeed, the decision by the Church of England in 1993 to ordain women 'priests' widened the gap. On the other hand, some Anglicans - including a few evangelicals - have hinted that they might be willing to accept the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. Do they not realise that salvation is only through faith in Christ's saving death, and not in the gift of any church on earth?

In 1982 the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches issued *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* which was discussed by the mainline denominations in Britain. This document set out the ecumenical theological agenda. Its flavour was both liberal and Catholic. It said that baptism 'unites the one baptized with Christ and with his people... Baptism initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world. It gives participation in the community of the Holy Spirit.' Faith was seen as necessary to receive salvation, but it was 'salvation embodied and set forth in baptism.' Speaking of the eucharist (the Lord's Supper) *BEM* acknowledged that some churches believe Christ to be present in the bread and wine that have become in a real but mysterious manner the body and blood of the risen Christ, while others believe his presence to be in the whole service. The document describes Christ as the unique priest. It speaks of the priesthood of all believers, offering their being as a living sacrifice to God. But, departing from Scripture in a Romeward direction, it says that Christian ministers 'may appropriately be called priests because they fulfil a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful' through Word, sacrament, prayer and pastoral care.

In 1990 the ecumenical movement in Britain adopted a new procedure and established a new kind of organisation. The British Council of Churches was replaced by *Churches Together*. Before this, as we have seen, there had been attempts at a national level to achieve the union of denominations by seeking

agreement on doctrine. Some of these attempts had failed, like the ill-fated Anglican-Methodist scheme and the *ARCIC* discussions. Other attempts had succeeded, but involved abandoning long-held principles and creating splinter groups that did not join the union, as when the United Reformed Church was formed. From 1990 the attempt to agree on doctrine at the national level was effectively given up and replaced by Local Ecumenical Projects, where churches did things together but without the detailed doctrinal discussion that had taken place earlier. On this non-doctrinal basis the Roman Catholic Church was involved for the first time. There was such a lack of commitment to considering the truth that Alan Gibson of the British Evangelical Council likened the whole *Churches Together* approach to 'holding hands in the dark'.

In *Churches Together* the assumption is made that every church and every member is already 'in Christ'. Nobody denies the biblical gospel of salvation. It is just bypassed. It is regarded as irrelevant. Every one is on a pilgrimage but nobody has arrived at the destination. It is the liberal journey *towards* the truth. It is asserted that the truths that divide are secondary matters, not essentials. (Is justification by faith not an essential? Is it not essential, that the minister be a teacher of God's Word rather than a dispenser of grace through the sacraments?) There is no understanding that God has revealed his truth in the Bible and that this gospel is the only cure that saves sinners.

4. Some important features of the ecumenical movement.

The ecumenical understanding of Christian unity - Appeal is made to the prayer of Christ for the unity of those who would believe in him: 'I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me' (John 17:20-21). Ecumenists take these words to mean *visible* unity, the joining together of separated denominations into one organisation or one outward fellowship. But this is a misunderstanding of our Saviour's high priestly prayer. The unity that he desires for his people is the same unity that has existed from eternity between himself and his Father: 'As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us.' It is a unity that is perfect in love, purpose and truth. There are no disagreements between the Father and the Son about what should be done. There are *no* doctrinal differences within the Godhead. There is total harmony. Father, Son and Holy Spirit share a *spiritual* unity. It is not outward and visible. We see it by faith, because our eyes have been opened to the truth of scripture. It is a unity of inner being. It is organic unity, not organisational unity. It is the unity of the spiritual body of Christ. A Christian has this unity with every other true believer, whether within the *FCE* or outside it. We don't need to belong to the same denomination to enjoy it. It cannot be created by joining churches together. For us, too, it is perfect unity in love, purpose and truth.

The ecumenical view of truth - The ecumenical movement faces the problem of how to bring people and churches of different and even opposing beliefs together. Various things have been done to overcome the problem of different views of the truth.

It has been said that *if we do things together, our differences of belief will disappear*. This is rather like the approach of governments to the euro: 'Let the people use the notes and coins. They will get used to the idea. This will overcome their doubts about whether one currency in Europe will be beneficial. It will overcome fears about the creation of a European state.' In a similar way *Churches Together* bypass truth and seeks to remove people's fears of error by encouraging churches to do things together locally. Using the euro does nothing to change the economic and political facts. Churches doing things together does nothing to change the doctrinal differences. The issue of truth and integrity remains unresolved.

The ecumenical movement believes that the things that the churches believe in common are more important than the things that divide. It is claimed that the things that divide are nonessentials. For example, the Roman Catholic Church officially accepts the Bible and all the historic facts of the faith. In these areas we have a tremendous amount in common. But in the area of justification - *how* as individuals we may benefit from Christ's sacrifice for our sins - we are diametrically opposed. Rome says that we can only be saved by receiving the Roman Catholic sacraments and by doing good works. The Bible says that we are saved by faith alone. Rome offers one cure for sin. The Bible offers something totally different. Both cannot be right. Our eternal salvation depends on receiving the right cure, the one that God has provided.

The ecumenical approach reduces the amount of truth that has to be believed. The larger the number of people you want to agree about something, the less substantial the commonly held truth will be. It is interesting to compare the contents of the great historic Confessions of the Reformation - the Westminster Confession, the 1689 Baptist Confession, the 39 Articles - with the basis of the ecumenical movement. The Reformed Confessions summarise the biblical faith - the Godhead, the person of Christ, the way of salvation, the government of the church. In its declaration, reformulated in 1961, the World Council of Churches declares itself to be 'a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' This is 'lowest common denominator' theology. On the surface it is plausible, but you can drive a cart and horses through the tremendous differences it conceals - about how the scriptures are interpreted, about how we are saved, about what it means to be a Christian. Unlike the Reformation Confessions this statement of ecumenical belief does not set out even a summary of the Christian faith. It does nothing to point the seeker after truth in the right direction. *The content of faith is reduced to an unacceptable minimum that is hopelessly vague about the message of salvation*.

The ecumenical objectives are set out in these words from *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*: 'The short-term aim is to provide an effective means for the Churches to consult, work and act together. The medium-term aim is to encourage the Churches to get so used to working together that it becomes the norm. The long-term aim is to help the Churches to discover together a real measure of "visible unity", so that, without losing their diversity and colour, they can be seen by everyone to be united where it counts.' *Belief has become secondary to doing things together*.

Nevertheless, there is also *the hope that visible unity of the churches will help people in the world to believe*. At this point we come back to the ecumenical misunderstanding of John 17:20-21 where the

Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the *spiritual* unity of his people. It is no use hoping that outward unity of the churches will encourage people to turn to Christ for salvation. Unbelievers are dead in sin, unable to repent and trust in Christ, until God makes them alive to his saving truth (Ephesians 2:1-10). Unbelievers hear, but do not understand. They see, and do not perceive (Matthew 13: 13-15). If the problem of disunity among the churches is removed, the human heart will seize on some other excuse not to believe. Only the grace of God can save, bringing conviction of sin and bestowing the gift of faith to the disobedient and rebellious.

The ecumenical attachment to episcopacy - Nearly all reunion schemes involve discussion of episcopacy. There is the idea that all united churches must have bishops. This insistence goes back to the *Lambeth Quadrilateral* of 1888 adopted by the bishops of the Anglican church world-wide. This statement was based on the principles adopted by the American Episcopal bishops in 1886. It expressed commitment to:

1. The Holy Scriptures as the ultimate standard of faith.
2. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.
3. The two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
4. The historic episcopate.

The modern ecumenical movement has generally adopted these principles, although *Churches Together* includes Quakers (the Society of Friends) who do not accept the Creeds and the Salvation Army which does not accept the sacraments. Ecumenism sets great value on bishops. The Church of North India was a union in 1970 of six denominations including Anglicans, Baptists and Methodists. At the beginning ministers were not all episcopally ordained, but all new ministers had to be ordained by a bishop. A period of thirty years was set after which all ministers had to be have been episcopally ordained. Episcopacy had become a necessity.

One reason for this insistence was the belief that a church without bishops would have no hope of being reunited with Rome. On the other hand, Rome accepts no episcopal orders except its own. The papal bull of 1896, *Apostolicae Curae*, still stands with its withering rejection of the ministerial orders of the Church of England.

In the *FCE* we regard episcopacy as a useful form of church government, but do not see it as instituted by God. Our constitution allows us to accept ministers from other churches who have not been ordained by a bishop. For us bishops are useful, but not necessary.

The ecumenical movement is moving towards multifaith ecumenism - This is becoming apparent on national occasions like the recent memorial service for British victims of the disaster in New York. It was not just the representatives of different brands of Christianity who took part, but also leaders of other faiths including a Jewish rabbi and a Muslim imam. Contemporary political correctness makes it unfashionable and difficult to assert not only the uniqueness of biblical Christianity, but also the uniqueness of Christianity in general over against the other world religions.

5. The Free Church of England and ecumenism.

The doctrinal basis of the *FCE* sets us outside the ecumenical movement, for while we can have spiritual fellowship with those who share the gospel as defined in our Articles and Constitution, we cannot unite with those who deny that gospel. We are a confessing church, acknowledging that certain things are secondary (like church government), but that the biblical gospel of grace is nonnegotiable.

In the Report on the Conversations between the Free Church of England and the Church of England in the 1990s there are various things that we cannot accept if we are to be true to the biblical gospel and to our constitution. Bishop Arthur dealt fully with this Report in his Analysis and Assessment given to Convocation in May 2001. I mention a few examples briefly by way of illustration:

1. We do not share the Report's insistence on episcopacy. We do not regard episcopal ordination as necessary for Christian ministry.
2. We do not share the view that the church consists of the baptised – a common ecumenical definition. We believe the church to consist of believers, justified by faith alone and being daily sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
3. We regret that the Report refers only to the Creeds and not to the Protestant Confessions of the Reformation that defined the gospel of grace, nor to the Council of Trent that refined and reaffirmed the theology of medieval Catholicism. The old divide still exists.
4. Unlike the Report we affirm that unity is in the truth of the gospel and the whole counsel of God in the Bible - not in one baptism, one eucharist and ministry in the historic episcopal succession.
5. Unlike the Report we do not see authority in the *consensus fidelium* (the common mind of the faithful), but in scripture alone.
6. We see God's truth, not the bishop, as the focus for unity. We unite under the truth of scripture, not around the bishop.
7. We reject the wrong idea that in the Communion service we offer ourselves to God, joining in Christ's self-offering to the Father in the present - as he has also offered himself once and for all in the past.
8. We refuse to express our faith in terms that are not exclusive so that we can unite with those who believe the opposite.

In our constitution and history we have an ecumenical dimension.

Our Declaration of Principles states that 'This Church will maintain communion with all Christian Churches, and will set forward, so far as in it lieth, quietness, peace and love, among all Christian people.' But there are limits. Fellowship does not extend to those who embrace the errors that the Declaration condemns and rejects. It embraces warmly those who love the Saviour and believe the gospel defined in our 39 Articles.

Our roots go back to Bishop Cummins' concern for *evangelical* ecumenism. He had to leave the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, not because he was an ecumenist in the modern sense, but because he valued fellowship around the Lord's Table with spiritual men of sound evangelical faith. He gives us a fine example of true ecumenism for us today.

GOD'S CAUSE

SOVEREIGN GOD,

Thy cause, not my own, engages my heart,
and I appeal to thee with greatest freedom
to set up thy kingdom in every place where Satan reigns;
Glorify thyself and I shall rejoice,
for to bring honour to thy name is my sole desire.

I adore thee that thou art God,
and long that others should know it, feel it,
and rejoice in it.

O that all men might love and praise thee,
that thou mightest have all glory from the intelligent world!
Let sinners be brought to thee for thy dear name!

To the eye of reason everything respecting the conversion of others
is as dark as midnight,
But thou canst accomplish great things;
the cause is thine,
and it is to thy glory that men should be saved.

Lord, use me as thou wilt,
do with me what thou wilt;
but, O, promote thy cause,
let thy kingdom come,
let thy blessed interest be advanced in this world!

O do thou bring in great numbers to Jesus!
let me see that glorious day,
and give me to grasp for multitudes of souls;
let me be willing to die to that end;
and while I live let me labour for thee
to the utmost of my strength,
spending time profitably in this work,
both in health and in weakness. ,

It is thy cause and kingdom I long for, not my own.

O, answer thou my request!