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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

The Reasons for Past Failure of Evangelical Unity

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Introduction

An attempt to evaluate the failures of earlier generations must surely be conducted with humility. After all, we are in no position to sit in judgment on our fathers. We have inherited a confused and confusing situation which too many seem content to perpetuate. Neither can we expect to solve all the problems which men of greater wisdom and godliness than our own seemed unable effectually to resolve. Yet we should not be victims of our past. Despite Hegel's pessimistic observation, we ought to be able to learn from past mistakes. If the Apostle Paul insists that the Old Testament Scriptures were 'written for our learning' (Romans 15:4), then we have a clear duty to evaluate our past and mend our ways accordingly.

That said, the very terms of the discussion are not immune from our own subjectivity and bias. One may be certain on objective medical and physiological grounds of the causes of heart failure, but what is regarded as failure in Christian unity is largely determined by conflicting theological perspectives. All political parties agree that unemployment is a bad thing, but they disagree when it comes to solving the problem. Likewise, even evangelicals differ in their 'policies' of ecclesiastical reunion.

In the face of a dismal historical record, it is necessary to view our subject from a clear, Biblical perspective. When all our uncertain and subjective evaluations have been sifted, we may be certain of one glorious, incontrovertible revealed truth: the unity of the elect people of God is an assured fact both in time and eternity. It is guaranteed by the sovereign will of Him who can neither lie nor fail in the fulfilment of His purposes. Our Redeemer's high priestly prayer (John 17) unequivocally roots the salvation and, by necessary consequence, the unity of the church in the electing love of God. 'God must win',¹ wrote John Calvin to the suffering Huguenots in France, whose heroism was inspired by One whose love makes His elect 'more than conquerors'. Not many years before, Martin Luther wrote, 'We tell our Lord God, that if He will have His church, He must look after it himself. We cannot sustain it, and, if we could, we should become the proudest asses under heaven'.²

What then are we discussing? What is the failure we have to

confess, and which no *Biblical* doctrine of the decrees of God can permit us to ignore? Surely that which involves the collective responsibility of all believers—the maintenance of the *visible*, corporate unity of the church of God (Ephesians 4:1–16).

Once we observe that Paul's exhortation to unity in Ephesians 4 is but one, vital aspect of his general exhortation to holiness in the body of Christ, the root cause of disunity is easy to state. As was conspicuously the case in Corinth, so elsewhere in the New Testament, the goal of unity was frustrated by carnality. In short, the way to promote unity is to promote holiness. Whether we consider the fragmentation produced by personal, loveless animosities, or the disarray caused by differing perceptions of truth, deficiencies in the *sanctification* of the church will place strains on the visible *harmonization* of the church. To this end the ministry is ordained by the Head of the church 'until we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man. . .' (Ephesians 4:13). As with our holiness, so with our unity, it will never be perfectly realised in this life.

Just as the model for the church's holiness is God's own holiness (1 Peter 1:15,16), so the model for the church's unity is the unity of the Holy Trinity (John 17:21; 15:26; Eph. 4:1–8). Thus defined, the church's sacred duty is clear: although she cannot ultimately either *produce* or *sustain* her unity, she must responsibly aim to *manifest* to the world the perfect unity which she possesses in principle and which she will fully realise in eternity.

Unity: the Current Scene

The main preoccupation of this paper is with the past rather than the present. However, present impressions tend to confirm a long standing one, that Evangelicals never seem to place unity very high on the agenda. They have strongly felt that an uneasy alliance seems to exist between truth and unity. 'Doctrine divides' is a popular slogan in an age when anti-rational trends seem to prevail. With our traditional commitment to Biblical truth, evangelical suspicions about much ecumenical activity might be summed up with 'oneness is vagueness'. I once asked a Church of Scotland minister why there were so many different presbyterian groups in Scotland. 'Because we love the truth' was the priceless reply! Although, in the past, Anglican and Nonconformist evangelicals have been bound by a common Protestant commitment, the last twenty years have witnessed a shift of allegiances. Ever since the public disagreement between the Rev. John Stott and Dr. Lloyd-Jones in 1966³ over secession and unity, evangelical solidarity has fallen victim to the distinctively non-evangelical propaganda of the ecumenical movement. Thus British evangelicals have become divided into separatists and inclusivists. As Anglican evangelicals began to reassess their position within a

traditionally broad-based Anglicanism, so the British Evangelical Council has been persuaded that separatism alone can preserve a faithful testimony to the Biblical Gospel.

The most alarming phenomenon of the last two decades has been the emergence of Neo-evangelicalism. Significant shifts of view are evident on such matters as ecclesiastical membership, charismatic renewal, social involvement and Biblical hermeneutics.⁴ The old Reformation distinctives have been shed in favour of an evangelicalism which seems happy in a context of theological pluralism. The Keele (1967) and Nottingham (1977) Assemblies of Anglican Evangelicals revealed the extent to which the 'successors' of Charles Simeon and J.C. Ryle had yielded to ecumenical and other pressures. The publication of *Growing Into Union* (1970) confirmed the suspicion that unity could only be pursued at the expense of truth. If the reactionary image of the British Evangelical Council has seemed somewhat negative, that is to say anti-Anglicanism appears to be a defining attribute of separatist evangelicalism, 'Mission England' and similar ventures in ecumenical evangelism confirm that many Anglican evangelicals are now 'Pro-Rome' Anglicans first, and evangelicals second. This spiritual posture has been aided by the charismatic movement, which in turn is having a relaxing effect in traditional separatist circles via the 'Reformed Charismatic' outlook. In short, British evangelicalism is more fragmented and confused than at any time in its history.

Evangelical Unity Defined

Since the formation of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846, evangelical unity has generally been pietistic and evangelistic. The Keswick Convention represents the former approach—'We are all "One in Christ Jesus", at least in the tent!' Likewise, in mass evangelistic crusades, evangelicals have managed to unite in evangelism if in nothing else. Hence the denominational organisational issue has been generally side-stepped: 'Unity is not uniformity' is a half-truth which obscures the need for evangelicals to think about organised, visible unity. Thus, in a sea of non-denominational organisations and societies, the doctrine of the church visibly expressed has suffered. But is it sufficient to limit unity to something 'spiritual' and 'invisible'? Is it even Scriptural to say that visible and organisational unity does not matter?

Recent trends have seen the emergence of two distinct answers to these questions. *First*, the separatist response. In England at least, separatists tend to be dominated by the 'gathered church' theory of Independency. Yes, they say, visible unity is vitally important, but the exhortations of Ephesians 4 only apply to local, congregational unity, not to something national and interdenominational. Furthermore, doctrinal declension is less likely in 'gathered' than in

'territorial' churches. *Second*, the inclusivist or non-separatist response. Separatism is a recipe for fragmentation and confusion. Personalities become more important than principles. The visible church is a world-wide family (Ephesians 3:15!), not just a local concern. The church of Christ has both 'territorial' as well as 'gathered' features (Acts 15:1–34). Besides, the pursuit of a 'pure' church is both impossible and unscriptural, according to the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24f).

This division of opinion, based in part on genuine differences of interpretation, explains why evangelicals are divided. In England at least, the separatist case is largely argued in Baptist and Independent terms, whereas the non-separatist position is chiefly occupied by Anglicans. This *status quo* largely reflects our inherited divisions. In other words, reasons for *present* failure in evangelical unity arise from a perpetuation of *past* failure.

Past Attempts at Evangelical Unity

It must be emphasised that evangelicals *were* concerned about visible unity long before the formation of the Evangelical Alliance. Indeed, there have been many attempts and as many failures. But in view of the neo-evangelical desire for increasing rapprochement with Roman Catholics, it must also be emphasised that the Reformation rupture was *not* an instance of such failure. The Protestant Reformation was a triumph not a tragedy. The Evangelical churches had a solemn God-required duty to distance themselves from the corrupt and reluctant-to-reform Church of Rome. It was the Babylon of the Book of Revelation, 'the mother of harlots'. In the words of Thomas Hobbes, the Roman Catholic Church was 'the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof'.⁵ It was sin *not* to protest against the theological and moral corruption of Rome and to suffer the inevitable consequence of excommunication and separation.

Since Martin Luther nailed his protest to the church door at Wittenburg in 1517, Rome has added corruption to corruption. It would therefore be greater iniquity to contemplate unity with the Roman Catholic Church today. A body which smothered the Gospel long before Luther was born, and since then has increased her 'infallible errors', whose political intrigue was largely responsible for the First and Second World Wars—I have in mind that astonishing book by the French Catholic historian Edmond Paris, *The Vatican Against Europe* (English tr., 1961)—and which harbours criminal elements in the Vatican—I recall the equally astonishing book by the late David Yallop, *In God's Name* (1984)—this institution masquerading as the 'Holy Catholic Church' is no place for any Christian to be. This is a verdict from which no consistent, unashamed evangelical Protestant would dissent.

As surely as we evangelicals continue to resist and oppose Rome-orientated ecumenism, we have a confession to make. Our own incontrovertible principles embarrass us. If we question Vatican-centred principles in the name of Biblical principles, exposing the flaws of a false unity, truth demands that we ask: where is our unity if our foundations are sure? How can we accuse Rome and the ecumenists of concocting a *false* unity, if we cannot demonstrate a *true* unity?

As has been noted, some have wondered if evangelicals have ever really been concerned with unity. We have been accused of making light of it, of ignoring its importance. However, if this has been true of us for the last one hundred years or more, our more distant past tells another story. We will now take a critical look at evangelical history, highlighting the issues which have divided evangelicals.

1. The Reformation Settlement

It is not commonly known that the reformers were as anxious to demonstrate a 'Reformed ecumenicity' as Dr. Philip E. Hughes calls it,⁶ as they were to justify their separation from Rome. In view of the sitting of the Council of Trent (1545–1563)—the Roman Council of the counter-Reformation—Archbishop Thomas Cranmer proposed to John Calvin that a 'godly synod' of the Reformed churches should be held, to consolidate and unite the work of the Reformation. The Genevan reformer was every bit as enthusiastic as Cranmer, judging by his famous and memorable reply: 'As far as I am concerned, if I can be of any service, I shall not shrink from crossing ten seas, if need be, for that object . . .'⁸ Alas! Cranmer was martyred in 1555 and Calvin died in 1564, so this grand project never saw fulfilment.

It is fascinating to wonder what might have been the consequences had Calvin visited England. However, we know that his views of reform were to prove odious to Queen Elizabeth I after the reformer's death. For Calvin's approach to the reformation of the church was more radical than the Queen was prepared to allow in England. Indeed, Anglicanism was ambiguous from the beginning. It was clearly reformed in doctrine, yet semi-reformed in its government and liturgy. In the judgment of the Puritans, the English 'sons of Calvin', Anglicanism retained too much of its mediaeval heritage. Thus, an argument which began in Frankfurt among the Marian exiles⁹ was to continue back home. The reformation process was cut short, producing a settlement which irritated both Catholics and Puritans. As for the Queen herself, always the daughter of her father King Henry VIII, she was determined to govern the church as firmly as she governed the state. Thus her religious policy was to fuel the Anglican versus Puritan controversy, accentuating the divisions between men who, at that time, were all truly evangelical. In short, 'state interference' frustrated evangelical unity. From a Puritan

perspective (and using language borrowed from John Bunyan), if Rome was the 'city of destruction', and Geneva was the 'city of reconstruction', then Canterbury was the 'city of obstruction'. Indeed, the issue hinged on the question of authority in the church. It was a question of what principle should regulate ecclesiastical affairs, the *Cultural* or the *Scriptural*?¹⁰ What aggravated matters was the insistence on a rigid uniformity in certain details of worship, things which were acknowledged to be 'indifferent'.¹¹ The Puritans were surely right to contest this. Why should they have been compelled to 'go against conscience' in matters they judged superstitious and inimical to true worship?

The problems of establishment and state interference were highlighted by Queen Elizabeth's treatment of Archbishop Grindal. This good man sympathised with many puritan ideas, especially the need to promote sound, biblical preaching throughout the land. In the early years of Elizabeth's reign, Grindal had been in close touch with Calvin who wrote urging a continuing reform of the Church of England. His letter politely questions the legitimacy of diocesan bishops and their place in the House of Lords.¹² He adroitly reflects on the nature of the Queen's authority in matters ecclesiastical, pointing out her duty to encourage faithful pastors who will preach the gospel.¹³ Judging by an earlier letter,¹⁴ Grindal evidently shared Calvin's concerns. In succeeding Matthew Parker as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1575, Grindal had obviously made some concessions over episcopacy, but his basic 'puritan' concern to encourage gospel preaching remained unaltered. This brought him into collision with the Queen who was utterly opposed to anything which might promote Puritanism. She therefore sought to suppress the puritan 'prophesyings' (expository lectures on the Bible) which had commenced in Northampton in 1572. Contrary to the Queen's will, Grindal actually encouraged the prophesyings. Summoning the Archbishop to her presence, she browbeat the good man, complaining that there were too many preachers. Three or four per county were quite enough, and they only need read the Homilies.¹⁵ The language with which the Queen humiliated her Archbishop surely raises fundamental questions about the Anglican Reformation. As if her famous utterance might have been 'Although I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, yet I have the stomach of a Pope!' After recovering from the shock, Grindal made a courageous reply to Her Majesty. 'I cannot with a safe conscience and without the offence of the Majesty of God give my assent to the suppressing of the said exercises. . . . Bear with me, I beseech you, Madam, if I choose rather to offend your earthly Majesty than to offend the heavenly Majesty of God'.¹⁶ Then Grindal reflected on the nature of the Anglican establishment. He reminded the Queen that the will of God, and not of the prince, was the standard for spiritual decisions.

She should consult with the clergy in matters of doctrine and discipline, 'for these things are to be determined in Church or Synod, not in the palace (*in ecclesia seu synodo non in palatio*)'.¹⁷ For this steadfast adherence to Scriptural principle, Grindal was placed under house arrest and suspended until a few months before his death in 1583.

This tragic episode, with its more tragic implications for the Reformed Faith in England, might have been averted had John Calvin visited England. To contemplate him addressing Convocation defies the imagination. He might have said to the Queen, in words not far removed from Andrew Melville's¹⁸ heroic utterance before King James, 'May it please your Majesty to remember that there are two monarchs and two realms in England: there is Queen Elizabeth, the head of this Commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject Queen Elizabeth is, and of whose Kingdom she is not a queen, nor a head, but a member'. Such sentiments do not call into question the duty of submission to earthly rulers in earthly (but not spiritual) things (see Romans 13:1-7 and Acts 5:29), nor do they question the principle of a legal religious establishment, only its form. As the late Bernard Lord Manning made clear, since the 1689 Act of Toleration, even the 'Free Churches' are, in a sense, part of the 'religious establishment' of the United Kingdom.¹⁹ They oppose state interference in things spiritual without denying their civil obligations to the state in things temporal. Of course, things have changed since 1689. Our monarch no longer has the absolute powers once exercised by the Tudors and early Stuarts. Bishops are now chosen by advice from the Prime Minister, a procedure full of embarrassing implications for Anglican evangelicals as well as (presumably) other varieties of churchmanship. What if the Prime Minister is a Unitarian, as Mr. Chamberlain was? What if he is a rather antinomian Baptist, as Lloyd-George was? Whatever problems enter into Free Church life, having their ministers chosen by non-church members is not one of them! In other words, visible evangelical unity in England is a non-starter until the Anglican Church is disestablished. The 'Crown Rights of the Redeemer' is a sacred principle every faithful Free Church Christian jealously guards, for Christ governs His people by His Word and Spirit through His people.

2. The Puritans in Power: the Westminster Assembly (1643-49)

During Queen Elizabeth's reign, many good men decided to make the best of a partially reformed church. After the suppression of the prophesyings and the ill-fated presbyterian scheme of Thomas Cartwright, the presbyterian Puritans hoped for better days. This was 'reformation while tarrying for the magistrate'. Frustrations spawned

the more impatient Independents and Separatists. Thus Puritanism—the belief in a ‘pure church’, itself became divided. The Separatists’ programme was ‘reformation without tarrying for any’, a bold posture which invited considerable persecution. This led directly to the vision of the Pilgrim Fathers who, in 1620, forsook the ‘old world’ for the ‘New World’ to establish a pure, New Testament church.

Encouraged by a Puritan-dominated House of Commons, and supported by presbyterian Scotland, the Westminster Assembly attempted to perfect and complete the English Reformation. As well as clarifying Reformed theology in the aftermath of the Arminian reaction, the Westminster divines sought to re-structure the English church on presbyterian lines. Unlike the more spontaneous, grass-roots presbyterianism of the Huguenots in France, state-sponsored English presbyterianism produced widespread dissatisfaction. For some, the new system seemed oppressive. After his initial enthusiasm, John Milton complained that ‘New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large’.²⁰ If some desired a ‘reduced episcopacy’, the most vocal dissenters within the Westminster Assembly were the Independents or Congregationalists.²¹ Thus, evangelicals were to be divided on church government.

Although he was not a member of the Assembly, Dr. John Owen became the ‘archbishop’ of the Independents. He was for a while presbyterian in his convictions, but then he adopted the independent view. Dr. Lloyd-Jones, who himself forsook Welsh Presbyterianism for English Congregationalism, commends Owen for being ‘big enough’ to change his position.²² Dr. F.J. Powicke was of another mind.²³ He laments not only Owen’s excessively rigid Calvinism, but also his failure to promote rapprochement with the Presbyterians. In short, Owen ‘led Independency astray’. This seems a very fair judgment, for the Independents helped to dissipate the energies of a sadly fragmented Reformed evangelical witness in England.²⁴

Since Owen’s views of church government are well established in the British Evangelical Council’s constituency, it might have a salutary effect on our sadly fragmented situation to recall that Owen had *another* change of mind! Using Dr. Lloyd-Jones’s criterion, that makes Owen a *very* big man! For on his death bed Owen declared that he had ‘seen his mistake as to the Independent way’ and that ‘after his utmost search into the Scriptures and antiquity, he was now satisfied that Presbytery was the way Christ had appointed in his New Testament church’.²⁵ Even if the authenticity of this admission is questioned, it is irrefutably certain that Owen changed his mind on the subject of the sin of schism. In his treatise *On Schism* (1657), Owen denies that a local church refusing to have any fellowship with another is guilty of schism.²⁶ In his posthumous treatise *The True Nature of a Gospel Church* (1689), Owen says quite the opposite.²⁷ Owen was not the only eminent

Congregationalist to do a 'U' turn. Writing to Dr. John Erskine of Edinburgh in 1750, Jonathan Edwards declared:

As to the Presbyterian government I have long been out of conceit with our unsettled, independent, confused way of Church government in this land; and the Presbyterian way has ever appeared to me most agreeable to the Word of God and the reason and nature of things.²⁸

These verdicts must surely count for something at the present time? They might encourage us to look again at the possibility of a visible drawing together of evangelicals in the United Kingdom.

Of course, many evangelicals today would question the importance of this issue. After all, whether we are episcopalians, presbyterians or independents, evangelicals have always maintained that church government is related to the *bene esse* (well being) of the church, rather than the *esse* (being or nature) of the church. This amounts to saying that the issue is of very great importance. Indeed, the 'life-support system' is not to be identified with the 'life' it supports, but it is necessary in its supporting rôle. In a pluralistic religious scene, one system of church order might seem as good as another, its spiritual efficiency largely depending on the quality of those who operate it. In which case, we may all 'do our own thing'. But once we begin to face up to the challenge of *visible* evangelical unity, the issue of one, visibly united organisation becomes a pressing question demanding an answer: which system should we adopt?

Approaching this question with regard to independency, it is surely significant that Congregationalists have, over the years, felt the need for tangible, even 'nationwide' unions and associations. Even Congregationalists have admitted the need for a form of connexionalism. But the issue is not to be settled on merely *pragmatic* grounds, especially when John Owen and Jonathan Edwards justify their own change of view on *Scriptural* grounds. Indeed, there is sufficient evidence in the New Testament to demonstrate that independency is not a Scriptural church order at all. It is institutionalised schism. Viewed historically, independency is understandably an over-reaction to an unscriptural diocesan episcopacy, but with as little Scriptural support. At the present time, evangelicals in England are separated into these two opposing camps.

With regard to episcopacy, the real question is what form is envisaged? For even Independents have 'oversight' or 'congregational episcopacy'. This much is certain, one cannot really justify even the Anglican theory of 'bishops, priests and deacons' from the New Testament, let alone the Roman Catholic one. Even episcopalian theologians agree that, in the New Testament, 'bishop' and 'presbyter' refer to the same office.²⁹ The subordination of presbyters to bishops was a questionable development of a later age. Even if it might be argued that 'priest' is derived from 'presbyter' etymolog-

ically, the term is far too ambiguous for use in a Protestant church, a fact which even Richard Hooker acknowledged: ‘. . . in truth the word *Presbyter* doth seem more fit, and in propriety of speech more agreeable than *Priest* with the drift of the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ’.³⁰ A Protestant priest is a contradiction in terms, unless one is speaking of the ‘priesthood of all believers’ (a truth which has little to do with public ministry). Furthermore, the Anglican idea of the diaconate as a stage on the way to priestly ordination is quite alien to the New Testament, where ‘deacon’ and ‘presbyter’ refer to quite separate rôles. Furthermore, even if the terms ‘bishops, presbyters and deacons’ have a *verbal* justification in the New Testament, what of archbishops, archdeacons, canons and prebendaries? In addition, the territorial districts of diocesan episcopacy, i.e. provinces, dioceses, deaneries, etc., have more to do with the Roman Imperial administrative districts than the inter-church relations of the New Testament.

Alternatively, presbyterianism meets the need of visible connexionalism *and* a large degree of local autonomy. All presbyters (or elders) are equal (Acts 20:17); a pastor is an elder *primus inter pares* (see Rev. 2:1). All churches are equal too. When need arises, Acts 15 provides the clear basis for auxiliary synodical government. If apostolic practice provides the authority of a divinely revealed precedent then, coupled with the apostolic teaching, Presbyterians may claim divine right (*jus divinum*) for the principles and leading particulars of their polity. In today’s fragmented English situation, presbyterianism could be a vehicle to express Reformed evangelical solidarity. Indeed, the eminent Dr. Thomas Chalmers, believed presbyterianism to be a meeting ground for evangelical reunion, for it combines the demonstrably Biblical elements of episcopacy and independency to the exclusion of what is demonstrably unscriptural.³¹ Throughout evangelical history, a failure to perceive what amounts to a Biblical *via media* has repeatedly hindered visible evangelical unity.

3. The Baptist Testimony: the rise of Ultra-Puritanism

For many, the issue of baptism is perhaps the most tricky one of all. Seemingly based on a genuine difference of interpretation, it is doubtful whether evangelicals will ever alter the situation handed down to us from the seventeenth century. But the issue may be clarified if not entirely solved. From the beginning of the baptist movement, it was a protest against state religion and nominalism. The protest was divided from the outset, for the first Baptist church in England, founded in 1612, was a ‘General’ or Arminian one. The Calvinistic or ‘Particular’ Baptists emerged about 1633.³² The latter were more concerned to throw off their ‘anabaptist’ and heterodox image, which they did by publishing *The Baptist Confession of Faith* in 1689. This was largely modelled on the *Savoy Declaration* (1658) of

the Independents, which in turn was derived from the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Just as the Independents went 'beyond' the Presbyterians with respect to church order, so the Baptists went 'beyond' the other Puritan groups with respect to baptism. They claimed to apply consistently the principle enunciated by John Robinson of the Pilgrim Fathers: 'The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word'.³³ It should not be forgotten that if Robinson was complaining about the blemishes of the Anglican and Continental reformations, so the Quakers felt that even the Baptists did not go far enough. Fragmentation has a sad tendency to proliferate.

Since the general demise of evangelicalism within the presbyterian-congregational tradition—the United Reformed Church does not possess a conspicuously evangelical wing—the English scene shows a polarisation between the Anglican and 'baptistic' churches. In short, when baptistic evangelicals oppose infant baptism, they usually object to the language of the Prayer Book, with all its overtones of baptismal regeneration. Despite the apologetic efforts of such stalwarts as J.C. Ryle,³⁴ the language of the baptismal service still seems to support the idea of baptismal regeneration *ex opere operato*. It is at best ambiguous. It is argued that the Prayer Book should be interpreted by the Thirty-nine Articles, but does this really help us? In the Royal Declaration, we are told that the Articles should be interpreted in 'the literal and grammatical sense'. Only by adopting a different and less perspicuous canon of interpretation can the offensive expressions in the baptismal service be vindicated. If plain language means anything, it is difficult to question C.H. Spurgeon at this point:

Of all lies which have dragged millions down to hell, I look upon this as being one of the most atrocious—that in a Protestant Church there should be found those who swear that baptism saves a soul.³⁵

However, all this does not invalidate the paedobaptist position. At their best, the Reformed or Presbyterian churches have not taught baptismal regeneration. Neither is the issue whether believers are to be baptized. In a missionary context, or in the case of any one converted 'out of the world', Presbyterians have always taught that baptism should be accompanied by a personal profession of faith. The only question concerns the children of believers. At this point, it may be cogently argued that the covenant paedobaptist position makes better sense of the *entire* Biblical revelation than the Baptist one does. The *unity* of the covenant of grace, the sacramental equivalence of circumcision and baptism, and the importance of the *natural* family in God's gracious purposes tend to embarrass baptistic individualism. It is a *Biblical* doctrine that the natural offspring of believers should receive the sign of the covenant in infancy, for which

there is circumstantial evidence in the New Testament. Our Lord never revoked the principle of infant membership of the visible church. Indeed, He seems to encourage it. The paedobaptist is able to view his children in the context of the promises of God. But as a Baptist pastor said to a Presbyterian friend of mine, 'My children are in limbo'. To 'invent' a ceremony called 'infant dedication' is as questionable a remedy as 'episcopal confirmation'. Neither has any New Testament warrant. However, infant baptism does, *inferentially*.

It could be argued that a Baptist is obliged to view his children as pagans until they make a profession of faith. Not so the paedobaptist. When Isaac was circumcised (Genesis 21:4), his actual spiritual condition was then doubtless little different from a pagan child. But he was reared in the atmosphere of the covenant. Furthermore, one is no more committed to the idea of baptismal regeneration than to the idea of 'circumcisional regeneration'. As natural birth made one a member of the nation of Israel, and circumcision in the flesh made one a member of the 'visible church', so later 'circumcision of the heart' (the Old Testament equivalent of the 'new birth') made one a member of the 'invisible church' of Israel. Contrary to the teaching which plays down the spirituality of the Old Testament, no one was regarded as a 'true Jew' without the inward, spiritual circumcision (see Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; Romans 2:28-29). According to their principles, one can imagine Baptists questioning the propriety of infant circumcision, since the vast majority of their objections to infant baptism apply equally to the Old Testament ordinance.

As with circumcision, the correct administration of infant baptism does not depend on the spiritual condition of the child at the moment of administration. As Calvin reminds us: 'Children are baptised for future repentance and faith'.³⁶ However, the validity of administration *does* depend on the faith and commitment of the parents. Since the promise of salvation is 'to you and your children' (Acts 2:39), it makes no sense to baptize the children of unbelieving parents. As Presbyterians have usually argued, with the increasing agreement of Anglicans, indiscriminate baptism of infants cannot be justified. In short, a disciplined rather than sentimental administration is absolutely essential. However, Baptists are no less in need of discipline. How often have the grown-up children of Baptist parents been baptized on the basis of a questionable profession of faith? Insisting on the baptism of believers only does not necessarily avoid the possibility of an unregenerate membership. There are Baptist hypocrites as well as Anglican ones. Furthermore, Baptist ultra-Puritanism is no necessary preservative against that other index of 'impure' churchmanship—theological heterodoxy. Many modern Baptists subscribe to liberal and ecumenical convictions. Better a Reformed Anglican than a Deformed Baptist!

As with church order, so with baptism, presbyterianism provides a

Scripturally valid and potentially harmonising middle-way.³⁷ A failure to grasp this has sadly contributed to Protestant Evangelical disunity. That said, if neither Anglicans nor Baptists are prepared to meet 'in the middle', there is a precedent for charitable coexistence in the old 'Union' churches of Bedfordshire.³⁸ Is it altogether unthinkable for the two views to function side by side? If the Gospel is more important than its sacraments, is it inevitable for congregations to separate over baptism? After all, if conversion is preached as the essential pre-requisite for communion and church membership, the symbolic 'route' is much less important.

This brings us to the question of the mode of baptism. Just as Anglo-Catholics attach fundamental importance to the ritual of baptism, the usual Baptist insistence on total immersion is almost guilty of the same thing. In addition to the fact that some Baptists do *not* practise immersion,³⁹ this subject has never been a major issue for Presbyterians. Even Calvin was prepared to acknowledge that total immersion was the mode in the early church.⁴⁰ The Prayer Book also makes provision for immersion (or 'dipping'). However, there are some who have argued persuasively on *Scriptural* grounds that it is highly doubtful whether immersion was ever the mode in the New Testament churches.⁴¹ Indeed, the application of water by either effusion or sprinkling to the individual, rather than the application of the individual to the water, seems to express more vividly the truth that salvation is something God does to us and for us by the outpouring of His grace and Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16f).

4. 1662 and its Aftermath: the Decline and Revival of Evangelicalism

Our contemporary religious scene dates from 1662, when the infamous Act of Uniformity deprived the Church of England of around 2,000 of the most godly and learned clergy this country has ever known.⁴² Most of the nonconforming ministers were presbyterian. For the next twenty-six years, Presbyterian, Independent and Baptist evangelicals stood shoulder to shoulder in their sufferings for the Gospel. In great measure, persecution drove them together. Even then, there were men in the Church of England whose testimony to the Gospel was not by every standard faithless, even if they lacked the courage of the old Puritans.

With the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 came hopes of reconciliation. Encouraged by the unambiguous Protestant monarchy, 'low church' Anglicans like John Tillotson⁴³ and moderate Nonconformists like Richard Baxter promoted a scheme of comprehension. This involved a revision of the 1662 Prayer Book, with all the objectionable sacerdotalism and sacramentalism removed. However, a more reformed '1689 Prayer Book' was never to be.⁴⁴ 'High Church' intransigence threw out the proposals at Convocation. Had the

Comprehension Scheme been accepted, much of the damage of 1662 would have been repaired.

Although the Baptists went their own way, Presbyterians and Independents attempted to draw together. The *Heads of Agreement*⁴⁵ of 1691 were an attempt to unite the two traditions on common ground. As always, such a scheme only appealed to the moderates of each party. However, the 'Happy Union' was shortlived. It was really wrecked by theological controversy. For by this time, many Presbyterians had drifted from *Westminster Confession* orthodoxy into Arian-Arminianism, a shift which became more tragic in the following century in the emergence of Unitarianism.⁴⁶ By the same token, many of the Independents had embraced a more exaggerated and antinomian high Calvinism, itself the forerunner of 'hypercalvinism' proper. This tendency was also shared by the Particular Baptists.⁴⁷

The early decades of the eighteenth century saw English Protestantism in appalling confusion and disarray. The extremes of liberalism and ultra-orthodoxy were evident everywhere. However, the Comprehension Scheme lingered in the minds of some. Conversations took place between Archbishop Herring, the Presbyterian Samuel Chandler and the Congregationalist Philip Doddridge.⁴⁸ Sadly, theological bitterness and mutual suspicion ensured that evangelical disunity would continue. In short, there was a general unwillingness to discard inherited positions and unite.

There can be no doubt that the Methodist revival halted the declining influence of evangelicalism. As the labours of George Whitefield, the Wesleys and others increased, the Dissenters (as they are properly called after 1689) entered into blessing. Although the movement began amongst Anglicans, the friendship between Isaac Watts (after an initially cool response), Philip Doddridge and the revival leaders helped heal the disputes of an earlier generation by means of a common evangelicalism.⁴⁹ However, notwithstanding the immense good brought by the revival, it added the most basic ingredient of all to evangelical disunity—the Calvinist-Arminian controversy.⁵⁰

This debate has always been a 'hot' one. It is a matter which has been 'shelved' rather than 'solved'. In an age of subjective irrationalism, and doctrinal indifference, it might not rate very high on our list of priorities. But a Biblical view of salvation and evangelism can never side-step the issue for very long.

In the seventeenth century, Arminianism was understandably viewed as a threat to the Gospel. Never an isolated issue, it was bound up with the Romanising measures of Archbishop Laud. A not very amusing joke of the period was: 'What do the Arminians hold? All the best bishoprics in England'. But it may be argued that the advent of Arminianism led to an 'over-reaction'. Despite its very

commendable but not infallible qualities, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* shows signs of an ultra-orthodox mentality, judged, that is, by the Reformed Confessions of the sixteenth century. This is even more evident in the exaggerated Calvinism of John Owen, whom Richard Baxter described as an 'over-orthodox doctor'.⁵¹ The momentum of the anti-Arminian reaction was to lead eventually to the deadening effects of 'hypercalvinism'.

With the advent of the Evangelical Revival, 'Calvinism' and 'Evangelicalism' could no longer be regarded as synonymous. (Even in the seventeenth century, there were notable exceptions. For instance, John (not to be confused with Thomas) Goodwin was an 'Arminian Puritan', whose evangelicalism could not be doubted.) Only those who shared the 'hard-line' Calvinism of Augustus Montague Toplady would seriously question the evangelicalism of John Wesley, something which the 'moderate' (though still five point) Whitefield never did. The facts are that the Calvinist-Arminian controversy could have been reduced to much more manageable proportions had both sides been more mindful of the way the sixteenth-century reformers formulated the Gospel of the Grace of God.

For those willing to accept the principle of paradox in the Scriptures, there always was a solution to the 'great debate'. However, the very distinctive and, by seventeenth-century standards, 'moderate' Calvinism of John Calvin himself and the Anglican reformers tended to be ignored in the heat of controversy. The facts are that Calvin and his fellow reformers taught the doctrine of universal atonement *as well as* the doctrine of divine election.⁵² They were prepared to accept the paradox that, notwithstanding the *applied* particularity of salvation, the Gospel reveals a salvation *applicable* to all. In the seventeenth century, the contestants destroyed revealed paradox by unbridled logic. Albeit from opposing perspectives, both high Calvinists and Arminians were guilty of rationalism. Thus, in the context of the Whitefield-Wesley debate, Wesley was wrong to reject divine, unconditional election (as in Article 17) and Whitefield was wrong to deny universal atonement (as in Article 31). Both men suppressed that half of the paradox which conflicted with their presuppositions. The Anglican Church never committed its clergy to the theological *systems* represented by either Wesley or Whitefield. In fact, the Articles, Prayer Book and Homilies are standing rebukes to both sides.⁵³

Using sixteenth-century norms of discussion, both Calvin's and Cranmer's 'Calvinism' are the remedy for scholastic tendencies in both *high* Calvinism and Arminianism, 'mind-sets' which, if unchecked, are both destructive of the Gospel. Such was the verdict of John Newton and Bishop Ryle, both 'true' Calvinists. Indeed, Ryle had the exaggerated Calvinism of Owen and others in mind when he

warned against an 'idolatrous veneration of a system'.⁵⁴ There can be little doubt that John Calvin would have been happy to sing the universalist hymns of Charles Wesley.⁵⁵ This remark touches another issue which has divided evangelicals. It might surprise our exclusive psalm-singing brethren in Scotland and Holland to know that John Calvin actually wrote a hymn.⁵⁶ He evidently did not object to hymns in principle, in the way that later Presbyterians did. One of the redeeming features of the new Methodist hymn book is that it includes this hymn by Calvin!⁵⁷ To return to the Calvinist-Arminian issue, *high* Calvinists and Arminians are, at their best, both 'semi-Calvinists', for they both stress aspects of the Gospel which Calvin and his fellow reformers were content to hold in tension.

It is a matter of the greatest historical importance that Edmund Calamy and others in the Westminster Assembly argued for a position virtually identical to that of Calvin and his sixteenth-century colleagues.⁵⁸ However, the tide of anti-Arminian feeling was too strong to prevent the formulation of high Calvinist orthodoxy.⁵⁹ Coming to the nineteenth century, it is clear that Dr. Thomas Chalmers, founder of the Free Church of Scotland, took a broader 'Reformation Calvinist' view than the *Westminster Confession* strictly allows.⁶⁰ The ill-fated Presbyterian Church of England, re-established in 1876, was troubled by this issue in the 1880s.⁶¹ This could have been avoided had Calamy's moderate formulation of the doctrine of redemption been accepted by the Westminster Assembly. Indeed, looking at the history of this damaging dispute, differences might have been resolved more easily had all parties observed the Biblical balance of John Calvin and the Anglican reformers. In following the leading of plain Scripture (i.e. John 1:29; 3:16; 2 Cor.5:14, 15; 1 Tim.2:6; Heb.2:9; 1 John 2:2) which clearly challenges the theory of limited atonement, it is far easier to ride a 'four-legged' Calvinism than a 'five'! More theologically, high Calvinism represents the rationalism of the 'right'; Arminianism the rationalism of the 'left'. Calvin—believe it or not, shows us the humble path of submitting the logical faculty to the constraints of the Biblical revelation. Failure at this point led, alas, to the most damaging blow to evangelical unity ever sustained by the Reformed churches. Yet, as indicated above, there is a solution, if we are prepared to accept it.

Since the great eighteenth-century revival, the British evangelical scene has not altered significantly. Separatist movements such as the Plymouth (or Christian) Brethren and the Free Church of England were a protest against the Tractarian or Anglo-Catholic movement in the Church of England. The Brethren placed considerable stress on prophetic and second advent issues, which have contributed to divisive trends in evangelicalism. The emergence of the Salvation Army was an indication of a continuing concern by evangelicals with social needs. As time has passed, increased secularism has produced

imbalance in this area at the expense of the Gospel. Throughout the nineteenth century, the rapidly expanding missionary movement revealed a common evangelistic zeal in the efforts of traditional Calvinist and Arminian denominations. More ominously, theological liberalism has had a devastating effect on all Protestant bodies, with the exception of the Strict and Particular Baptists. The Ecumenical movement grew as confidence in the verities of the Reformed faith declined. 'Conservative evangelicalism' received a much needed boost through the activities of the Inter Varsity Fellowship. Committed to student evangelism, the I.V.F.'s intellectual concerns avoided stressing the issues which have generally divided evangelicals. In recent years, interest in distinctively Reformed issues has been promoted by the Banner of Truth Trust and other publishing houses. The Charismatic movement, in its various branches has reinforced the claims of the earlier Pentecostal movement, its generally subjectivist, anti-rational approach encouraging both ecumenical and liberal trends in the main line denominations.

Evangelical Unity: the Way Ahead

My attempt to evaluate the reasons for past failure in evangelical unity has concentrated on the major causes of division. In seeking to pin-point the historical and theological causes of these divisions, I have proposed an alternative set of Bible-based solutions—an agenda for Reformed Evangelical churchmanship in the United Kingdom. However, Scriptural idealism has to be tempered with realism. We have to start from where we are. But this much is certain, that *visible* evangelical unity is a Biblical must. Beginning with local and regional attempts to express our oneness within and across denominational structures, we must aim for a national evangelical unity based on the 'five points' of Reformation Biblical Christianity—*sola scriptura, solo Christo, sola gratia, sola fide, and soli Deo gloria!* We must all be prepared to discard some of our 'distinctives', which all too often become 'destructives' where unity is concerned. This will not be a pain-free exercise for anyone.

In re-assessing the emphasis we all tend to place on our 'distinctives', we have to confess to the sin of schism. We are guilty of this when we allow things admittedly not essential to salvation too great a prominence. For then, secondary things become primaries. A 'static' view of confessional unity (where we acknowledge on paper our unity in the 'big' things) has to give way to a 'dynamic' view of unity, in which the essential, primary things which we all embrace must become conscious priorities despite lesser differences. Our religious psychology must concentrate on central rather than peripheral matters.

It might be useful to cite some instances of this 'dynamic' unity. During the Reformation, John Hooper and Nicholas Ridley disag-

reed over the question of vestments; Hooper regarded them as unscriptural and Ridley thought them to be 'indifferent'. Yet when the two men were called to suffer for the Gospel, Ridley confessed to his 'simplicity' and Hooper's 'wisdom', and the two great men were reconciled in the Gospel.⁶² During the Methodist revival, despite their theological differences, a bond of affection always existed between John Wesley and George Whitefield. Although the two men's disciples sought to exacerbate the rift, Wesley was happy to preach Whitefield's funeral sermon.⁶³ On the negative side, the Calvinist Spurgeon invited the Arminian D.L. Moody to preach for him, but not the Calvinist Bishop J.C. Ryle with whom he surely had a more basic theological affinity.⁶⁴ Presumably the Baptist preacher did not consider baptism too major an issue, since he was happy to receive pulpit assistance from the American Presbyterian, Dr. A.T. Pierson.⁶⁵ Lastly, when Dr. Billy Graham sought the support of Dr. Lloyd-Jones for his London crusade, Dr. Lloyd-Jones was willing to help, notwithstanding the Calvinist-Arminian issue. However, Dr. Graham was unwilling to sacrifice his questionable ecumenical support in the interests of true evangelical solidarity.⁶⁶

Evangelicals are unquestionably divided over the issue of separatism. I once agreed with Dr. Lloyd-Jones's view that evangelicals are 'guilty by association' if they remain within the doctrinally mixed denominations. But mere involvement in such a body is not enough to incur guilt. This is too simplistic for words. John Stott was right to challenge this view, as was Julian Charley who put the alternative case beyond doubt. He argued that at no time during Israel's long history did God call the faithful to secede from the corrupt nation. The Apostle Paul did not make a similar call with regard to the Corinthian church, neither did the Apostle John with respect to the degenerate church of Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6).⁶⁷

Where then does this leave the Reformed churches vis-à-vis Rome, and the Free churches vis-à-vis the Church of England? As Mr. Charley pointed out, our Free church fore-fathers 'did not *secede* from the Anglican Church; they were *expelled* . . .'.⁶⁸ The same may be said of the Protestant reformers. They sought to reform the mediaeval church, only to be excommunicated. They did not simply secede. In all these instances, it was a case of involuntary exclusion, not voluntary separation. Although separation was forced upon them, they were reluctantly 'separated'. They were certainly not separatists by intention. Most importantly, they were being thoroughly scriptural.

However, Mr. Charley⁶⁹ and others⁷⁰ were being utterly naive and insensitive to suggest, as a corollary to his thesis, that Free church evangelicals should contemplate rejoining the Anglican Church. The lines were drawn in 1662. Only by retracting the measures which forced our fore-fathers *out* could their sons be expected to go back

into the Church of England. This very reasonable condition can hardly expect a sympathetic hearing today.

Where then does this leave us with respect to the 'guilt by association' doctrine of separatism? To start with, none of us is ever in a 'non-guilt' condition. Simply by starting a new church down the road does not absolve us from sharing in the guilt of the world-wide church. Nehemiah saw this. 'Both my father's house and I have sinned' (Neh. 1:6). The answer was not secession, but to fight the corruption, whatever the consequences. In short, non-separatists are not guilty of association with the enemies of the Gospel *if* they are actively and publicly contending for the faith (Jude 3). Guilt only arises from a complacent acquiescence in the *status quo*, an attitude which seems to depend on a mutual truce. 'We'll not trouble the denominational authorities if they don't trouble us'. This is surely 'peace to quietly do our own thing'. Is not this the mark of 'the church indolent and out of breath' rather than the 'church militant here on earth'?

Assuming that separatists are being as active in the Gospel as their circumstances permit them, they have no right to accuse inclusivists of a guilty compromise if their brethren are seeking to serve the Lord with an active, holy militancy. But the duty of the non-separatist is clear: he is to make things 'so hot' within his denomination, that either it will be reformed, or he will be forcibly ejected. On these terms, a separated brother may lawfully encourage his non-separated brother, despite their differences, if they are both motivated by a love for Christ and the cause of the Gospel. The question is: do we have a stomach for the fight? Of course, a right response to this challenge will almost certainly lead to persecution. And did not the Apostle Paul say that 'they that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' (2 Tim. 3:12)? If we suffer no kind of persecution, then are we as godly as we would like to think? Surely, one who is charmed into silence by the flesh-pleasing policy 'Keep quiet, you'll have more influence' possesses a doubtful Christian profession. But for the true evangelical, this is no option at all.

If the proposals outlined above were pursued—both in terms of theological re-assessment and public activity, then a very definite outcome is envisaged. We will find ourselves with separated ministers and their flocks and the less likely but still feasible possibility of reformed denominational bodies. Out of this situation could arise, by the blessing of God, a visibly united, nationwide evangelical church. It is impossible to stipulate any kind of time-table, except to say that the times are urgent and delay must not be countenanced. Yet one may say that *Phase A* of such a venture involves an active commitment to discipline and reform, with mutual support on the part of the separated and the non-separated. *Phase B* would involve a uniting of all concerned on the basis of a consistent Reformed

Evangelical platform.

The pursuit of such a goal requires a clear sense of direction and a vision of the glory of God. Both are provided by a sure knowledge of Holy Scripture. This is the supreme issue of our time—the final and all-sufficient authority of a divinely inspired and inerrant Bible.⁷¹ We must be absolutely clear about this. As with the older threats of Roman traditionalism and rationalistic liberalism, so the charismatic position is a threat to the true, Biblical Gospel rediscovered at the Reformation. These three heterodox positions combine in calling into question the sufficiency and thus the exclusive authority of Holy Scripture. We dare not tolerate those who effectively supplement the Bible either with mediaeval dogmas, rationalistic speculations or new visions, revelations and prophecies.⁷² The choice is clear. We are all 'R.C.'s, in one form or another. We are either *Roman Catholics*, *Rationalist Corrupters*, *Restorationist Charismatics* or *Reformed Christians*. Only the last variant will infallibly secure the true Gospel of the Grace of God for mankind. The only basis of the true Gospel is the only basis of true unity. We cannot have one without the other. May God give us grace to ponder these things and to act upon them. Never was it more urgent for us to draw together in a visible unity. God grant that this may be so, to His eternal glory and to the comfort, prosperity and increasing usefulness of His church in a desperate and needy world.

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NOTES

- 1 Given in Jean Cadier, tr. O.R. Johnston, *The Man God Mastered* (I.V.F., 1960), pre-title page.
- 2 Given in A.H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Armstrong, 1890), p.425.
- 3 See *Unity in Diversity* (Evangelical Alliance, 1967), Foreword and pp.7–13.
- 4 See Edward Gross, *The Changing Face of Neo-Evangelicalism in Biblical Missions* (The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions) July/August 1985, pp.6–12.
- 5 *Leviathan* (J.M. Dent, 1965), p.381.
- 6 See *Theology of the English Reformers* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), pp.257f.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p.260.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.261; see also *Letters of John Calvin* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), p.133.
- 9 See Kenneth Brownell, *Worship and the Marian Exiles in Frankfurt in Spiritual Worship* (1985 Westminster Conference Report), pp.1–16.
- 10 Calvin wrote to John Knox in 1555 concerning the Anglican liturgy:
For some friends had complained to me that you insisted so peremptorily on the Anglican ceremonies, that it was evident you were more wedded to the usages of your country than is fitting . . . Certainly no one, I think, who is possessed of a sound judgement, will deny that lighted tapers, and crucifixes, and other trumpery of the same description, flow from superstition . . . Nor do I see for what reason a church should be burdened with these frivolous and useless, not to call them by their real name, pernicious ceremonies, when a pure and simple order of worship is in our power. *Letters, op. cit.*, pp.173f.

This was in no sense to suggest that French ideas should operate in England. Indeed, there was a very definite 'meta-cultural' and scriptural 'internationalism' about Calvin's Geneva.

- 11 The details included the wearing of clerical dress (the surplice and other vestments), kneeling at Holy Communion and the sign of the cross in baptism. For a discussion of the underlying principle, see Iain Murray, *Scripture and 'Things Indifferent'* in *Diversity in Unity* (1963 Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference report), pp.15-35. See also, *Anglican and Puritan Thinking* (Westminster Conference report, 1977).
- 12 See *op. cit.*, p.228. Can anyone question this interpretation of Calvin's words?

You in your turn should lay aside, nay, cast from you entirely whatever savours of earthly domination, in order that for the exercise of a spiritual office you may have a legitimate authority and such as shall be bestowed on you by God.

Although Calvin entertained a tolerant attitude towards episcopacy (for a fascinating discussion of this *à propos* the Church of England, see Toplady's *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England in Works* (1825), Vol.2, pp.7-8, 145-6), none can question his belief in presbyterian polity (see *Institutes* IV:iii:8). See G.D. Henderson, *Presbyterianism* (The Saint Andrew Press, 1955), pp.32f. Calvin's letter to Grindal (1560) was written a year after the final edition of the *Institutes* appeared, where he had clearly 'discoursed of the order of church government as delivered to us in the pure Word of God, and of ministerial offices as instituted by Christ . . .' (*Institutes* IV:iv:1) His discussion of the early development of episcopacy in this section is *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*, in which he outlines the gradual transition from New Testament church order to the system of papal episcopacy. Even then, Calvin only endorses the kind of episcopacy that Presbyterians have always claimed, i.e. a 'bishop' or pastor in a settled congregation is simply an elder or presbyter *primus inter pares*. That this is 'the order established by our Lord Jesus Christ' is stated in the *French Confession of Faith* (1559), a document Calvin helped to draw up. See *The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches*, ed. H.B. Smith and P. Schaff (Hodder, 1877), p.376. Accordingly, Calvin wrote to Grindal 'It is a matter of deep regret that the churches of your whole kingdom have not been organised as all good men could wish, and as in the beginning they had hoped.'
- 13 'This indeed will be [the Queen's] supremacy and pre-eminence; then she will hold the highest rank of dignity under Christ our head, if she stretch forth a helping hand to legitimate pastors, for the execution of those functions that have been enjoined us'. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
- 14 'I commend to your prayers, and those of the other brethren, the state of our churches, not yet settled sufficiently according to our mind'. *Ibid.*, p.228.
- 15 None can doubt that a lively reading of the Homilies would have been a fruitful exercise had this been performed on a widespread and regular basis. Even today, they would supply the clergy with excellent Biblical material for a series of sermons. See the re-issue of the Prayer Book and Homily Society's 1833 edition, with a Foreword by Dr. David Samuel, published by Focus Christian Ministries Trust (1986).
- 16 See A.H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England* (Presbyterian Church of England, 1889), p.181. The opening lines of Grindal's letter to the Queen are reproduced in the endpapers of Patrick Collinson's, *Archbishop Grindal 1519-1583: The Struggle for a Reformed Church* (Cape, 1979).
- 17 *Ibid.*, p.181.
- 18 See John Macleod, *Scottish Theology* (Knox Press and Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), p.46.
- 19 See *A Free Churchman's View of an Established Church in Essays in Orthodox Dissent* (Independent Press, 1943), p.197.
- 20 See James Moffatt, *The Presbyterian Churches* (Methuen, 1928), pp.57f. For Milton's famous line, see *On the New Forcers of Conscience, under the Long Parliament* in *Milton's Poetical Works* (many editions).

- 21 See Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Difference between Independency and Presbytery* in Iain Murray, ed., *The Reformation of the Church* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), pp.281f.
- 22 See John Owen on Schism in *Diversity in Unity*, *op. cit.*, p.62.
- 23 See *English Congregationalism in its Greatness and Decline in Essays Congregational and Catholic*, ed. A. Peel (The Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1931), pp.297–301. See also Ernest A. Payne, *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England* (S.C.M., 1944), p.50.
- 24 The fears of Owen's contemporary, the Presbyterian Thomas Edwards, were thus fulfilled. See Moffatt, *op. cit.*, pp.59f. and Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford, 1978) pp.83f.
- 25 See Prefatory Note in *Works*, ed. W.H. Goold (Johnstone and Hunter, 1853), Vol.16, p.viii.
- 26 'One church refusing to hold that communion with another which ought to be between them is not schism, properly so called'. *Works*, Vol.13, p.181.
- 27 'And that particular church which extends not its duty beyond its own assemblies and members is fallen off from the principal end of its institution; and every principle, opinion, or persuasion, that inclines any church to confine its care and duty unto its own edification only, yea, or of those only which agree with it in some particular practice, making it neglectful of all due means of the edification of the church catholic, is schismatical.' *Works*, Vol.16, pp.196–7.
- 28 Given in Moffatt, *op. cit.*, pp.142–3.
- 29 See *Episcopalian Writers on Church Government* in Murray, *The Reformation of the Church*. Appendix 2, pp.407f.
- 30 See *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, ed. Keble (Oxford, 1836), Vol.2, p.601; also, Philip E. Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp.168–9.
- 31 See E.A. Payne, *op. cit.*, pp.133–4.
- 32 See Michael R. Watts, *op. cit.*, p.65. 'General' = 'General Redemption'; 'Particular' = 'Particular Redemption' or 'Limited Atonement'.
- 33 See Stephen Brachlow, *John Robinson and the Separatist Ideal in The Puritan Experiment in the New World* (Westminster Conference Report, 1976), pp.5f.
- 34 See *Knots Untied* (James Clarke, 1964), pp.103f.
- 35 Given in Eric W. Hayden, *A Centennial History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle* (Clifford Frost, 1962), p.11.
- 36 *Institutes* IV:xvi:20.
- 37 See Pierre Ch. Marcel, tr. P.E. Hughes, *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism* (James Clarke, 1953); also the recent re-issue of Samuel Miller, *Baptism and Christian Education* (Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1984). A useful work is C.G. Kirkby, *Signs and Seals of the Covenant* (1986).
- 38 See Michael R. Watts, *op. cit.*, p.164.
- 39 See *Baptism: Its Mode* (Gospel Tract and Bible Society of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, n.d.); also, see Miller *op. cit.*, p.82.
- 40 See *Institutes* IV:xv:19.
- 41 See Jay E. Adams, *The Meaning and Mode of Baptism* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1975).
- 42 J.C. Ryle wrote:
 Taking all things into consideration, a more impolitic and disgraceful deed never disfigured the annals of a Protestant Church . . . I believe they (i.e. the bishops) did an injury to the cause of true religion in England, which will probably never be repaired, by sowing the seeds of endless divisions. *Light from Old Times* (C.J. Thynne, 1902 ed.), pp.316–9.
 See also Iain Murray, ed. *Sermons of the Great Ejection* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1962).
- 43 See my article: *Great Anglican Divines: (4) John Tillotson (1630–1694)* in *CROSS+WAY*, Church Society, Spring 1986, p.3.
- 44 This venture was not entirely fruitless, since the Prayer Book of the Free Church of England (founded 1844) largely follows the 1689 proposals. See *A History of the*

Free Church of England (Free Church of England Publications Committee, 1960), pp.171f.

- 45 See Iain Murray, *The Reformation of the Church*, pp.297f.
- 46 See C.G. Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians: From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (George Allen & Unwin, 1968); also, Hywel R. Jones, *The Death of Presbyterianism in By Schisms Rent Asunder* (Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, 1969), pp.31f.
- 47 See Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hypercalvinism in English Nonconformity 1689–1765*, (The Olive Tree, 1967).
- 48 See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Chandler, Doddridge and the Archbishop: a study in eighteenth century ecumenism* in *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol.1, no.2 (November 1973), pp.42–56.
- 49 See my *Philip Doddridge and the Oxford Methodists in Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Vol.XLII, Part 3 (December, 1979), pp.75–80.
- 50 For an illuminating survey and discussion, see Alan P.F. Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation* (H.E. Walter, 1982).
- 51 See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A Study in a Tradition* (Dr. Williams's Library Lecture, 1951), p.10. See my criticism of Owen in *Geneva Revisited or Calvinism Revised* in *Churchman*, Vol.100, No.4 (1986), pp.323–334.
- 52 See my article on the French Confession of Faith (1559), *John Calvin and the Confessio Fidei Gallicana* in *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol.LVIII, No.3 (July, 1986), pp.195–206.
- 53 See my article *The Gospel and Justification* in *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol.LVIII, No.3 (July, 1985), pp.247–267.
- 54 *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, St. John, Vol.1 (William Hunt, 1865), p.159 (Notes on John 3:9–21). For Newton, see *Works* (1808), Vol.4, pp.190f.
- 55 If John Calvin could write, 'God commends to us the salvation of all men without exception, even as Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world', (*Comment* on Galatians 5:12), there is nothing which would have embarrassed him in Charles Wesley's lines:
For all my Lord was crucified,
For all, for all my Saviour died.
Hymns & Psalms (Methodist Publishing House, 1983), Hymn 226:7.
- 56 For a discussion of this issue, see my *Benjamin Keach and Nonconformist Hymnology* in *Spiritual Worship* (Westminster Conference Report, 1985), pp.82–84.
- 57 *Op. cit.*, Hymn 391, 'I greet thee, who my sure Redeemer art'.
- 58 In the debate about Redemption, Calamy declared:
I am far from universal redemption in the Arminian sense; but that that I hold is in the sense of our divines (e.g. Bishop Davenant) in the Synod of Dort, that Christ did pay a price for all . . . that Jesus Christ did not only die sufficiently for all, but God did intend, in giving of Christ, and Christ in giving Himself, did intend to put all men in a state of salvation in case they do believe . . . I argue from the iii of John 16, in which words a ground of God's intention of giving Christ, God's love to the world, a philanthropy the world of elect and reprobate, and not of elect only; it cannot be meant of the elect, because of that 'whosoever believeth' . . . xvi Mark, 15. 'Go preach the gospel to every creature'. If the covenant of grace be to be preached to all, then Christ redeemed, in some sense, all—both elect and reprobate; but it is to be preached to all; there is a warrant for it.
Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, ed. A.F. Mitchell and J. Struthers (William Blackwood, 1874), pp.152–4.
- 59 The Westminster Confession does not even include a reference to the universal sufficiency of the atonement. It simply states that the work of redemption is

Churchman

- confined to the elect. Thus, the Westminster divines were more extreme than the divines of Dort. See my *Geneva Revisited or Calvinism Revised*, *op. cit.*, p.325.
- 60 See Chalmers's *Institutes of Theology* (Sutherland and Knox, 1849), Vol.2, pp.403-4.
- 61 See *Digest of the Proceedings of the Synods of the Presbyterian Church of England (1876-1905)*, comp. S.W. Carruthers (Presbyterian Church of England, 1907), pp.12-26. The Presbyterian Church of Wales also moderated its position in 1874. See the *Confession of Faith* (The Bookroom, Carnarvon, 1900), pp.129-130.
- 62 See Ridley's letter to Hooper in *The Works of Nicholas Ridley* (Parker Society, 1841), pp.355-6).
- 63 See *On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield in The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, A.M., ed. Thomas Jackson (John Mason, 1840), Vol.6, pp.158f.
- 64 See Donald Macleod, *C.H. Spurgeon: Sunshine and Shadow* in *The Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, June, 1986, pp.128-9.
- 65 See Eric W. Hayden, *op. cit.*, pp.36, 49. Pierson actually became a Baptist after Spurgeon's death.
- 66 This fact was related to me by the Revd. Charles S. Lawrence of Banbury.
- 67 See Julian Charley, *Church Order in Unity in Diversity*, pp.22-3.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p.23.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p.23.
- 70 See *All in Each Place*, ed. J.I. Packer (Marcham Manor Press, 1965).
- 71 Under the influence of the 'new' hermeneutic even some evangelicals fail to see that the movement to ordain women is a flagrant violation of the authority of Scripture on this subject (see 2 Tim.2:12f.; 3:2, 12).
- 72 Article V of the *French Confession of Faith* (1559) is thoroughly relevant to the current situation:
Whence it follows that no authority, whether of antiquity, or custom, or numbers, or human wisdom, or judgements, or proclamations, or edicts, or decrees, or councils, or visions, or miracles, should be opposed to these Holy Scriptures, but, on the contrary, all things should be examined, regulated, and reformed according to them. *op. cit.*, p.362.