The Bierton Crisis

David Clarke

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Introduction 1984

The following pages contain a collection of recorded events, which seek to explain the reason for my secession from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church. Bierton is a village near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The Bierton Church was a society, in law, called Strict and Particular Baptists, formed in 1831 and was presided by the son of John Warburton of Trowbridge, Wiltshire. It and became a Gospel Standard listed church in 1983. My succession from this church was not a separation from any other Strict Baptist church just the Bierton Church. I was not the subject of church discipline but rather I withdrew from the communion as a matter nod conscience. And according to our church rules practice I am still a member.

Conscience free

My voluntary leaving of this society leaves me free in conscience to relate my experiences, being bound only by the Law of Christ and not the rules of that society. The date of my secession was the **26th of June 1984.**

Love covers many errors

I am certain I shall make more enemies through this publication, for they will say it is all wrong, names ought not to be mentioned nor letters published without prior consent from their writers. Even of this be the case, for the truths sake I will not remain silent, knowing this: the day is coming when we shall all appear before the Judgement set of Christ and then all shall be revealed. I apologies if I cause unjust offence for this is not my aim.

It is hope many may learn from my sad experience and that my treatment of the serious matters that I write able will be helpful for any who find them selves having to deal with the issues that I have spoken of.

Let them that have ears to hear, hear what I say and

judge for them, bearing in mind charity covereth the multitude of sins (I Peter 4 [8]). All the members of the church have now passed away. Only I and another member of the church are left alive.

A common problem

I hope this will help others to avoid similar pitfalls and that this record will be of aid to recover the fallen (Deut. 22 [4]).

Pastor less churches and churches not run on biblical lines must surely fall by the same means unless they be faithful to the word of God and obey the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14 [15]).

The issues spoken about range from Particular Redemption, dealing with offences, the Law of Moses and the rule of the gospel. I speak about Gospel invitations rather than offers. I speak about the Gospel Standard Articles, the Sabbath day and gospel rest. I believe what is recorded reflects similar situations throughout the land in these days where men have lost sight of the cause of Christ and the purpose of His Gospel Church (Hos..... 4 [6], Isa 5 [13]).

A testimony for the elect of God

My prayer is that the Gospel of God will be declared to this generation and the elect of Christ be gathered and called unto him. That my testimony may serve to the glory of God.

General letter to those persons listed below:

Please find enclosed a copy of an article written by my own hand called the 'Bierton Crisis.' I have sent a copy to each of the persons mentioned below for they are all in some way connected with these things related in my article. Some names are mentioned others have their letters reproduced in this account. Others are trustees and some are Churches were I am engaged to preach.

It has been suggested I should have asked permission to mention people's names or reproduce their letters sent to others or me. But for the cause of truth such is not the way I am lead to act. I see in the New Testament letters sent and read public ally many containing named persons of saints and enemies to truth. Ought we to let any differently?

I do hope my readers will seek the Lord that he gives them wisdom to judge and discern between good and evil. My prayer is that this testimony of mine may be of help to all concerned.

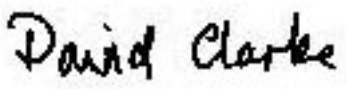
I would ask the reader to pray for me and my family and the folk at Bierton; I have a fond love for my friends their. Who can tell what the God of all grace may do for us.

I would value help, advice, reproof or correction from them that are moved with a concern and love for the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus the Lord.

This letter general is sent to:

Mr Sayers, minister, Watford.
Mr Crane , o**verseer** of the Bierton cause, Lakenheath.
Mr Baumber, **trustee** and minister of the gospel, Bedford.
Mr Janes, **trustee** and deacon (Eaton Bray), Eddlesborough.
Mr Dix, minister of the gospel, Dunstable.

Mr Levey, deacon of the Baptist Church, Dunstable
Mr John Just, Dunstable.
Mr J Gosden, minister of the gospel, Southborough.
Mr Ramsbottom, minister of the gospel, Luton.
Mr Croydon, minister of the gospel Croydon.
Mr Howe Aylesbury, former minister of the gospel, Ivanhoe.
Mr C Lawrence, minister of the gospel, Harold.
Mr S Scott – Pearson, minister of the gospel, Maulden.
Mr Royces of Luton
Mr Hope, minister of the gospel, Reading.
Mr Martin, **trustee**, minister Blunham Strict and P rticular Baptist
The churches at: Evington, Oakington, Attleborough, Bierton, Blackheath and Stamford.



David Clarke I Cor. 16 22-24 31/10/84

Note from the publishers

David Clarke is the sole remaining male member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists, a Gospel Standard cause, and this book is David's personal testament that tells of his conversion from crime to Christ, on **16th January 1970**, whilst suffering from the effects of a bad trip on LSD. It continues and tells of his pursuit of truth and wish to follow Christ, as best he could. In this pursuit he read the bible intensely, along with a range of classical Christian literature, and sought the help of many professing Christians.

David sifted through the many differences and contentious issues that divided professing Christians at that time because he and his brother Michael were both criminals

in the 60's and brought up by their parents in Aylesbury and had not come from a religious background. He finally joined the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, in 1976 concluding that their doctrinal base, which formed the basis of their society formed in 1831, was a faithful representation of those truths taught in the Bible. Those truths being expressed as the distinguishing doctrines of grace and more fully expressed in the First London Baptist Confession of Faith 1646, 2nd Edition.

The Bierton Church became a Gospel Standard cause in 1981, whose Articles of Religion are a clearer distillation of the 1646 Baptist Confession, and so were not inconsistent with the beliefs and practise of the Bierton Church. However this caused serious opposition from various quarters from without the church resulting in a dilemma and problems that David had to deal with. This was because he was the churches secretary and felt those issues that were raised were important and it was necessary to resolve them.

The story tells of David's call to preach the gospel that involved a church process in sending him to go wherever the lord opened the door, in January 1982. Both Mr Hill of Luton Ebenezer, and Mr Hope of Reading, recommended David's application to preach to the Church and it was accepted.

The story relates his experience as a sent minister of the church, preaching in many churches in England, during which time he learned of the many difficulties that churches were experiencing and believers were struggling with issues. David believed these issues needed to be addressed. David says he became aware that the people of God were suffering and were in need of help as expressed by Isaiah 5 13. Isaiah 5: 13

Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.

This book also tells of David's endeavour to reach is former friends in crime when he invited them all to a meeting at the Bierton Church, on 5th June 1983, at which meeting David was able to tell of all what the Lord Jesus had done for him. Significantly Michael, David's brother was there, with his family. David and Michael were both criminals in the 60's and were sentence to prison for malicious wounding and possessing a firearm without a license.

Providentially this meeting was televised and available on this link.

It was 16 years later that Michael too became a Christian and was baptised in an old oil drum in New Bilibid Prison, on 16th September 2000, whilst serving his 16-year sentence in this Philippine jail.

It was after this meeting that David noticed his troubles appeared to begin and he contended with his church over matters of doctrine and practice. A fall into error of belief and conduct that were Hymns relating to general redemption had been introduced to the Church, views with respect to the Law of Moses were held, that were contrary to their articles of religion and false views relating to giving reverence to holy tables and buildings.

As a matter of principle and conscience David seceded from the church in 1984 and wrote his privately published book, "The Bierton Crisis", which he circulated to all the Trustee's and all concerned. The church did not terminate his membership as they wished him to return.

It was David's argument that when men look to tradition, and were not governed by scripture, then there is a cessation of truth among them because truth is no longer of prime concern, only in so far that it keeps or preserves their traditions and order that they have become use too. Whether that order, or way of life, be according to the word of God or not.

David realized that men might begin well, according to the faith of Christ, but fall from grace and turn aside to vain jangling following the traditions of men and false notions regarding the Law of Moses. By falling from grace he means a lapse from teaching the way of grace. David also witnessed this fact during his preaching tour of the Philippines and in New Bilibid Prison in 2002. This occurred when speaking to criminals in New Bilibid Prison when certain so called converted criminals and religious volunteers who were mostly Arminian's opposed David's preaching and ministry because he drink wine and mixing with sinners late a night in the Prison. David now calls them the Don't Doers and this was just the same religious spirit that he had opposed at the Bierton Church. This account is written about in David's book, and our publication, "Before the Cock Crows".

Bierton Church was a Gospel Standard cause and as such was governed by strict rules relating to membership, only the church can terminate the membership of its members and this is a very important rule. See Gospel Standard Rule 22, Severance of any member from the church.

During David's time in the Bierton Church he had to deal with a range of contentious issues that plagued the professing Christian church in that day. These contentions ranged from Calvinism and Arminianism, the Gospel as a rule of life rather than the Law of Moses. The preaching or none offer of the gospel as opposed to offering the gospel, now referred to as Fullerism. Problems relating to the added articles of the Gospel Standard trust. The charges of being a Hyper Calvinist and an Antinomian. The role of women in the church, head coverings, and holy tables the use or none use of a television set or cassette recorder to record meetings.

David also discovered a great divide that existed between the Gospel Standard Baptists and Grace Baptists, a division that is very serious. David noted that many were

falling into the lapsed position of offering the gospel and turning from their Gospel Standard position. This divide was sinister because the London Grace Baptists Association contended earnestly against the Bierton Church because they were a Gospel Standard cause and that contention is current, on going and a threat to many his day.

David's views are very clear

and he believes they are according to the scripture and principles of truth.

Our own articles of religion govern our Church and they we free to associate with any society provided this does not conflict with our articles of religion as expressed in our trust deed.

Only the church are permitted to elect their own trustees.

Trustees cannot pass on the churches trust deed, or church property, to another body without the Churches permission.

Particular Redemption is a truth and any hymns expressing general redemption should not be sung or taught in the Church.

The Gospel or Royal Law of liberty is the rule of life for the believer and not the Law of Moses.

The gospel is to be preached with no "free offers"of grace to men.

The added articles of the Gospel Standard need clarification as they have caused some to stumble. They are essentially correct and are saying it is not right to offer Christ to men because the atonement is limited and unless a man be regenerated he cannot believe in or lay hold on Christ.

Women have their place in the Church but not as elders, or ruling the men, and head coverings for ladies is a custom taught in scripture.

There is no place in the Christian faith to hold views that relate to holy tables and buildings or relics.

The use of television sets, radio, reading of newspapers,

Recording equipment and other electronic means of communication, such as the cell phone and Internet, are not to be dictated by a churches or another person's conscience.

David's books treat these subjects very seriously and he believes that he has been called by the Lord Jesus to share his experience to all who are concerned and are seeking to honour and follow the lord Jesus Christ. It is David's desire that it may prove a very helpful read as it has been written as it were, with a pen of iron on a lead table. That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! Job 19:24

When David first published, "The Bierton Crisis", it was sent only to those who were directly involved out of courtesy. In that edition he informed the reader that his secession left him free in conscience and not governed by the church rules, but rather for truths sake, being governed only by the law of Christ.

The Church did not terminate David's membership, as they wanted him to return, as can be confirmed by Mr Crane of Lakenheath. Mr Crane was the churches over sear and is able to confirm that it was the Churches wish that David return to Bierton. And also when David returned from mission work in the Philippines in 2003, he suggested he reopen the Bierton chapel that had been closed for worship in December 2002.

David has written this account out of conviction, conscience and principle that what is written is of great importance. He does not wish to high light personal issues or breach any rule of confidentiality and will not be printing any persons personal identity, without their expressed permission. He is contacting all who have been mentioned in his first edition of, "The Bierton Crisis", seeking permission to print their letters or communications or alternatively to remove their identity to avoid their personal infringement or privacy.

Church Rules And Church Business

It is normal courtesy for all church matters, that are spoken in private, should not be discussed out side of the church with out the churches permission, in just the same way as personal matters within a family are private and not to spoken about without permission of the parties concerned. How ever this rule is the ordinary rule and matters of a serious nature can be spoken about in an appropriate way. In the same way the law of the land states that if a person witnesses and is privy to a crime they are legal bound to report the matter to the police. David believes in this case and cause of truth the Lord Jesus has addressed this issue.

What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops. Matth. 10:11. David is the last remaining church member and has the right to speak of all those issue affecting the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

David is the sole remaining member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Society and now responsible for all the Church affairs. And in David's first edition of, "The Bierton Crisis", he said that his secession left him free in conscience, not bound by the rules of that society, being bound only by the Law of Christ, to tell of his experience. This left him free to make a stand for truth, which is what he did. The church was a liberty to terminate his membership but they did not do so as they wanted him to return.

Churches Connected

Churches: Dunstable, Evington, Oakington, Matfield, Stamford, Leicester, Nottingham, Bradford, Ebenezer Luton, Oxford, Reading, Attleborough, Limes Avenue, Linslaid, Colnebrook, Kendal, Dunstable, Bedford, Attleborough, Rowley Regis, Prestwood, Linslaid, Blackheath, Evington, Walgrave, Fenstanton, Uffington, Colnebrook, Grove, Ebenezer Luton, Tamworth Road, Hedge End.

In this publication personal names have been removed in the interest of privacy.

1. Truth Causes A Division (Luke 2 [51])

The following sermon notes were made before and after I preached at the weeknight meeting at the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Chapel on **Wednesday the 20th of April 1983**. I believe that sermon was the instrument laid at the root of the error, which caused the division, and parting of the way between myself and the Church at Bierton. I seceded from the Church on the 26th of June 1984.

Our church had run a Sunday school for many years and each anniversary Mr King, one of our members and a sent minister from the church, would conduct the service. I was surprised to observe the Mr King had selected, for the second year running, two children's hymns for the children and their unconverted parents to sing. The hymns were **"Jesus love me this I know, co's the bible tells me so"** also **"There is a green hill far away"**. In his comment he stated that Jesus loved them each one. It was matter that cause me concern **for Mr King was a sent minister from the Bierton Church** who had become a Gospel Standard cause and he was teaching general redemption rather than particular redemption.

An Attempt To Resolve The Difficulty

On Wednesday, the 20th of April 1983, I preached a sermon, during our week evening meeting, at the Bierton Baptist Chapel. The text being, this is a faithful saying and these things I will that thou affirm constantly. That they, which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works' (Titus 3 [8]). In my attempt to apply the truth of this text, bearing in mind the current needs and position of our church at Bierton, I gave examples, by way of direct application. I stated how we might be found to take heed to this exhortation if we restored a suitable children's hymn book which did not

contain hymns expressing general redemption & universal redeeming love to all children. I stated also it would be a good work to set our church in order even though some would not credit this to be a good work. That in this pursuit there may be things not acceptable to our natural carnal desires and us as individuals.

The Examples Given In Order

We had no ruling authority and needed a pastor or minister for teaching and ruling well.

We should teach truth in our Sunday school and not error such as ' universal redeeming love' for all children. I asserted it was wrong to teach the children or lead them to believe in general redemption and that a step to avoid this would be to restore a suitable hymnbook, which was in accordance with our own Confession of Faith.

Effects Of This Address

During this address I observed the countenance of Mr King who shook his head from Side to side. This was at the point I said it was heresy to teach the children Jesus died for them each one. He said, at another time, he knew not by what spirit I spoke that evening.

Church Meeting Called For

Mrs Gurney, after the meeting, asked when we could have a church meeting to discuss these matters. Our quarterly meeting was due to be held that April so we booked the 27th day of April at 2:30 p.m. At this meeting Mr King was the chairman and read from the 23rd Psalm.

Transcript From The Minutes

At this meeting Mr King was the chairman and the minutes read as follows:

The chairman made introductory comments regarding his position as chairman and that by the next church meeting he would have fulfilled that office for one year and that he

wished the church to seek a chairman to succeed him. This was because he could not conduct church affairs whilst there were disagreements amongst the members.

Chairman Forbids Discussion

The chairman informed the church that our rules relating to matters of serious Importance could not be brought forward at any church meeting unless notice is given at A church meeting one-month previous thereto (according to rule 15 of the Gospel Standard rules). Therefore any matters arising from the sermon preached by Mr D. Clarke could not be raised or dealt with at that meeting.

Chairman comments upon the sermon

The chairman stated that I had made serious charge against the Bierton church and that he wished the ' chair ' to be respected and honoured by this ruling authority

Chair Opposed

After general matters had been discussed and church business had finished Mr D. Clarke opposed the Chairman regarding the sermon preached explaining he wished the church to give their opinion as to their belief in respect of teaching the children and their unconverted Parents, at the Sunday school Good Friday meetings, general redemption in opposition to particular redemption. I said my charge of them teaching heresy was justifiable for Mr King had said himself, at the Good Friday service both last year and this year, **Jesus had died for each one of the children.** Also they were teaching the children to sing Jesus had died for them and he loves them all.

Chairman's Disapproval

The chairman expressed his disapproval since he said this matter could not be raised since it was contrary to the rule 15 of the Gospel Standard rule book. Also Mr D Clarke was out of order and must have permission of the church to

discuss this matter.

Mr. D Clarke expressed his view that since it was a case of serious disorder and the Cause of truth would suffer prejudice if left for one month, **rule 15 allowed for his action**. Also that it would be wrong to leave for a whole month such a charge being unanswered. (P.S. Mr. Clarke Believed this delay was a tactic of Satan and so the Devil was resisted in the same way as Cromwell deposed the King of England who maintained "the divine right of a King to rule in unrighteousness".

Help Called For

I put to the church that they call independent witnesses, such as a minister of another Cause and one of the trustees. I suggested Mr. Hill of Luton, or Mr. Hope of Reading, but Miss G Ellis expressed a minister who was not so well known to them might be better. I suggested Mr. Ramsbottom, of Luton, andMiss B Ellis suggested Mr. P Trustees 1, (Trustee) of Eaton Bray. This motion was put to the church seconded by Mrs. M Clarke and carried by vote, 5 to 2.

Chairman re-instated

Since I had assumed the office of chairman to deal with the above I then asked Mr King to close the meeting; with he did leading in prayer.

Post Script To The Church Minutes

There is a postscript to the above church minutes and they read as follows:

During the debate Mr King asked the church if he could have an honourable dismissal to seek membership elsewhere and that in his view it was wrong for Mr D Clarke to join the church knowing these hymns were tough the children; therefore he aught not to seek such changes. The church gave no reply to M. King except Mr D Clarke who explained the church could not give him honourable dismissal but for a

justifiable reason and that this issue could not be considered justifiable, but rather if he taught these views (of general redemption to children) the church could not license him to preach.

After the postscript a note explains the church could not recall the last paragraph of the postscript and would note adopt it as part of their minutes.

My Observations

At this meeting I saw something of sanctimonious religion wriggling like a snake; my conscience would not allow me to remain silent but rather stamp on the serpent.

Leaving The Meeting

Coming with grief from the chapel both my wife and I meet to our joy and delight Mr Hill, of Luton, He was standing on the corner of Bierton cross roads outside the Pentecostal Chapel. I had left the church some 10 years ago because of their Arminianism. Mr Hill had come by us from Luton and walked some two miles along Bircott Lane, having mistakenly come to preach at Bierton that evening. We believe he was sent of God to our aid and comfort for after we embarrassed him and poured our hearts out unto him he encouraged us by words of exhortation saying we should honour the Lord, for they that honour me I will honour (I Sam 2 [30]).

After tea Mr Hill and I attended the evening meeting and heard Mr Goode preach the word of God.

2. My Method Dealing With The Problem

I wrote the following letter to Mr King and gave it to him by hand by hand at the weeknight meeting of 2nd. May 1983. No one in the church knew the contents of this letter until Mr King read parts of it at Church meeting. (See Church minutes. Unofficial Church meeting 19/10/83). It was difficult to approach.

My Letter To Mr King the 2nd of May 1983

Dear Mr King;

It would seem your conduct and policy, as displayed at our recent church meeting amounts to shameful behaviour and I wish you to know not only have you caused me offence but also my wife who also is a church member and could only serve to harm the church at Bierton. But thanks be to God who given more grace is careful and watchful over his little ones and will not suffer this harm to destroy his own work in the people of God. But through this disorder my God will turn these evils to their good.

In the first instance your opening comments, the church, expresses doubt as to the spirit by which I preached at the chapel on Wednesday last.

Then you attempted to prohibit any matters arising from my exhortation, to the people of God, to be diligent in all good works, by informing them there were standing orders which forbid any matter of serious concern from rising unless one month had elapsed and a meeting ordered for that expressed concern. Even Mrs Gurney expressed her frustration saying that it would be wrong to prohibit any member of the church from expressing their views for a whole month.

The rule 15 in question, Mr King, is connected with motions being put to the church and not discussing matters of serious concern. You cannot make a rule saying these matters are not to be discussed simply because you are averse

to them.

A correct understanding of rule 15 us this: any matter which is of a serious nature, requiring church approval, must not be put forward as a motion for the church to decide unless it has been given due consideration, and one month has been allowed to elapse before the matter be put as a motion to the church to be carried or rejected by a vote of the church.

Now after this you then claimed that I was out of order when bringing these matters rightly to the church. You them proceeded to charge me and others with joining the church to cause disorder and disturb the peace and since we were not baptized as strict Baptist in the Bierton Church we ought to have remained in the churches from where we came. All of which conduct serves to show your conduct as a Christian, a minister and member of the church is unacceptable.

My suspicions are, you are an enemy to those doctrines I seek to preserve, or you see no need to be careful of your choice of words when teaching the children and unconverted parents. Both of which attitudes are contrary to the church at Bierton of which I joined.

It is on this basis I content with you King, that I was perfectly in order and disclaim your accusations of bulldozing methods in the church meeting. It was necessary for the cause of truth and decency to take charge of a runaway horse. Now what would you say of Phinehas (Numbers 25 – verses 7-8). It was you who gave me the 'chair' and I that gave it back to you after the matter had been rightly put to the church. And those who may claim lawful membership. And the distinguishing love of God.

We hold that the Lord God does not love all individuals the same nor does he love all infants and children as you put forward in public meetings. But he has distinguishing love, which was set upon his people, who are stilled in scripture as the little ones, having set this love upon them before the

foundations of the world. These are the elect the body of Christ, those for whom the Lord died and of the rest, children included, they are hated with the hatred he had towards Esau. For as it is written Jacob have I loved Esau have I hated. Being said for them before they were born that the purpose of God according to election might stand. We ought therefore to be careful when selecting Hymns for the children to sing and in front of their unconverted parents. For the children's Hymnbook contains doctrines contrary to the scriptures and our articles of faith. This, King, is not what you call changing things at Bierton, but rather doing a good work and putting things right in our own church and returning to the old paths, in the spirit of true Christian charity and love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

There were several other issues, which came to light in that meeting which I now seek to examine and call your attention to, apart from the spirit by which of, which you preached were in doubt of.

You charged the Rev. Stephen Scott – Pearson with wearing a Romanising Clerical collar and by your inference smeared his character. Now while this is true, he wears, such a collar on certain occasions, it is not true to say from that inference that he supported and advanced Roman Catholic friends who would be offended.

For the records, which you know to be true, the magazine in question show Mr Pearson in a public protest meeting against the visit of the Roman Pontiff. It can be said of the Rev. Stephen Scott-Pearson, he is a faithful contender for the Christian faith.

Can this be said of you?

Secondly, you accuse myself and others of having what you call a **free will Baptism** (what ever that means) and we ought to have remained in the churches from whence we came. You say we came to disrupt the church for we knew of

all the conduct and the Sunday school before we came. Bertha actually testified it was only of recent days these Hymns in question have been sung by the children. And my testimony is this; I questioned you last year on the same issue, the first time I heard such matters being put to the children.

Now let me remind you again, it was you who put the motion to the chair, contrary to the rule you accuse me of violating, when the church voted to join the Gospel Standard causes. Therefore, who has been seeking changes and affected them, and who is in breach of the rules?

I remind you again, you are a trustee and have public ally acknowledged, before God, the Church and the world, to carefully promote, preserve and keep watch over the doctrines are those stated in our articles of faith. Now if you do not believe them nor seek to preserve them, not only as a trustee but also a minister, you have lied on oath, and in court of law is criminal.

Your concern, Mr King, ought not to be am I being personally attached and under an inquisition? But rather, do I advance views contrary to the scripture and dishonour Christ, and are my views in conflict with his word and the articles of the Church I have joined? You ought not to fall back upon your age to justify your activity for as Elihu says (Job 32 – Verse 9) Great men are not prophesying. But to prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil (2 Thess. 5 – Verse 22). My charge being it was not just an appearance of evil but an actual evil doctrine being advanced at the children's school. This doctrine being contrary to your own church and confession of faith.

See supplement: Bierton Articles of faith and trustees responsibilities

Now I read the situation like this: - you being Baptized with a Free Grace Baptism at the Bierton Church, (whatever that baptism means, for that can only be the counter part to

a free will Baptism), are the lawful son of the household of faith at the Church at Bierton. That I and others having a free will Baptism, not being baptized at Bierton are not the lawful children. That you have the right to hold views and conduct yourselves contrary to the scriptures and the articles of the church which you joined by reason of the lawful Baptism. This, Mr King, is not Christian doctrine but rather the opposite. For they that do and hold the practice and believe the articles having given themselves up to membership and been received into membership are the lawful children and not they who speak with the mouth and act contrary to their affirmations.

You say you are under inquisition. Pray let me know how can you be given an honourable discharge to join another church if you will not subject yourself to the lawful enquiry of the church you are in membership of. You are a Minister of the Bierton Church and therefore have professed a calling to it, now here are those Graces accompanying this call to assist and support you in such diligent enquiries as to the doctrines you preach. You cannot advance views contrary to the scripture and fall back and hide behind a cloud of weakness when the church, or congregation or private member questions your advances, Now, Mr King, I as a lawful member of the Bierton Church protest to you. You have before the church stated by inference that I spoke by an evil spirit when preaching at the church on Wednesday last and by your conduct lately pointed out in this letter oppose my actions. Now where is your charity here to the little ones of Christ's fold and his ministers? My great consolation is this, they said the same of My Lord Jesus Christ and that he had a devil. It is you, Mr King, by your traditions do violate the Gospel of Christ and make it void. For you say, being a lawful son of the church you can act as you feel and believe even when in conflict with the articles of the Church, objecting when questioned with these words; the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life. Hence

you misquote scripture to support your conduct. Therefore you by your traditions (that is unwritten beliefs and current behaviour in the Church) seek to prevent and resist the lawful children from exercising their privileges by smearing their profession and opposing their Christian stand against error and falsehood. You charge me with being out of order by not respecting the ‘ chair ‘. Mr King, the ‘chair’ was out of order when seeking to administer a ruling contrary to the rule. We have no such view of the ‘ Divine Right of the Chair’, for if the ‘chair’ acts contrary to the rules. But I do realize you may have been ignorant of this matter but you had one whole week to consider and deliberate your actions.

From the outcome of that meeting it appears you deliberately attempted to oppose the cause of truth and frustrate the children of God seeking to continue in your traditions and false ways.

My charge to the church still stands and you as a member of that church must also answer. The Charge is a follows:

To say to the children God loves them each one and that Jesus died for them all each one is contrary to the Scripture, is false doctrine and is opposed to the articles of our church.

To teach the children and their unconverted parents by encouraging the children to sing the Hymns, such as ‘ Jesus loves me this know, for the bible tells me so’, etc. Is not a good work. -Nor should we put words in their mouths expressing faith, hope and love, and teach them to call God their Father and Christ their Saviour, when they will most likely find one day to their confusion, that Satan is their father, and Christ their Judge.

This is not a good work but rather an evil one, for it serves to delude their minds as to the nature of the love of God in Jesus Christ to the elect children of God.

Now listen, it was the whole Church at Bierton who recently gave assent to the truth of these articles of faith that I

seek to preserve, maintain and promote, for I believe them and preach them. These truths of the distinguishing love if God and particular redemption have always been the doctrines of the Church at Bierton, ask those who were there before you.

I am seeking to preserve and maintain these doctrines of the faith once delivered unto the Saints and my question to the Church at Bierton is their objective: are they? – **And my question to you, Mr King, is: are you?**

Now King, Christian Charity covers a multitude of sins, but only those sins which are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, and if you review what has transpired I will forgive and receive you as a Christian brother of you show the evidences of grace and obey the scriptures. For I exhort you with the words of the Apostles, ‘ be ye reconciled to God ‘. I come to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and say may we be reconciled through Christ and be united by His Spirit in the common cause of truth and grace.

Yours in the name of Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of God the Father, seeking the good and peace of Zion,

David Clarke.

P.S. For your own good and those involved I am willing To submit what I have said to the judgment of any Christian and Minister being in membership of a Strict Baptist cause to judge the spirit by which I Act and the matters in question.

Mr Kings Reaction To My Letter

In order to resolve the conflict I sought to speak to Mr King personally but he was out when I called to I left him a note.

I called and left a note to Mr King, which read as follows: -

Dear King,

Sorry you were out when I called this evening.

I wonder if you would be willing to discuss some of the matters I mentioned in my letter to you in the presence of Mr Hope and Mr Hill or some other ministers or brethren in order to correct our differences according to the scriptures. Math. 18 Verses 15-17.

David Clarke.

28th May 1983.

Mr Kings Response

The following is a copy of the reply of Mr King to my note of 28th May 1983

Dear David,

Thank you for your note of Thursday last. I'm sorry that we were out.

'THEN CAME JESUS'

I am quite willing to meet Mr P. Hope at some convenient Prearranged time.

My heart sorrow, grief and contrition with solemn humbleness Is before God.

' MAY HE FORGIVE ME MY EVERY SIN '

' THE DOORS BEING SHUT '.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus My Lord.

Amen.

Arthur

My Response to Mr King's Letter

I responded to Mr King'sletter as follows: -

Dear King,

Thank you for your note of Saturday, I note you do not mention Mr Hill. If Mr Collier will be willing to come with Mr Hope, would you be willing to discuss the matters I have raised with them present.

Math. 18 Verses 15-17 and Math. 5 Verses 23

Yours Sincerely,

David Clarke.

P.S. The reference to the door being shut if felt was a manipulation craft practiced by witches.

Mr Kings Response Was As Follows: -

Monday, 6th June 1983.

Dear David,

I am sorry for this delay since your last note regarding TWO ministers to carry out some enquiry. I did not realize you were enforcing TWO ministers when the scripture suggests and states ONE OR TWO witnesses.

Never the less, if you feel that two ministers would be more satisfactory for your conscience sake, you may do as you feel.

Mr Collier is not very well and I do not think it would be kind to ask him to become involved.

Perhaps you would be kind enough to let me know your further arrangements. My heart before GOD is to forgive even as I pray I have been forgiven.

MY MANNER BEFORE ALL MEN IS TO APOLOGISE. IN ONE WORD-

SORRY!!!

IN LOVE, King.

My Response To Mr King's Second Note

Because of the serious nature of the problem I thought Mr Collier was ideally suited to discuss and judge in these affairs since he was a Pastor and Minister of the Gospel and his personal knowledge of our church would be very helpful. I believed that if he knew the natures of my charge against Mr King he would be able to show that I was not making an issue our of nothing.

Requested Help from Mr Hope

I telephoned Mr Hope and briefly explained the problem And Mr Hope said he would come only if Mr King was

in agreement.

Request Help From Mr Collier

I then called to see Mr Collier and asked his advice. In his View the matter was clear, particular redemption is the truth of the Bible, Therefore, the Hymnbook must be changed.

He then suggested I try to speak again to Mr King before any such meeting with him.

Called Again To Speak To Mr King

I called again to speak to Mr King very fearfully under much pressure. I explained firstly, that I sought an apology from him since. He had offended me, as I had already indicated in my letter. I then apologized to him for any unjust offence I may have caused him.

Mutual terms expressing sorrow were exchanged and we left

After an embrace, scripture reading and prayer.

I though the matter was now really resolved and that Mr King

Did not really see my concern and his simplicity were excusable.

3. Controversy Over Strict Communion

Immediately following that notable church meeting of the 27th April, another wave of trouble hit us at Bierton.

Again I was at the forefront and held in derision of them that are quick and hasty in judgment.

Mr Levey preaches at Bierton

We had engaged to preach for us at Bierton the Deacon of the Baptist Church at Dunstable, Mr Levey. This day was the 1st May 1983. And after the evening meeting and according to our usual custom the Bierton Church had their communion. It is normal for the minister who preaches that day should conduct that meeting.

However, I was confronted that evening after our normal preaching service with a problem.

Mr Levey was perplexed, he had asked me what I wanted him to do for we had **now become a Gospel Standard listed church** and he was not in membership of such a church. Also the communion of the church at Dunstable was not restricted in the same way as expressed in the Gospel Standard articles of religion, which meant things would be out of order for him to conduct the communion service. Herein was a problem to me.

At the same time I had Mrs Moses come to me and instruct me saying I was to conduct the proceeding of the communion that night myself.

At this point I was vexed in spirit. The church had enlisted as a Gospel Standard cause without due consideration given to what they were doing. Things were very out of order when women issue instructions to men and, after my charge to the church regarding allowing general redemption being taught in the Sunday school and their unrepentant concern; I realized what I must do.

I briefly explained to Mr Levey he must do as I say,

there were things going on which require I must act, as I am to do.

We proceeded and entered the chapel from the vestry. I said to the church Mr Levey was not in membership of a strict communion Baptist Church and I asked Mr Levey to confirm this before them. After which I said Mr Levey could not sit down with us since our rules and order forbid it. At this the faces of some of the members showed their disapproval, but I was determined, if they trifle with jointing league with a body or denomination they will go by the rule book of that association and hence avoid disorder. After all they had joined the Gospel Standard and not me.

I suggested Mr Levey remain with us and sit in the Chapel while we partake of the communion.

This caused me much grief; nevertheless, one must do what one must do at times like this. Having apologized to Mr Levey he said he quite understood.

Letter from Mr Levey

After 10 days I received a letter from Mr Levey and this following is a transcript.

10TH May 1983.

Dear David,

This is just a brief hurried note, which John has kindly offered to pass on to you on Thursday.

You will I believe have by now received a letter from Pastor Dix relating to the relating to the Communion Service when I was with you recently.

This was just mentioned by me to the Pastor casually when I went on a recent car journey with him. I was very surprised at the hostile attitude he took and told him that I could see no reason for him to write you in the manner he has.

Mr Dix of Dunstable Baptist Objects

Mr Dix's letter of objection

DUNSTABLE BAPTIST CHAPEL

10th May 1983.

Mr David Clarke

Dear David,

I am very, very distressed at the way in which Douglas Levy was treated during his visit to Bierton on the first Sunday in May. As I understand it, he preached at both morning and evening services as had been arranged. He then tells me that prior to the evening service you indicated your intention of personally conducting the Lord's Supper. Then, when this was about to commence, with Douglas actually sitting in one of the chairs at the Tables, you raised a point of order saying that according to the rules now adopted by the Church Douglas was not entitled to join with you at the Table. I gather that in spite of verbal protest from one of the members present, you then asked Douglas either to withdraw, or alternatively to take a seat at the back, which in fact he did. Douglas tells me he had no notion of what your intentions were, and from what happened it appears the members had no indication either.

It is not my practice to interfere in any way with the affairs of another church, unless of course I am asked, but on this occasion conscience demands that I write to you. Douglas is a member and a deacon here, and I believe he has been shamefully treated. As his pastor I would be utterly failing in my responsibility if I did not express to you, and to the friends at Bierton, my deep sorrow and concern that he should have been subjected to such a humiliating experience. I would also like to make the point that by coming to Bierton on that day Douglas was obviously unable to join at the Lord's Table in his own church; through what happened he was kept from it altogether.

Sadly, through events of this kind, through this lack of sensitivity and the rigid application of what after all are man made rules, all to many have been driven away from S.B. Chapels. It has caused untold sorrow and heartache, as I know through accounts heard from my childhood onwards. Honestly, David, I cannot believe we can look for the blessing of God, either at Bierton or elsewhere, when we are prepared to treat fellow believers for whom the Saviour died, in this unkind and ungracious way.

There are, of course, other issues involved. Douglas came as a minister of God' Word to your souls, but was then debarred from joining with you at the Table of the Lord whose Word he had preached. If you think this through you will see this can only undermine the word he had preached. If there is some reason why he may not sit at the Table, is there also some reason why his ministry may not be received? I also believe that what happened is coming dangerously near to sacramentalism by giving a higher place to the Table than to the Word. This has always been the sacramentalism position, whether high Anglican or Roman Catholic.

Believe me, I have no desire to cause any kind of upset or strife, particularly among those whom I have know and loved in the Lord for almost 25 years. Neither would I wish to see you change from that rule of you sincerely believe it is according to the Word of God. But I do feel that if the is upheld, then you ought not to invite Douglas, or others in the same position, to come and preach for you. If you have Particular Baptists to preach for you, who are not allowed to commune with you, then it does seem to me that the sacrament is being exalted above the Word.

With all best wishes,

You're sincerely

Kenneth Dix.

Copy to Mr King

Let the spiritual judge

Now again, for the spiritual, for them that have been tried and exercised in these things, let them judge. Are there any wise amongst the people of God?

What should I do?

I put pen to paper and wrote to Mr Levey.

The following is that transcript: -

12th May 1983

Dear Douglas,

Re: your letter of the 10th May 1983. Thank you for your letter and explanation of the circumstances following your visit with us at Bierton. I have received a letter from Mr Dix and shall write in due course.

I am sorry I am unable to elaborate in detail the reasons for my actions at this stage, but I believe you have sufficient understanding in these matters and are neither offended nor humiliated over the events, which transpired during the communion service.

This whole matter I wish to bring before our coming church meeting because of the serious repercussions, which must inevitably take place.

My view as to ought or may preach in our church, are those who are sound in the faith and have a gift and are also in church membership of a church where there is a structure for discipline for obvious reasons.

Now whether they are of the same order (Strict Communion) it matters not in so far as they preach the faith once delivered unto the Saints. But this rule for preaching does not apply to the Communion if the articles of the church stipulate the order of Communion is limited to Strict Communion Baptists. However, our position at Bierton is slightly different for whilst the Church endorse the G. S. Articles of faith they do have their own articles set out in the Trust Deed and these I believe allow for the Pastor of the

Church to exercise His own Judgment in the name (authority) of the Church to admit or bar from the communion those who he has scriptural reasons for so doing. However, at Bierton this flexibility cannot easily function for we have no Pastor (elder) to regulate these affairs and as a private member I acted on Sunday last with reasons not yet fully disclosed to you, but gave sufficient reasons for you to understand and agree. In the fear God, I believe I acted and look to Him to justify my actions in the courts of your conscience.

In no way did my action call into question your standing in Christ and no way can it be said you ought not to preach at the cause of Bierton, for the previous mentioned reasons and for the same reasons why W. Huntington, Toplady or Newton ought to be allowed to preach in a Strict Baptist Chapel.

I am sorry, however, you missed your own Church Communion but I do trust this incident will prove to be of God and turn out for the good of the cause at Bierton.

In the absence of a Pastor and having no authority except as a Private member I was unable to act lawfully in allowing you to sit at the communion. But had we a pastor no doubt you would have been permitted.

The problems arising from a pastor less church have proved to me that unless the Articles of Faith and Order have rule not only does practice and order fail but also truth and doctrine falls and error creeps in which is very difficult to put right.

Yours with Christian Regard

David Clarke

Jude Verse 3

Letter to Mr Dix

After delivering my letter to Mr Levey by and hand I wrote to Mr Dix believing he had really stepped out of place.

1st July 1983

Dear Mr Dix,

Thank you for your letter of the 10th May 1983, I am sorry not to have written sooner but I had hoped to bring the matter to our church meeting, but matters have been delayed.

I cannot as yet write on behalf of the church for we have not yet been able to discuss the matter to settle such affairs, but hope to at the next church meeting.

I have written to Douglas regarding the incident and expressed my personal views, which I believe would the founders of the Church at Bierton hold the views. However, we are without a Pastor and the Church have recently aligned with Gospel Standard Churches and are in agreement with their ' Articles of Faith ' which express the doctrinal views of the Church at Bierton in greater detail than those expressed in our Trust Deed.

In order to ascertain the legitimacy of the Church at Bierton in so joining and aligning with Gospel Standard cause I wrote to Mr Secretary (the secretary of the committee) in respect of our association, also Mr Hill of Luton. I questioned the matters of our own Trust Deeds and it's written Articles and Practice believing any deviation from their expressed tenets would be in fact unlawful and immoral. Now whether or not our people at Bierton are aware of the issues involved I cannot really say, although I have reason to believe they are not. The actual position of the Church at Bierton is as follows:

We have our own articles of faith and rules of practice expressed in our Trust Deeds and cannot deviate from them in matters of faith or practice.

Our alliance with the Gospel Standard cause is by mutual agreement and the articles of faith and practice set out in ' these Articles ', so long as they are not inconsistent with our own articles already mentioned.

Our order as set out in the trust deeds is clear, we are a Strict Communion Baptist Church and so membership and Communion of the Lords Supper is restricted to Strict

Communion Baptists. Although I believe our articles allow for the Pastor or elders to admit or bar the communion to they whom they have scriptural reasons for so doing. But we are without a Pastor or means of flexible Church Government, which such officers could allow. Therefore the articles of faith and practice must bear rule in such absence.

For the record Mr Howe and his wife recently sought to partake with us at the communion, but were prevented by myself (I believe with the churches agreement) for their non –membership of a church of same faith and order (but again without a pastor or elder who should decide these policies?). I wrote immediately to him and his wife and he assured me there was no offence made.

Concerning the event causing concern; we had at the evening service before the communion service, none church members, those who felt they ought to be allowed to commune with us (who are in membership with no church, nor believe they need to be), John Just, and his friend, who I don't believe would expect to commune with us but these would be discriminated against had Douglas been admitted to the communion.

I would maintain that since our Articles restrict the "Communion" to Strict Communion Baptists, the church ought to preserve their order during the absence of Pastor and seek God earnestly and by all means seek a Pastor. In effect a gracious and Lawful means of church government.

I expressed to Douglas there were certain reasons why I acted but could not elaborate to him since it involved discussing church business, which was causing some concern amongst some of the matters.

In respect of who may preach in a Strict Baptist Church, I maintained thus to Douglas, that my view is, <u>faith</u> comes before <u>order</u> and I see no biblical reason for excluding a particular Baptist or Presbyterian from preaching in a Strict

Baptist Church provide they were of the same faith. Otherwise it would be equally inconsistent for hymns and read sermons by none Strict Baptists being public ally read and voices in our meetings. This I believe has always been the view of Strict Baptist in the past: (I cannot say of today, but each church are responsible for their own judgments in these matters). And held responsible by the Lord for their judgments.

Now surely a particular Baptist Minister would not be offended at Strict Communion and would respect the order of the church he be engaged to preach at. (He may not agree).

This practice, I believe, do not make the ordinance sacramental nor points to it for the preached word is held above the communion in every case. This view I would argue is perfectly in according to Christian unity and liberty and in bonds of the Gospel of Christ. To say Douglas ought not to preach if he cannot partake of the ordinance surely makes or points to a sacramental view of the Super for that view makes to supper equal to the preached word, which it is not and neither is Baptism. See G. S. 1862 enquires w.r.t. Ministers preaching J.C Philpot?

I maintain Faith and the Word by which it comes is before all of these things.

I am sorry if I have caused any grief. I am equally opposed to man made traditions particularly when they oppose the Gospel and truth. We have common enemies, our carnal self, natural man's wisdom, anti-Christian principles, and apostasy in the professed churches all to contend against. Not forgetting the great enemy of the church, the Devil and his spirit and ministers.

I expect the church will send word when we have discussed the matter you have raised.

Yours with Christian Regards in the fear of God

David Clarke

4. Visitors and Strict Communion

This series of events and letters were submitted to the judgment of the church and are recorded in the minutes of the 6th July 1983, meeting.

Mr Peter Howe, Ivanhoe Particular Baptist.

Former minister of the Ivanhoe Particular Baptist

In my letter to Mr Dix I mentioned an incident, which occurred at the Bierton Chapel with Mr. Peter Howe. Both he and his wife attended the Bierton Chapel on the first Lord's Day in November 1982, and requested to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Mr Dawson, from Kent, was the minister engaged to preach on that day and since did not know our two visitors. I spoke to Mr Howe and his wife explaining our communion was restricted to they of the same faith and orders.

Mr Howe's circumstances were such that the Church at Ivanhoe had down and hence Mr Howe and his wife were not now in membership anywhere. I also knew Mr Howe held to duty faith and duty repentance. He had also recommended I read Andrew Fuller's book titled ' The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation" which supported his views. He also held that the Ten Commandments were the rule of life for the Believer. All such views were in conflict with my views and the Bierton Church (or so I thought). Knowing these things I was not at liberty to invite Mr Howe and his wife to the communion. I said to them in much fear and tender consideration that they would not be permitted to partake of the communion. I wrote to them immediately, the next day to explain the Churches order of communion and apologized for any offence caused.

The following is a transcript sent to Mr Howe

7.II .82

Dear Peter and Pauline,

I do hope we did not offend you on the Lord's Day evening, we do not wish to offend in any way. I call to mind those scriptures as, Matthew 18 v 6, and I Chr... 16 verses 21 – 22. May I explain our position in respect to the matter of Church communion? We hold the administration of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper to be in the hands and authority of the local Church (it's self being subject to Christ Jesus and His Laws) and our order is such that we restrict the communion to. Baptized believers (by immersion)

Who have given themselves to Church membership of the same faith as ourselves?

That they are actually in communion with his or her own Church.

Therefore in respect to yourselves it would be viewed you are not in membership anywhere, but would hope you be graciously helped and directed as to what you should do.

Please do not think we wish to hold ourselves aloof more orderly than others but rather seeking to hold to those things once given unto the saints and aiming at a defence of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In pursuit of these things decisions have to be made which often are against our natural inclinations.

Trusting you are well,

Yours with Christian regards,

David Clarke.

Church Approved Of My Letter And Actions

At the next church meeting I informed the members of this letter sent and also the reply Mr Howe had sent to me.

The churches approved of my actions and were in agreement with my judgments.

Mr Howe's Reply

The following is a photocopy of Mr Howe reply: -
David Clarke Esq.
187 Aylesbury Road

PWH/MH

7th January 1983

Dear David

I do apologized most sincerely for the delay in replying to your letter of 7 November. This is a busy time of year for me and December particularly is a difficult month because virtually nothing can be done in the week leading up Christmas.

It was kind of you to write to me setting out the position with regard to the Lord's Table, and may I say at once that my wife and I were not in any way annoyed at what transpired when we were last at Bierton. Indeed it is good to know that some churches exercises some measure of discipline with regard to the Lord's Table.

However, having said that, clearly you were uncomfortable at what took place and I can well understand your grounds for discomfort. It is one thing to say that those coming to the Table should actually be in communion with their own church, but you are well aware that we were brought to the position of closing the Chapel at Ivanhoe for reasons beyond our control and which I trust do not reflect on us after having put in nine years' service there. As things stand, I concluded to myself rather wistfully as I left your church that evening that we would have been in exactly the same position had we been forced to leave a church having run off with the collection! Had the positions been reversed

and you had been approaching me as to whether in those circumstances you could have participated in the communion service, without doubt I would have replied in the affirmative. As to your penultimate paragraph about church membership, we hope indeed to be " graciously helped and directed as to what (we) should do ". We find ourselves in the difficult position however where no church has given any indication that an approach by us about membership would be welcome. Regrettably I have to say that, spending as I do much time on the road each year, I find when I go to a pub for a meal (which I do from time to time when I am not quite sure where to eat) I receive a far more friendly welcome than I do in some churches. I hope indeed that we will receive the help to which you have referred, but it is a matter of great sadness to me that, having been involved in active Christian service for over 30 years I have never felt at such a loose end.

May I conclude more positively in wishing you and Irene and your children every blessing for 1983?

Yours very sincerely

PP. Peter Howe

5. Evangelical Repentance

I believe I am now in a better position to speak to Mr. Howe about this matter and feel I should do so. At that time I acted as a private Church member and not with the authority of the Church because I was neither a deacon nor an elder. Had I public office to act, for and no behalf of the Church, then I could have asserted the churches doctrinal position and taken the matter up with Mr Howe as far as far as it was necessary. In order to show our differences, for the truths sake and Mr Howe's good.

I now feel I should have been even more open with Mr Howe over his position and doctrinal statements.
We were a Gospel Standard cause and in that light is was only right to explain and discus differences in doctrine with any visitor.

Erroneous Views Of Mrs Evered

At that time I knew that Mrs Evered prominent member of the Bierton Church, had erroneous views as to the doctrine of repentance toward God, and that since we were now a Gospel Standard cause as a church we had committed ourselves to defend those articles set out in the Gospel Standard articles of religion.

Mrs Evered false views came to light when she rejected the use of the term ' evangelical repentance' used by Mr J Tanton who preached at Bierton, earlier that year of 1982. The matter she raised at the church meeting of October 13th 1982.

A Transcript Of That Meeting Is As Follows: -

Mrs Evered also made mention of the fact the Mr Tanton had used the words ' Evangelical Repentance' to which she objected. Since there was no such mention in the scripture. What action the Church aught to take was not specified; however no response from the remaining members by way of

objection was made.

The secretary (myself) reminded the Church of Article 26 of the Gospel Standard causes where our position was specified as to our responsibilities or otherwise of men towards God in this matter.

I wrote immediately to Mrs Evered to help sort our some of her views in respect of the subject.

Letter to Mrs Evered

13th October 1982

Dear Mrs Evered,

Re: The terms Evangelical Repentance used by Mr Tantum during his preaching engagement on the Lord's Day evening 19th September 82

May I offer for your consideration the following thoughts on the subject above? The term evangelist as used in the scripture, means: <u>One who announces good tidings</u>; see Acts 21 verse 8, Ephesians 4 verse II and Timothy verse 4 & 5. All protestant churches since the reformation were known as Evangelical Churches. The term repentance is another scripture word; see acts 22 verse 21, Acts 3 verse 19, John 16 verse 7 & 8 Matthew 5 verse 4 and many other places mentioned. The nature and kinds of repentance the scripture mentions are various.

There is a natural repentance which the light of nature and natural conscience dictates Romans 2 verse 4 & 5.

There is a national repentance an outward humiliation for sin. Such as Ahab exercised I King 21, verse 29, and such had Tyre & Sidon exercised would have remained until the day of Jews, if they were privilege, as the Jews were, by the preaching and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a hypercritical repentance, which the children of Israel exercised when in the wilderness. See Psalm 78 verse

34 – 37 and Hosea chapter 7 verses 16.

There is a legal repentance, which is mere work of the law, which in time wears off and comes to nothing. Both of which Pharaoh and Judas exercised. Exodus 9 verse 27 and Matthew 27 verse 4 and Cain, Genesis 4 verse 3. All of which may be experienced by reprobates and is none other than the sorrow of the world, which worketh death. 2 Corinthian 7 verse 10.

There is an evangelical repentance to which Mr Tantum referred too in his ministry, although he did not draw the distinctions just mentioned. This evangelical repentance is not a duty but a Free Grace Blessing and a Gift of God for which our article 26 contends is not the duty of all men. It may be called evangelical repentance for such penitent sinners derive comfort and consolation by the gospel. Since through the blessings of the blood of Christ which when applied to the conscience it cleanses from all unrighteousness. It flows from the free grace of God. His Spirit who reproves of sin and enlightens the eyes to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin and to which the gospel invites such men to rest in Christ Jesus, and of which are may references. Proverbs 28 verse 13. I John chapter I verse 6-9, Isaiah 4 verse 7, Jeremiah 3 verse 12-13, Luke 24 verse 47, Acts 5 verse 31. Those who experience this Blessing are the elect only, and it is a gracious privilege and the gospel exhorts them to exercise. A full treatment of this subject may be found in Dr Gill's body of Divinity, under the subject repentance toward God. Dr Gill is held in very high regard by the Gospel Standard ministers to which both Mr Gadsby, William Huntington, John Warburton, John Kershaw and Mr Philpot, paid particular respect. A further exposition has appeared in the Gospel Standard magazine September 1967 to which I would refer you to for further explanation.

Trusting this will be of some help. Before and since joining Our Church I have been much exercised over this

matter and am persuaded that our article 26 expresses a scriptural view, although the wording of it needs clarification.

Yours with Christian regards

David Clarke.

Mrs Evered's response

To my letter Mrs Evered stated that my points were not relevant to her rejecting the term evangelical repentance and she had spoken to another minister and he too agreed with her; there was no such thing as evangelical repentance.

I never did find out the underlying reason for anyone rejecting the term evangelical repentance nor would Mrs Evered state whom the minister was she had asked about this matter.

Mr Howe And The Added Articles

This problem was directly connected with Mr Howe, for he had now approached the church at Bierton to partake of her communion. Connected because we had recently become a Gospel Standard Cause no scriptural references to the added articles (1878) of the Gospel Standard Strict Baptist. Also, in his view, that stand mentioned in these articles of religion could not be supported from the scriptures. This matter Mr Howe mentioned to me sometime during 1972 to 1976. At that time I had not closely studied the Gospel Standard position but I did reject the notions of duty faith and duty repentance of which Mr Howe maintained. I was obliged to support my view entirely from the scripture and answer his objections from first principles without reference to any articles of faith. I had read of Mr Howe's views in a book written by Mr A.W. Pink but I did not agree with him on this matter. The book entitled ' The Total Depravity of Man'.

My concern, when Mr Howe asked to partake of the communion at Bierton, was that we were in disagreement over these issues and the church was now a Gospel Standard cause; so how could Mr Howe now wish to join with us in our communion? The concerns that I had were those if the views of Mrs Evered were held and taught by others in the church and I taught the truth of the scripture then it would appear to our visitors we were not of one mind and at variance.

At that time I realized there was a difficulty if I spoke to Mr Howe over his views on repentance and saving faith. Because had I advanced, what I considered to be, a biblical position as specified in our articles of religion and acted on that occasion as a church representative, whilst some of our members advance different views and denied evangelical repentance when we would be out of order as a church.

I began to realize folk were not clear in their thinking and in error in their doctrine as regards repentance towards God and their understanding of our articles of religion. The matter had to be put right but the way to do it was not clear to me. People were generally of the opinion that if you left the matter alone it would all clear up in the end. I am not of that opinion. Nevertheless the matter never was settled in a biblical.

6. Problem Of The Children's Hymn Book

In this chapter I relate how an attempt was made to resolve the issue connected with the children being tough hymns containing doctrine contrary to our articles of religion and scripture.

The Church Meeting

I do not think it possible for anyone to know the anxiety and stress, which such matters cause unless they have gone through similar paths.

Nevertheless they had to be faced. Who is sufficient for these things?

Truth was at stake and must be preserved. I was certainly alone, for none of the church appeared to stand with me save my wife.

Church meeting held the 15th of June 1983

Scripture reading I Cor. II 20-30

This was an interim church meeting seeking to bring to the church the correspondence from Mr P Jane (trustee) and Mr B. Ramsbottom, minister of the gospel, Luton.

After reading the minutes of the last meeting a matter of the 27th April, clarification was raised by Miss G Ellis regarding the postscript of these minutes. (This postscript has been quoted on page under this heading). It was asked, " What views were meant. When stating they would prohibit Mr King from preaching'. I explained, ' the views which prohibit any preacher from teaching at Bierton were that of teaching children God loves them all and the Lord Jesus died for each of them.

Minutes Cause Embarrassment

It was felt the paragraph ought to be removed for the sake of future generations and so avoid conveying wrong information.

The secretary expressed the purpose of the minutes were to convey a true and accurate account of what actually took place in the meetings whether the church were in agreement of what transpired or not.

It was suggested that since some members could not call the events, related in the postscript, taking place then a clarifying note to be made. This was agreed by the vote.

It was further motioned the whole postscript be removed but could not be carried by vote.

The chairman resolved the impasse by signing the

minutes under the end of the minutes before the postscript. This was done to the satisfaction of the members.

It seems evident from these notes that the church did not like what was recorded and sought to clear Mr King of all possible blame. Some wanted the minutes to be tampered with and hide the truth, an evident sign of the natural man and his ways.

If they wished to clear Mr King of the charge I had made, then they could have asked him what were his views and doctrines. Mr King to this day has never denied my charge of teaching "Universal" love to all children and has never expressed he though himself wrong when saying to all the children Jesus had died for them each one.

I realized again that this business about voting and women dictating that was or was to be was wrong.

However, back to the minutes: -

The secretary informed that church the reason for the gathering was on two accounts: -

A. Letters from Mr. Ramsbottom, minister of the Gospel (Luton Bethel) and Mr. P. Trustees was to be read to the church respecting the question of teaching methods used in teaching children.

B. That a letter from Mr. Dix, minister of the Gospel (Dunstable) was to be red to the church.

The two letters from Mr. Ramsbottom and Mr. P. Trustees were read and the secretary expressed that they both conveyed and supported he views expressed in the Bierton " articles of faith'. After some discussion the possibility of changing the Hymn book used by the children was raised but the teachers said those hymns which appeared to some as teaching general redemption were always viewed by them as scripture, which contains the word 'all' as in Isa. 53 Verse 6, and so on; but in a limited sense.

The Hymns In Particular Were: -

There is a green hill far away.

Jesus love me this I know for the bible tells me so.

Mrs. G. Ellis suggested that the Hymns ought to be carefully selected.

Mrs. Gurney motioned that the church retained the hymnbook, and the motion was carried by the vote of the church.

Letter from Ramsbottom

The following are the letters sent to us from Mr. Ramsbottom And Mr. P. Janes

To The Church Of God At Bierton

2.5.83

Beloved friends,

Mr. David Clarke has visited me and brought your church's request. In the fear of God I have tried to put down a few thoughts on Sunday Schools, which I hope will be helpful. I have sought to avoid personalities and keep to principles.

Desiring your real spiritual welfare.
With Christian love,

Yours sincerely,
Mr Ramsbottom

To the church of God at Bierton

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE PURPOSE AND RUNNING OF SUNDAY SCHOOL

The purpose of a Sunday school is to teach the Word of God to our children.

With the Lord's help an attempt will be made to put

things are simply and clearly as possible; otherwise there is no point in having a Sunday school.

Though the teaching must be simple, it must be in absolute agreement with the doctrines we believe: those set out in the trust deed and the articles of faith, preached in the pulpit, and, above all, revealed in the Word of God.

Great care is needed in the choices of the teachers. Obviously they must be gracious; in complete agreement with the truths we profess: and, in my opinion, church members.

These four points would seem to be clear.

It is on points 3 and 4 where there has been deviation in recent years. Yet even a hundred years ago one or two eminent ministers had to raise their voice against " another gospel" being preached to children. Though simple, it must be the same truth: the vital necessity for the new birth; the sinner's complete helplessness. We must beware against lowering standards in our desire to simple. It is the same way to heaven for a child as an adult. (NOT: if you love Jesus you will get to heaven.")

Thus, it should be evident that the Sunday school hymns are in complete agreement with the truth, though in simple language. Some of the popular children's hymns are very beautiful: some are erroneous. Care must be taken. Our great concern must be for the honor of the Lord Jesus out of love to him. (I do not see how, believing in particular redemption, we can teach children, " Jesus loves me, and this I know.") Also some children's hymns speak as if all children are " lambs" – a lamb is a new believer, however young or old.

Above all it is wrong to teach children that Jesus loved them and died for them.

Finally, great weakness has crept in some Sunday schools in the loose appointment of teachers. We hear (concerning some girl who shows no signs of grace): " Well, she just takes the little ones!" To be a Sunday school teacher

is a long solemn thing, a weighty responsibility.

May we not deviate from the standard of truth with sentimental views of being loving and kind?

Letter From Mr Janes (Trustee)

To the church worshipping at Bierton Street Baptist Chapel

Dear Friends,

As a trustee of your chapel I concede to your request to comment on certain teaching practices in the Sunday school.

My wish is to avoid confrontation, which often results in division, and seek wisdom to write in such a way that may be helpful in resolving your differences/.

It is very easy for all of us who profess the Lord's name to continue in certain practices and adhere to modes of worship without realizing that we may be wide of the mark.

On the one hand it can be argued that God's people will not be ultimately deceived by teaching, which suggests a general atonement, because many who have listened to have proved this that doctrine and their eyes have been opened to see otherwise.

On the hand to give anyone, whether it is believers in an unregenerate state or world lings, a false sense of security must of necessity be wrong.

Many religious bodies are guilty of giving a false hope so we must be careful not to do the same.

I don't think there can be any doubt but what the hymn ' Jesus loves me this I know' etc. Is not a suitable hymn for one our Sunday school because it gives this false sense of security and is not doctrinally correct.

I suppose that one of the other hymns in question i.e. " There is a green hill far away" could be sung by a group of true believers and be applicable language, but if believe the generally accepted interpretation of this is that Christ died for all men, which is not what the word of God teaches.

It is often quiet difficult not to put words unto people's lips that a mixed congregation cannot with all honestly hymns, but I say again it is very difficult.

I often fear that my hope is false, but I feel I can say to the honour of my God that through the spirit's teaching

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

My prayer and desire is, that all who enter the door of Bierton Chapel, including the Sunday school children might know this true foundation.

With Christian love,

Janes

My Response to the Church Meeting

From the last section of the minutes and the response, or lack of it from the church. Even after I had called my two witnesses to confirm my views. Not to myself, but for the benefit of the women. I realized the voting system falls down and that these women ought not to determine doctrine or practice of the church.

Now what was I to do?

7. I consider leaving the Church

From this time I thought seriously that I must leave the Church of Bierton for truth was not now a prime mover of our faith and practice. I had sough my God in prayer much engaged in contention for the faith, and now the people of Bierton are holding on to what they are used to. I could not see that truth could be restored whilst things remained as they had been.

I had two children now and twins on the way, and wished my children to be brought up where truth would be taught and not from a sentimental point of view. If God hated some men then let the children know. If God loved some men let the children know. But I could not remain among those who teach a sentimental, universal love for all. That was how it appeared to me. I had enough of that whilst touring the wilderness of the King Churches of Aylesbury, in which Mr King had said I should have remained. I announced to the church shortly after, my intention to leave and then I placed the house on the market ' for sale'. We had though we could move closer to my work and perhaps go to the Church at Eaton Bray.

Circumstance

My wife was with child at the time and due to give birth in November, and if we were to move, then if it be of God then we concluded we must sell our house without delay.

The house was sold ' Subject to Contract ' to our first customer, After looking at properties at Eaton Bray and Eddlesborough, and sounding out the folk at the Eaton chapel we began to doubt what we were about.

Sale falls through

After two or three weeks we had word our prospective buyer could not go ahead with the purchase, and so withdraw from the procedure of buying.

The effects of our doubts regarding Eaton Bray and the imminent birth of our twins, we concluded we could not go ahead with the sale of our house at present, and hence whilst at the Bierton Church must continue and fight the cause of truth even though the people hated the contention.

Next Church Meeting 6th (July 1983 2. 30 p.m.)

Our next church meeting was held on the 6th July 1983 at 2.30 p.m. At this meeting the letter from Mr. Dix was read to the church. The secretary then informed the church of the letter received by Mr. Levy, for he had written to say he did not agree with Mr. Dix's response to the event mentioned. To the contrary he was not humiliated but approved of the action taken by myself.

The secretary explained in greater detail the circumstances relating to that accusation, and Mr. Evered, had suggested that I on that occasion was to conduct the service. Further to this the secretary reminded the church of their recent approval of the Gospel Standard Articles of religion. They express that the communion was restricted to membership of a church not practicing strict communion, nor holding to strict communion principles.

Mr. D. Clarke then explained he had written to both Mr. Levy and Mr. Dix apologizing for any offence wrongly caused, also explaining the whole matter to them both.

It was also expressed by some members that the incident had upset them and they disapproved of it. Also that since Mr. Clarke had written it was not necessary for a further letter of apology, explanation, or otherwise to Mr. Dix.

After consideration of the above issue it was mentioned that on future Lords Days when the communion service was to be held, only ministers of Strict Communion Baptist's are engaged to preach.

This is done to avoid a similar upset. Also, so that open Communion Baptists be free to commune in their own

Churches on that day, since this was the general custom. This motion was approved and carried by vote.

Mr King cannot remain in fellowship with the church

It was later on in the meeting that Mr King asked to be excused while the church dealt with the contents of two letters written to the church by him. Upon which he left the meeting.

The following is a transcript of these letters: -

Bierton,

Wed. 15.6.83

My Dear Friends,

God who knows me through and through prompts me to have this little note ready to leave with you.

My failings are many. The ability to be composed in argument or debate is not among my virtues.

Rather than be led into saying other things we would regret I feel it wiser to deal with it in this way.

As a preliminary ‘ step ‘ and after much earnest prayerful sorrowing consideration, for the sake of my mind, conscience, health and faith before God, for a period, at least, I am persuaded, <u>fully persuaded</u>, I cannot remain in fellowship with the Church at Bierton.

Only the lord knows the state of my mind at this time and the end from the beginning whether this will be temporary or permanent.

Pray for me.

God bless you all. Deeply sorrowing, forgive me.

Christian Love

<u>Arthor</u>

173 Aylesbury Road, Bierton

Wed. 6. 7. 83

My Dear Friends,

The Lord knowing my feeling of weakness in body, mind and spirit, I know I must have this letter ready to leave with you.

I agreed ‘ to chair ‘ the Church Meetings here for one year, that time has now expired.

David has letters from me regarding current engagements with you to speak and also that I have declined any future engagements for 1984.

While I remain in membership with you I feel it is in ‘name’ only. My prayers before God continue constant, that he will show me (painfully perhaps) his way out from such pressure and concerns over these past months.

Enclosed letter 15.6.83. May show something of my concern at that time. “ I waited patiently for the Lord”.

May God bless you all and forgive me.

Aurtor King

Secretary’s Response

The secretary explained he had letters expressing that Mr King requested to be relieved of his preaching engagement in December 25th, 1983 and that on future week night services, if the secretary be present then they hold a prayer meeting only, shared by them both.

Also consideration of these matters it was mentioned and agreed, Mr. Clarke and Miss G Ellis speak to Mr King and ask him to explain his thoughts and actions (subject to Mr King agreement).

After treating the above matters I read the following letter to the church: -

5th July 1983

To the Church at Bierton,

May I explain the reasons for my recent announcement

to leave the church at Bierton and disclose to you my mind? There are two main reasons for concluding we are being called away, of God, and they are follows: -

Church Not Governed By The Bible

On several issues it appears the mind of the church in general is governed by a different set of principles from what I have learned of the scriptures. And since every man is accountable to God for the judgments he makes, and governed by his own conscience, then in answer to a good conscience. I cannot stay in a church where the governing principles are contrary to the bible.

Example 1

Rejecting the ministry of Mr Scott-Pearson
Un-scriptural

The recent principles which dictated whether Mr. Scott – Pearson should preach at the chapel on the Lord's day were as follows: -

A. He wore a clerical collar on certain occasions.
B. His name appears in print with the term rev.
Prefixing his name
C. He is a particular Baptist and not Strict.

None of the reasons given had a doctrinal biblical basis as to why he ought not to preach at Bierton on my day, Lord's Day or not. The reasons given were rather a traditional prejudice. As far as church order goes Mr. Scott – Pearson is in the same position as Mr. Levy of Dunstable.

Example 2

Miss Treatment Of Mr Lawrence

This was the treatment of Mr. Lawrence. If the church believed Mr Lawrence be overtaken in a fault then, according to the scripture Gal.. 6 verse 1, then they which are spiritual

restore such a one in the spirit of meekness: for according to James 5 verse 20 ‘ Let him know that he which recovereth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death.

Both of these men were not judge according to biblical principles had they been preaching false doctrine and continued to do so then they would rightly not be asked to preach again. However they were rejected upon another footing not according to the bible.

A church not governed by biblical principles is not church for a Christian to be in membership. It seems a dreadful shame when a church can be so concerned about issues not biblical and be so slow to stand for real important biblical gospel truths.

Last year when the Anti- Christian Pope came and polluted this land again the general mind of the church was that the chapel building was not the place to hold a protest against the Anti-Christ for it may offend some friends.

My last example:

The Church Teaching General Redemption

After I challenged the church with not being careful in the selection of suitable children hymns and the appearance of teaching a general atonement, you were far from being concerned whether my charge had any weight but rather felt you knew better. It could not be said of you which was said of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 7-11), what carefulness it wrought in you, what clearing of yourselves etc. In all things ye have approved yourselves clear in this matter.

However I do realize and make allowance, you are without a pastor to watch over you in these things, and I must take this into account.

Second reason

The second reason is that of a domestic and family

nature. It may be better for my wife and inevitably my family if we moved to a community where there are younger families. It is very difficult for my wife to cope with the Church's difficulties and the children, especially when I am away preaching and should I not provide for my own household I am worse than an infidel and have denied the faith (1 Tim. 5 v. 8).

I do not know what the future holds excepts my God determines only that which will turn out for the good of His dear people and we must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints – Jude v. 3.

D. Clarke.

The Church's Response To My Letter

It was expressed by Miss G Ellis that there would be many people very sorry should the church at Bierton be Closed, and it would be a very sad day should that occur. Also could not the church continue according to right principles for God is the same where ere we be.

This was the general view of the remaining members of the church.

8. Decision To Stay

Realizing we could not leave without a way being opened up for us to go, I concluded I was to continue at Bierton and continue my defence of Gospel truths, even though I was to upset the whole church. The next battle was with Mrs Evered who was the moving person for us to become a Gospel Standard cause and so one would have thought she would have known better. Sadly not so.

Battle Number Three

With this resolve battle number three was to begin and through the following pages, which I pen for the benefit of any persons in a similar position, **I realized the " inhabitants abiding in the land" are indeed sly, hidden, crafty, Wiley and appear as harmless lovers of outward morality, being very strict in their discipline, in particular the observance of the Sabbath day, the avoidance of worldly influences such as the tape recorder or even the televisions set and so called " evangelical news papers".**

The incident occurred as follows: -

Before the morning meeting at Bierton I was dressing my niece ready for the service; whereupon I was instructed by Mrs Evered to remove from the desk my niece's cardigan, for the table was a **" holy vessel set apart unto God**", and to be reverenced not being put to a secular use ".

I was dumfounded, never having heard of any such notions. I held my peace until I visited Mrs Evered the next day, on the Monday evening.

Heresy or Holy Table

Realizing she held heretical notions regarding the chapel building and the communion tables I reproved her as a heretic stating she was as a Roman Catholic who reverences building and the like. Due to the serious nature of the errors I was constrained to write to her, for such notions could not

go unchecked. The following is the transcript of my letter to her.

Letter to Mrs Evered

Dear Mrs. Evered

As a minister of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, I write in concern, not only for your own soul's good, but also for the good of the Gospel and cause of truth at Bierton.

The last Lord's Day morning you told me to remove from the desk, at the front of the Chapel building, my niece's cardigan, as I was about to dress her ready for the service. This was done before the commencement of the morning meeting. The reason you gave to quote "**The table was a Holy vessel unto the Lord'.**

Upon questioning you, on Monday, about this matter you informed me that you did not expect me to know about that, but since you were a girl, and since you have always been taught these things and knew this to be true from scriptures. You also said the Chapel was the **" House of God ",** therefore to put a child's item of clothing upon the Holy communion table was sacrilege, for this was putting it for a secular use.

You further expressed you did not wish me to write to you, after my admonition, upon this subject for you knew the truth of it and would never think any different.

I expressed to you your views were heretical and therefore an Heretic in this matter; for there are no such ' vessels ' sanctified for holy use to be held in such reverence in Christian worship, whether they be building, tables, chair, pulpits, tablecloths, cups or plates or any other such item for " we have no worldly sanctuary ' (Heb.. 9 verse 11).

All such vessels used in the Old Testament, to which you referred, were those directed of God for a specific end and were sprinkled with blood (Heb.. 9 verse 21). They were but a shadow of the things to come, to be used only whilst the Levitical priesthood stood, until the time of Reformation

(Heb.. 9 verse 10). This time has now come and has been since our Lord Jesus was raised from the dead and has ascended into heaven.

Also the chapel building is not the "House of God " for it is just bricks and mortar; the Almighty God does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 7 verse 45, 17 verse 24). But now the temple of God is with men, the church, the body of Christ, the called out elect vessels are the temple of God and House of God. (1 Tim 3 verse 15) and not the building as natural men think and many Roman Catholics.

In view of the serious nature of the case, it has been necessary for me to approach you for should your thinking be affected by superstition and not taught of the spirit of God, you cannot be preserved from being an instrument in the hand of Satan when called upon to make church decisions.

I trust you realize the concern I have. Therefore as a minister I admonished you and now warn you if you persist in this heresy and cause strife turning aside to vain jangling (1 Tim. 1 verse 6) it will be necessary for the church to discipline you in this issue. For if you are will fully ignorant and will not be admonished and insist on issuing directives to Church members and congregation on matters like this you will be rejected by the Church as an Heretic, for your mouth must be stopped lest the whole house be subverted (Titus 1 verse 11). I suggest you speak to another minister over this issue and show them this letter for there are no Christian ministries in the Gospel Standard denominations who holds the views and beliefs you do. It is certain the Gospel Standard Committee would not own such a minister.

I suggest you speak to another minister over this issue and show then this letter for there are no Christian ministers in the Gospel Standard denominations who holds the views and beliefs you do. It is certain the Gospel Standard Committee would not own such a minister.

I repeat again, as I said to you, if the spirit by which you have been taught these things is for God then it is are will spirit of the Lord, even as Saul was troubled by an evil spirit of the Lord. (That is to say a devil has influenced your thinking and the light of the Gospel must dispel that darkness of mind).

I commit you to God and the word of His Grace, which is able to build you up and direct you. May God enlighten your mind and open your eyes to receive the truth of the gospel.

You're in concern,

David Clarke.
Minister of the Gospel.

P.s. Until this matter is resolved I will not have your assistance in the secretarial work.

Mrs Evered who had refused to read it returned this letter. This reminds me of Zech. 7 verse 11.

Response to my letter regarding Heresy and Holy Table

Shortly after my giving the letter to Mrs. Evered, she returned it stating she had not read it for she knew the truth and would never think any different. **I was told that all the folk at the Chapel thought the same things as she.** This was said in private, in the schoolroom, while the remaining members were in the chapel building.

I immediately, called these church members together and stated exactly what Mrs Evered had said? To my surprise some of the folk seemed to sympathies with Mrs. Evered's point of view. Whereupon I stated whilst I remained a member, I would not countenance such views to be held or promulgated in the church or otherwise, and at this point Miss Gwen Ellis left in anger at my determination expressing she was fed up with people saying what they were or were not

going to do. The remaining members departed. So the heresy manifested it self.

The matter unresolved

Now I asked what more must I do?

The members present were: Mrs. G. Evered,

Miss B. Ellis, Mrs C Gurney, Mr. D. Clarke and Miss G Ellis.

Who was I ? – I felt so inadequate.

I had no office or authority in the church we had no pastor, no elder – in fact my question was – **were a church?**

No Church Order

It was evident we had no church order and with Mr King having resigned from office as chairman and no church meeting set it was evident we needed to put these matters right.

9. Discovery of more Uncommon Ground

The next series of events highlights another area of uncommon ground between the Bierton folk and myself, which I considered detrimental.

There were plans being made in Aylesbury to launch what was called Mission Aylesbury. This was a so-called united evangelical effort of all churches to take place the following year. It was to run in conjunction with the proposed visit of Billy Graham who was to speak at the Mission England gatherings.

Concern Over Ecumenicalism In Aylesbury

I put to the church a request to use the chapel buildings for lectures. I explained the need to remind this generation of Christians of the history of the reformation. I suggested I would raise this request at our next church meeting and left it at that.

However one or two commented in this was: No other chapels are used for this purpose. Dare we do this? Would our trustees be in favour?

In order to ascertain the trustees mind on this matter I wrote to Mr Baumber of Bedford, Mr. Hill of Luton and Mr. P. Janes of Eaton Bray.

Letter To Mr Baumber:Lectures On The Reformation

The following is a transcript of the letter sent to Mr Baumber and exactly the same letter was sent to Mr. P. Janes: -

5th May 1983.

Dear Mt Baumber,

I have recently put forward a request to the church at Bierton for permission to organize a series of lecture on the subject the ‘ History of the Reformation’ using the Chapel Building to conduct these meetings. Mr. G. Ashdown of the Protestant Alliance would be asked to conduct these meetings.

It has been questioned whether our trustee would be in favour of such meetings being held at the Bierton Chapel, for this reason I write for your views, comments or suggestions.

As a member of the church and a Minister I am aware of the arrangements being made by some of the other churches in the area of Bierton and Aylesbury for a united evangelistic effort. This being in a direct response to the planned Billy Graham crusades to be held in Britain next year.

Believing it being part of our duty as a church and a privilege to bare testimony to this current generation of the kindness and goodness of God to us in the past. We ought to do all that is in our power to bring remembrance and remind fellow believers of the Great Reformation God wrought for us in the 16th Century and since. Realizing unless we do they may fall foul by Satan's snare during future days. It would seem right to teach and remind believers and those seeking God by such means. To bring them back to, and through the historic milestones of our reformation history, may be a means of redressing the balance of contemporary ecumenical evangelism of our day.

I would value your comments, reactions and seek your support.

Yours with Christian Regard,

David Clarke

Response to my letter

Mr. Baumber telephoned to say he would have no objection provided it was not causing any breach or division in the church.

Mr. P. Janes wrote and his reply was a follows: -

25. 8. 83

Dear David,

In direct answer to your letter received yesterday I see

no reason why any trustees should object to your proposed series of lectures on the reformation.

I cannot go along with noisy demonstration, but in Joshua 4th chapter we read of the twelve stones taken from the midst of Jordan to remind the people of past deliverances and they were to tell their children.

Mr. Ashdown is, no doubt, a Godly man and very gifted at memorizing and retelling past events, hence very suitable for such meetings.

It would be a good reason for the trustees to object if you were inviting someone into the pulpit to preach knowing that he would advance things contrary to the teaching of the word of God, but this is not the case.

I wish I had a retentive memory so that when I hear these things I could remember. However, if you do make arrangements and I can possibly come, I will, and endeavour to bring others.

However, if you do make arrangements and I can possibly come, I will, and endeavour to bring others.

Mr. Ashdown would have to be suitably paid for his journey and time, so perhaps you would intimate to me your thoughts about this side of the matter. Collections at the meetings would probably be the best way.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Janes

My response

Due to the disorder amongst the church already mentioned, it seemed inappropriate at this stage to pursue this matter further. However, it seemed a shame that the church could not rise to the occasion and be, as it were, as a light set upon a hill.

10. A Dream

Background To The Dream

The following chapter relates a dream that I had and then leads up to the next attempt to resolve our disorder at Bierton.

A Dream And Its Effects

On Sunday the 29th September, I was preaching at Oakington, Cambridgshire and that night I dream a dream. To relate the dream I need to explain a few things.

Ruth Ellis was a member of the church at Bierton and was now in the Bethesda Home at Harpendon.

She had suffered lately and her actions, ways and reason were at some times strange and often inconvenient to her relatives but also she could not be sensibly communicated with. She often causes a great deal of trouble to the people concerned.

Ruth had been a great help to me in the past and always our conversation was concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, his truth and our experience. She was able to quote from memory virtually all the hymns of the Denham collection and Harts hymns. Even in her poorly mental state she was able to quote from hymns to any that asked.

In company she would often say things which could not be understood and as a results come folks would ignore her and say virtually oh, you know Ruth, she speaks nonsense,' and so she was ignored.

I often tried to communicate with her poorly state and I am sure her problem was only in that she selected the wrong words to express what she wanted to convey. Yet in all this we still were able to speak and have choice experience when considering some of the substance of the Hymns she could quote.

I felt for Ruth particularly when folk ignored her and her as though she were insane.

Now to the dream: -

I was in company of they who I had believed to be my friends.

Were gathered together in a reception room like that of a hotel and I had occasion to speak and express my views about a matter I couldn't recall. However, these folk all turned on me, not in a physical way, but in a mental way. They said, in effect, although not verbally, " Oh no!' You are wrong, not only wrong but you have gone beyond the point of no return in your thinking." " We all know the scriptures by virtue of who we are, but no, you are completely wrong."

They concluded that they should ignore me for I was lost and they could not come to my aid. They conclude the best way to treat me was to ignore me and not take any more notice of me. Just in reality like they treated Ruth. To politely smile at my words but take no notice of me whatever is said.

The loneliness and isolation that I felt was just as I believed Ruth Ellis must have felt when she was ignored. I cannot find words to express the depth of grief I experienced when I realized I was so alone.

I awoke and spoke my mind to my wife weeping. I was resolved to speak the word of God even though I be counted a madman, the truth to me was more important than those so-called friends.

Who these folk were in my dream it matters not for I did not think it relevant. However, for they who can interpret dreams, one was Mr. Peter Trustees 1 of the Eaton Bray church.

Further Attempts To Resolve Our Disorder

Following all these events it was necessary to do something. I called a church meeting, for the 19th October 1983. Not that I had the authority, but something had to be

done. The following members were present: Mr. A. King,Miss B Ellis, Mr C Member, and Mrs Evered. D. Clarke, Miss G Ellis.

Mr King opened in prayer and a reading from the scripture 1 Cor. 13

Mr King then expressed he felt constrained to give a reason for his action and decisions of recent months to the church; explaining he had a nervous complaint which had severely affected his body. The affairs of the church had been by no means helpful.

Mr King explained he was in receipt of a letter written to him by Mr. D. Clarke dated 2nd May 1983, and he had shown the contents to the deacon of the church at Linslaid. Although Mr. Collier was the pastor, due to his age, it was thought he ought not be engaged in any controversy or disagreement between Mr. D. Clarke and himself. Although Mr. D. Clarke had suggested it that Mr. Collier might be called upon to help settle any offences or controversies.

Mr King removed himself from the table and sat upon a chair (previously placed by himself) away from the desk stating he did not feel he could read quotes from this letter to the church standing at ' the Table of God;

Parts of that letter were read and afterwards Mr King stated he had hoped the church by now had obtained the help of a chairman to conduct this meeting, since on several occasions he had requested the church should do so. Mr King then reminded the church of his earlier request to be relieved of his preaching engagement at the Bierton Church in December of that year. After this he left the meeting.

The secretary (myself) explained church business could not be conducted unless we had some means of regulating church affairs; we each had responsibilities to each other and Mr King whilst in church membership.

The secretary put a motion to the church that since a

serious disorder existed in the church it was necessary for them to seek someone to act as an overseer without delay, until such time as we were settled and able to function as a body.

Mr J Gosden, Minister of the Gospel, Kent, was proposed by the secretary, that in his prayerful and considered opinion he was the only person, known to himself, able to act in his capacity. The secretary also proposed one of our trustee be asked and named Mr. P. Janes of Eaton Bray, to help set in order the things which were wanting.

Consideration was given to the seriousness of our affairs and viewed it harmful to leave such a decision for a further month (even though the Gospel Standard articles of faith rule 15, stipulated one month notice should be given to such a decision).

The matter was agreeable to the church although Mr. Evered suggested we ask Mr J Luton of Luton, Bethel Chapel, to act in the above-mentioned capacity.

The motion was put to the church and carried by vote.

Comments on that meeting

Mr King speaks of The Table of God

I was surprised that Mr King read from the letter I had sent to him, for I understood this matter was resolved between us but now he opened up the whole issue again. I was offended that only parts of the letter were read and not the whole because the parts he read cast sinister shadow upon the whole letter.

The other point which was a surprise to me was that Mr King spoke of the **"Table of God",** now what did he mean? What connection had he with Mrs. Evered?

Again I realized this could not go on without a check. What was I to do?

Help from Mr J Gosden-Church function and Order

I wrote immediately to Mr J Gosden with our request to help us, but sadly for us he was not in the position to do so.

Here is his letter in response to our request: -

Reaction to the letter

I understood clearly Mr J Gosden's reply and wondered what we could do. I gave the letter to Mr King and asked him to read it.

Tunbridge Wells
Mr. David Clarke,

24th October 1983

Dear David,

Church at Bierton

Thank you for your letter of 19th October. After prayerful though and consideration I have my initial opinion confirmed, that as much as I should like to be of help to you all, the distance involved (about 100 miles) and the very heavy commitments here make my involvement a physical impossibility.

I have felt with sorrow the evident lack of respected leadership and lack of unity in the fellowship of late, and my heart aches for you as I remember the situation when it was so very different. My I therefore make the suggestion that you make a new approach to the problem by considering carefully the character of a true Christian Church

A church is a gathering of God's people, those who through grace have known the forgiveness of sin through the blood of Christ, and in whose midst there is: -

A. Government and discipline administered by MEN called, equipped and qualified by God to lead and rule on his behalf. Eph. 4. V11-16. Only matters previously agreed and considered by these men should be put to the church meeting.

B. Preaching of the whole counsel of God by those

called of God to do so. Rom. 10. v13-15

C. The administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as an outward and public avowal of union with Christ and, in him, UNITY WITH EACH OTHER AT THE TABLE. i.e. All to be done with "one accord" Acts 2 v 41.

Wherever any one of these elements is seriously or entirely lacking, it is very doubtful whether, in God's sight, there any longer exists a gospel church. If you feel this to be your situation, only two courses are possible.

For the church to unanimously appoint from its own MALE members those qualified in accord with 1 Timothy 3, in whom there be complete confidence, and for whom all would have respect.

Or

If the above is impossible then to seek to place your selves under the discipline and oversight of a properly constituted gospel church as near to Bierton as possible, and to remain under their discipline until such time as God may raise up men from your own numbers who could undertake the responsibility.

I trust these thought may be helpful. My inability to become further involved is no indication of lack of love or concern, but the sheer impossibility of being useful at so great a distance.

My Christian love to you all,
Yours sincerely,

John Gosden

11. Events Turn For The Worst

One could hardly think such a few people who profess a fear of God could act and react in the way they have done, as I am to show through the following events.

The following is a summary of those events, which caused me to see how things at Bierton were going from bad to worse.

Weeknight prayer meeting 26th October 1983

Mr King read from the 33rd Chapter of Jeremiah's prophesy and emphasized verse 3 after a few comments on the reading.

Four Members Of The Church Walk Out

Following this I was to read from Ezekiel 's prophesying Chapter 14.

However, this is what happened. I made introductory remarks before my selected reading and the effect of my words were such that four of the seven gathered got up and walked out of the meeting.

I was astonished and so were the remaining church members who were Mrs. Gurney andMiss B Ellis. This had never been known to happen in the history of the Bierton Strict Baptist Church.

The following is a recollection of the words spoken at that time, none of which were designed to hurt or cause any such effects as has been mentioned. They were spoken from the heart and with all honesty and truth as the subject lay heavenly upon my spirit. Particularly after recent events at the church at Bierton and after receiving the letter from Mr J Gosden (which at that time none of the church members had read save Mr King).

The Scripture Speaks

The Chapter 14 of Ezekiel seemed to speak to us at Bierton and I as a minister of the Gospel felt responsible to

convey these things which I believe the living God would have us take note of. Before the appointed reading took place, I took the liberty to make the following introductory comments:

Ezekiel 14, "The text of scripture which King had emphasized was a very good word to the people of God and to any seeking him. ' **Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not".**

I too could testify of the truth of these words having experienced the truth of these words in my own case for when the Lord Jesus called me by his grace 14 years ago. I was in no church nor was brought up in things, which were known to others who from a child had known the scriptures. But the truth of the words, " call upon me and I well answer thee", was true in my case for I called upon the name of the Lord and he heard my cry and saved me, separated me from my former ways and manner of living. Being once a drug seller, drug taker, criminal and wicked person. Only the power of the gospel and constraining grace of the Lord Jesus could work in such a way overnight.

Being called in no church nor brought up in my church my knowledge of Jesus Christ came as I read the bible.

I met in those days after touring the churches here and there and discovering churches here and there I was unable to settle into any of the churches. The reason being, I could not find that concern to know God and his grace in the way taught through the doctrines of Grace as they are in Jesus Christ and as I had come re receive. They neither taught them nor believed as I had come to know me. I had read in those days accounts of John Kershaw's life, John Warburton, William Huntington and later William Gadsby, all men with whom I believed I had something in common. We had experience the same things in measure, believed the same truths of God's

word, but I knew of no church in those days who knew these things as I had received.

That is until the Bierton Church was made know to me. As you know I crept in and sat at the back and continued with you until this day.

At that time the reverence for the things if God and manner of worship was well pleasing and pleasant. The singing of the hymns were savoury, their theme always being that of Christ Jesus and his gospel of grace. The hymns spoke of free grace, justification by faith of imputed righteousness and the sovereignty of God in all things. Those doctrines I had come to receive before coming amongst you.

Now believing I have been called of Jesus Christ to preach his gospel, and given leave of the Church I must speak and can only speak of those great things God hath shown me from his word. My responsibilities to you and your responsibilities to me as a preacher and also our responsibilities to King as a preacher are the same. I ask you if I speak not according to the word of God you must take me aside and show me, and I appeal to you to do so. Nevertheless since it is a truth in general a prophet is not received amongst his own people, the prophet Ezekiel needs no commendation, let him speak the words applicable to us and may his word be believed and the ‘ Spirit’ who dictated the word speak to our hearts as appropriate.

Having now been amongst you these several years I am now discovering not only here but as I travel the churches, things that I must make known.

Recently it has been brought to my attention when minister or you people refer to the **‘House of God’** you actually mean the building. I have never understood our ministers to actually mean the building, for they mean the church, the elect called out body of Christ.

As I read the scripture I find the ‘ House of God’ the

place or seat of worship according to the 1st. Testament, means

But all of these forms and the ordinances of worship were all but types of the substance of true gospel worship and true church order now revealed in the New Testament.

Now the temple of God is the people of God, Lively stones and not by man's doing, but by the regenerating work of God the spirit. The elect body of Christ, called to be Saints are the true building of God; the house of God and not this chapel building, which I discover, is believed to be the case today.

All the vessels of the Old Testament were typical of the elect people of God set apart for divine use. Types of officers, helps and functioning members of Christ's Gospel Church.

We are the temple of God. New Testament worshippers have no ' holy tables' or tables of God' or ' holy temples' as have been recently told me.

I am told the communion tables must be 'reverenced' for it is a 'holy table' set apart unto God.

The building I am told is to be ' reverenced ' for it is the ' House of God '. All of which I discover to be not found in the word of God.

Speaker From The Congregation

At this point, a member of the Church asked well is not this the 'House of God' pointing to the building. Then another rose to their feet saying this is more like a church meeting and walked out. This was followed by three other persons leaving. They were Miss. G. Ellis, Mr. A. King and Mrs. G. Evered. The other person was a member of the congregation. This left myself and two members behind.

I was amazed and alarmed for I had not raised my voice nor spoken in a severe way, or a hard way, nevertheless I had provoked this reaction by speaking the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

I beckoned to the remaining few that I should close the

meeting in prayer and asked the Father of our Lord Jesus to save his people from these troubles and give us wisdom in these days, how we should conduct ourselves.

I then spoke to the two remaining, asking them to do what they believe to be right. They need not trouble themselves over me but rather themselves. If they feel I should leave, then I would do so, if this would bring them peace. Or if they felt a minister or ministers should speak to me to show me any errors in my ways, then they must do so.

Then indicated to them from the word of God the scripture that clearly shows the ' House of God ' to be the Church. 1 Tim. 3 verse 15.

We left Bierton Chapel heavy in heart but I trust with our eyes towards heaven that God would be gracious and appear for the people of God.

Dream Recalled

I then recalled my dream and wondered were these people them in my dream, and after all was there anything in the dream?

12. Communion Refused

Having no pastor and having no authority from the church I knew not what to do. It seemed no one understood these issues involved and that it were I that was the cause of these disorders.

Withdrawal From The Communion

With all these disorders I could not, in conscience, sit down and partake of the communion to hold that month. I therefore withdrew asking Mr. Crane, of Lakenheath, to excuse me. I gave no explanation to him at that time for he was A Visiting Minister Unacquainted With Our Affairs.

Refusal To Conduct The Communion

Because our disorders were unresolved I believed it wrong to continue as a church holding the communion whilst our differences prevailed. I therefore prepared a statement for the church and read it to them at our weeknight meeting. The following is that statement read in November 1983.

It is the custom of the Bierton Church, to hold the communion service on the first Lords day of each month, and that service to be officiated and conducted by the Minister engaged to preach on that day. I am engaged to preach on the first Lords day in December 1983, but I must express my concern to the Church at Bierton.

I abstained from the communion on the first Lords day in October and the reasons for doing so were manifold, however, they may be summed up in the following way.

The church are not united in the cause of truth and at are variance one with another; to act outwardly as though one was in harmony when not inwardly is to pay lip service to a principle. Such practice is hypocrisy and dishonours the communion of Christ's body.

To illustrate this disunity I must point out six recent issues of disorder, none of which have been resolved to the

honour of the Lord Jesus Christ.

King considers himself to be in membership in name only and has asked to be relieved of his preaching engagements at Bierton during 1983. He has also declined to fulfil preach elsewhere. It was only at our last nu officiated church meeting that he gave any formal indication for his actions.

We are out of order a church if we do not resolve this matter and put right any wrong done.

When I brought to the attention of the church the inconsistency of teaching general redemption, to the children and their unconverted parents, when in fact scripture teaches particular redemption; the church were not concerned, but rather upset that it should be mentioned.

The resulting confusion and variance over this issue gave witness to the real beliefs of the church. Therefore, we are out of order unless we are one mind in such matters.

Both King and I are given license at the church to preach and yet over the issue of General and Particular redemption and the Love of God to the elect and hatred to the reprobate we are at variance.

I maintain the scripture teaches particular redemption and the Love of God is Eternal, unchangeable towards his elect and the rest of mankind are hated with the same hatred mentioned towards ease (Rom. 9). That Christ died only for the elect.

In this matter we, as male members must be in agreement to walk together for otherwise we cannot serve the needs of the church at Bierton.

Mrs Evered will seek to establish her religious practices and ways, believing them to be right, when in fact they are wrong, upon other members of the church and congregation. When I opposed her privately, and then before other members trouble arose and the rest of the church winders why?

At a recent prayer meeting three of our members

walked out of the service, Miss G Ellis, Mrs Evered and Mr King. It appears they took offence over some things, which I had spoken in sincerity, honesty and in no bitter spirit, when making introductory comments before the reading of the scriptures.

The comments were related to the communion table, the Church building and current heresies connecting them with the Old Testament modes of worship.

I say while such heresies are allowed to go unchecked, the church is not out of order.

In the past the church has made governing decisions contrary to the spirit of the Gospel and continues to do so. The reason appears to be because it is believed should strive for peace at all costs, even at the cost of truth, honesty, justice an example of this bad practice is in connection with Mr Lawrence. Mrs Evered expressed that he aught not to be asked to preach at Bierton again and gave her reasons. However, another member mentioned it since this matter had caused so much trouble, it would be prudent not to ask him again, at least not for another year. To this the church agreed. This is not honourable.

I maintain that this was dishonourable, practice as a church we have responsibilities to each other and visiting ministers and, had there been a cause of serious error on Mr Lawrence's part we should at least act rightly and put it right in a biblical manner.

This has happened in the past and is of course out of order, and must be put right.

From these six issues it is evident that we have no effective means of Church government, and since we have no officers to affect a remedy we are out of order.

Therefore, since there are matters unresolved amongst the Church and there is not that harmony required before the Communion service it would be wrong to symbolize the

Lord's death for us, by means of the communication, until we put these matters right. To do so I say would be to have ' no respect for the Table' which of course is a metaphoric expression relating to the communion of the Body of Christ.

Therefore, in conscience, in the fear of God, I abstain and believe it wrong to conduct this service until we put these matters right. We are responsible before God to do so!

David Clark
Minister of the Gospel

The Churches Response To My Actions

This caused some of the members to ask, ' Well can we not have this service on another Lords Day when another visiting minister could conduct the ordinance'. They did not think I was right to do what I had done.

Due to the difficulties in obtaining suitable ministers we had no ministers to preach on any of the 1st. Lords Days in the following months of January, February or March. Nevertheless I was available to preach and to officiate the communion if the church resolved their differences.

Further Attempts To Remedy Our Disorders

By this time our disorders were accumulating and so I called another church meeting in order to set in order or effect a remedy. The following is a transcript of the minutes of that meeting:

Church meeting 14th. December 1983

Members present:Miss B Ellis, Mrs C Gurney, and Miss G Ellis Mrs Evered and Mr D Clarke.

Acting Chairman Mr D Clarke

Reading: 1 Cor. Chapter 2 followed by prayer.

The chairman explained the meeting was not properly

convened meeting since we had no duly appointed chairman for which reason he thought Mr King was absent

However we were gathered in order to set in order those things which wanted since we had now serious things and matters of disorder amongst us. That it was necessary to establish a means of regulating and governing the church affairs.

Each church member had read the letter from Mr Gosden and so we were aware of his inability to help.

The secretary read a letter received from Mr King explaining his absence and his intention not to attend the meeting expressing he was sure he had made it clear, to the church, he would not attend the meetings when he was with us at the last meeting.

Miss G Ellis express she did not think King had made the matter clear at all and that surely we could not made decisions affecting the church without him.

The chairman express that whilst he felt Mr King had not made the matter clear at the last church meeting he had made himself plain he was not attending this meeting. However it was thought perhaps this was because we had no chairman duly appointed and that we had obtained such help he would have attended.

To this Miss G Ellis expressed she had hoped this was the case. Likewise all the members.

The chairman further explained we had accumulated church business, which had to be attended to, but we had no means of affecting and ruling on issues, which had arisen and was at hand.

After the discussion it was agreed we needed someone to act as an overseer and it was suggested we ask Mr Ramsbottom. The secretary mentioned Ramsbottom had already indicated he was very busy in previous correspondence with the church and perhaps we should ask our trustees.

The chairman suggested it would be a very heavy responsibility to ask one person to act in this matter at this stage and perhaps two or three persons aught to act and be involved to set things in order. The chairman suggested we could ask Mr C A Wood, of Croydon, you act as an overseer and that if he felt the help of trustees were needful he could say so. This was agreeable to the members. The chairman then pointed out that the help we had in the past was only of the chairman and not oversight. We are now seeking the aid of an overseer or elder since our church affairs had proved the need of such an officer. To this the church agreed and understood.

Mr Evered expressed we aught to solve our difficulties before we ask someone like Mr Wood to help in this way. The chairman explained we had no means of doing so for the nature of our disorders and disagreements were very serious and required a biblical ruling and enforced church authority to settle these matters.

Mr Evered express at this point she objected to being charged with heresy, by Mr D Clarke. That her practice of reverencing the communion table, vestry and building was right. She denied the charge also of being a Pharisee and a Roman Catholic. All of which charges had been made against her at her home by Mr D Clarke.

She said, ' A heretic was one that had departed from the traditional church view and held self-opinionated views and she did none of these things. All her views were right for she had been taught them fro, a child'. To which the chairman said, 'This matter could only be settled in a biblical manner but at present we were without the means of settling such a disagreement and since she had initially sought to press her views upon Mr D Clarke, in public, he was obliged to resist her in this matter would require a church ruling.

The chairman explained he had not the authority of the church to act in this matter on their behalf even though he

believed Mrs Evered he wrong. But for this reason we were seeking to give such authority to an elder or overseer.

The chairman asked Mrs Evered to give one scriptural reference to support her views and mode of religious practice when reverencing the communion table, vestry and chapel. Also what scripture reference had she for maintaining the building was 'The house of God'. To which she quoted the introductory comments made by Mr G Collier, when describing the atmosphere of entering the meetinghouse of Benjamin Keach at Winslow.

The chairman asked would she reverence the Anglican Church buildings, to which she replied, 'Yes'. It was then asked would she reverence the Roman Catholic buildings, to which she replied she would but not their religion. To which the chairman replied such reverence should be given to any such buildings, let alone that of an Idol temple such as a Roman Catholic place of worship. To this last statement of the chairman the church seemed to agree.

The chairman expressed since no scripture could be given he would read the scripture which clearly defines the 'The House of God' (I Tim 3^{15}).

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou aughest to behave thyself in the 'House of god', which is the church Of the living God, the ground and pillar of truth'.

He further stated that God seeketh such to worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4^{23}), that there are no holy buildings, tables vessels or such things which we should give reverence. That the new Testament churches are the people, the elect body of Christ, called by grace; these are lively stones built up into a spiritual house and building for an habitation of God through the Spirit. This being no earthly of which Pharisees could not see or understand or receive.

The chairman was then pressed by Miss G Ellis to explain the text the Lord Loveth the gates of Zion more than

all the dwellings of Jacob.

The chairman replied saying, ‘ saying The gates of Zion are not the doors of the chapel building but the public ordinances of the Gospel ministry; reading, prayer, preaching etc. All of which are Christ’s ministries in the church. Thess.

To which Mrs Evered replied she could not make the chairman see. To which was replied he saw perfectly well that her views were heretical, superstitious and leading to the will worship or the Roman Catholic Church. And that just as Pope John Paul the II denies idolatry when reverencing the statue of the Black Madonna, so would she when reverencing a wooden table, building and vestry all of which are made by man and men cannot put holiness into things that are made.

The chairman warned then of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. and what we should take note of what happened to Shiloh (Jer. 7^{14}). That he would not be surprised to find the building burned down if such superstition prevailed at the Bierton church. At this it was exclaimed ‘oh never’.

The chairman explained it is self evident we cannot settle these or any other matters without a biblical basis and properly established church government.

The chairman explained he felt he would benefit form the help of such an overseer in order to discuss such matters as they arose. That the churches were responsible to settle and resolve these matters honourably and not brush them aside.

It was agreed that both Mr King and Mr D Clarke should discuss these affairs with Mr C A Wood, in detail and go back as far as needed be through the church affairs to settle these agreements.

Mrs Evered then raised a point of disagreement with a statement made by Mr D Clarke (chairman) in a sermon whereby he said the devil reigns over men in the world. She denied this and that the devil was not chained as Mr D Clarke

had said in previous explanation for that would only occur in the millennium reign of Christ. To which the chairman replied; God is sovereign and overall but Satan rules in the kingdom of darkness over the minds of the ungodly and he being bound signifies him being bound metaphorically by a chain. Meaning Satan can do no more that he be given leave to do.

Miss G Ellis then said a minister aught not to name people from the pulpit or in letters for this did not seem right and was surely diplomatic. Mrs Evered also said a Gospel Standard minister never did this nor would do. To which the chairman replied, ' whatever other ministers did or did not do the rule of them sent of God is scripture. Since the apostle Paul named men that opposed him in the ministry such a Demas (2 Tim. 4^{10}) or Alexander the copper smith, also Luke informs us of Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5^{1}) all of which were named persons so too was it right to name persons, as need be, whether publicly or in private. That it was only the wisdom of this world, which dictated otherwise. That of course diplomacy be employed when, needed but it is only a tradition of men, which forbids names being mentioned publicly or in letters.

The chairman was asked by Mrs Evered not to speak from the pulpit about these things, which have caused offence since she disagreed with him. To which was replied, 'He did his best not to offend or say things to upset but in faithfulness to men he could only speak of those things which he believed to be of God, appropriate and according to the scriptures, then the church must show him from the scripture and obey the biblical principle of judging prophesy (I Thess. 5^{20-21}) and hold fast that which was good. Now in this case we had no means of effecting government in the church in order to put right our disagreements.

Mrs Evered then asked the chairman if he believed in

keeping the Sabbath day holy, or the moral law. To which he replied she did well if she did so. To which Mrs Evered said she did so.

The chairman explained the Sabbath Day according to the Law of Evered was Saturday (the 7th. Day) and cannot be changed (Gal. 3 15) for it was part and a term of the covenant given and made at Mount Sinai. That this is done away and fulfilled in Chris. That the Lords Day was the 1st day of the week when he rose from the dead and that this day is not the Jewish Sabbath Day. Hence we are informed men cannot (or should not) judge in respect of holy days, new moon of the Sabbath (Col.. 2 16) for the law was and has a fulfilling end for the believer in Christ Jesus. To which Mrs Evered said Lords Day or Sabbath Day it's just the same. To which the chairman replied, 'He believed the Gospel was the rule of life for the believer and not the 10 commandments commonly called the moral law of which she was advancing and this article of religion was according to the Gospel Standard Articles 16.

Mrs Evered then asked the chairman if he felt his job as a lecturer teaching electronics was in keeping with that of a minister of the Gospel. For this work involved teaching the maintenance of television and video recording equipment which are all of the world.

To which the chairman replied he thought his work was quite in order.

The meeting was concluded with a resolve to ask Mr C A Wood, of Croydon to help us at Bierton.

The meeting was then closed in prayer.

My conclusion to this whole affair was that the beliefs of the majority members of Bierton were so much in error that any other believer, minister or pastor who truly believed the Gospel Standard Article of Religion would be ashamed to own these as believers.

Letter sent to Mr Wood

I contacted Mr. Wood immediately but he was not in the position to help so I called a church meeting, which met in December 1983. The minutes for that meeting are as follows:

Church Minutes Of A Meeting In December 1983.

Mr. Wood had declined our request to act as an overseer due to practical considerations and his commitments already. However he was prepared to help at a first meeting if we obtain help form another minister to act as an overseer. That we could ask Mr. Ramsbottom if he knew of any who may be able to help us who was living closer to Bierton, or he might have some suggestions.

To this he suggested we ask one of the ministers we had to preach and because he did no know all the ministers we had it was very difficult to say.

After explaining all our ministers were not Gospel Standard listed men and he suggested this need not necessarily matter. After explaining not all our ministers were in agreement over the added articles and this might prove awkward, Mr Ramsbottom suggested we could ask Mr Haddow, of Prestwood or perhaps Mr C Dawson, of Westoning or Mr J Buss.

Mr Paul Crane Asked To Be Our Overseer

Mrs C Gurney, Miss B. Ellis, Miss G Ellis And I Clarke. At our weeknight meeting it was suggested we ask Mr Crane of Lakenheath to act as overseer for he was one of our regular ministers. To this the church agreed and the Secretary was to make the appropriate arrangements. Also Mr King and Mr D Clarke were to discuss those matters with Mr Crane before such a church meeting. Also if need be Mr Wood could be called and asked to attend a first meeting.

I contacted Mr Crane immediately and he kindly offered help. I made arrangements to visit him and make him aware of these affairs. Mr King did not wish to be involved.

After this we called a church meeting, which meet on the 18th. Of February

Church Meeting 18Th February 1984,

2:30 P.m.

Members present: Mrs I Clarke, Miss B. Ellis, Miss G Elliss, Mrs C Member, Mrs Evered, Mr D Clarke.

Chairman: Mr Crane (of Lakenheath)

The singing of a hymn followed by a reading from the Scripture I Cor. II and prayer opened the meeting.

The secretary introduced the meeting expressing the purpose and summarized the events leading up to the meeting. Particular notice was made concerning the fact the church had not obsessed the communion service since November 1983 and that the church were gathered to set in order those things which are wanting (by the grace of God)

The secretary explained to the church Mr King would not attend the meeting and that he said if they wished to sack him well they would have to do so. He felt better in himself. He was at home if any one wished to discuss matters with him and his wife would be present.

Mr Crane explained he had a letter from Mr King explain to some degree the nature of his nervous complaint and the church affairs had proved to be not at all helpful.

The church was reminded of her responsibilities as a body and as individuals, to act and put right any wrong for the good and cause of truth at Bierton.

The secretary explained, Mr Crane had agreed to act as an overseer (elder) if the church were unanimous in this request.

The secretary also explained the authority invested, by the church, to such an elder an was as follows:

1 To govern the church of God at Bierton according to

the scriptures.

2 To have access to the church minutes and documents relating to church affairs.

3 To be able to visit and enquire of all members about matters of the church affairs.

4 Each member may resort to him and enquire for help and advice regarding church matters.

The minutes of the previous unofficial church meeting held on the 19th. Of October were read and the 14th December and of January. Before approval, that these minutes were correct, Mr Crane requested we settle the matter of him taking oversight.

Before accepting the office as overseer Mr Crane explained the secretary explained the church could ignore his objections and invite another minister to conduct the service but he believed that would be wrong to do so and after all the meeting was called to settle this points of order.

It was said by Mrs Evered that the church have always reverenced 'The House of God' and ' The Table'. For the Bible taught somewhere that the vessels of Gods house were holy.

The secretary said that there were several matters to be dealt with and we now had a church were prepared to settle these affairs in a biblical manner. There were however matters which could not be treated at this meeting since Mr King was not present but if the church agree to settle these matters in due course there was no reason for him to abstain from the communion or take the service.

Mr Crane made reference to the nature of different persons upbringing; and that from a child his background was such that he and all the children of his day were very quiet in chapel and not one would make a murmur. That whilst this was not so with all the Bierton Sunday School children he had taken that into account that the children came from different

backgrounds and none Christian homes which made a great deal of difference.

In like manor we must take into account our own backgrounds some need to be less censorious whilst others more sensitive when differences arise in the church.

Mrs Clarke expressed she had been made to feel she did not fit into the ways of the church of Bierton so she thought it best to leave, explaining when other peoples ways are forced upon you then it was necessary to resist such oppression. An example of this occurred when the twins' nappies need changing after a meal at Berth Ellis's home one Sunday. Ruth in her helpful way took them away and rinsed them for her however this met with the disapproval of Mrs Evered who felt this was wrong to do on the Sabbath. This typical of a legal spirit that she found so difficult to cope with.

Mr Crane expressed he hoped these matters would not result in her leaving and that hopefully matters would be resolved.

Mr Crane commented he found the expression to reverence the table to be inordinate but could understand the phrase respect and that ' The House of God' was surely where God meets with his people and that may be in many different places.

Mr Crane mentioned also that each day should be as Lords Day to us for Jesus is the true Sabbath for the people of God.

The secretary made mention there were several matters he wished to speak to Mr Crane about. All which were related to church affairs natural reaction was to shrink from such a tasked and that he did not profess to be a fount of all wisdom and could not any he had all the answers to matters of disagreement amongst men. But realized, who could tell and what may come of these proceedings? The responsibility may prove to be help to himself and the churches of God.

Mr Crane expressed he would take office if the church were unanimous in the matter in the matter. The matter was put to the church and all worse agreed; thus the church requested he take office.

Mr Crane accepted the office and then consideration was given to the matters of the minutes.

Approval of the minutes was sought but Mrs Evered brought some of the matters arising from the matters mentioned in the minutes forward.

Mrs Evered commented that these differences which had arisen in the church had occurred since Easter of 1983 and after a letter sent to Mr King by D. Clarke; that letter containing nothing but condemnation. To which the secretary confirmed this to be so and that all these matters were contained in the previous church minutes of which Mr Crane had been acquainted. Also these matters were to be dealt with now we had a means of order.

The secretary confirmed he had written to Mr King and reminded the church this was after he church meeting of the 27th of April 1983. The contents of the letter were only part read to the church, by Mr King, at a church meeting on the 19th of October 1983.

We were reminded however the business at hand was only to approve the minutes of the previous meetings and then matters arising from them could be dealt with.

Mr Crane mentioned there was a lot of matters related in the minutes and explained they could not all be dealt with at that meeting but would treat them in due course.

There was no objection or amendments required of the minutes however no proposal of correctness was forthcoming.

The secretary then referred to the recent statement he had made to the church, which had also seen, circulated to them in which was stated the reasons why he had refused to partake and conduct the communion service since October

1983.

The statement was not read again and this meeting, due to time considerations, however matters in that in that statement were to be considered at the meeting by the church.

It was asked by Mrs Gurney, 'Why they could not partake of the communion'. None of which could be treated at this meeting.

The secretary mentioned he wished to bring the matter of the children being taught hymns which taught general redemption explaining the children were being taught to sing hymn I69 of the Young People Hymnbook (S.B.S.S.A.) and at the Easter period would be singing this public ally with many none Christians present. This taking place even after I had repeatedly said was contrary to the doctrinal beliefs of the church. The final verse of that hymn reading:

Show me the scene in the garden
Of bitter pain,
And the cross where my saviour,
For me was slain
Sad ones for bright ones
So that they be stories of Jesus
Tell them to me

Published by the National Strict Baptist Sunday school Association

It was objected, by the secretary, that this hymn was teaching the children that Jesus had died for them. Which was contrary to the doctrine of particular redemption. The matter was raised last year and was currently related to the disorder amongst us and with Mr King and himself.

Another matter was that relating to Mr H Sayers , of Watford, a visiting minister. This needed to be discussed with

Mr Crane.

Mr Crane signed the church minutes and asked if there were any other matters that needed treating. Also if any members wished to contact him they were free to do so and make mention of anything which needed to be raised at the next meeting.

The next church meeting was booked provisionally for the last week of March or the first week in April.

Mr Crane closed the church meeting with prayer lead.

13. Mr Sayers Gospel Standard Articles

At this time a mutual friend brought to my attention that Mr Sayers of Watford Strict Baptist cause, disagreed with the Gospel Standard Articles. Mr Sayers was engaged to preach at the Bierton chapel and so since I was the secretary and was concerned I telephoned him and enquired of this matter. Mr Sayers did not volunteer much information so I spoke to Mr D. Crowther, deacon of the cause meeting at Attleborough, wishing to ascertain what disagreement had actually take place between Mr Sayers and the church at Attleborough. Mr D. Crowther was very helpful and forwarded a letter sent to him from Mr Sayers wherein he sets forth his views in respect of the 'duty faith and duty repentance' article. From this letter it is clear Mr Sayers opposes the Gospel Standard doctrinal position in respect of these matters.

Mr Sayers and Attleborough

Watford
Mr D. Crowther,

25th February 1983

Dear Mr Crowther

I refer to your letter of 15th February and as promised in my letter of 2l st will seek to answer the points raised. May the Holy Spirit guide in what I reply and may the honour and

glory of God be paramount in this matter.

If I may I will take each question in turn and seek to turn to scrip are in support of what I write.

Firstly, who is referred to as ‘ all ‘ in 1 Tim 2 v 4 – ‘ who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth’ - and in II 3 v 9- ‘not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance’. To my understanding the tenor of these words is the same as of those found in Ezekiel’s prophecy Ch. 33 v ll where we read that God has ‘ no pleasure in the death of the wicked turn from his way and live’? To me that whole chapter shows clearly the responsibilities laid upon both preacher and hearer, whether the hearer be lost or saved by God’s grace. In connection with this point, and indeed each raised in your letter, the words of Deut. 29 v 29 seem relevant that ‘ the secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law! To me the revealed will of God is that all men should repent and believe and His secret will is that only those who constitute the election of grace will do so. I am aware that the doctrine of election is clearly set forth but we do not know who constitutes that number that no man can number. If it is not the will of God that men should repent, how can he be just in condemning men for not doing so? That man, in and of him, is quite unable to fulfil those conditions of salvation I do not deny, but that is his sin and God is not responsible for it. Did not Christ Himself lament over Jerusalem, Matt 23 v 37 & Luke 13 v 34, declaring that he would have gathered the Jews, but they would not. –

This is not to say that he could not but that His desire as a man was toward them and they would not be gathered because of their depraved will.

Secondly, to whom is the Gospel exhortations, invitations and commands addressed? It is my firm belief that

they are addressed to the whole of the human race without exception. That is not to say that they are effectual to every man. When I was first led into the solemn work of the ministry that command was most clearly given to me' and he (that is Jesus) said unto them, go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned' Mark 16v15&16. If the servants of God can only go forth calling upon the elect to repent and believe, then they would never go on for we do not know who constitute the election of Grace. Surely we see here the goodness and mercy of God in proclaiming salvation to all (revealed thing) while reserving the power of salvation to Himself (the secret thing). Did not our Lord Himself utter that great cry on the last day of the feast of tabernacles less ' any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of water'. John 7.v.37&38. There were those who heard and believed, v.40&41, and also those that believed not. Thus the gospel invitation divided them. You mention specifically my discourse on Isaiah 55 v 6&7. It is most clear from the Word of God that verse 7 is addressed to the wicked in person. We are to exhort the wicked to repent, and if I may refer again to delivered our soul. Turning again to Deut. 29.v.29, the revealed 'thing' of God is that he who turns from his way to God will receive pardon and mercy, but he who turns not shall be lost. Before finishing with this point I recall a quotation that I heard some years ago and has remained with me, that if the gospel invitations were as limited in their presentation as they are in their application, what a miserable gospel it would be! I feel that we need to keep in view the boundless love of God as set forth in the Gospel as well as the glories of the doctrine of election, which I most firmly adhere to. The gospel invitations reach out to all men but are only effectual to the children of God' those that

are called according to His purpose' Rom 8.v.28. The servants of God sow the seed, but God causes the seed to fall into the ground prepared of Him and bear fruit.

Thirdly, Gods common love to all mankind. That sin is loathsome and hateful to God we cannot and dare not deny and this must ever be set before the sons of men by God' servants. You quotes those words that God is angry with wicked every day' Pslm... 7.v.11, but here we see the goodness and mercy of God and His love to the world made manifest in that he does not cut man off as he deserves. Their life is yet lengthened that they might hear and believe the Gospel. That they will not come unto Him that they might have life does but add sin to sin. If we turn again to Matt 23 & Luke 13 we read of solemn judgments pronounced by the Lord Jesus over the Pharisees and those that trusted in their own righteousness, but we also read of Christ' s lamentation over Jerusalem. Sure this is the language of love and not hatred. It is as if Jesus pleads with Jerusalem, with those that hate his name to return. Here again we must be careful for we are speaking of the revelations belonging to man and the secret things belonging to God. Also when considering this point I cannot see how else those beautiful verses in John 3.v.14&18 can be interpreted. It is clear, at least to me, that God, out of His love to mankind, sent his Son Jesus to die. Again the revealed will of God – that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish etc. – And - that the world through him might (not will) be saved and he that believeth is not condemned - the will of God that only people will ever do so is made clear in John 6.v.37 – 40, but even there the doctrine of election is tempered with mercy by a promise that him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

I feel that in the preceding three points we are dealing with the extent of the Gospel and the extent of the Gospel Ministry. I believe that it is addressed to all mankind, is to

be proclaimed to all mankind and that the outcome of that proclamation is to be left with God, knowing that it will be effectual to His own dear people. – ‘ In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether both shall be alike good’ Eccl.. 11v6. – ‘So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it’ Isaiah 55 v 11. -

Fourthly baptism. That there is no saving grace in the ordinance I most heartily endorse and if I may say so believe that whenever I have been led to speak of the ordinances have always stated so. It is an ordinance that has the blessing of the Trinity resting upon it (Matt 3v16&17 Mark 1 v 10&11, Luke 3 v 22). And is essential in obedience to Jesus Christ. Jesus has also joined it with salvation and I dare not separate the two. However this is not the point raised by you. As regards the qualifications (for want of a better word) of the candidate coming to be baptized, there are but two requisites – repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I think of the words usually spoken in the water ‘ upon a profession of your repentance etc. ‘ We are not to sit in judgment upon any who come before us. The matter of possession rests between their soul and God. We can only act as the apostles did, on a profession. This is all that Philip acted upon when he baptized the eunuch. Is this not one of the reasons why we are left instructions in the Word of God as to how to deal with those who after their profession turn back and walk no more with him. My thoughts go to Simon Magus. Remember the words of Christ in the sermon of the mount, ‘ Judge not in order that ye be not judged ‘ Matt 7 . 1. Having said that we cannot lightly receive others into church fellowship. The walk must be consistent with the profession made but this in and of itself is no proof of reality. I do not feel that the churches dare sit

in judgment as to the reality of the work of grace. We may be sadly mistaken. If this ordinance was attended to in our churches as it ought to be, that is in the very beginning of a believer's experience and the Holy Scripture shows this to be the case – see the book of the Acts – there will not have been the opportunity to examine the candidates reality and depth of experience. This should be the first step after believing. Having entered the church of Christ the young Christian then grows. I feel that as churches we expect too much from fresh converts and this is very often a stumbling block to them, by probing into the reality of the work of grace (the secret thing of God?) We prevent them from giving an evidence of that reality.

Finally you ask what I meant by the expression ' Tomorrow it may be too late' in relation to baptism. Frankly I do not see the inferences that you say are there. We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth, and hence there is urgency in the Gospel and it's commands, including that before us. I feel that very often when baptism is set before the congregations as a needful rite, which is to satisfy the obedience called for by the Gospel, that Satan immediately raises all possible objections in an attempt to prevent believers from following their Lord and especially because of the public nature of this ordinance. Nowhere in the Word of God we find any license given to delay in following in this step. Indeed we profess to be Baptists but seem intent on raising reasons, or rather excuses, as to why believers should not be baptized. I realized that I have written perhaps bluntly here but it is a great exercise with me that there are those who willingly and knowingly refuse to honour the Lord in this way. It may be called threats and pressures from the pulpit but God has commanded that whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned. Again I repeat that there is no salvation in being baptized. And here we

bow to the sovereignty of our God, but he has still plainly commanded it and he people are to be told so.

I trust I have answered your questions and pray that you will receive this letter in the spirit in which it has been written, seeking the honour and glory of God. Please forgive my writing at such length.

Wishing the blessing of God upon you and upon the church and congregation at Attleborough,

With Christian love

Yours very sincerely,

Howard R. Sayers.

The Bierton Church Unable To Deal With The Issue

It was evident to me, from reading Mr. Sayers letter, he did not agree with the Gospel Standard Articles of the religion. I had spoken to Mr. Sayers on the telephone and asked whether he subscribed to the Gospel Standard Articles when joined the Watford church. He explained he had never been asked to do so. This surprised me since he was engaged to preach in Gospel Standard causes and the church at Watford is Gospel Standard listed church.

What was I to do? If our church cannot put right matters respecting **Particular Redemption**, **‘ Holy Tables’** and **disorderly members** how could this matter be now taken in hand? I knew this matter would have to be resolved in the fear of God and that the church must be in a position to judge these issues. But they were not. The matters of ‘**duty faith**’ and ‘ **duty repentance’** were involved; both of which I had already met and at Eaton Bray church some had actually opposed my doctrinal stand over this issue. At this church I preached from the text in Acts 17 and defended article 26 of the Gospel Standard articles. I was judged as being wrong,

both in the substance and my method of preaching and at a later date gently reproved by Mr Godly, who is a minister now in membership of the cause at Eaton Bray. The church at Eaton Bray in a Gospel Standard listed church.

I had also written to the Gospel Standard committee over this issue and received a satisfactory reply. I had cause to look into this matter before the Bierton church joined the Gospel Standard denomination. Both of these letters may be read in the supplement under the heading

My letter to the Gospel Standard Committee

The circumstances relating to my concern over this issue are also found in the same supplement under the heading, Letter to Mr. Peter Howe, former minister of the Ivanhoe Particular Baptist church (pages 33 – 40) in this supplement I have shown one of our members was not clear over these matters and knew the church were in no better position now to deal with this matter in a correct way.

Matter To Be Brought To The Church.

This matter would have to be brought to the church but now and when? Look at what we were already in? The matter was brought forward at our church meeting in February 1984 (see page 86).

14. Leprosy Discovered

In this chapter I relate how the communion of the church was restored but this lead onto another more serious problem, which has yet to be resolved. That being the distinction between the Law of Evered being a rule of life for the believer, which is the gospel. Sadly to say the truth of this matter lies under much debris today, but I believe will surely shine when God fulfils His word as spoken in Act 15:16.

Restoration Of The Communion At Bierton

After our church meeting in February my conscience gave me leave to conduct the communion service with the Bierton church that following March. I preached from the text Acts 15:16 during that day: **'After this will I return and build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:'**

Mrs Evered was not present at those meetings but we partook of the communion that evening with myself presiding.

Leprosy Cannot Be Cured

At the next church meeting it was evident to me that the deeper one probed to discover the nature of a disorder the worse things became. I say the disease became apparent to all who have eyes to see, and I will say unto them that give a glib answer to the question as to whether the law of Evered be our rule of life or the gospel: I say remain silent and only speak of those things you know from experience and according to the oracles of God. For this I say is the root of the matter; Mrs Evered has Evered as her rule while I have the rule of the Lord Jesus. That is to say his gospel.

Church Meeting Reveals The Disease

April 21st 1984 2:30 p.m.

Members present: Miss B. Ellis, Mrs C Gurney, and

Miss G Elliss Mrs Evered, Mr D Clarke.

Chairman: Mr Crane of Lakenheath

The meeting was opened with the singing of an hymn followed by a reading of the scriptures Gal. 5:5 and prayer.

The chairman made comments upon the scripture reading before the minutes of the previous meeting were read.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved and adopted as correct.

There were 3 matters raised: Mrs. Gurney wondered why Mr King was not present and Mrs Evered felt the church aught to know the contents of a letter sent from Mr. D Clarke to Mr King. Also Mrs Evered requested Mr D Clarke express his beliefs regarding baptism, sin and the commandments, since this affected her and the ordinance (communion).

Mr Crane said this could be dealt with in due course.

To Mrs Gurneys question as to why Mr King was not present; Mr Crane felt given time the matter would be resolved when the wound was healed and it would seem the letter written by Mr D. Clarke to Mr King had caused this reaction. Mrs Gurney expressed she too had suffered severely through the whole affair and why should Mr King be allowed to be excused; for surly this cannot go on.

Mr Crane mentioned that whilst Mr King feels free to preach elsewhere he does not feel free so at Bierton because he did not think it right that he should be 'looked over ' by the church at Bierton.

Miss G Ellis wanted to make sure that Mr King was not under the impression that the private letter sent by Mr D Clarke as in any way from the church. This Mr Crane expressed the letter was known to Mr King as a private letter from Mr D Clarke and for that reason it should remain private. Also the problem between Mr King and Mr Clarke should be resolved

between them.

Mrs Evered felt the letter should be read to the church but Mr Crane said that he did not think it necessary.

Mr. D Clarke expressed he would be willing to read the letter since Mr King has already read parts of it to the church already even though he had thought he had thought the matter had been resolved. Nevertheless since Mr. Crane himself had not known the contents it would be better first that he do so in private and if he felt it appropriate he could read it to the church. To which Mr. Crane expressed he did not think it necessary for this would not resolve anything.

At the same meeting I raised a question relating to ministers engaged to preach at Bierton and Mr Crane expressed: the church at Bierton was established in 1831 and had her own articles of faith, which were free grave articles. That the ministers we engaged must agree with the doctrines contained in the trust deed. But as a church they had now tied themselves, by their association with the Gospel Standard and because many our ministers did not actually agree with all the articles of this cause this should be considered.

It was mentioned by Miss G Elliss that Mr Hope had said we could have our existing ministers. To which Mr Crane replied he did not think Mr Hope would have been aware that we had so many who would not actually agree with the Gospel Standard articles.

Mr Crane said he felt it wrong morally to engage these ministers now, only to reject them at some future date when we could get help from the ministers of the Gospels Standard. This was a problem, which should be born in mind, and no doubt the secretary would seek to engage those ministers from Gospel Standard causes.

Mr Crane mentioned that the church aught to consider resolving a difficulty in the Sunday school of which there were two:

At the last church meeting the singing of the 169, by the children, was mentioned by Mr D Clarke. To which he asserted it was wrong and inconsistent for the church at Bierton to teach the children a hymn, which the hymn reads, (last verse)

Show me the scene in the garden, of bitter pain;
Show me the cross where my Saviour For me was slain-
Sad one for bright ones, So that they be
Stories of Jesus, Tell them to me.

In this hymn I maintained it was wrong to put these words into the children minds, for it cannot be said Jesus has died for them and was their Saviour until they be called by grace and are in possession saving faith.

Mr. Crane added that there were also many such hymns in that book (a Sunday School Strict Baptist Mission Book) which were not suitable being in conflict with the doctrinal position and practice set out in the churches trust deed. No proposal to resolve any such conflict was put forward.

Baptism, Sin And The Commandments

Regarding the questions of Mrs Evered relating to Baptism, sin and the commandments, Mr Crane expressed the doctrinal position and practice set out of the church in respect of these points which were all set out in the articles of faith. To which Mrs Evered asked Mr Crane to read from the scripture the answer the Lord Jesus gave to a young man seeking eternal life. Luke 18 18 and Mark 10.

The Lord Jesus answered saying he should keep the commandments and in spite of the fact this young man had kept them and knew the 10 commandments from his youth upwards; Mrs Evered was assorting we should likewise be governed by the same rule.

After Mr Crane commented upon these passages and

explained the scripture I requested I give answer to the question raised. My answer was as follows.

My answer

For The Record In References To Baptism:

Only those who are regenerated unto God, being born again were to be baptized upon the profession of their faith in Lord Jesus Christ. Only those who can testify of a saving work done in them could be baptized. That baptism did nothing to the subject did not remove sin nor give grace, for it was only a sign and symbol of something, which had already taken place. Namely they're union to Christ in his death and burial. Hence the old man is buried with him in baptism and to be reckoned dead with him, even to the law. Whilst the raising up out of the water (being by immersion) signified the life of the new man of grace and the believers union with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. By this death and resurrection the believer is dead with Christ to the law and so sin and now alive unto God under the rule of the Gospel. For the new man of grace is governed not by the 10 commandments commonly called the moral law or Law of Moses but by the law of Christ.

For the record regarding Sin

As for sin: every believer is not free from in experience and that even the sins of thought of them present, would be sufficient to damn them for all eternity. That sin was in everything we do, in thought deed and action, to which the believer should wage war against.

Sin was in the world before Moses gave the 10 commandments from Mount Sinai. This being evident by the scripture referring to every one of those sins mentioned in the law, except the breach of the Sabbath, in the book of Genesis. That the **Sabbath was broken soon** after it was enjoined upon Israel (Exodus 16,[27])

For The Record Regarding The Law Of Moses

As for the commandments given by Moses these were not the rule of life for the believer for the apostles never taught so. The Law being given to the Jews alone as a legal covenant and by which that law excluded the gentiles from the covenants of promise (Eph. 2 12).

The Apostles when considering this question of the Law of Moses in Acts 15 5 and Acts 15 29-21 gave no such commandments to the gentiles, that they were under it to keep it[1].

I said this point of doctrine is expressed is expressed in article 16 of the Gospel Standard Articles. That is the believers rule of life is the gospel and not the 10 commandments as Mrs Evered was contending.

See John Calvin: the fourth commandment institutes.

Reaction to the church meeting

I realized even more so that unless the mouths of those who contended for the rule of Moses are stopped the whole house will be subverted.

But sadly I knew not where to begin for some of these views expressed by Mrs Evered appeared to be rampant throughout the churches of the Gospel Standard and other Strict Baptist denominations. It should never be the case but I feel the lapsed position and legal spirit dominates a great many.

I concluded I could not remain amongst those who could not walk with me in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our liberty in Christ being more precious than any chapel building, friend, family, yea the whole world. I could see no other path for me to take; I must leave this church. Leprosy cannot be cursed except by the Lord.

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1 John Calvin. Institutes on the forth Commandment

15. Announcement of Registration

I announced to the few gathered at Bierton; Mrs Evered had ceased to appear when I took the prayer meeting or was preaching and so only Mrs. Gurney, Miss B. Ellis and Miss G Ellis were present when I announced my resignation in the first week in June 1984.

Mr Crane makes a special visit

Mr. Crane made a special visit to see me in order to discuss these affairs but we were not able to get much further than I aught to remain since there was no where else for me to go. For I would find the same if not worse in other churches or another denomination.

I Am Persuaded To Stay

Thinking Mr. Crane may be right I went to the next weeknight meeting intending to speak my mind. I asked Mr King if he would remain behind after the prayer meeting in order to hear what I had to say. Mrs Evered was not present and Mr King would not stay behind.

An address given

The following is a full account of the address given that evening and was delivered on Wednesday the 12th of June 1984 at 8: 15 p.m.

Commencing prayer

Our Dear Lord God thou hast promised to hear when thy people call upon thee; and we do call in Jesus' name. Please come to our aid for his sake we ask. Amen.

An Address Given

What I have to say tonight is very important, since the reaction, which must take place, will have far reaching effects. It is so important to you all that I am constrained to record (cassette) what lays heavily upon my mind, for the benefit of all concerned and may afterwards be used and freely available

by any who are concerned to maintain the cause of truth here at Bierton or elsewhere.

You may find what I say will move you to say, we have had enough. We do not understand the bible the way you do. We believe you are wrong and cannot walk with you any longer and it would be best if you depart and trouble us no more. If that were your hearts response I charge you before God and the elect angels to accept my resignation as already given me leave to do what I must.

Whatever other response we get my prayer and hope is that it will turn out for the good of all concerned and the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am certain of this that where God is at work the enemies of truth will speak evil of all the good which I hope will come as a result of these proceedings.

I apologize for the unorthodox, or un-traditional or the in etiquette manner I may have, but realize this: the Lord God is not bound or tied to work by the rules and traditions etiquette of man. I act as I do for we are at a crisis point. Satan has wrought provoke trouble and made the people of God ill at ease. It cannot go on. We must not let it go on. Enough is enough.

Dire straits require dire measures for correction. Epidemic, sickness, epidemic measures for rectification. Times of war are not as times of peace. Cheeseparing manors have not place in the battlefield, so I beg the pardon of any who judge me out of order.

I have spoken to Mr Crane and informed him of my recent announcement of Wednesday last, to resign from both the office of secretary and membership. He made a special visit to discuss with me my points of discord and reasons for my actions but we were unable to conclude or settle the matters I raised. Mr. Crane left with a note of caution to not act in haste, to maintain sound doctrine.

Now since my announcement to you and in much prayer, I am persuaded I must put forward to you all the forward and actions we must take, as a people professing godliness, given the constraints we all have and are faced with. By constrains I mean the following:

Our relative ages and abilities. Our current membership and geographic locations; of us all including Mr Crane. Our constitution set out in the trust deed and relationship with the Gospel Standard group of Strict Baptists.

Now I say way forward and actions for things cannot remain as they are. A remedy must be sought and that remedy which will do us good must come from the Lord, whom I trust we seek. Therefore we must appeal to the God of heaven, seek directions from the word of the Lord and put in action the principle taught us in the word. This must be the way and is only way.

Let me remind you of my announcement and reasons for action in May/ June of this year. I said then, I have two immediate matters of importance which effect the church at Bierton which must be dealt with:

My Resignation From Office As Secretary

My resignation from membership

Resignation from office of Secretary and membership

This being important and must be dealt with immediately for this month must be spent in engaging ministers for 1985. It being common practice for ministers to give their dates for preaching after the end of this month for the period January to December 1985.

This is of prime importance for the remaining members.

Resignation from office

This being a mere formality but having repercussions must be treated as soon as possible.

Resignation from membership

It has been necessary for me to examine my reasons for faith and religious practice and find my ever-increasing compromise inconsistent with those possessed of a true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the fear of God. This rendering my activities of preaching and teaching in the church at Bierton and elsewhere ineffectual having not the approbation of God though I have spoken truth in the fear of God in and amongst you, by me remaining silent and holding my peace for the sake of peace and unity, afterwards this has removed any base and ground for my faith towards God in this matter and hence I can no longer exercise faith expecting God to appear by the way of building again that which is fallen down, here at Bierton.

Areas of Compromise

(Secretaries responsibilities)

I) As secretary I have to engage only those ministers which church wish to engage. The church wish to engage. The church consisting effectively only of women. In this matter then the women exercise authority and power over the man, which the scripture forbids.

Example 1

Minister have been rejected for the wrong reasons

Ministers have on several occasions, by the will, wish and desire of the women: and in my view to the detriment, harm and hurt of the cause of truth. The rejection of these men being based upon the maxim peace must be kept at all cost, even at the expense of truth and righteousness. In this practice I will no longer continue. For example, Mr. C Lawrence, ministers at Harold. Mr. S. Scott – Pearson, minister at Maulden. Mr. Redhead, Mr. Payne and a Mr. Butler (of Chelmsford), were all rejected by the women voting.

This matter came to a head after my visit to the chapel at Winslow where I was engaged to preach. I was shocked

and surprise to find they had a women pastor and I was lead to believe they were to hold a united service that evening with the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.

After preaching in the morning the need to earnestly contend for the faith and for the scripture to be our only rule of faith and practice I felt constrained to write to the Deacon, Mr. Paul Duffet, and express my shock in respect of a women having such authority and the so called united service with the Roman Catholic church, thus making no distinction between the false church of Rome and the church of Christ. At this my conscience accused me in this way: but look at you at Bierton, the women are they that rule. How can you write to a man and justly point out the error and unbiblical practice of the Winslow Baptist church when you at Bierton are equally guilty of the same charges. Hence I was powerless to act, as I should do.

Example 2

Women Allow General Redemption Hymns

Contention for truth: My recent contention with the church regarding the singing Hymns by the children, is judged by the women as not an important point of concern. Yea rather, we know better. I maintain children must not be taught that Jesus died for them each one.

(Hymn 169). In this matter the church or women disagree and so the women have their say.

Example 3

The reverence of the building and the fear of man

I have plainly taught and openly rejected the notion he chapel is a Holy Place, to be reverenced and that the table is not in any way to be reverenced. Both matters caused contention. My belief being that unless these here is stamped out the Lord will not appear to repair the ruins at Bierton. Hence I cannot exercise faith nor hope in God to bless is as a people in church

while such notions go unchecked. On a number of occasions I have listened and heard our ministers refer to the House of God etc., Terms very loosely used. In each case I believe the ministers aught to be acquainted with the views of Mrs Evered for they would then be very careful not to use such loose expressions and rightly refer to the church of Christ as the house of God and not the building.

Hence I cannot expect nor exercise faith in God to appear for us unless these affairs are set in order.

Call of Abraham

I must obey God rather than man. I do not know what lies ahead for my family, and me but I must teach my friends and family the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ. To do so I must not remain in a compromised stifled position, for every man must give an account unto God and we must each act and walk according to the measure of faith given. I have a family to bring up and I must do free from false religion.

Whilst I am bound and tied by my membership here and the church pulls one way and that being the opposite way to the way I must walk, I am not free to walk by faith nor am I true to the " Faith ". Hence truth would cease to be a governing principle in my life.

My experience having lead me to the belief that the structure and government of the Bierton Church (like many church) inhibits truth: that truth is not able to flourish once the primary purpose of our activity is to protect our own authority, power and the Status Quo. Truth becomes subservient to this end and so ceases to be truth and exist in its own right and so cease to be true. Truth cannot then be said to have set free in this case.

Recommendation

At this point in the meeting. I went on to give my recommendation, but I would like to stop here and explain my

last concluding statement relating to truth. This I did mention to Mr. Crane but not to you at that meeting.

Cessation Of Truth

By this I mean truth is not a prime concern only in so far that it keeps or preserves the traditions and order, which you have become used to. Whether that order or way of life be according to the word of God or not.

For example:

If I speak of a Strict Baptist or the denomination in general say the Gospel Standard churches, I think a picture, which may present itself to many, may be as follows:

A particular stile of chapel building. The forms of worship were an opening hymn is sung followed by a reading from the scripture and prayer (20 minutes) then notices. A second hymn followed by preaching. A final hymn closing with a benediction (1 hours)

All ladies being expected to cover their heads in worship.

The preacher engaged to preach often having come a long distance and in membership of a similar Strict Baptist cause. His ministry being expectable provided: He is suitably dressed (generally a dark suit and tie). His speech is that familiar to the people, i.e. Uses phrases like free grace and denies free will and has a standard range of terms for speech. This being whether he be intelligible or nor provided what is said does not disturb the people and gives assurance that all is well, if not God will appear for them if they continue just as they are. If this were the case he will generally be asked to preach again the next year, and so the cause goes on.

The general picture one may gather is that to read the Gospel Standard and to support the other chapels at their anniversaries and follow the general trend of the majority of the chapel people, and then this is being faithful to the cause of Christ.

Because this is the common and hence normal conduct of the majority one might be lead and expected to think is the way spoken of in the scripture. That such order in the church is the way of life we should preserve and contend for. That any deviation from this is to fall away and become wide of the mark and so fallen from truth. Hence the people gear themselves up to serve this way of life. To promote it. It becomes the habitual norm, a way we expect our children to follow. That the grace of God tempers us to serve this way for after all it is the way, the truth and the life.

Now when this happens I say the people like Samson have their eyes gouged you and are made to tread the mill.

The evidence I have to support my assertions that truth ceases to be truth for such a people is as follows:

When I charged the church at Bierton, which is a Strict and Particular Baptist, Gospel Standard cause with teaching general redemption or suffering it to be taught by means of the hymns or otherwise, the church were offended and not at all repentant. It appears to me the general consensus of opinion is what can be wrong in using the phrases, when speaking to the children, the Lord Jesus has died for them each one and the Lord Jesus loves them all?

It is also argued because the scripture uses the phrases all the world etc. Then we cannot be wrong in this matter of using hymns expressing redemption for all, even though we know it cannot mean all.

I say here truth does not govern the people but rather an unguarded sentiment for the children and a pattern, which has been adopted over period of years. If the people cannot see the error here then they have no eyes to see in this matter.

The same may be said over the affair of the Holy Table and the chapel building. I maintain truth has not been the guiding principle in the minds of the people but rather a carnal view and long-term acceptance of untrue sentiments relating

to a place of worship and the church of Christ. That some of our ministers are responsible for using loose phrases of speech in this matter and Satan has used this to seduce people. My question is this: Do the people love the chapel more than the truth? I know it brings back memories etc. But will we forsake it for truth? If not seduction has taken place and so truth ceases to be a prime mover in our lives. Just as the church of Rome relies upon its historic background also tradition and structure and has come to view the primary purposes for its existence is to extend its territory, preserve its identity and use all means to maintain its cause believing it peruses a God honouring and God blessed end. Seeks to resolve difficulties by compromising truth for peace sake, such a church has left the foundation upon which the church of Christ is built. The end thereof is death.

How then can I be at peace or rest where this takes place? I seek a city whose builder and maker is God, not a chapel or people that will not forsake all for Christ yea even the chapel, family and life long friends. I think in the whole affair we are learning the truth, by experience, of what the Lord Jesus said he came not to bring peace to the earth but a sword, that they that shall be our enemies shall be they of our own households.

Conclusion

I concluded by giving a recommendation that Gwen should act as secretary and by no means Mrs Evered. I commended you to God and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

Further explained, I would write to the churches where I was engaged to preach to avoid them embarrassment for they could not have me preach being out of membership with you or any one.

Where Does This Leave Us?

The question you should now ask is where does this leave us and what are we to do?

During my conversation with Mr Crane I expressed my dilemma in that as secretary I was now due correspond with those minister were to engage to preach next year and due to the recent controversies being always upon mind I had a draft of a letter that I had prepared to send to all our ministers next year. But I thought surely I have enough to do in tending to my family and setting my own home in order, let alone any church or recommendation to other ministers and felt would it be better left and save all the agonies of such a problem. Let me read you the draft

Letter Sent To All Our Visiting Ministers

Some of our ministers have referred frequently to the chapel at Bierton as the 'House of God', both in their preaching and in prayer. The result being to allow some our here to court notions that the chapel building is where God dwells and is a ' Holy Sanctuary'. That the communion table and vestry are all ' Holy vessels' unto God. That they are to be reverenced.

As a member and being called to preach I have had cause to consider this matter in my preaching and at the church meetings. I have taught that the church of the living God is the ' House of God ', that God does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 17 34). That all the Old Testament shadows are all fulfilled in Christ and his church. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the true tabernacle of God. That the union of the divine nature at the incarnation constitutes the true unique temple of God. Further to this according to the promise the whole church, being united to Christ at regeneration and effectual calling, these are they are in dwelt if God the Holy Ghost. (Rev 21 3, I Tim. 3 15, John 4 33, John 2 19-21, I Cor. 3 16.)

Some have opposed me in this matter and resisted

the truth. I would appreciate you bare this in mind should you ever refer to the 'House of God' when preaching to the congregation gathered at Bierton.

Yours in concern for the truth of Christ,
David Clarke 1984

Possible Effects Of Such A Letter

I asked Mr. Crane what he thought of such a letter and he expressed that it may have the following repercussions:

The ministers may think you are criticizing him personally. But Mr. Crane said, the whole affair had caused him to consider such phrases because he himself had used the terms and was now very careful himself.

The minister may react and say, whom do I think I am to write in such a way. But surely that would be wrong and he could see the concern expressed. He may fell there is nothing wrong with the letter and take thought of the matter as requested

Mr. Crane thought there was nothing wrong with the letter and it would be in order to send it.

Now where does this leave us?

Mr. Crane expressed to me he knew to some degree the minds of the church and that the church did not wish any leave because we were so few.

Let me say this, neither do I wish to leave because the whole affair would be very painful.

I have children to consider and also my wife etc. And I realize should I leave you there must come a strain of relationship, not only with us in the village but also throughout the churches. I could not join any other church without them judging this affair amongst us. Nor could I be involved in any other church, being not in membership anywhere and so this would affect family and myself. I would be looked upon with

suspicion and so to bring my family up amongst them that fear God would prove difficult. I think possibly I would have to remain alone. But if that is the path I am to go and that is the way ordained. Of God for me then by the grace of God I shall take it. But I do not welcome that path with open arms nevertheless for the sake of truth I may have to take and walk that path.

What are the alternatives? What can we do? How can we resolve the problem?

Let me say first of all there is a great question mark raised in mind regarding Mr King.

After my letter to him (in May 1983, see chapter) Mr King has relinquished his responsibilities of church membership.

He will not attend the church meetings and has declined any request to partake in the meetings except the prayer meeting.

Now why is this? Am I the cause of this evil? Have I acted with an evil mind in this matter? What am I to do? Who will give me good council?

The church have grieved that Mr King takes leave of this church responsibilities and preaches in other churches. Mr King has expressed his health is not too good and has a nervous complaint and no doubt my letter and its contents has been no means helpful to him. But what should I have done in light of the circumstances?

The church does not understand nor do they agree with my actions of beliefs, but they still say why doesn't Mr King and I get on together? The church want, or it appears, my services as being the only male member but it appears not the doctrines I preach and defend.

Oh! That I could find good council. My experience is such that I believe I am being proved (tried) and the question being asked me is, ' Am I faithful servant of Jesus Christ or

no? ‘ I tend to feel that those onlookers would say’ lay down your weapons of war and be at peace. What you are doing is not good. Do you really think these affairs are important? Should not love for these people prevail? How can you do this to these ladies? What will become of them and what will become of you and your family?

Conscience Speaks

I have do what any faithful Christian would do in light of the circumstances. In this matter I look to the Lord God to vindicate my works.

Mrs Evered refuses to attend meeting

This woman will not attend the weeknight meetings if I take neither them nor the communion service if I am officiating. This stemming from my stand against her insisting I reverence the communion table, the building and vestry. It has now developed into views in respect of the Law and the Gospel.

What Should I Do?

In both cases I believe Mr King and Mrs Evered are wrong and out of order as church members but had it not been for my contending for the truth of the gospel I would never have met nor caused these ills and trouble. Some people say it is my manner which upsets etc.

My views regarding disorderly members

I believe both Mr King and Mrs Evered should be brought under the discipline of the church, for this is the correct procedure. However, this does not seem to be the view of the church so what should I do?

Am I he that troubleth Israel? Oh! That help should be given. May the Lord Jesus Christ appear to be our saviour and cause us to be obedient to him and may his grace be sufficient for us.

If I am to stay, then may we set in order those things,

which are out of order, and I'm sure that is what you all want.

May I then outline the areas that are out of order?

The relationship between Mr King and myself

Matters relating to Mrs. Evered

In both these matters, if I am to remain, we must apply the scriptural principles and follow the pattern give of God to put them right. Mr. Crane and I must work together. What must be done must be done. Any church discipline must be enforced.

Mrs Evered recent question relating to the Law and the Gospel must be opposed the Gospel Standard articles (16) and our own confession of faith. She maintains the Law of Evered is the rule of life for the believer. That the Lord Jesus directs believers to use it as a pattern for their conduct.

In this matter she errs and sadly to say many do. But when you joined the Gospel Standard cause I wrote to you expressing my agreement with article 16 of the Gospel Standard articles.

Endorsement Bierton Becoming Gospel Standard

Here is the letter, which I wrote to the church dated The 12th of February 1981, and my address was Wigston Magna, Leicestershire.

Dear Mr Evered,

Thank you for your letter dated the 24th of January 1981,informing me of the outcome of the recent church meeting. May I confirm my approval and desire to help the cause at Bierton, been though my present circumstances are not helpful.

I believe the **Gospel Standard cause are a means by which God is preserving his truth in the world**; in particular the articles of faith which treat our relationship to the Law as believers, particular redemption and the declaration of the

gospel as opposed to offering the gospel. All doctrines, which the majority of churches of our day deny. I believe also that a right understanding of these truths is the means of preserving a true godly fear and reverence in our worship of God. (As has been in the past and can be seen by looking at the history of former Gospel Standards before this century).

The Law is not the Believers Rule of Conduct

If the Law were the believer's rule then the Sabbath day being the 7th day of the week must be observed according to the Law. It is precisely these articles of faith, which distinguishes the Particular Baptists such as J.C Philpot, of the last century (See the Gospel Standard 1861 where he argues the case with a Presbyterian minister). Also William Gadsby's Works, Vol. I page also his ' the perfect law of liberty'. Also John Bunyan concerning the 7th day Sabbath where he denies the Sabbath is moral. Also Dr. J Gill, in his ' Body of Divinity ' under; the day of worship for the Christian'. Also read Huntington's works, ' 40 Strips for Satan save one'. His writing are full of the doctrine of the Christians liberty. The Christian is neither under Evered rod nor rule; we are saved from that bondage. (See also J. Calvin or the Fourth commandment in ' the institutes!) I know the present day Strict Baptist have got the Sabbath and the first day of the week mixed up and wrongly express the biblical position in there zeal for righteousness which needs to be addressed inn the next generation of men who stand for Christ.

Gospel Standard Articles

Now here is the Gospel Standard Article of faith which I believe to be true and which as a Gospel Standard Church you recently affirmed was you position:

XVI) We believe the believer's rule of life is the gospel and not the 'Moral Law' issued upon Mount Sinai, which has no glory in it by reason of the glory, which excelleth it, that

is the gospel. (See the article and scripture reference your selves).

Now in this matter Mrs Evered aught not to meddle with things to high for her, however, I know very few men amongst the Gospel Standard today have clear understanding of these matters. Nevertheless they have responsibilities to do so since they have all subscribed to them.

A Course Of Action

Since this is the case what course of action must I take? On my part, to walk honestly in and amongst the churches, I know where I stand doctrinally in respect of these issues and teach the same but I find divisions and people hold other opinions even amongst they that have professed to believe these articles when joining their respective churches. In one church I defended another of these articles, article 26, where we deny duty faith and duty repentance, I was criticized by a minister and some of their members because it would seem they opposed me. We also have men who come to preach here at Bierton that are in Gospel Standard causes who deny this article 26 and others. (Mr. P Rowland's and Mr. H Sayers)

How Does This Concern Us

You may say how does this concern us. I say in every way it should because you solemnly subscribed to the Gospel Standard Articles when you joined in 1981. As a church we have responsibilities.

Here is that letter from Mrs Evered informing me of this act of the church:

Dear David,

Just a line to let you know the result of our church meeting of the 16th of January 1981. It was decided (taken by ballot) unanimously that we join the Gospel Standard causes. It was a wonderful meeting. I am sure led by the Holy Spirit. Mr. Hope (chairman) kindly consented to deal with the

correspondence. Etc.

Signed

Mrs. G Evered, Hon. Sec.

I replied to this letter as you know and I have already referred to it. Mr Sayers and Mr Rowland agree and subscribe to our articles set out in our trust deed 1831 but not the Gospel Standard articles. As you know, as a Gospel Standard cause we are required to not have them preach, since they have actually deny and do not accept the Gospel Standard Articles. This is not my opinion but what we agreed to when becoming a Gospel Standard cause.

Solution

This matter needs to be resolved if we are to walk honestly as a church.

Two alternatives

Cease to be a Gospel Standard cause and then we don't have to answer to others.

Prepare a written statement expressing the doctrinal beliefs of this of this church in respect of the disputed articles and then submit them to our visiting ministers and the same to the Gospel Standard committee.

Ensure visiting ministers do not teach contrary to the doctrines we hold to and invite those ministers who we feel in conscience to invite. That the secretary be given leave to invite ministers who agree with our confession. We have already spoken in the past about Open and Strict Communion Baptists. That matter should be left with the governing men of the church.

My preference

I would suggest to you that we adopt the second alternative.

That is so to say we prepare a written statement as to

our own position, it would be helpful for the cause of truth and myself. I say this because I believe what was intended by the original formation of these articles of the Gospel Standard are in accordance with the word of God. But in our day, and I must speak there are very few men that have a clear understanding of these disputed doctrines. When I ask here and there they have their own views and there seems, as there are none who can stand and say this is where we stand. They seem to follow one another.

My recommendation would be to write your own statement of belief in respect of the disputed articles.

The Disputed Articles

The one already mentioned in respect of the Law and Gospel and article 26. We have a minister coming (Mr. H Sayers) who denies this article. It reads: we deny faith and duty repentance. I must read it to you because it concern us all and for the benefit of any ministers who hears this recording. These terms signify that it is mans duty to spiritually savingly repent and believe. We also deny that there is any capability in man by nature to do any spiritual good whatever, so that we reject the doctrine that man in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God.

This articles cause controversy because it is badly written. This is how it should be rendered (having considered the objections against it):

My Version Of Articles 26

I wrote this when vexed in spirit and was to preach on this subject we deny duty faith and duty repentance terms which signify it is every mans duty to live by faith upon the benefits and merits of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we reject the doctrine and practice of calling upon man whilst in a state of nature to believe in or turn to God in this saving way. For these graces and blessings are wrought in the elect

by the Spirit of God according to the terms of the Covenant of Grace and are not legal duties. But we believe all me in a state of nature should repent of their ungodly deeds and believe the gospel report concerning Jesus Christ the Lord. Worship him as preaching all men must be exhorted to these duties. (Act 17 [30,] Acts 8 [22,] Acts 26 [20)]. By this article we confirm our belief there is no spiritual power or good whatever in the natural man to please God.

I say this is a better rendering and would solve some of the difficulties, which have been cause, these past 100 years.

Articles 31 34

This reads, we believe that it would be unsafe; from the brief records we have of the way in which the apostles, under the immediate direction of the Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely different circumstances. And we further believe that the assumption that others have been inspired as the apostles were has led to grossest amongst both Romanist and professed Protestants therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation calling upon them to saintly repent, believe and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and, on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption.

34 we believe that any such expression as to convey to the hearers the belief that they posses a certain power to flee to Christ, while in an unregenerate state, so that unless they do thus close with Christ, etc., They shall perish, are untrue, and must, therefore be rejected. And we further believe that we have no scripture warrant taking the exhortation in the Old Testament intended for the Jews in national covenant with God, and apply them in a spiritual and saving sense to

unregenerate men.

Need for clarification

I say these needs to be clarified for the benefit of our generation.

We have lost the men that fully understood and will teach these things from first principles. We have lost them I say. But I believe the substance of what is being said here is correct but badly treated. It needs to be clarified in light of the history of the Added Articles. Articles 34, I agree with and must be taught for this also deals with the whole relationship between the Law and Gospel. The Jews were under the law in covenant. Therefore you cannot apply the exhortations for them to live as a people separated and have natural blessings and bring them to a gospel sense to unconverted gentiles and so on. This must be taught and needs to be explained. We aught to do so as a church for the benefit of the next generation: I need to know where you stand, where the so-called committee stands. I believe many of the men do not fully understand themselves. Let them speak if they can.

Defend the truth I must!

Suggestions

So I suggest we adopt the latter alternative

Let me press on

I have two more points: -

The singing of the hymns by the children, such as you have mentioned.

This has grieved you, it has me and I am sorry if I have caused you undue hardship or concern. If Author were here I would apologies to him if I have offended him wrongly and embrace him in the bonds of Gospel love.

The Hymn 169 reads:

Show me the scene in the garden of bitter pain
And of the cross where my saviour for me was slain.

Sad ones for bright ones so that be stories of
Jesus tells them to me.

I maintain you mist not put these words in the children's mouths for in the end it may turn out to their confusion they are not the children of God at all.

Another Hymn: I do not want to pick things to pieces; it's a dreadful task.

Hymn 108.

God loves the little children

.

We know the Lord Jesus came into the world to save his elect who are styled as little children. The love of God knows no change these hymns are teaching Arminianism. It cannot go on. They deny the sovereign free grace and love of God to his elect. You must be selective when choosing hymns for the children. If you cannot then let us produce a Sunday school hymnbook, which is according to our confession of faith.

Now I am not seeking to control any one. Perhaps Mr. Crane could speak to the Sunday school teachers including Mrs. Watson regarding this matter, stating our doctrinal position. Just as I suggest with our ministers. We have a responsibility.

Now My Last Point

I have mentioned in the past perhaps we aught to have occasional meetings; special meetings. Which are important currently in our day. For instance I mentioned during the time the Pope was to visit Britain that we should hold the meeting, at the chapel, inviting a minister or such to give us some instruction as believers as to our responsibilities. How we are to act during this time and climate and time of history in which we live. I also suggested; by the way, you remember the church declined my request to use the chapel building for such a meeting, or the Sunday school room. That it would

be all right to hold such a meeting in the hall down the road but not the chapel. The words were, we' have some Roman Catholic friends and we would not want to offend them. Mr King said this. (I subsequently held a meeting at my home and asked the National organizer of the British Council of Protestant Christian Churches to give and Address; the Rev. G Ferguson).

I also mentioned at a later date lecture concerning the Reformation.

We perhaps aught to have them and invite men such as Mr. G. Ashdown of the Protestant Alliance, who could faithfully teach the History of reformation. We perhaps could invite the local churches and churches from a distance. They need to be taught these things. Our children are not taught these things in the schools now. At on time, in the protestant school, when the Church of England had religious education these things was taught in schools. They are no longer taught; other religions are being taught.

We as a people that fear the living God, knowing history, must teach our children. Put it to the church, that was a reasonable request and part of our duty. What happened? It was asked, would the trustees be in favour? Dare we do this; no other churches are doing this.

The Church Aught To Be A Guide To Other

No dear friends we are living in server times and as a church we should be awake. The church aught to be guided by those that see the times and know the times and read the times.

Let me give you an illustration: I have spoken to you a half year ago about such things now look what appears in print.

Britain Protestant face a sell out (I do not think this is Christian group writing)

Britain Protestants are likely to face a major test of their

loyalty and faith during the next four years.

Reason

A decision by the Church of England to unite with the Roman Catholic Church and to restore Papal authority once more in England.

Such move however would have far reaching consequences both in the United Kingdom and the Monarchy. For union with Rome will mean constitutional changes involving the Bill of Rights and the Acts of Settlement

Evidences that the English and Roman Churches will close an agreement on unity was made clear last February when a joint statement of the two churches announced that it they were re-united the Pope at the time would be Universal Primate.

The Activity Of Ecumenicalism

At the present time our Monarch on the throne has sworn allegiance to the Protestant faith.

The mechanisms and machinery, which the hierarchy and officials of the Church of Rome are working behind the scene to cause our Queen to abdicate from the throne and Prince Charles to ascend. He will not be required to give his allegiance to the Protestant faith, for the coronation oath will be so dealings going on. How do I know? I read the scripture and see history unfold and look at the books. We see the unfolding World church (Anti – Christian) before the coming of the Son of God. And where will she be the church? In the wilderness!

Now where are our ministers that tell us these things? Let them that see speak from the housetops those things that are seen. Let them be faithful to the people. If our ministers do not do it from the Gospel Standard and other Strict Baptist ministers, then where are they? I must speak what God has given me to speak. And I say let them see guided them that cannot see.

Measure of light with that comes responsibility

I believe I have a measure of light given. Where does it come from?

The grace of God. Sinful man! Who deserves it? Look at my friends in Aylesbury: drug takers, addicted, and broken homes, marriages failed. Why did God select me from these people? The grace of God makes man to differ, nothing more. There is no boasting here. I had no education. The grace of God gives wisdom. All by free grace, all Christ Jesus. Them that see should guide.

I suggest then in conjunction with Mr. Crane we should hold such meeting without seeking for permission of the whole church, which cannot see. This should be attended too. It must be attended too. It aught to be put right.

Conclusion

I have said a lot. My position to the church is as follows:

If you can go along with my recommendation and they are acceptable then let us call upon the name of the Lord that he appear for us and continue according to the Word of the Lord.

If you find you do not agree with my doctrine and are opposed to my suggestions then give me leave to go and free me of my responsibilities to go where the Lord I trust will direct me.

Please loan this tape to any you feel can give you direction. You have permission. I shall ask King to listen and Mrs. Evered. Make your decision.

After you have discussed these matters amongst your selves, at our next church meeting I want you to tell me what you would have me do.

Now I have said an awful lot, at times like these we know our absolute dependence upon the Lord God. But I know this: I believe this to be true; if there be but one believer or two, thousands are put to flight as God uses them for the

furtherance of the Gospel.

Will you walk with me, or do I walk alone?

I would ask you please consider this matter Please talk it amongst your selves. You know me. I may seem unapproachable but please believe me I try to be. Could I give my all for you? I have a family to bring up. I have a love for you folk here.

My desire is that the truth of the Lord Jesus should be preserved here.

The churches is Aylesbury do not see. They need to be enlightened.

If God will appear for us then may we be a light to the gentiles around.

But we must talk according to the bible, be governed by the gospel ordinances and according to the rule and pattern set for the churches. I would ask you then; we have a church meeting shortly, I think it is July. In the mean time I will do my best to engage our ministers for you whilst in membership I will discharge my responsibilities, I must do so. I have a concern for you. I would not go to this extreme; I would not do this if I did not have concern for you.

Can we then close and may God have the glory.

Amen.

Address ignored by Mr King and Mrs Evered

I gave a tape recording of my address given to the church Both To Mr King And Mrs Evered.

Recorded Cassette Abhorrent To Mrs Evered

Mr King said he would not listen to a tape recording nor read any letter sent from me and there was ‘one above who knows all’.

Mrs Evered also returned the tape enclosing a letter

expressing she would not listen to the tape recording; the following is a copy of her letter:

Dear David

19th June 1984

I return the cassette. I have not heard it.

It is abhorrent to me that the business of the church should be mechanically recorded and that on a cassette. There should have been a proper church meeting, as all things should be done dealt with in order and confidential.

'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls (Jer. 6 6). ' Touch not, taste not; handle not (Col.. 2 13).

'And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds. That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12 2).

To him be the glory

Your sincerely,
Gladys Evered

My Response To Mrs Evered Objections

At the time I groaned within, as it was such a serious error. My wife however saw the funny side as the matter and found it laughable. Mrs Evered had no idea of the spirituality of gospel truth and goes to show that unless a person be born again they cannot see, let alone enter, into the kingdom of God. At that time it almost appeared as though a hand was writing on the wall **אנמ, אנמ, לקת, ויסרפו**

Mene, Mene, Tekel u-Pharsin.

I wondered how many people in our churches were

like this? What had happened? How could it happen?

Mr Cranes Response

I gave a copy of the tape recording to Mr Crane and he replied very quickly by means of a letter, which reads as follows:

Dear David,

You did say a lot. The age in which we live is full of deception. Since the time of Jesus on the earth, vital religion has never been confined to just one nation, yet England without a doubt has been greatly favoured. The candle was lit in this country and has burned very brightly, whether it is removed, we cannot tell. Was it ' play the man Ridley for we shall light a candle in England this day which shall never be put out? We should not be complacent to see our Protestant heritage taken away by the craft of men we do need a voice to sound an alarm. But in the last days shall be find faith on the earth? Decline, falling way, love of many gone cold etc., Set forth the last days, except the Lord revive the work in the midst of the years. We could say time would have been terminated many times. But his patience is lengthened out. The end could have come with Adam, Noah the last war. But the Lord has brought a reviving. It will not always be so, there will be an end and then there will probably be very few faithful left on the earth. The Romeward movement is ancient. It has to do with mans natural religious instinct, which needs something. Rome is fallen but she is religious, and how amazing, has lasted centuries. Unenlightened religious aspirations go towards Rome, but also all that is not of God is sin, religious sin, Strict Baptists notions or other denominational notions, which are not of God, are sin. It is possible to have an idol Christ, not known in the power. Only the Spirit of God enlightens and leads to Christ the new and living way. The perfect law of liberty. Doubtless a voice in needed in the nation. Similar to Luther, Wickliffe and all the reformers.

We do not need another reformation, only the Spirit of God to enlighten, kings, Queens, Prime ministers etc., All across the nation. We wonder if the Lord will rise up such a voice, perhaps has already done so, doing so. We fell impatient, not able to reach the people, the media all against truth. Yet God is able in an instant to show a man, Archbishop, the truth, just as Saul of Tarsus. Done very quickly and effectively. Not all the C & E is Romeward, but they are not very clear on vital matters, not much free grace about, much free will, and much lightness. Always error will run opposite to truth, it always has done so, Dathan and Abiram for instance with the strange fire (if my memory serves me right). We need the Lord to still appear in Israel, she is a little people, a remnant, surrounded by enemies. Sometimes she enjoys a measure of prosperity and liberty, at other ties struggling and the lamp almost put out, then revived again. The Lord in old days rose up Judges over the people, then they fought and were brought off victorious. We must see it all in a spiritual light. History finds the church waxing and waning. We may never have persecution again, but we do fear a spiritual wildness.

We are not to fight with our hands. But we may loose all with our lethargy. The Lord may see our sleeping and turn from us both as little churches and nationally. A voice in the midst may be the Lords way to keep the candle with us. We do believe in election and the will of God, nonetheless, Hezekiah prayed and the sickness departed and 15 years was added, we cannot understand these things, for God has said thou shalt surely die, but of course he did not say when he should die, it was a warning and it was heeded and the Lord revived him. We are to go to God with impossibilities and wait for God to work miracles. Such prayer is hard work.

David if God has raised you up to preach and has given you clear views of his will and His word then it is because there is a need. You should not complain when you

go from place to place when they argue with you and find fault with what you say. Surely you are given light for the purpose that they might see light. You want to go and shed your light where there is light already, but God has prepared you to shed light where they do not have light, the fact that they are established Churches has nothing to do with it. We all come to truth gradually, some more quickly than others, many over very many years Learn of me (Mat). Don't find fault with the people because they are full error, preach the truth with a desire that they might come to the truth as you have been shown it. Do not presume that any of them know very much, don't say you aught to have known better at your age in your capacity as a member or even as a Deacon. We all need teaching even you. Eternity will be needed to explore the love of God in Christ Jesus. Go on to preach faithfully, feelingly, tenderly, lovingly. Do not shout at a people; reason with them, like Paul at his trial. But remember to some it will be life unto life and to others death. Leave the issue with God. If like the Jews they reject you, then shake off the dust from off your shoes and say, nevertheless the gospel has come nigh you. Not all ministers have the same commission. Some have a note of warning, others of comfort. Not all have good delivery, some may seem to be boring, and we should strive to be clear and interesting, yet faithful. It might be better to have at Bierton reading services when suitable ministers cannot be procured. Note all would be acceptable to you. I fully accept your views on doctrine. There is a need for clear teaching but doctrine in itself is insufficient. Like dry bones it needs round it the flesh of experience.

The articles of the G. S. are only over you association with that body. However the articles of the Bierton church are practically the same. They are the same in essence. The added articles, so called, are words of caution not statements of faith. Statements of faith are important. As words of caution,

written in an age of much schism and argument, they were useful. Has the age of schism departed. The same errors are in man now as the. However, they can never bind the spirit taught and moved preacher, who speaks as prompted by God. I cannot see any controversy in the article concerning duty faith etc. I do not see any need to re-write this article. To me it is quite clear. What God does in us becomes our articles of faith. These have been set in a clear form but enlightened men we have not necessarily learned them by experience. You should invite men to preach at Bierton agreeable to the articles of faith. You are a Strict Baptist church, you believe in particular redemption, and therefore you should invite men with similar views. To do otherwise would deny and compromise your position. Strict communion also surely says we believe that God has chosen us and saved us in His Son Jesus, which makes you a separate people, baptized in accordance with scripture. How can you therefore have men to minister the ordinance that see otherwise? These men like Huntington we know were good gracious men, but your light enables you to go a little further perhaps than they.

You David would probably like to minister at Bierton every week. Is this God will? You cannot force it neither against the wishes of the people or against the will of God. If God requires you at Bierton, say as their pastor, then God will do it for you and for his own will. In his own time. But you must wait for it. If the vision tarry wait for it.

Church Discipline

If members fail to attend the ordinances they should fall under the censure of the church. However, you as secretary have appointed yourself to many first Lords days, not I am sure for selfish reasons but because you could not fill them otherwise. You could have the ordinance another week though. There is enmity between you and some members. If by your sharp words you have injured them, wait for the Lord to heal.

The light of some members may as yet be very dim. Do not censure them for that. They can only have light when God give it. We can however censure for setting that the members be circulated with the 'Bierton' articles of faith and that at our next meeting. The secretary should be authorized to engage any such minister on any such minister on any Lords day. Members failing to attend worship because of their dislike could fall under the censure of the church.

I suggest that each minister be circulated with Bierton articles.

The C of E articles re relics might be useful in the book also! Regarding lectures etc. Are a great interest to our natural minds. They do not always benefit the soul. I am not against them. Books on the subject of Protestant history are numerous and very profitable however the purpose of a church meeting together is to hear about ' Jesus'. Our language aught to be 'Saw ye Him whom my soul Loveth'. Other activities are but side shows to the real purpose.

I have scribbled a few notes and missed out much I did scribble. Perhaps have missed the vital point. Write and ask for more if you need it.

Regarding the Sunday school hymnbook. Yes you do need a new one. Have you read the Young People Hymnal?

We need truth in the school as well as in the chapel. A thin wedge eventually becomes a thick one.

PAUL (Crane)

I Seek Further Help

Having met Mr John Metcalfe from Tyler's Green I sought council and help and after consultation I decided I had but one option if I was to maintain a constant witness against the errors I had faced at Bierton and elsewhere.

I telephoned Mr Crane and explained my position and

said I would write immediately. From Mr Crane letter I had seen that the matter of "duty faith" or "duty repentance" was not considered a problem at Bierton or elsewhere. Unlike myself who had found it necessary to teach the truth in respect of these doctrines from first principles and give a clear definitive statement to such terms in order to clear the ambiguity of the Gospel Standard articles 26 and 31. I also considered that in respect of contending against the ecumenical and anti-Reformation movement in our district we were not in agreement. I did not think lectures upon the reformation were sideshows to the gospel. However I was not prepared to take Mr Crane up on these issues since he had enough to cope with as it was.

Letter Of Resignation Sent To Mr Crane:

Dear Paul,

26th June 1984

Thank you for the reply and prompt attention given to my speech, which I gave at the Bierton chapel on the first Wednesday in June. I gave a copy of the tape recording to Mr King but he would not listen to it nor receive a letter from me.

Mrs Evered also had a copy but likewise she would not listen to what I had to say to the church. The following is a copy of her letter dated the 19th June: (see the letter on page 119)

Now finding consolation and instruction from the scriptures such as 2 Tim 2 20-21 and Psalm 68 6. I am constrained to withdraw from membership with the churches at Bierton. My conscience no longer gives me leave to remain.

I have said enough already regarding the disorder amongst us; I see no benefit to reiterate what has been spoken. I do not believe my remaining among you is right for my family nor me. I can see no prosperity for the people of God at Bierton unless attendance is given to the things mentioned. I

will forward a written copy of what is recorded on the cassette.

Since I cut myself off from the church I exclude myself from the privileges of membership and will accordingly write to the churches where I am engaged to preach and ask leave to withdraw from such preaching engagements in order to avoid them embarrassment.

For those who have found me a friend; I hope this causes no breach in friendship. It simply means I am no longer lied by church membership to you and am free to do what I must do. Nevertheless you are tied by the rules of the society to do what you must.

I must and can only walk by the word of God and wage war against the enemies of the gospel with the weapons given me. As with David I cannot use the armour of Saul for I have not proved it. But in the name of the Lord God of Israel I shall fight the fight of faith. By this step of faith and successive steps I believe God will appear for my good and the good of the church of Christ universal.

Yours very sincerely,
David Clarke.

Response To My Letter

Mr Crane telephoned me and asked if I was sure in my mind what I was doing. He had hoped he could have thrown the letter away and so ignores it. I explained he could not and must act its contents.

I reminded him that I had not engaged any minister for the Bierton church and that week was the customary week for letters to be sent to engage ministers to preach for the year 1985. Mr. Crane said that was not a prime concern for if God intended the church to have ministers for that year then they shall have them even if they are not contacted until late December of this year. (I did not like that statement nor

way of thinking for it be like saying if God wished a man be clothed and warm then he shall be provided for; hence I need got give those things needful).

I had seceded from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist church, which was founded in 1831 and became a Gospel Standard cause in 1981. My date of secession being the 26th June 1984.

16. I Seek A City

(Heb.. II[10])

If what is written here is of any benefit to the children of God scattered abroad, may it be so used to help them be gathered unto Christ Jesus our Lord.

My Hopes And Desires

Excuse all that is not spiritual and if any feel they may be of help to me and mine in our pilgrimage please feel free to communicate.

> ' I seek a city whose builder and maker
> Is God' (Heb.. II[10])" and a people of like
> Mind that we may have mutual help, reproof
> For correction unto edification and in
> Righteousness and mutual consolation in
> Christ Jesus our Lord. Ps 20 [2].
> Grace be to you and peace from God the father
> and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave
> Himself for our sins; that he might deliver us
> From this present evil world, according to the
> Will of God and our father:
> To who is glory forever and ever Amen.
> Gal. I [3-5] .

Conclusion To The Whole Matter

My secession from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church was not a separation from any other Church. The Bierton Church was a Gospel Standard cause and according to our rules I cannot cease to be a member. It is the Church alone who severs membership by giving an honourable or dishonourable discharge. The Church at Bierton could have severed my membership, along with Mrs Clarke and Mr King, but the church did not do so and so we are still members. This is according to our rule 22, which deals with Church membership. Mr Crane wished me to change my mind and return to full communion, as I was not found wanting in any way by doctrine, conducts or practice.

Whilst at the Bierton Church I maintained and contended for the truths of Sovereign grace, as outlined in the **Bierton Article of Religion** stated in the trust deed 1981 and signed by Mr Warburton and also the **Gospel Standard Articles of Religion**. It was the remaining members of the Bierton Church who forsake their heritage not me. Only repentance and a turning again to those truths mentioned will put the matter right.

I write this way for the generation to come. Unless we remain faithful to the truths of God and build a house, as Jesus said according to his word, then the house we build will tumble and fall and the fall of such a house will be great.

Luke 6. 49 And the ruin of that house was great.

If I can be of any help to any please call me.
David Clarke

17. Bierton Articles of Religion of 1831

These are the articles I solemnly subscribed to when I joined the church at Bierton, on the 8th of January 1976, and which I strove to maintain. Knowing also covenants must not be broken nor the terms added to once made Gal. 3 15. Also covenant breaking is a crime against God Rom I 31):

These article I transcribed from the original trust deed held by Miss Bertha Ellis. The son of John Warburton from Trowbridge signed the document.

The Articles Are As Follows:

And whereas certain persons meet together and with the blessing of God will continue to meet together for the purpose of divine worship at a chapel or place of worship adjoining the said hereditament and called the Bierton Baptist Chapel and the said persons call them selves "The Society of Particular Baptists" and such persons are herein after meant and referred to by the expression of "The Church" and the said persons believe and pledge themselves to the promulgation and support of the tenets or articles of faith herein after set forth, that is to say,

They believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are given by inspiration of God and are the only rule of faith and practice and that these scriptures reveal the one true and only God who is self-existent, infinite and eternal. That there are three self existent co-eternal persons in the Godhead namely the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost and these three are one God and that the Lord Jesus Christ is very God and very man in one glorious complex person.

That Before the world began God did elect a certain number of the human race unto everlasting life and salvation whom He did predestine to the adoption of Children by Jesus Christ of his own free grace and according to the good pleasure of His will.

That God created Adam upright and all his posterity fell in him, he being the federal head and representative of all mankind.

That the Lord Jesus Christ in the fullness of time became incarnate and that he really suffered and died as the substitute for the elect of God only and in their stead whereby he made all the satisfaction for their sins which the law and justice of God could require as well as made a way for the bestowments of all those blessings which are needful for them for time and eternity.

That the eternal redemption which Christ hath obtained by the shedding of his blood is special and particular that it is only and intentionally designed for the elect of God who only can share its spiritual blessings.

That the justification of Gods elect is only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them and received by faith without consideration of any works of righteousness done by them and that the full and free pardon of all there sins and transgressions is only through the full free pardon of all their sins and transgressions is only through the blood of Christ according to the riches of Gods grace.

That regeneration, conversion, sanctification and faith are the work of the Almighty efficacious and invincible grace of God the Holy Ghost.

That all those chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son and sanctified by the Spirit shall certainly and finally persevere unto eternal life.

That there is a resurrection of the dead both of the just and the unjust and that Christ will come a second time to judge the quick and the dead when he will consign the wicked to everlasting punishment and introduce His own people into his kingdom and Glory where they shall be for ever with Him.

That baptism of believers by immersion and the Lords Supper are ordinances of Christ to be continued until His

coming again and that the former is absolutely requisite to the latter, that is to say that only those are to be admitted as members of the church and participate in its privileges including the ordinance of the Lords supper who upon profession of their faith have been baptised namely immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And that no person who has not been baptised as afro said shall on any account be permitted to sit down or commune at the Lords table within the said school room and whereas for the purpose of giving effect to the objects and intentions of the parties hereto and of the said church it has been agreed that the said Hereditament's shall be conveyed to the trustees upon the trust and for the purpose hereinafter contained and these present have been approved by the members of the said Church meeting called for that purpose and held at the said chapel on or before the date

Hereof

The indenture further witnesseth that in further pursuance and consideration of the premises they the trustees do hereby severally covenant and agree amongst themselves and with each other and with the church that they the trustees their successors and assigns shall and henceforth stand and be possessed of the hereditament And premises hereinbefore conveyed unto them upon trust to dedicate and devote and preserve the same for the purpose of holy and divine according to the tenets or articles of faith herein set forth.

That the election of any future pastor of the said church and the removal of any pastor shall be decided by the vote of two thirds of the church assembled at a regularly convened church meeting together with the object for which it is convened having been publicly announce for four successive Lords days. No member eligible to vote has to have been four times to the Lords table in six months unless prevented by illness etc.

No minister shall be elected to the pastoral office or continue therein but such as holds to the doctrines and communion aforesaid nor shall it be lawful for the said church to receive into fellowship any such persons as members but such as have been baptised that is by immersed in water upon confession of their faith in Christ and are able to give some satisfactory account of a work of grace having passed upon their souls in being called out of darkness into Gods marvellous light, nor shall it be lawful for the said church to admit to her communion (in which term is include the ordinance of the Lords supper) any person who has not been baptised by immersion in water on a profession of faith in the name of Jesus.

18. Bierton a Gospel Standard Cause

Our History

The following pages were written to answer a query raised by Mr D Crowther, deacon of the church meeting at Attleborough. At this church I was asked to preach shortly after my secession from the Bierton church. I wrote and explained to Mr Crowther that I was no longer in membership with any church and my coming to preach at Attleborough may cause some embarrassment between the churches. I explained should the church at Attleborough wish me to preach then to enquire of Mr Crane, the overseer of the Bierton cause, of my reasons for secession. After which if they still wished me to preach I would be free in conscience to preach the gospel to them at Attleborough. Free in conscience in this sense: The church at Attleborough would be quite clear as to my reasons for secession and were satisfied I was not acting out of order as a Christian in my contention for the truth.

Following this letter is another letter written to Mr Royce of Luton who enquired about one of the Gospel Standard Articles, Articles 32. I enclose this in order to show there have been problems over this article causing a great deal of unrest in and outside the Denomination. My reply to Mr Royce shows my doctrinal position in respect of this controversial point and I hope it will help any in difficulty.

The day is coming when the watchmen will all see eye to eye' (Isa)

I pray hasten the day.

Letter to Mr D. Crowther, from Attleborough

Dear Mr Crowther,

I am pleased to speak for myself in respect of my secession from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church. I am also thankful that Mr Crane has already spoken

and conveyed to you what he understands of all I have said. It would seem he misunderstood my references to the Gospel Standard Articles and the Bierton Church joining the Standard cause. For this reason I shall forward a copy of this letter to him since I do not know all he said to you and I believe this written record will help settle matters which are not in order at Bierton.

I was introduced to the Gospel Standard denomination in 1973 / 74 through Bierton Church, when Mr Hill Minister of the Gospel of Luton Church Meeting at Ebenezer, that time I knew of no other churches that faithfully contended for the doctrine of Grace which I had come to receive as biblical and according to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I had been called by grace and converted, from a life of crime, drug taking and immorality in 1970, having no church background, my knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and of Gospel truth came through reading the scriptures, seeking God and various books. In the providence of God a friend loaned me the book, " The kingdom of God taken by prayer " by William Huntington and another friend " Mercies of a Covenant God " by John Kershaw? At that time I was meeting with a Pentecostal Church in Aylesbury and had attended a wide circle of Churches, none of which taught the doctrines of Sovereign Grace. I ceased to attend the Pentecostal Church because of their King doctrine and I started to attend the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist church. Until this time I did not know of any people that love and taught the truth of Absolute Predestination and the doctrine of free Sovereign Grace. It was at the Bierton Church I became a member in 1976

Joining the Bierton Church

After I attend the Bierton Church for a period I asked to see their articles of religion. I was shown the original trust deed and took a hand written copy of those articles set out

those deeds. I was shown another set of articles called the " Bierton Articles of Faith " but to my disappointment they were different from those articles set out in the trust deed. I say disappointed because: -

Articles of Faith cannot be alter nor added too if a chapel has a trust deed. How then had these articles appeared?

I could not agree with this second set of religious tenets.

This second set of articles was spurious since there was no record kept in the Church minutes of their introduction or origins.

I explained to the Church that these second set of articles restricted me joining the Church for I could not subscribe to them, but I could join the Church if the articles set out in the Trust Deed were in operation.

My further disappointment came when I heard some of the Church members response for they were of the opinion, " couldn't I just ignore the awkward articles for they only were only man made rules after all".

I was this response, which showed a looseness and careless attitude towards articles of religion, which was not right. I had always understood such articles of faith are solemnly subscribed to when a person joined a church.

Articles which I could not subscribe to:

The two articles which I could not subscribed to and took exception to are as follows:

XII. We believe that Christ has set apart a day of rest, to be kept holy and for His honour and glory, which is the first day of the week commonly, called Sunday. - Mark 2 [27,] Acts 16 [13,] and Heb. 4 [9],

XVI. We believe that all who die in their infancy go to heaven by virtue of the death of Christ. - Matth. 19 [13,14 and 15.]

Neither of which articles could I subscribe to for the following reasons?

I believe the scriptures clearly teach the believer, by

virtue of his union to Christ, is dead to the Law. This Law being the 10 commandments issued from Mount Sinai and which came by Evered. This Law has a jurisdiction over those being raised to the newness if life by Christ Jesus. This liberty and freedom from bondage being the privilege of he sons of God alone. To the rest of mankind this Law excluded the Gentiles from the covenant of promise, Eph.. 2 [12,] and curses all who do not continue in all points of the Law to do it.

It being my experience and apostolic doctrine that all who seek the favour of God and perfection by one deeds according to this Law, do not find what they seek, but rather a guilty conscience. For this Law shows no mercy, is not of faith, gives neither strength nor rest to the believer. But rather issues a curse at the least transgression Gal. 3 [10.]

I had also found that they that taught the Law was the rule of life for them had no convictions and appeared to have no sensitivity to its spirituality and were grossly inconsistent in their manor of living.

Their so call regard to it and obedience gave them leave to boast and hence provoked that which the law of faith excludes Rom. 3 [27.]

For example: The Law says remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. According to the Law the Sabbath day is the 7th day i.e. Saturday and this Law prescribed how this Law was to be kept, from the eve of the 7th to the even of the 1st day. This according to our Western and gentile custom is from Friday evening through to Saturday evening. There is no atonement for the breach of this commandment and the punishment for its breach is death stoning. This Law then, issued according to these terms, by Evered, cannot be altered nor changed and prevails over they that are under it so long as they live under it. Gal 3[15,] Rom. 3 [19,] I Cor. 7 [39.]

The believer who fancifully puts himself under it and chooses another: day and alters the times of its observation

has never been to ' the Mount'; for otherwise he would know he cannot temper with the Law nor its terms. He may think himself alive unto God but where is his death by the coming of the Law in its condemning might and power. They that experience such a death, whether it is later or early in their life, welcome the rule and rest of Christ for he alone has found Him who delivers from the body of sin and death. The Lord Jesus being the true rest for the people of God. Heb. 4 [9.] He being the sum and substance of the seventh day Sabbath of the Law of Moses. The believer being now under the Law of Christ (being not without Law to God) of which it is written the gentiles have waited for. Isaiah 42 [4,] I Cor. 9 [21.]

I also found they who believed they kept the Law of the seventh day Sabbath but observed Sunday instead were very critical of other folk and had an eye to judge others who were not so strict as they. Neither did I find their conversation spiritual nor savoury but rather given over censor others we touched, tasted or handled matters in a different way than they. Col. 2 [18-23.] It also seemed to me they could not speak of a death by the Law and deliverance from this death through the Lord Jesus Christ.

My objections to this articles was that the scripture quotations do not support the statement and the text of Hebrews 4 does not apply to the seventh day Sabbath but the rest which is in Christ Jesus. (As I found latter to be expressed in Gadsby hymn 636). It seemed the compilers of this articles sought to establish a false notion of gospel rest and were not clear as to the believer's rule of life. The scriptures maintain the gospel of Christ is the believer's rule and not the Law of Moses. This gospel is that royal and perfect Law of liberty as expressed in the Gospel Standard articles of religion. (Articles 26). See also John Calvin on the fourth Commandment in " The Institutes".

As for the Bierton articles XVI; again the scripture

quotation has nothing to do with infants dying in infancy and so not applicable.

This belief I thought attacked the doctrine of the fall of the human race in Adam and the sovereign prerogative of God to show mercy to which he will. Not all infants are loved of God for Esau was hated before he was born.

Granted if God hath chosen infants that die to be in Christ, then they shall go to heaven by virtue of the blood and righteousness of Christ. But I see no scriptures that teach these articles of religion and I could not say I believed it to be true. I could equally believe all infants dying are dammed by virtue of the imputed quilt of Adam.

However I could not discuss these matters with folk at Bierton because I had found none in the position to comprehend what I understood and when I attempted to express my views it was said by my dear friend Miss R Elliss and others, ' look these rules of ours are only man made rules anyway, so could not I just ignore them'. This could not do and be true to my conscience and knew these two articles were not contained in the trust deed of the Bierton Strict and Particular Church meeting at Luton chapel ' Ebenezer'.

Mr Hill believed it to be right I should be admitted into church membership on those articles set out in the trust deed of 1831. To this the church agreed by a unanimous decision.

The following is a record taken from the church minutes of the 8th of Jan. 1976:

Quote From The Church Book

My Application for membership of the Bierton Church

From Mr David Clarke having been received in a letter, which had been read and made known to the church members, was invited to attend this meeting. A previous interview having been carried out with Mr Clarke by Mr King and Miss Gwen Ellis. Before the church at this meeting Mr Clarke repeated a very clear and detailed account of the Lords

dealings and arresting power in his life bringing him down to his own great need and the Lord applications of his full atonement in his sacrifice and the blood of Calvary.

David was accepted as a member in the original deeds of faith, his membership being proposed by Mr King and seconded by Miss G Ellis and carried by a unanimous vote.

The chairman for that meeting was Mr J Hill and the secretary Mr King.

To be more precise; the church at Bierton, consisting of members: Mr King, Miss B. Ellis, Miss R Elliss, Miss G Elliss Mrs C Member and Mrs Evered. With Mr J Hill, minister and pastor of Luton church meeting at the chapel called ‘ Ebenezer’, and Mr King as chairman admitted into membership Mr D Clarke, upon the profession of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Who had been baptized by immersion in 1970, according to the scriptures; and now upon his confession and agreement to the terms set out in the deed of trust of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist church dated 1831. These articles of religion being those of the founder members of the church at Bierton and wished for them to be promoted and preserved for the glory and honour of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No Knowledge Of The Churches Government

Until this time I had no knowledge or idea of how the church governed them that is how the gospel of Christ and the ordinances were administered. Or who was responsible for watching the affairs and setting in order any disorders. I assumed Mr Hill had this responsibility and was completely ignorant who was the secretary or of this function. I had no idea of how ministers were engaged or any such like affairs. I now believe; them that know assume other people are fully aware of these matters, but from my limited experience I knew nothing. Neither could I know unless some one informed me. I find no reference in the scripture to these detailed affairs.

How the church functioned

It was only after joining the church and having access to the minutes of the meetings I was able to find out Mr Hill's responsibilities along with the responsibilities of the officers of the church.

I discovered Mr Hill only accepted the office of chairman on the 8th of January 1976 and that he chaired the meeting for the first time on the day I was received into membership. I noticed also Mr Hill had only been asked to act the once and that to council the church with respect to the election of new trustees. I found also Mr King had at that meeting agreed to act as secretary. Prior to this Mrs Evered had performed this task.

At the same meeting the church asked Mr Hill to acts as chairman on alternate occasions to which Mr Hill agreed to do.

Hence I found Mr Hill did not have the oversight since he was only asked to chair certain church meetings.

At this time the Bierton cause was not a Gospel Standard listed church.

The first move to become a Gospel Standard cause.

The church at Bierton voted to become a Gospel Standard cause on the 16th of January 1981. I was not present at that meeting and the news came as a surprise for the following reasons: (I ask you to bear with me for the following sequence of events is important)

Mr Evered first mentioned we make application to join the Gospel Standard denomination at a meeting dated the 7th of July 1978.

The following is a transcript from the minutes of that meeting:

Mrs Evered proposed that the church should make application to join the Gospel Standard churches and Mr Hill gave lengthy details of the procedure. He explained if

the church decided to think about this further then it could be brought forward again at the next church meeting and application could be made. Mr Hill also mentioned we could also change to the Gadsby' Hymn book should we wish since our Denham's collection had warm very much and were our of print and the Gadsby's Hymns were used in other Gospel Standard causes.

At the next church meeting Mr King resigned office as secretary. The meeting was held on the 1st of November 1978 and I was acting chairman.

I did not feel I could act as secretary at that time due to my domestic and private circumstances. At that time I had just finished at Teachers Training College and had lived between Wolverhampton and Leicester. From here I had moved the Leighton Buzzard taking up my first lecturing post at Luton College of Higher Education. Also having purchased a house near Mr Collier was the minister. I thought this move might benefit my wife since we had no pastor at Bierton. Hence my attendance at the Bierton chapel had been irregular for that year.

It was suggested that Mrs Evered take up the office as secretary but she refused unless we became a Gospel Standard cause.

I realized that was not the time to consider our association with the Standard churches for we had to elect a secretary before business could continue. I also knew that Miss R Elliss and Mrs C Member were not in favour of becoming a Standard cause. Neither was I satisfied that the reason behind the suggested move was spiritual and honourable. For example:

Mrs Groom, in membership of Prestwood Strict Baptist Church, (sister of Mrs Evered) had moved to Bierton. She had sought permission to partake of the communion at the Bierton Church. However the Prestwood church would grant her permission because we were not a Standard Church and

were not satisfied with our articles of religion.

The pressure to become a Standard cause came from Mrs Evered because unless we did so her sister could not join in the communion, at Bierton, without offending the Prestwood church. Hence these reasons were not with a regard for a defence of truth but rather to cater for family needs.

Had the church wished to join with the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists in order to promote the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, wishing to distinguish between other Strict Baptists who held and maintained the 10 commandments were the rule of life for the believer and that held to duty repentance. Then that would have been different for at that time these were only the doctrinal differences between many of the ministers we had to preach and the doctrinal tenets of the Gospel Standard. Our entire minister believed in the Eternal Son ship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As the chairman I ruled the church would consider the matter of joining the Gospel Standard denomination in due course, after we had elected a secretary. After discussion we had no prepared to take on the responsibility as secretary.

Moved with concern I expressed to the church I would offer my help and act as secretary for a period. I spite of my living at Leighton Buzzard and my consideration of transferring membership to the Linslaid church where Mr Collier was the pastor and minister.

The church took up my offer of help and in this office I continued until the 30th of April 1980.

Church vote against joining the Gospel Standard

At the church meeting on the 24 of January 1979, where all members were present, consideration was given to joining the Gospel Standard cause.

After discussion a vote was taken even though Mrs Evered was the only proposer. Four members were against the motion and one member abstained.

At the same meeting Mr King proposed this matter should not be raised for another year. This motion was put to the church and carried by vote.

My letter to the Gospel Standard Committee

Since so much concern had been expressed about joining Gospel Standard cause I thought it appropriate to write to the committee in order to ensure they had not lapsed into a false position in respect of repentance toward God. Their articles 26 needed clarification to my mind especially since I had already been in conflict with a minister who opposed the Standard position (see my article ' The Bierton Crisis ' under the heading letter to Mr Peter Howe).

I wrote to the committee on two matters I) in connection with Mr Hill, ii) in connection with article 26.

The following is a transcript of that letter to the committee:

Dear Sirs,

9th July 1979

I am the secretary of Bierton Strict Baptist Church and during our recent church meeting we have considered seeking membership with the Gospel Standard Churches. With this in view there are two matters I would like the committee to clarify.

1 The recent withdrawal of Mr Hill's name from approved List of ministers.

2 Article 26 of the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith.

With respect to my first point; what was the committee's reason for requesting Mr Hill to withdraw his name from the approved list of ministers? I ask his question since Mr Hill is one of our trustees and have faithfully served the church at Bierton for many years.

The second point is for a Sayers explanation of the concluding statement of article 26, ' so we deny the doctrine

that man in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in our turn to God'. Since this would appear man in a state of nature ought not to please God.

Yours faithfully,
David Clarke.

Letter From Strict Baptist Societies

Dear Mr Clarke,

The following is a copy of the letter, which answered my quires: -

Thank you for your letter of the 17th July from which I was interested and pleased to learn that the church at Bierton was considering seeking membership with the Gospel Standard Churches.

As enabled I will try to answer the points you have raised: -

A) Mr J. Hill – As Mr Hill himself has expressed sorrow for certain things which Have taken place, the committee asked him to withdraw his name from the list of ministers for a period of twelve months as a public expression of this, to which he agreed.

B) Article 26 - Article 26 simply means that we do not make free will appeals generally to a congregation to repent, accept Christ; give their hearts to God etc. Rather we preach the vital necessities of repentance and faith in Jesus, and encourage those who feel their need to flee to Him in their sorrow, as enabled by the Holy Spirit. There is no suggestion at all that men in a state of nature ought not to please God. Their duty is clearly revealed in the law of God, but they have neither ability nor desire to fulfil it.

I sincerely trust I have made these points clear to you

and that the Church will be enabled to make application for membership amongst us. Should you do so I would be pleased have a glance of the engagements for the years?

May the Lord abundantly bless the flock at Bierton with His Spirit and build you up in His fear and grace.

With Kindest Regards,
Yours very sincerely

Secretary
Mr D. Clarke
C/o 37 Finmere Crescent,
Bedgrove,
Aylesbury Bucks.

I Was Thankful For This Reply

To this reply I was thankful; mans responsibility before God was not denied and that it was acknowledged the law showed mans responsibility and hence they would not deny legal repentance or a natural repentance which law and nature dictates.

However I would have sought further clarification with respect to the reference to the law of God and its terms, since this was given only to Israel in covenant and by it the gentiles were aliens and strangers to the covenants of promise; the law thus making a middle wall of petition between Jew and Gentile. Eph.. 2 [12-14.] I could accept the " whole of the scriptures " being the law of the Lord but not the 10 commandments as given by Moses since these were never enjoined upon the gentiles world whether they be Christian or not. I knew this to be the Gospel Standard position from Article 16 and as specified by J C Philpot in the Gospel Standard of 1862. I knew also if Mr Secretary be not clear upon this point he could always consider these references together with Mr Gadsby's

book (hymn 636) " The perfect Law of Liberty ", also Dr J Gill in his commentaries and " Body of Divinity ". Hence we differ from the Presbyterians over this matter. I thought to write again on this matter should the church actually take further steps to join the list of churches.

Second Move To Join The Gospel Standard Cause

At the church meeting, on the 23rd of April 1980, I asked to be relieved of my duties as secretary and chairman since I was now living in Leicester. Mr King proposed that Mrs Evered should take up the office as secretary and to this proposal she said she would do so upon a temporary basis if we would consider joining he Gospel Standard. Since this was a more reasonable offer of help and the conditions of that help were acceptable I put this matter to the church. I suggested after a period of three months we could decide by vote whether we seek membership with the Standard causes. Under these conditions Mrs Evered took up office as secretary and Mr King was elected to act as chairman. The meeting to consider the joining of the Gospel Standard cause was provisional booked for the 7th of July 1980.

New Chairman Elected

At a special church meeting, of which I was not informed, Mr Hope (Minister of the Gospel, at Reading) was elected to act as chairman.

This meeting was held on the 21st of May 1980.

See also John Calvin on the fourth commandment.

Church meeting the 18th of June 1980

Having heard Mr Hope had been asked to act as chairman and a date booked for the next church meeting being the 18th of June 1980, I did all within my power to attend.

I noted at that meeting Mrs Evered had asked Miss B. Ellis to bring along the deed box containing the trust deed of the chapel.

The church vote against joining the Gospel Standard

At this meeting Mr Hope brought to the church the matter of joining the Standard cause. The following is a transcript of the minutes of that meeting:

Membership of the Gospel Standard

It was thought that a decision should be made at this meeting, as there had been enough time given for consideration whether to join or no. Five were for and two against.

It was desirous to have a unanimous agreement by vote which was not forthcoming therefore it was rejected but to be brought up again and when the members are in agreement'.

My Comments

I suggested to the chairman and the church unless we were in agreement over this matter we could not apply for membership with the Gospel Standard churches. To this Mr Hope agreed, likewise most of the members. I knew Miss R Elliss and Mrs C Member were not in favour of joining the Gospel Standard denomination (whatever that meant to them) and I too was not in favour of joining any association if other members were not agreeable. This being because I realized unless the church be all of one mind how could we strive together to maintain gospel precepts. The majority of our ministers were not Gospel Standard men and were not in full agreement with this article. Hence I did not think the church were in the position to exclude all ministers who were not Gospel Standard minded. I knew this to be the case since only a few years (1976/77) ago Mr John Gosden had been preaching at Bierton and several of us thought he might be a suitable minister to call and be our pastor. At that time Mr Gosden was in membership of the church meeting at Grove Chapel, Camber well (independent) and hence was not a Strict Baptist. Also his position in respect of the Gospel Standard would mean he be now excluded from preaching at Bierton

if we became a Standard cause. Mr Gosden expressed his doctrinal position to me after I wrote shortly after the church at Bierton had become a Standard cause.

John Gosden Gospel Standard Added Articles

6th of April 1982

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of the 15th March. I do regret the delay in replying, this has been partly due to heavy commitments and difficulties, and party to an uncertainty as to whether I can help you on any of the dates suggested.

The only possible Sunday would be June 26th 1983 but this, at the moment is not too certain. However I will tentatively reserve this for you and will write to confirm or otherwise in a week or so.

I do hope that you will be help in the responsibilities as Church Secretary, and also in the work of the ministry to which you have been called. You will need a continual supply of wisdom, grace and strength. My late Father said, " Be a labourer not a trifler". Good advice. I believe his careful preparation for the pulpit before each service, coupled to a close walk with God largely explains the freshness and effectiveness of his long ministry.

Regarding the G. S. Position. My differences are not with individuals; some of my best friends are in denomination. My difference with them is over some aspects of their Articles of Faith. Articles, which I consider to be vitally important not only theologically, but in their practical outworking in experience. The areas of difficulty are: the strange and unorthodox view of the relationship between Law & Gospel XVI. The restrictions placed on the promises of the Gospel, which consequently obscure the warrant of faith. XXIV, XXVI, XXXII, XXXV. And the unorthodox view of Sanctification. XIX.

A far more satisfactory and orthodox view is expressed in the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, Salvation" by F.E. Kevan, and ' Redemption accomplished and Applied ' by J. Murray. Each of these books is currently available and would be helpful to you. See also A.W. Pink on Man's total depravity, chapter 20.

God willing I will write again re the June date.

With Christian regards,
Yours sincerely,
John Gosden

Differences of opinion

Mrs Evered knew Mr Gosden was not a Gospel Standard minister and for this reason would not wish him to preach at Bierton. Her reasons for his rejection were not actually honourable as will be seen:

A special church meeting was held on August the 18th 1980 to discus whether a Mr Friend of could join us in our communion during his holiday break in September. Mr Friend and his wife were related to (member of the congregation and Sunday school leader of the Bierton cause).

At this meeting there was no chairman and Mrs Evered was the secretary. Mr Just had made enquire on behalf of his cousin and Mrs Evered records in the minutes of the meeting of following:

The church of which Mr Friend was in membership was connected with the Gosden Times (or so it was alleged) and for this reason Mrs Evered was opposed to Mr Friend joining us. A decision was needed by the church to see if the church at Southborough supported an ' Open Communion '. The enquiry was made and the Pastor (Mr John Gosden) did not support an open table.

My Comments

This incident shows up the devious ways of the natural heart. My suspicion was that reasons were being sought to exclude Mr Friend from the communion, by Mrs Evered, because she knew the Pastor of the church at Southborough, that Mr Friend was a member, read the Gosden Times news paper. Mrs Evered opposed Mr Gosden the minister of the Southborough Strict Baptist church because he read the Evangelical Times.

Mr John Gosden's doctrinal views

This prejudice was shown up through this incident. In fact no mention was made as to Mr Gosden's doctrinal views in respect of the Law and Gospel or any other doctrine of faith and the reason being because they were either not discerned of not considered important. But as can be seen Mr J Gosden's position is opposed to the Gospel Standard Articles over the issue of Law and Gospel. But the ironic thing is that so was Mrs Evered who maintains the Law of Evered being the 10 commandments were her rule of life. This may be seen from my contention with the church at Bierton as expressed in my article ' The Bierton Crisis 1984' and chapter.

My Conclusion

I knew the majority of the Bierton church and congregation got on very well with Mr Gosden however as can be seen from the letter Mr Gosden is not in the Gospel Standard position in respect of the Law, duty faith or sanctification. Also the folk at Bierton appeared not to pay any regard to such differences.

Having then a close knowledge of the general position of the folk at Bierton I expressed my mind; believing it be wrong to impose or surreptitiously bring about a union with the Gospel Standard causes when in fact the people at Bierton were not aware nor would be governed by the rules of the Gospel Standard society. Herein lies my statements, if I said

anything to that effect, I was not happy with the Bierton Church joining the Standard churches: Had the church been convinced internally of those distinctive tenets of truth which are expressed in the Gospel Standard articles and were moved with a due since of fear towards the living and true God to preserve and contend for them in the way expected and expressed in the rules of the society; then I had no objection and would lead them in those paths necessary to promote the distinctive tenants of the Christian gospel. I.e. The glory of free grace, Christ alone exalted and a repudiation of all legal notions and boasting engendered in them that take Moses Law as their rule of lice and conduct rather than the gospel. In my judgment these folk at Bierton could not walk that path at that time, as demonstrated by them by teaching the children and their unconverted parents to sing hymns as:

Jesus loves me this I know for the bible tells me so.

They had not reached, nor were likely to, that stage in experience, which must cause us to question such loose expressions used in children's hymns. I say not likely to if the pressure to become a Standard cause continued, for in my judgment the motives for such a move were not spiritual but carnal. I have not fully disclosed all what I considered to be carnal motives in becoming a Gospel Standard cause for the sake of brevity but have given one example. I.e.; We become a Standard cause in order that a blood relation could partake of our communion.

I had resolved that I would not support a motion to become a Gospel Standard cause unless all members were in agreement and that the folk at Bierton could give clear statements as to their beliefs in respect of articles 26 and some of those articles, which had caused controversy.

However since this matter of becoming a Standard cause had been voted again I saw no need to pursue these matters any further at that time.

Third Move To Become A Gospel Standard Cause

This was a surprise to me and I did not expect the matter to be put as a motion to the church without the required notice. However the following is transcript of the church minutes of the meeting the 10th of October 1980, where all members were present except my self: (quote)

"Two members were will still in opposition to the Gospel Standard churches. Hopefully to, D.V.? Refer latter".

My Comments

I knew Miss R Ellis and Mrs Gurney both members were against joining the Standard churches but not actually against them and also any such decisions to join the Gospel Standard cause must be made at a meeting specially convened for that purpose. I.e. Due notice given to all members of any such motion of serious importance. This rule had not been complied with.

It seemed to me that Mrs Evered was set to do all she could to influence the church and Mr Hope to obtain what she wanted namely to join the Standard cause; come what may.

I was completely unaware of this third attempt to join the Standard until I read of it in the church minutes several months later and that being after I resumed the office as church secretary.

Fourth Move To Join The Gospel Standard Cause

This may be read in the next chapter.

19. Bierton a Gospel Standard Cause

The church became a Gospel Standard listed cause after the next church meeting. At that meeting I was absent it being the normal quarterly meeting and Mr Hope was presiding as the chairman. Had I known the church had gathered and were to consider joining the Gospel Standard again I would have do my uttermost to attend.

The meeting was held on the 16th of January 1981 and the minutes of that meeting record:

Joining The Gospel Standard As A Listed Church

Vote was taken by ballot.

Was unanimous. Mr Hope kindly undertaking the correspondences ' for joining.'

A foot note mentions, ' Mr D Clarke to be written to informing him of the results of this meeting.'

Mr King motions a Gospel Standard cause

Letter informing me Bierton have joined the Gospel Standard. A letter from the church informed me secretary of this meeting and church decision and the following is a transcript of that letter:

Dear David,

24th January 1981

Just a line to let you know the result of our church meeting held on the 16th inst. It was decided (taken by ballot) unanimously that we join the Gospel Standard causes, it was a wonderful meeting. I am sure led by the Holy Spirit.

The chairman was Mr Hope who kindly consented to deal with the correspondence. A new bible has been purchased for the pulpit. Repairs as was sanctioned at the last church meeting are still progressing. The church is praying for a Pastor after the Lords own heart. It is vital that we as members of the above cause are the same, one in heart. God loves to

answer faithful prayer through His dear Son. Then there will you be helpful member to us a church, if your circumstances permit?

Trusting Irene and the children are well.

May the Lord richly bless you in your labour for Daily bread and in labour for Him?

With Christian love
Gladys Evered
Hon Sec.

My Endorsement To The Church Becoming A Gospel Standard Cause

It struck me as strange things for the whole church to be now unanimous, after such a short time, in their desire to become a Standard cause. Miss R Elliss and Mrs C Member had always said they wanted no such changes. But here I was informed otherwise. The second thing which struck me was the fact that such a matter of serious importance was not treated at a specially convince meeting or notice given to that effect one month previously there to.

However I wrote to the church in response to Mrs Evered's letter and made a point of attending the church, at my earliest convenience, to enquire about these things. The following is a copy of my reply to the church:

Dear Mrs Evered

12th of February 1981

Thanks you for your letter dated 24th of January 1981 informing me of the outcome of the recent Church meeting. May I confirm my approval and desire to help the cause at Bierton even though my present circumstances are not helpful.

I believe the Gospel Standard causes are a means by

which God is preserving His truth our relationship to the Law as believers, Particular Redemption and the declaration of the Gospel as opposed to offering the gospel.

All doctrine, which the majority of churches of our lady deny. I believe also a right understanding of these truths are the means of preserving a true godly fear and reverence in our worship of God.

Yours with Christian regards,

David Clarke

My Visit To The Bierton Folk

I visited Mrs Evered and asked to see the church minutes of the previous meeting but she refused to allow me to read them.

I then called upon both Miss R Elliss and Mrs C Member and asked about the meeting and their opinions. Mrs Gurney said she was placed under pressure to agree to join the Gospel Standard cause. This pressure came by being to feel she was the only one hindering this action.

Miss R Elliss said she misunderstood the method of voting and that she was opposed to the church charging to a Gospel Standard cause.

Mrs Gurney informed me Mr Hope had expressed impatience with them saying this matter of joining the Standard cause could not keep coming up every meeting and so the church must vote by private ballot. This method of voting was that which Miss R Elliss said she misunderstood. Also was that vote which was said affirmed a unanimous decision.

Being persuaded what had taken place was dishonourable I approached the following church members, when gathered at a convenient time after one our meetings, expressing my

finding and reaction.

The church members present were: Mr King, Miss B. Ellis, Mrs Evered, Miss R Elliss and Miss G Ellis.

Having made certain enquiries by which I may have cause some offence; I apologies for any wrong done. However I am still not satisfied that the events, which took place and decisions made at our recent church meeting, were entirely in accordance with its members.

My justification for pursuing this matter is that after careful questioning of the members find both Mrs C Member and Miss R Elliss did not wish the Bierton cause to become a Gospel Standard cause. That the unanimous decision came through Mrs R Ellis misunderstanding the method of voting; she not wanting the Bierton cause to become a Standard cause.

I expressed I took exception to this action and my conscience would not allow me to remain silent. Also that had I know this matter of joining the Standard cause was on the agenda at that quarterly meeting I would have wished to have been present. This being in accordance to the Gospel Standard rule 15.

The church had agreed that such a decision to become a Standard cause was to

Be unanimous therefore I wished the church to vote again on this matter with all Members present.

That Mr Hope should chair such a meeting (in fairness to him) since and decision to the contrary aught to be rectified by him.

I wished a meeting to be held in the usual way in order to ascertain if the church acknowledge my complaint and would consider my request.

The reaction of the church to my complaint

Mr King felt I was quite out of order and Miss G Ellis said both Mrs Gurney and Miss R Elliss were under no pressure and they were in agreement to becoming a Gospel

Standard cause.

Mr King said the church minutes were not available to me and would be read in the usual way at the next church meeting.

Mr John Just letter to the church at Bierton

Soon after this event the church members were circulated with a letter of complaint and of conscience from Mr John Just, a known visitor tot he church, it was a very pertinent letter and its essence was as follows:

My concern is over the women speaking at the church meetings. Reminding them that the head of every man was Christ and the head of every woman the man. That woman should learn in silence rather than take the rule.

Also those elders should be appointed to deal with Church matters

Those believers should obey them that have the rule over them

Of the member present (Miss R Elliss) being now unwell and unable to clearly express her self) it was said they did not wish the matter to be taken any further but left as they were.

My Reactions

I believe the Church was wrong in this matter but I saw no benefit in me taking the matter any further. I thought it wrong in the same way Jacobs's deception was wrong nevertheless that outcome was of the Lord.

This left me now in the position of seeking further information from the Gospel Standard committee in order to free my conscience and be absolutely sure where we stood as a church tied to a denomination body.

My concern was now manifold: Did the folk at Bierton realize what they had done in joining the Gospel Standard cause? Where they aware of the doctrinal stand and views

expressed in the Standard articles were opposed by many of our visiting ministers. I could accept them but only after our church expressed their understanding of the articles, which had already, caused some controversy. (See my articles, which had already caused some controversy. (See my article ' The Bierton Crisis 1984).

We already had our own confession of faith as expressed in our Trust Deed and this could not be altered (Gal 4 23). Therefore if we know use the Gospel Standard articles as shedding further light upon our current articles of religion then we also must have an appendix to the Gospel Standard article-clarifying article 26 and 32.

However I realized this seemed impossible with the folk at Bierton for they had not the minds to cope with such matters. Nevertheless, a believer, having a clear understanding of these things knew this could not be left unattended to. For I believed if God were to continue His work amongst us we aught to be clear and doctrinally sound in matters of faith and practice.

I was also concerned about church meetings since nothing had been said about such rules of conduct in them. The Gospel Standard rules forbids the women from speaking in them (according to the scriptures) but at Bierton the women had always spoken and continued to do so.

Church Reaction To John Just Letter

At the church meeting of the 3rd of April 1981, Mr Jest's letter was mentioned. Mr Hope expressed that he thought Mr Just to be quite out of order since the letter should have been addressed to the chairman and that he should have signed the letter.

The church rejected the charge that women were speaking and usurping any authority over the man.

Mr Hope thought he aught to write on behalf of the church a letter of kingly reproof for his actions.

My Comments

I thought Mr John Just was perfectly in order and the church had never adopted any formal means of dealing with any such affairs. Also Mr Hope was only the chairman and not an overseas and that Mr Just had genuine cause of complaint and concern over the affairs of the Bierton Church.

At this meeting Mr Hope mentioned he had a copy of a letter from Mr Secretary of the Gospel Standard committee and wished to deal with the matter mentioned in it.

The letter contained a copy of some enquiries I had made privately to the committee and their replies.

Mr Hope asked if I was satisfied with the committee replies to my questions. To which I replied I was. At this Mr Hope seemed surprised and after the meeting I explained my reasons of enquiry and actions, to which Mr Hope seemed to understand.

Letter of enquiry to the Gospel Standard Committee

The following is a copy of my letter of enquiry to the Gospel Standard committee followed by the committee's replies.

Dear Mr Dickinson,

4th of August 1981

Re: Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church and Her association with the Gospel Standard denomination.

I wonder if you could clarify our position as a church at Bierton and the above-mentioned association?

1. Have you any literature, which explains the structure of the Gospel Standard Society. I.e.When was the denomination formally so called and why was it formed.

2. How does the committee function.

3. How are members elected to the committee?
4. What role do the churches play?
5. What is the Gospel Standard list of ministers?
6. What is the connection with the Poor Relief and Bethesda Home Societies?

Also:

7. Will our present association constitute a breech of any clauses in our trust deed?
8. Should our trustees be informed of our present connection with the Gospel Standard Churches?
9. Does this connection mean our former Articles of Religion, as set out the trust deed, are to be set aside and we adopt those set out in the booklet published by the Gospel Standard Societies.

Yours sincerely with Christian regard's,

David Clarke.
Church member

PS. 10. Is it necessary to make any legal adjustments to our trust deed?

Reply from the Gospel Standard Committee

From my letter it can be seen my ignorance of some things which people take for granted people already know. This was not so with me I have no background nor relatives in any church to know these things from and hence was obliged to find out these things directly. The following is a copy of the letter from Mr Secretary in answer to my questions:

THE GOSPEL STANDARD STRICT BAPTIST SOCIETIES

13th August 1981

Dear Mr Clarke,

Thank you for your letter of the 4th August enquiring about the position of the Church at Bierton and the Gospel Standard List of Churches.

I understand the position was fully explained to the Church on the 16th January 1981 when the Church unanimously applied to be associated with Gospel Standard Churches.

However in reply to your questions which I will number:

1. I suggest you obtain a copy of " Historical Sketch of the Gospel Standard Baptists" by S.F. Paul obtainable from Gospel Standard Trust Publications as advertised in the " Gospel Standard" & 2.

3. I enclose a copy of the Rules of the Societies.

4. I cannot understand the purport of this question, but perhaps the Rules will help.

5. This is a list of accredited ministers who agree with the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard Societies.

6. Part i) See the Rules. Part ii) Please write to Mr A.J. Watts who is the Sectary to the Bethesda Fund.

7. Your association will not constitute a breech of the Trust Deed unless the Deed states you most not associate with the Gospel Standard Societies.

8. This is a matter you should take up with the Church's Chairman.

9. No.

P.S. 10 No.

Yours sincerely,
Secretary

Mr D Clarke,
187 Aylesbury Road,
Bierton,

Point 9 It was confirmed on the telephoned on Monday The 17th of August 1981: we cannot alter the trust deed.

Repercussions of My letter to the Gospel Standard

Mr Dickerson forwarded my letter to Mr Hope and Mrs Evered was informed. Mrs Evered then took it upon herself to reprove me, over the telephone, for my actions. She charged me with wrong conduct as a church member and also for not issuing directives to none church members.

This matter is related in the following letter, which I had prepared to send Mrs Evered. I did not send this letter because afterwards I had second thoughts wondering were my motives pure. The letters reads:

Dear Mrs Evered,

28th August 1981

Thank you for the telephone call of Thursday evening informing me of your concern. May I assure you my correspondence with Mr Dickinson, concerned myself privately. Neither did I make any of our church business a matter of public security. Therefore the matter was not the church business and not written in the name of the church. I did not therefore represent the church in any way whatsoever. My plea being, not guilty to the charge you made.

However there are one or two matters arising from the issue which must be considered for they gave me personal offence and would be wrong for me to let them slip. My duty being to bring them to your attention.

This has been the second time whereby you sought to censor me when you had no right to do so. But trusting you did it unawares I forgive if you can assure me you did so unawares.

The first instance occurred when you old me to tell a women member of the congregation to cover her head during public worship, and the second occasion you reproved me for writing (whether church business or not to another person. The reproof coming not from your self as a private member but as church secretary.

The nature of these offences are as follows:

As a women you sought to excises authority over me being a male member of the church in that you told me and reproved me assuming authority not given you by the church and contrary to the scripture (I Tim. 2.12).

As secretary you assumed responsibility not given you by the church. For in this office you are a delegate and a representative of the church, which means you only act and carry out the instructions of the church. Hence you cannot excises authority over a male, which is the result of personal judgment, nor make decisions for and on behalf of the church unless sanctioned to do so.

Therefore in both the above instances you acted out of place as church secretary, a women member, and a church member, speaking with usurped authority. Now of all this what is the sum? I excuse you if you acted in ignorance but advice you to consider and resolve in you own mind what are the limits of you jurisdiction as a secretary and keep to them.

I do understand the nature of your concern and realize the burden and weight of responsibility you feel however a right understanding of the office you have been given would alleviate some of this burden you carry.

Yours with Christian regards,
David Clarke,

Reaction of Mr Dix, Dunstable Baptist church

Shortly after these events Mr Dix was engaged to preach at Bierton on a weeknight meeting and afterwards at my home he expressed his surprise and regret over the Bierton church joining the Gospel Standard.

After consideration of some of the things he said I felt constrained to write to Mr Hill, minister of the Gospel, Luton. The following is a transcript of my letter to Mr Hill:

October 1981

Dear Mr Hill,

Proverbs 2[10-12].

Trusting it is with a live and tender conscience, as opposed to a dead and carnal reasoning mind, I am moved to seek your help and advice, in connection with our cause at Bierton.

In conversation with Mr Dix, after our Wednesday night preaching service, he charged us as a church at Bierton in acting illegally and immorally because of our actions in becoming a Gospel Standard cause.

The charge being that we had broken the covenant as set out in our own trust deed; that had we wished to become a Standard church we should have formed another church in another building. Our actions being illegal and immoral for no man can disannul or add to any rule or regulation or term set out in the operative deed of trust and we as a church must be bound by those articles of religion and rules of practice, set our in that deed alone. This being so since the founder members and trustees in titles covenanted together to maintain support and preserve those articles set out in that indenture.

This matter has caused me some concern in the past and seeking to resolve this issue as a matter of conscience I wrote to Mr Secretary the secretary of the Gospel Standard committee, asking for help from whom I obtained some

assistance.

I came to this conclusion that since the articles of our church are in no way inconsistent with the articles of the Gospel Standard societies we as a church are free to publicly acknowledge agreement to them and associate as a church with other such churches and so be known as a Gospel Standard cause. This acknowledgement and association in no way contravening any article of religion or rule of practices set our in our trust deed. Hence the rules of our church would be in no way added to or disannulled and any future member could only be required to give assent to those articles set out in the deed of trust.

I would value your judgment in this matter for I often find myself alone in my views realizing my opinions are, or may be, disregarded by some on the grounds I am a novice and inexperienced in matters of this importance. I am persuaded that my position, as described above, is sufficient to answer Mr Dix, but have hesitated to do so since I have not the authority of the church to do so, nor am I certain our position as a church is fully understood by our members for they are now being regulated by the rules of the Gospel Standard articles. Also I believe a prospective new member of the church, would only be asked to subscribed to these articles alone, without reference to those articles set out in the trust deed. Which if Mr Dix were to ask and I confirm this was so it would confirm his opinion and justify his accusations.

Having therefore, I trust, a measure of faith and good hope, through the grace of God, to confess the Lord Jesus Christ before men and the world and being moved by conscience to walk in the church of God, and the world, in all honour thus obeying the gospel rule I Pet. 3 [16]. ; Could you advice me in the way I should act and the correct course of action, if any that I should take.

Yours in the care and cause of God and truth; may the

Lord Jesus comfort, preserve and strengthen you according to His riches in glory especially in this time of bereavement.

David Clarke

23 / 10 / 81.

Shortly before this time Mr Hill had just lost his wife Beth and so briefly alluded to in his reply.

Letter from Mr. Hill

Dear David,

27 October 1981

I do appreciate the kind letter from you both, I know it is sincere.

I am so stunned by the suddenness of it all (the death of Mr Hills Wife) so please forgive my short note, but I felt I must answer your enquiry immediately to set mind at rest.

Mr Dix is wrong, but I fell it shown the enmity, which there is to the Gospel Standard causes.

Your articles are almost identical and if you can subscribe to the one set, you can subscribe to the others also I am sure that those godly men who drew them up, would in these days ally themselves to the Gospel Standard denomination, because as a body they are the only people I know who contend for the same things. Further, most of the trustees, I think all of them belong to Gospel Standard churches. However just to instance a case the late Mr Raven who was the chairman of the Gospel Standard committee and Pastor of Small fields, told me himself that his church had their own articles of faith, but fully subscribed as a people to the Gospel Standard articles; it was a position just like yours.

I hope this note will put your mind at rest.

Please ring me when you have had the church meeting re: your exercise and have the sanction of the church preach, for I want you to come to Ebenezer. (Mr Hill did ask me to

keep this matter private at that time)

Now my very warm love to Irene and yourself and dear little children'

The enclosed is something for them.
Yours in gospel affection,

James Hill

Conclusion

From this record of events I have shown that from the outset the church at Bierton were rather loose in their regard to articles of religion. This being shown firstly by their adoption of a spurious set of articles and hence a deviation from those tenets of religion set out in the trust deed. Then secondly by the views of one or two members who suggested I ignore those points, which caused me to object these saying,' after all these are only man made rules'.

I have attempted to show that the move to become a Standard cause was by means of a subtle and determined effort of one of our members (Mrs Evered) and that the meeting, which determined our joining the Gospel Standard denomination, was in fact out of order for that meeting was not specially convened to consider that motion. Also the unanimous decision to become a Standard cause was not so since Mrs C Member expressed she was pressurized, in the meeting by being made to fell she was the only one stopping the church from doing what it wanted. Also Miss R Elliss expressed she did not wish any changes nor saw any reason to become a Standard cause. She wished things to continue as they were. That the unorthodox private vote was the cause of her being misunderstood for she wished to vote against becoming a Gospel Standard cause.

In this account I have indicated Mrs Evered denied

the terms evangelical repentance and hence I consider it necessary to establish a correct understanding of articles 26.My letter to the Gospel Standard committee show this matter up. In connection with these articles I have included as a supplement to this record a copy of my letter to Mr Royce of Luton. In this letter I answer Mr Royce's enquiry and express my views on article 32. In fact had I remained at Bierton I would have wished the church to express her views in respect of these controversial points as an appendix to the 35 Article of Religion of the Gospel Standard. This being necessary because of the various to the Bierton cause. To illustrate this matter I have also included a section from one of the chapter in my article ' The Bierton Crisis 1984 ', which commences with the heading ' Letter to Mr Peter Howe who was the former minister of Ivanhoe Particular' Baptist Church'.

I have also attempted to show my discontent with the Bierton church becoming a Gospel Standard cause; not because I had anything against the Standard cause but rather I was not satisfied with the motives and methods used to join the Standard denomination. Certainly the ineptitude of the Bierton church in dealing with serious matters of doctrine and administration were out of line with the Gospel Standard churches. This being shown clearly in my reasons for leaving the Bierton cause. Hence under those condition the Bierton church did not begin nor continue and honourable member of the Standard denomination.

I have written a full account of my reasons for leaving the Bierton church and will be available, God willing, after I have given a copy to Mr Crane and the Bierton church. If you wish I should like you to read it for in so doing you may comment and give advise of you feel lead.

Letter to Mr Royce's of Luton Added Articles

18th Aug. 1984

Dear Mr Royces

Article 32

In response to your request that I should give my views upon the above mentioned article may I say at first; I believe it imperative we should be clear in our minds as to what we subscribe to when joining any society that have articles of religion. We aught not to be as them in the apostate Church of England who once swore on oath and gave assent to the 39 Articles of the Anglican Church but have now perjured themselves by denying them openly or privately. This sin is spoken of in Rom. I 31, which mentions covenant breakers and of course is characteristic of the last days; such sins we should ever turn from.

We are flooded today by such false ways and spirit of guile, which I believe to be in all false prophets. It animates Anti- Christ and such a spirit of deception is clearly working to bring about a world wide ecumenical church and unit with the mother church (and whore of Babylon) of Rome. Also I have seen it in some of our Strict Baptist churches and in some ministers and deacons, who of course would deny it saying, ' We avoid all controversy; we want peace and unity at all cost'.

The principle I adopted, when first called by grace, in 1970 was that I would not join any denomination or society of Christians unless I could agree with their doctrinal confessions. I have learned since that chapel buildings and a churches assets are linked to a trust deed. In which the Trust Deed specifies who are the lawful beneficiaries of the chapel building and church assets. Also a body of trustees have solemnly sworn on oath, to watch and guard and to do all in their power to ensure that the Society in question, continues in those tenets of religion set our in that trust deed.

I am of the opinion that there is many we like us all, fail in our responsibilities and neglect what they put there

hand too. I was once asked to be a trustee of the Bierton Strict & Particular Chapel in 1976 but declined since I questioned whether the ' strict communion principles' set out in the trust deed and carried out by the church were biblical. Hence I declined the request on a matter of principles. I will add here I am now clear in my mind that ' strict communion ' principles are correct. How this is administered is another thing; again I have dealt in controversy over this issue, with Mr Dix the pastor of the Baptist church in Dunstable (this may be seen in my article entitled **" The Bierton Crisis" 1984).**

Well to the point; never give assent to any articles or religion, unless your conscience gives you leave to do so. At regeneration we are given a tender and good conscience, never violate it and let it be ruled by the Word of God alone. Then you be Christ's free man and need fear no man.

A soiled conscience weakens a man; robs one of strength to wage warfare against sin and error, as every exercised Christian will tell you.

The way I propose to answer your question is as follows: -

1. Consider the statement as written.
2. Break it down into its natural parts.
3. Discover the main point of belief.
4. Consider this article in the light of the whole confession of faith.
5. Give my opinion.
6. Recall the purpose of these articles.
7. Consider what the compilers of this article may be denying.
8. Assert what the true position is, one, which we could agree with.
9. Consider what one should do if the article is in error.
10. Recall Mr Popham said in 1906 about this question.
11. Answer the assertion as listed in my broken down

form (see b) above)
12. Give my conclusion.

I think by looking at the article in this way we may be able to see more clearly the path we are to take.

To the first point then; the article 32 itself: -

We believe that it would be unsafe; from the brief records we have of the way in which the apostles, under the immediate direction of the Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely different circumstances.

And we further believe that an assumption that others have been inspired as the apostles were has led to the grosses errors amongst both Romanists and professed Protestants.

In the articles we find; there are several assertions

1. We have only brief records of Apostolic addresses to mixed groups of people.
2. That such occasions were certain special and circumstantial cases.
3. That on these occasions they were under the immediate direction of the Lord.
4. That from these cases we cannot derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses.
5. That these occasions were under widely different circumstances than the present day (1878).
6. That to derive any absolute and universal rules would be unsafe.
7. That it is an assumption that any one has ever been inspired as the Apostles.
8. That such assumptions have let to gross errors found amongst Romanists and professed Protestants.

In breaking the article down in this way it is easier to treat each point. However, I think the main point of belief is: -

"We cannot derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses from certain particular scriptures".

The rest of the article anticipates objections by those who make reference to scriptures containing Apostolic addresses and justifies such caution by alluding to errors of the Romanists and professed Protestants.

Repentance and responsibility

All men should cease from sin and it is right to rebuke men for sins. Men should turn from sin and live uprightly. Such repentance is a duty of all men even if there was no salvation. Remember God is good and the goodness of God leads men to repentance. But after, due to his hardness and impenitent heart wrath was treasured up unto himself against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. When God would render to every man according to his deeds. Romans 2 1-6. Hence the gospel calls men (outwardly by) to these duties of religion he has fallen from and a natural and legal repentance; this being distinguished from evangelical repentance. The natural or legal repentance being enjoined and pressed upon all men in a state of nature whether dead elect or none elect through the gospel. (See Dr J Gill Body of Divinity on repentance towards God and effectual calling.) Also read the Arminian Skeleton by William Huntingdon, page 217 / 218, where he states God hath power to command a change of hearth and to make them clean even though man has lost the ability to comply. If you read the Seceders it is written of Williams Tiptaff that towards the end of his life her continually called men to repentance (Seceders Vol. I). I know of no Strict Baptists who would deny this and it seems difficult to believe the compilers of these added articles could have fallen from the truth. Nevertheless we must take the

articles as written for these articles define and limit church membership to such as agree with the compilers of these articles.

If these compilers deny ministers or Christians should warn people and children of their sinful ways by informing them; unless they repent they shall perish for their sins they shall perish and exhort them to cease from them and call upon God for mercy they are wrong. For this duty is a fallen creatures duty whether dead elect or reprobate. This repentance may be considered as legal and to what natural conscience leads to. Of this kind o repentance Jonah, and the prophets, and the Lord Jesus, the apostles and the ministry of the gospel commands.

But if these compilers assert that the grace of evangelical repentance (repentance which flows from faith in Christ is a free grace blessing, a gift of God, is bestowed, and such repentance is unto life. That it flows from a love to Christ having knowledge of sins already pardoned then they are right. Since this cannot be a duty of all men or any in a state of nature. Hence no minister of the gospel in his right mind would dream of exhorting such to believe and turn to God in this way.

This I believe I could prove to be the position of Dr Gill, William Gadsby, John Warburton, John Kershaw, William Huntington and Joseph Philpot position.

This is my position and I believe to be the biblical one. Hence we deny Duty Faith and Duty Repentance and do not agree with Andrew Fuller who expressed his views in his book "The Gospel worthy of all Acceptation". Nor Baxterianism as stated in article 28.

Now if you ask me what was in the minds of the writer and body of men that asserted these added articles it is rather difficult to say, for this reason we need to widen our research and find other evidence to establish their meaning. We know

this; these men were not inspired as the Apostles, as they admit this in their articles. So they are self-confessed fellable men and so may be in error on this matter, whatever they thought. The problem that we may find is this: what aught you to do if we discover through our research these men were wrong on this point? I'm sure this would be the fear of any person who stands to loose many things should they discover any such error in their articles of religion. However the Christian should not retreat when faced with such a reality. My position would be to do what conscience dictates, in the fear of God, knowing that what we turn our hand to do, we do with all our might and leave the outcome to the Lord. By these means the Christian church has always prospered and of course we see the Lord our God work for us in establishing His truth amongst us. Indeed we must so do, if we are to contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints.

If I may direct you to the Gospel Standards committee 's response to the same question in 1906. Mr Popham writes: -

" It is not for me say what was in the minds of the framers of those Articles, nor yet affirm that they were all accurate theologians etc.

Here we find the same difficulty and admittance that Mr Popham was not in the position to say what was in the mind of Mr Hazelrigg and the men that adopted those added articles. He may have known and was not prepared to say or could only surmise; in which case he could not speak on that which he knew not. From this question we learn the problem is not new by any means, nor is it easily solved.

My Comments Article 32

1. We have only brief records of Apostolic addresses to mixed groups of people. Be this as it may, we have the record of which it pleased God to grant and that scripture is that which is profitable for doctrine, reproof and correction in righteousness. Yes every word, accent and punctuation. (As

in the original)

2. That such occasions were special and circumstantial cases. Every case and occasion is special and peculiar and can never be repeated and no one could deny all circumstances are different.

3. That on these occasions the Apostles was under immediate direction of the Lord. We know the apostles were not always under the immediate direction of the Lord as Peter is discovered to us. However since this article does not refer to any particular reference this cannot be disproved.

4. That from this case we cannot derive universal rules for ministerial addresses. Since these cases are not specified who can say. However we draw rules from ministerial addresses from no single example but from the whole tenor of the scriptures and hence we are able to deny certain modes of congregational addresses.

5. That these occasions were under different circumstances and widely different than the present day of 1878. No person would deny that the times in 1878, in England, were different to those days of the Apostles in other lands, but we do take note of these occasions and differing circumstances in order to understand Apostolic doctrine.

6. That to derive any absolute and universal rules would be unsafe. This has been considered in part under my point IV. We derive any such rules from the whole of the scripture and not just one part. I would say it be unsafe to ignore the apostolic examples for our apostle exhorted "These things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of piece shall be with you".

7. That it is an assumption that any one has been inspired as the Apostles. To this the whole body of Christ agree, that is they who take the scripture to be the only rule of their faith and practice.

8. That such assumptions have lead to the gross errors

found in Romanists and professed Protestants. Since we deny apostolic inspiration to any but apostles this must be the case.

My Conclusion To This Article

As I have already said earlier, it had been better not to include this article (as it stands) since it is not specific, tends to diminish the use of every part of scripture and leaves an uncertain question mark "What is the compiler driving at"? Hence Mr Popham could not affirm that all these men were accurate theologians; are we in any better position today to do so? I think an understanding of how these articles came to be added could shed more light on the subject but that I must leave unless it is important to you.

Yours in the cause, concern and care of truth, with love to the Lord Jesus and his dear people.

David Clarke

20. Gospel Standard Articles

Articles of Faith and Rule

These Articles of Religion were subscribe to by **Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist,** on 16th January 1981, when the church became a Gospel Standard Listed cause. Information relating to Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists may be seen in the Wikipedia article under None Conformist Particular Baptists Place of Worship.

For further amplification of these Articles of Faith, readers are referred to the book, What Gospel Standard Baptists Believe, by J. H. Gosden, published by the Gospel Standard Societies in 1993 and obtainable from Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts. AL5 3BZ.

The following Articles of Faith are the same as those of the "Gospel Standard" Aid and Poor Relief Societies. Some of them are taken from those of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, 1640, &c., and the General Assembly of Baptist Ministers and Messengers, in London, 1689, and subsequently revised by Dr. Gill. These were amended by the late Mr. W. Gadsby, Mr. J. M'Kenzie, and Mr. J. C. Philpot; and afterwards, in 1878, well considered and unanimously agreed to by a duly-appointed Committee, consisting of the following friends: Mr. J. Gadsby, Mr. Hatton, Mr. Hazlerigg, Mr. Hemington, Mr. Hinton, Mr. J. Knight, Mr. Mockford, Mr. Vine, and Mr. Wilton; and finally unanimously adopted at a General Meeting of the Founders, ministers and others, of the Societies. The Rules of the Societies require that no person shall receive benefit from the Societies until he or she shall acknowledge his or her belief in the Articles.

ARTICLES

1. The Holy Scriptures

We believe in the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and receive them as a gracious revelation of the mind and will of God[2]; and we believe that therein are revealed all the doctrines and truths which we here state[3].

2. The Trinity

We believe that there is but one living and true God[4]; that there are Three Persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost[5] – and that these Three Persons are equal in nature, power and glory; and we believe that the Son and the Holy Ghost are as truly and as properly God as the Father[6].

3. The Everlasting Love Of God; Election; Predestination; Adoption; And The Eternal Covenant Of Grace

We believe in the everlasting and unchangeable love of God[7]; and that before the foundation of the world the Father did elect a certain number of the human race unto everlasting salvation, whom He did predestinate unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will[8]; and we believe that in fulfilling this gracious design, He did make a covenant of grace and peace with the Son and with the Holy Ghost on behalf of those

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2 Deut. 4. 2; Ps. 19. 7; Prov. 30. 5, 6; 2 Pet. 1. 19-21; Rev 22. 18, 19; John 5. 39.
3 2 Tim. 3. 15-17.

4 Exod. 3. 14; Deut. 4. 35; Deut. 6. 4; Num. 23. 19; 1 Sam. 2. 2, 3; Ps. 90. 2; Ps. 115. 3; Ps. 135. 5; Ps. 139. 7-10; Prov. 15. 3; Ecc. 3. 14; Isa. 40. 28; Isa. 45. 22; Isa. 46. 9; Jer. 10. 10; Jer. 23. 24; Mal. 3. 6; Mark 12. 29; John 4.24;1 Cor. 8.6; Col.1.16.
5 Matt. 28.19; John1.1; 2 Cor.13.14; 1 John 5.7; Jude 20, 21.
6 John 10. 15, 30; Eph. 2. 22; Heb. 1. 3; Heb. 9. 14.
7 Jer. 31. 3.
8 Gal. 4. 5; Eph. 1. 2-13; 1 Thess. 5. 9; 2 Thess. 2. 13; 2 Tim.1.9; 1 John 3.1; 1Pet.1.2; 1 Pet.2.9.3 2 Sam. 23. 5; John 1. 17.

persons thus chosen[9], and that in this covenant the Son was appointed a Saviour, and all spiritual blessings provided for the elect, and also that their persons, with all the grace and glory designed for them, were put into the hands of the Son as their Covenant Head, and made His care and charge4.

4. The Fall Of Man

We believe in the Fall of our first parents, and that by it the whole of the human race became involved in, and guilty of, Original Sin; and that as they are born into the world, the whole of their posterity are, in consequence, actual transgressors against God[10]. And we believe that by the Fall all men were rendered both unable and unwilling spiritually to believe in, seek after, or love God until called and regenerated by the Holy Ghost[11].

5. The Sacred Humanity Of

The Lord Jesus Christ And His Offices

As Mediator, Surety And Substitute

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, being set up from everlasting as the Mediator of the New Covenant, and having engaged to be the Surety of His people, did, in the fulness of time, really and truly assume human nature, and not before, either in whole or in part[12]. And we believe that, though He existed from all eternity as the eternal Son of God[13], the human soul of the Lord Jesus did not exist before it was created and formed in His body by Him who forms the soul of man within him, when that body was conceived, under the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, in

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9 2 Sam. 23. 5; John 1. 17.
10 Rom. 5. 12-21; Ps. 58. 3.
11 Gen. 6.5; Gen. 8.21; Job 14.4; Job 25.4; Ps. 51.5; Jer. 13. 23; Jer. 17. 9; Matt. 15. 19; Rom. 3. 10-24; Rom. 5. 12-19; 1 Cor. 15. 22, 45-50; Eph. 2. 3; 1 John 5. 19.
12 Prov. 8. 23.
13 John1.18; Phil.2.5-8; Heb.1.5,8; Heb.13.8; 2John3; Rev. 1. 8.

the womb of the virgin Mary[14]. And we believe that Christ's human nature consists of a true body and reasonable soul, both of which, together and at once, the Son of God assumed into union with His Divine Person, when made of a woman and not before[15]; that this human nature was not sinful, peccable, or mortal[16], though capable of death by a voluntary act[17], but essentially and intrinsically pure and holy[18]; and that in it He really suffered, bled and died, as the Substitute and Surety of His church and people, in their room and stead, and for no others[19]; whereby, together with His holy, spotless life, He fulfilled the law, and satisfied all the claims of justice, as well as made a way for all those blessings which are needful for His people, both for time and eternity[20].

6. Particular Redemption

We believe that the eternal redemption which Christ has obtained by the shedding of His blood is special and particular[21]; that is to say, that it was intentionally designed only for the Elect of God, the Sheep of Christ, who therefore alone share in the special and peculiar blessings thereof [22].

7. Imputed Righteousness;

Justification; And Pardon

We believe that the justification of God's Elect is only by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ imputed to them[23], without consideration of any works of righteousness,

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14 Isa. 7. 14; Matt. 1. 23; Luke 1. 26-38; John 1. 14; Gal. 4. 4.
15 Luke 2. 40; Heb. 2. 14-17.
16 Ps. 16. 10; Acts 2. 27.
17 John 10. 17, 18.
18 Song 5. 9-16; Heb. 7. 26.
19 John 10. 15, 26; John 17. 9, 13.
20 Heb. 9. 22-28.
21 Gal. 3. 13; Heb. 9. 12-15.
22 Isa. 35. 10; John 10. 15, 25-28; Acts 2. 47; Acts 13. 48; Acts 20. 28; Rom. 5. 8-10; Rom. 8. 33, 34; Rom. 9. 13, 15, 16; Rev. 14. 4.
23 Isa. 45. 24; Isa. 64. 6; Jer. 23. 6; Matt. 7. 18; Luke 18. 13; Acts 13. 39; Rom. 4. 4, 5; Rom. 5. 19; Rom. 10. 4; 1 Cor. 1.30; 2Cor.5.21; Phil.3.9; Ti-

before or after calling, done by them, and that the full and free pardon of all their sins, past, present, and to come, is only through the blood of Christ, according to the riches of His grace[24].

8. Regeneration

We believe that the work of regeneration[25] is not an act of man's free will and natural power, but that it springs from the operation of the mighty, efficacious and invincible grace of God.

9. Conviction Of Sin;

Believing In Christ; And Final Perseverance

We believe that all those who were chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son, and no others, shall, at the appointed time, certainly be convinced in their hearts of sin by the Spirit[26], be brought in guilty before God, and made the recipients of eternal life, coming to Christ for salvation, and believing on Him as the Anointed of the Father, and the only Mediator between God and man[27]; but that none can spiritually come to Christ unless drawn by the Father[28]; and that all the elect shall be thus drawn to Christ, and shall finally persevere; so that not one of the elect shall perish, but all arrive safely in glory[29].

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tus3.5.
24 Rom. 3. 20-27; Rom. 4. 22; Rom. 9. 11; 2 Tim. 1. 9; Heb.1.3; Heb.9.22; 1Pet.3.18; 1John2.1.

25 Jer. 50. 20; Ps. 110. 3; John 1. 13; John 6. 29, 63, 65; John 16. 8; Rom. 8. 16; Rom. 11. 4, 6; James 1. 18.

26 John 16.8; 1Cor.2.14; Eph.2.1.
27 1Tim.2.5; Heb.8.6; Heb.9.15; Heb.12.24.
28 John 6. 44, 65.
29 Job 17. 9; Matt. 25. 34; John 4. 14; John 5. 24; John 6. 37, 44-47; John 10. 28; John 17. 6, 12, 24; Acts 2. 47; Rom. 8. 29-39; Phil. 1. 6; 1 Pet. 1. 3-5.

10. Spiritual Death And Spiritual Life

We believe that all men are by nature so completely dead in trespasses and sins that they cannot, while in that state, know or feel anything of God in Christ, spiritually, graciously, and savingly[30]. And we believe that, when quickened into everlasting life in Christ (as the elect alone are, or can be, or will be), the vessel of mercy then first feels spiritually the guilt of sin, and is taught to know, in his own experience, the fall and ruin of man[31]. Thus every quickened child of God is brought, in God's own time and way, through the Spirit's teaching, from necessity to depend for salvation on Christ's blood and righteousness alone[32]. And we believe that this teaching will not lead him to licentiousness, but make him willing to walk in good works, to which he is ordained, and which are acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ[33].

11. Man Unable To Perform Spiritual Good Works Until He Is Called By Grace

We believe that man can never do a good work, properly so called, until the grace of God is implanted in his heart[34], and that nothing is spiritually good but what God Himself is pleased to communicate to, and work in, the soul, both to will and to do of His good pleasure[35]. And we also believe that man's works, good or bad, have not anything to do with his call, or being quickened, by the Holy Spirit[36].

12. Effectual Calling; The Application Of The Law; And The Manifestation Of Mercy And Pardon

We believe in the effectual calling of all the elect vessels

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30 Eph. 2. 1-3.
31 Isa. 1. 6; Rom. 3. 10-19; Rom. 7. 18.
32 John 6. 68; John 10. 9; John 14. 6; Acts 4. 12; Eph. 2. 8-10; Heb. 6. 18.
33 Rom. 8. 14; Gal. 5. 16-25; Gal. 6. 14-16. 19
34 Rom. 8. 8.
35 Phil. 2. 13.
36 2Cor.3.5; Eph.2.3-9; Tit.3.5; Heb.13.21.

of mercy out of the ruins of the Fall in God's appointed time, and that the work of regeneration, or new birth, is the sovereign work of God, and His work only, the sinner being as passive therein as in his first birth, and previously thereto dead in trespasses and sins[37]. We believe in the application of the Law to the elect sinner's conscience by the Spirit of God[38], showing the sinner how greatly he has broken that Law, and feelingly condemning him for the same; and in the manifestation of mercy and pardon through Christ alone made known to the soul by God the Holy Ghost[39].

13. The Effects Of Faith

We believe that faith is the gift of God[40], as well as true spiritual repentance and hope[41], and a manifestation of pardon to the soul; that through faith Christ is made precious to the soul[42], and the soul drawn out in love to God[43]; that all are the fruits and effects of the blessed Spirit, and that they will most certainly be productive of good works, and a walk and conversation becoming the Gospel[44].

14. The Resurrection Of The Body;

And Eternal Glory Or Damnation

We believe in the Resurrection of the body, both of the just and the unjust[45]; that the just (the elect) shall be raised up in glory and honour[46], and be openly acknowledged and fully acquitted in the Judgment Day, before angels, devils and sinners, and made fully and eternally blest both in body and

37 John 3. 3-8; John 6. 37-65; Rom. 8. 30; 1 Cor. 1. 26-29; Eph. 2. 4, 5.
38 Rom. 7. 7, 9, 12.
39 Ps.30.3; Ps.130.7; Isa.40.2; Jer.33.8; Mic.7.18; Rom. 7. 5-10.

40 Eph. 2. 8.
41 Acts 5.31; Rom. 15.13; 2 Thess. 2.16; 1 Pet.1.3.
42 1 Pet. 2. 7.
43 1 John 4. 19.
44 Gal. 2. 16-21; Gal. 5. 22-26.
45 Acts 24. 15.
46 Matt. 24. 31; Matt. 25. 31-40.

soul; and that the wicked shall be raised up to be condemned, body and soul, to the unspeakable torments of hell for ever and ever[47].

15. Baptism And The Lord's Supper

We believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper[48] are ordinances of Christ, to be continued till His Second Coming; and that the former is requisite to the latter; that is to say, that those only can scripturally sit down to the Lord's Supper who, upon their profession of faith, have been baptised, by immersion, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and that, therefore, what is called "Mixed Communion"[49] is unscriptural, improper, and not to be allowed in the churches of Christ[50].

16. The Gospel, Not The Law,

The Believer's Rule Of Conduct

We believe that the Believer's Rule of conduct is the gospel, and not the law, commonly called the Moral Law, issued on Mount Sinai, which hath no glory in it by reason of the glory that excelleth, that is to say, the Gospel[51]; the Gospel containing the sum and substance and glory of all the laws which God ever promulgated from His throne, and the Jews, because of the hardness of their hearts, being permitted some things which the Gospel forbids[52].

17. Infant Baptism Denied

We deny and reject, as unscriptural and erroneous,the

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47 Isa. 26. 19; Dan. 12. 2; Matt. 25. 31-46; John 5. 28, 29; Acts 23. 6; Rom. 6. 23; Rom. 8. 11, 23; Rom. 14. 10-12; 1 Cor. 15. 52; 2 Cor. 5. 10; Rev. 20. 12-15.

48 1Cor.11.2,26; 1Cor.14.40; Col.2.5-8.

49 Rom. 16. 17

50 Matt. 3. 13-16; Matt. 28. 19, 20; John 3. 22, 23; Acts 2. 37-42; Acts 8. 12; Acts 9. 18; Acts 10. 47, 48; Acts 16. 14, 15, 30, 31, 33; Acts 18. 8; Acts 19. 1-6; Rom. 6. 3; Col. 2. 12.

51 Gal. 6. 15, 16; 2 Cor. 3. 10; Rom. 7. 2-4.

52 Deut. 24. 1; Matt. 19. 8, 9.

baptism of infants[53], whether by immersion, sprinkling, pouring, or any other mode.

18. Baptismal Regeneration Denied

We reject as blasphemous the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration[54]; that is, that the person baptised is or can be regenerated in, by or through baptism, much less, if possible, by infant sprinkling.

19. Sanctification

We believe in the sanctification of God's people, the term sanctification signifying a separation and setting apart by and for God. This, in the child of God, is three-fold: 1, by election by God the Father[55]; 2, by redemption by God the Son[56]; and 3, by the almighty regenerating operation of God the Holy Ghost[57]. We believe that the blessed Spirit is the Author of what is styled in Scripture the new creature, or creation[58], or new heart[59]; being, in truth, an implantation of the Divine nature[60], through which the child of God would, according to the inner man[61], be holy as God is holy, and perfectly fulfil all the good pleasure of the Father's will; but groans being burdened, being constantly opposed by the contrary workings of the old man[62]. We reject the doctrine of progressive sanctification, or that a child of God experiences such a gradual weakening, subduing, or rectification of the old nature, called in Scripture the old man[63], or such a continued general improvement as shall make him at any time

53 Heb. 11. 6; Acts. 8. 12, 37.
54 John 1. 13; 1 Pet. 1. 23.
55 Jude 1.
56 John 17. 19.
57 Rom. 15. 16.
58 2 Cor. 5. 17; Eph. 4. 24.
59 Ezek. 36. 26.
60 2 Pet. 1. 4.
61 Rom. 7. 22.
62 Rom. 7; Gal. 5. 17.
63 Eph. 4. 22; Col. 3. 9.

less dependent upon the communications of the Spirit and grace of Christ for all goodness, or less a poor, vile, wretched, helpless sinner in himself, and in his own estimation[64].

20. Growth in grace

We believe that the grace of God produces a real change in a man, and teaches him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live godly[65], and that there is a growth in grace[66], which consists principally in a growing experimental knowledge of a man's sinful self[67], the vanity of the creature, the glory of God, the spirituality of His law, and the want and worth of Jesus Christ. This is accompanied by a deepening distrust of everything but the grace and love of God in Christ for salvation, and is not a growth in conscious goodness, but in felt necessity and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ[68].

21. Indwelling Sin

We reject the doctrine of perfection in the flesh, or that the believer ever becomes free from indwelling sin[69] in this life, or whilst in the body. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

22. Backsliding And Chastening

We reject the doctrines that the children of God cannot backslide, and that God does not chastise His people for sin[70]. For, though we believe that a child of God is called from a death in sin to a life of righteousness, and would, according to the law of his mind, or new nature, in all respects obey God's holy will as declared in the Scriptures, yet through the temptations

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64 John15. part of 5; 2 Cor. 3.5; Rev .3.17.
65 Tit. 2. 11, 12.
66 2 Pet. 3. 18; Phil. 3. 8-10; Mark 4. 26-29; 1 John 2. 12, 13.
67 1 Kings 8.38; Ezra 9.6; Job 40.4-6; Ps. 73.22; Dan. 10. 8.
68 John 3.30; 1Cor. 2.2; Tit. 3.3-8; Eph. 3.8; 1 Tim.1.15.
69 1 John 1. 8; 1 Kings 8. 46; Job 9. 2; Job 15. 14; Ps.119. 96; Prov. 20. 9; Ecc. 7. 20; Rom. 7. 18.
70 1 Cor. 11. 32.

of Satan, the allurements of the world, and the power and deceitfulness of indwelling sin, he may fall for a season like David, Peter, and other Bible saints did[71]. But we believe that when the children of God thus sin against God, and transgress His holy revealed will, God does in various ways and degrees chastise them for it[72], not in vindictive anger, but in tender love, as a father does the son in whom he delighteth[73]. We believe, too, that in this matter of chastisement for sin God will deal in a most sovereign way, and as a God of judgment; so that, though the punished child shall be made to discern the reason of the rod[74], it is seldom safe for others to judge according to the outward appearance. We further believe that no man living in habitual sin gives any proof that he is a child of God, and we cannot, therefore, have fellowship with him, be his profession what it may.

23. Final Perseverance

We believe, as expressed in Article 9, in the doctrine of the final perseverance[75] of the saints, and that, however much the elect of God may be tried by sin, and opposed by Satan, they shall all eventually attain to everlasting glory. Not one of them shall perish, for none can pluck them out of the Father's hand.

24. Gospel Invitations

We believe that the invitations of the Gospel[76], being spirit and life*, are intended only for those who have been made by the blessed Spirit to feel their lost state as sinners and their need of Christ as their Saviour, and to repent of and forsake their sins.

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71 Jer. 3. 14, 22; Hos. 14.
72 Ps. 89. 30-33; Prov. 3. 11, 12.
73 Job 5. 17; Ps. 94. 12; Ps. 119. 67; Isa. 54. 7, 8; Heb. 12. 5-11.
74 Mic. 6. 9.
75 Isa. 51. 11; John 10. 28, 29.
76 Isa. 55. 1; John 7. 37; Prov. 28. 13; Matt. 11. 28-30; John 6. 37.

25. Universal Redemption Denied

We deny that Christ died[77] for all mankind.

26. Duty Faith And Duty

Repentance Denied

We deny duty faith and duty repentance – these terms signifying that it is every man's duty to spiritually and savingly repent and believe[78]. We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever. So that we reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God[79].

27. The Non-Elect Incapable Of

Receiving Grace

We deny that the Holy Spirit ever enlightens[80] the non-elect, to make them capable at all of receiving grace.

28. Baxterianism Denied

We reject the doctrine called "Baxterianism"; that is to say, that while all the elect shall assuredly be saved, there is a residuum of grace in Christ for the rest, or any of the rest, if they will only accept it[81].

29. Indiscriminate Offers Of Grace Denied

While we believe that the Gospel is to be preached in or proclaimed to all the world, as in Mark 16. 15, we deny offers of grace; that is to say, that the gospel is to be offered indiscriminately to all[82].

30. Christ's Glorified Body

We believe that the glorified body of the Lord Jesus

77 Matt. 25. 31-46; John 10. 11, 15, 26.
78 Gen. 6. 5; Gen. 8. 21; Matt. 15. 19; Jer. 17. 9; John 6. 44, 65.
79 John12.39,40; Eph.2.8; Rom.8.7,8; 1Cor.4.7.
80 Isa. 6. 9, 10; John 14. 17; Rom. 11. 7, 8; Mark 4. 11, 12; Luke 8. 10; John 12. 39, 40.
81 John 3. 27; 1 Cor. 2. 14.
82 Mark 16.15; 2 Cor. 4.3,4.

Christ is the same flesh and bones now in heaven as that which hung upon the cross[83].

31. Annihilation Of The Wicked Denied

We reject the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked, and believe that all who die out of Christ shall be turned into hell, the fire of which shall never be quenched, the wicked there suffering for ever the torments of eternal fire[84].

Note: It is the same word in the Greek which, in Matt. 25. 46, declares the eternity of life for the sheep which declares the eternity of punishment for the goats. So (Rev. 20. 15), those who are "not written in the book of life" are "cast into the lake of fire", where they are "tormented for ever and ever" (Ver. 10). Now the same words which are there translated "for ever and ever" are also used in Rev. 10. 6, where the angel "sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever". Therefore, if God is "to live for ever and ever", the torment in the lake of fire is to be for ever and ever; for the words are exactly the same in both passages.

32. Preaching Of The Gospel

(Apostolic Uniqueness)

We believe that it would be unsafe, from the brief records we have of the way in which the apostles, under the immediate direction of the Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely- different circumstances. And we further believe that an assumption that others have been inspired as the apostles were has led to the grossest errors amongst both Romanists and professed Protestants.

Note: When Articles 32-35 were added to the original 31 Articles, no Scripture references were provided, except for Article 35. Readers are referred to pages 150-152 of the

83 1 Cor. 15. 16, 20; Luke 24. 39; Acts 1. 9, 11.

84 Matt. 25. 46; Rev. 19. last part of 20; Rev. 14. 10, 11; Rev. 20. 10, 15.

book, What Gospel Standard Baptists Believe, where several Scripture references are given. For details of this book, see Note at the end of the Preface on page 7.

33. Preaching To The Unconverted

Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and, on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption.

Note: For Scripture references, see the Note which appears at the foot of Article 32.

34. Preaching Of The Gospel

(Exhorting The Unregenerate)

We believe that any such expressions as convey to the hearers the belief that they possess a certain power to flee to the Saviour, to close in with Christ, to receive Christ, while in an unregenerate state, so that unless they do thus close with Christ, etc., they shall perish, are untrue, and must, therefore, be rejected. And we further believe that we have no Scripture warrant to take the exhortations in the Old Testament intended for the Jews in national covenant with God, and apply them in a spiritual and saving sense to unregenerated men.

Note: For Scripture references, see the Note which appears at the foot of Article 32.

35. Degrees Of Faith

We believe that there are various degrees of faith, as little faith and great faith[85]; that when a man is quickened by the blessed Spirit, he has faith given him to know and feel that he is a sinner against God[86], and that without a Saviour

85 Matt. 6. 30; Matt. 15. 28.
86 Luke 18. 13.

he must sink in black despair. And we further believe that such a man will be made to cry for mercy, to mourn over and on account of his sins[87], and, being made to feel that he has no righteousness of his own[88], to hunger and thirst after Christ's righteousness; being led on by the Spirit until, in the full assurance of faith, he has the Spirit's witness in his heart that his sins are for ever put away[89]; but that the faith is the same in nature as is imparted in his first awakenings, though now grown to the full assurance thereof.

Declaration (Especially for church members)

Now all and each of these doctrines and ordinances we can honestly say it is our desire to maintain and defend in one spirit and with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

And we desire, by the grace of God, that our conversation, both in the world and in the church, may be such as becometh the gospel of Christ, and that we may live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.

And, as it regards each other in church communion, we desire to walk with each other in all humility and brotherly love; to watch over each other's conversation, to stir up one another to love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but, as we have opportunity, to worship God according to His revealed will; and, when the case requires, to warn and admonish one another according to God's Word.

Moreover, we desire to sympathise with each other in all conditions, both inward and outward, into which God, in His providence, may bring us; as also to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities; and particularly to pray

87 Matt. 5. 4.
88 Isa. 64. 6; Phil. 3. 9.
89 Rom. 8. 16; Eph. 4. 30; Heb. 9. 12, 26; Heb. 7. 27; Heb. 10. 14.

for one another, and for all saints, and that the gospel and the ordinances thereof may be blessed to the edification and comfort of each other's souls, and for the gathering in of vessels of mercy unto Christ.

And for every blessing and favour, both temporal and spiritual, we, who are as deserving of hell as the vilest of the vile, desire to ascribe all the praise to the glory of the grace of a Triune God.

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Church Rules

The following note is reproduced from earlier booklets:

"Several of the Rules hitherto in circulation being found impracticable, the "Gospel Standard" Committee has formulated the following Rules, and issued them in the hope that they will be useful to the churches. Although it believes that these Rules will be generally acceptable, the Committee desires to make it quite clear that whereas the Articles of Faith are enrolled and binding upon all the churches of the "Gospel Standard" denomination, these Rules are not so, but are for guidance only, and each church will act independently in regard to adopting them or otherwise in regulating its own affairs."

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Admittance Into Church Membership

1. Any person desiring to become a member of this church, must first be interviewed by the pastor (if there be one) and deacons, who, if in their judgment the candidate is suitable for membership, shall duly bring the matter before the church. A copy of the church's Articles of Faith and Rules to be given to each candidate for their instruction.

2. At a regularly constituted church meeting (see rules 13- 15) the candidate (whether already a member of another church or not) shall make a verbal confession of faith, and

declare what he or she believes God has done for his or her soul. If accepted by a vote of the majority of members present and voting, signature in the church book to the Articles of Faith and Rules will be required. Thereafter, at the earliest convenient opportunity, the person shall, unless previously baptised by immersion, be so baptised in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and be formally received into church fellowship at the next observance of the Lord's Supper.

3. Any person who, having been baptised while only in a carnal profession of religion, has since been called by the Spirit of God to a knowledge of his or her lost condition by nature and practice, and to living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, being desirous of uniting with this church, shall attend to the ordinance of believers' baptism, according to rule 2 (last clause), for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14. 23).

The Pastorate

4. No minister shall be appointed as pastor until he has supplied at least months on probation, and unless there be in favour at least two-thirds (three-fifths) of the members present and voting at a church meeting duly convened for this particular purpose (see rules 13-15); nor shall any minister be invited to supply on probation without a like majority, also at a duly convened meeting.

5. If at any time where there is a pastor, the conduct of such pastor should be contrary to the precepts of the gospel, or if he should depart from the Articles of Faith or any one of them, or if his ministry should become unprofitable, a majority of the members present and voting at a properly convened church meeting (see rules 13-15) shall be competent to declare that he shall no longer be the pastor; and he shall be removed from the pastorate accordingly. And at such meeting the pastor shall not be present. Always presuming that adequate opportunity has been afforded the pastor to explain himself.

Discipline

NOTE. – The object of discipline in the Church of Christ is (1) The vindication of the truth; (2) The restoration of any offending brother.

6. Any member of this church knowingly receiving the ordinance of the Lord's Supper with any church not of the same faith and order with ourselves, shall be reproved; and should the offence be repeated, be withdrawn from.

7. Any member knowing another to act disorderly, shall tell the offending brother or sister of his or her fault alone, in the spirit of meekness (Gal. 6. 1); and if not satisfied with the explanation, shall acquaint the pastor or deacons of the church with the matter; and if any member neglect to do so, and be found reporting it to others, such member shall be visited and reproved as acting contrary to Scripture rule.

8. Any member bringing, in any manner, an open reproach on the cause, shall be suspended; and no member suspended for any reason shall again be admitted to the Lord's Supper and to the privileges of membership, until godly sorrow and repentance are manifest, and satisfactory acknowledgement is made to the church.

9. Any member relating to any other person, not a member, what has been said or done at any church meeting, shall be liable, according to the judgment of the pastor and deacons, to be brought before the church to be dealt with.

10. If any member repeatedly neglect to attend the preaching of the Word, the Lord's Supper, and prayer meetings, unless from unavoidable causes known to the pastor and deacons and the church, a reason will be required for his or her absence; and if he or she shall be absent from the Lord's Supper upon more than three successive occasions, without being able to give the pastor or deacons who shall visit such member a satisfactory reason for such absence, they shall bring the matter before the church to be dealt with as it shall determine,

whether for reproof, suspension, or withdrawal from the offending party.

11. Members having private differences between themselves shall not bring the same before the church before the rule laid down in Matt. 18. 15, 16, has been first attended to by the offended party; and in the event of satisfaction not being given, that the peace of the church may if possible be preserved, the offended party shall first inform the pastor or deacons (assembled); but if not satisfied with his, or their mediation or decision, the member shall bring the case before the church, by giving one month's notice in writing to the minister or deacons.

Church Meetings

12. A church meeting, at which the pastor or a minister agreed by the church shall preside, shall be held every months, and oftener if required; and it is expected that all the members who are able will attend. No person shall be present at our church meetings but regular members of this church, except by special consent of the church. No member who may be under church censure shall be present at any church meeting.

13. All church meetings shall be audibly announced from the pulpit or desk when the people are regularly assembled for worship at least on the two Lord's Days immediately preceding the date of any such meeting.

14. The pastor or deacons shall have it in his or their power to call a church meeting whenever he or they consider it necessary; also he or they shall be required to do so when requested by not less than of the members, in any case considered urgent; but in every case proper notice (rule 13) shall be given; and any meeting held, whether called by pastor or deacons, or both, not according to such rule, shall be of none effect.

15. No motion of any serious importance (e.g., cases of discipline, application for membership, call to the ministry,

appointment of pastor, etc.) shall be brought forward at any church meeting, unless notice thereof shall have been given at a church meeting held at least one month previous thereto; except in such a case as (in the judgment of the pastor and deacons) the cause of truth would suffer prejudice by delay.

16. All propositions, whether for church membership or otherwise, and all motions, shall be seconded before being put from the chair; and in the event of the voting being equally divided on any subject to be decided, the chairman (president) shall be allowed a second (casting) vote. Any debate or difference that may arise shall be settled by the majority of the members present and voting.

17. When any question has been decided by the majority of the church, if any member shall attempt to set aside or oppose the same decision within six months afterwards, such member shall be accounted as acting disorderly and contrary to rule 16 of this church.

18. Female members may ask questions through a male member, or may, if asked by the chairman (president), answer any question put from the chair; otherwise they are not permitted to speak at church meetings. Should any female member persistently violate this rule, she shall be liable to suspension from the privileges of membership for months.

19. A statement of the finances of the cause shall be laid before the church every months, when the vote of satisfaction or otherwise shall be recorded.

20. The number of the deacons of the church shall not be less than two where practicable; no deacon shall at any time be appointed unless at least two-thirds (three-fifths) of the members present and voting at a church meeting held for the appointment of such deacon, be in favour of such appointment.

Visitors

21. Members of churches of the same faith and order

may commune with this church by giving notice (naming their own church) to the pastor or deacons of their desire to do so not later than before the commencement of the service immediately preceding the communion service; or where the communion service is held separately, not later than the close of the preceding service.

Cessation Of Membership

22. The severance of any member from this church may be only effected by the church itself acting under its duly appointed officers (pastor and deacons), at a properly convened church meeting (see rules 12-15), in the following instances :-

(a) In respect of an orderly member for transfer to another church of the same faith and order, in which event an honourable dismissal should be granted; or,

(b) By disciplinary action of withdrawal AS A LAST RESORT in the case of any disorderly member neglecting to hear either

(1) An offended member's private remonstrance; or, after that,

(2) The additional exhortations of two or three other brethren; or still further,

(3) The admonition of the whole church, according to Matt. 18. 15-17.

Sanctioning A Member To Preach

23. Any member of the church considering that he has received the call of the Holy Spirit to the solemn work of the ministry of the Gospel, shall, before engaging to preach anywhere, relate to the pastor (or deacons where there is no pastor) his exercises relating thereto; who, if in his (or their) judgment the matter is indeed of the Lord, shall name the

same to the church assembled according to rule 13. In the event of any question or reason entertained by any member or members (on grounds relating to walk or character) why the case should not proceed, the same must be raised and considered at this preliminary meeting; and no examination of the credentials of the member's call shall be undertaken until such question or reason shall have been satisfactorily disposed of by the church. If then agreed by not less than four-fifths (two-thirds) of the members present and voting, the church shall assemble, a month later (according to rule 15), to hear from the member a relation of the matter, and (either then or at a subsequent meeting, as agreed) to hear also an exercise of his gift in preaching. If approved by four-fifths (two-thirds) of the members present and voting, the member shall be given the church's sanction to preach.

Any member preaching contrary to or in neglect of this rule shall be dealt with as walking disorderly.

Should the member consider that his case has been prejudiced, or if through assumed prejudice the pastor or deacons do not bring it forward, the matter may be dealt with according to rule 11. But except for very serious defection in the church, it is believed that when such a matter is truly of the Lord no such course will be needful.

Notes:

(1) In some cases where the majority stated is not quite reached, that there may be no precipitate conclusion in so solemn a concern, it may be considered advisable for the church to hear the member preach on some further occasion or occasions, before coming to a final decision. This course should only be adopted when the church agrees by a majority of four-fifths (two-thirds) voting in favour.

(2) In cases of pastorless churches, it may be proper for the church to agree to invite the pastor of another church of the same faith and order to preside at the meetings relating to

this important subject.

(3) Bearing in mind the solemn importance of such cases, and the serious responsibility assumed by the church in deciding the same, much earnest prayer is required that the great Head of the church would so dispose each member to act under the spirit of the fear of the Lord, and in the spirit of discernment, and of love to His truth and cause, that the voting may be regulated thereby with a single eye to His glory, according to the will of God.

Note – The blanks in Rules 4, 12, 14, 18, 19 should be filled up, and the alternative majorities in rules 4, 20, 23, be defined, by each individual church.

21. Note From The Author of The Bierton Crisis

One refelection and with hind sight I fell that I needed good Christian men, at the time of my conversion, to direct me in the way, in particular as to what to do with all the stolen goods that I had. No one was available or saw the need of help me in this matter or get involved. There was clearly a need of pastoral care and any Christian man could have helped in this matter.

Now in retrospection the same was true in the Bierton Crisis, good men were needed to step in and offer help to me, just like Mr David Oldham did to his credit.

I have very clear views of the doctrines of grace and full knowledge of the relationship of the Believers and the Law of Evered. I knew very few, in my day who see clearly in this matter.

That the issues that caused controversy at the Bierton Church would not have happened had there been consecutive teaching in the church over the years and good me who were prepared to step in to help. This failure was due to the reliance on supply preachers with no consistent pastoral care.

I am also aware that I remain a member of the Bierton

Strict Baptist Church since the church never terminated my membership and I am entitled to take on the care of the Bierton Church matters now that all former members have died.

I also am of the opinion that a clear understanding of the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem at 70 AD is important to understand the finality of the Law of Moses as its the rule of life for men as the gospel of the lord Jesus Christ declares clearly this is the rule of life for the believer.

It is now David's desire that this publication will serve **"To build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down". Acts 25 verse 36.**

Appendix

Since writing 'The Bierton Crisis' I have discovered that the Gospel Standard Added Articles have cause others concern historically as will be shown below. And it is my opinion that this matter should have been resolved another way rather than that which has happened. This secret history written by William Wileman reveal a reluctance to do what was right at the time. And that an coercion to move men to act in away to achieve ones objectives by withdrawing a deed of gift in order to achieve will not be blessed of God. Never the less God is able to overrule the wrong affairs of men to preserve His truth among His people. Heresies there must be 1 Cor. 11. 19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

It is my testimony that I came to an understanding of the doctrines of grace before joining the Bierton Church and I was fully convinced there can be no free offers of grace, or offers of salvation to any, since the Lord Jesus died for His church and not the whole world. It would seem the awkward wording of the Article has served to draw attention to this importance matter.

When I joined the Bierton Church I met with various

ministers as I have related who took exception to the Added Articles and their wording and to my mind rightly so. That was why I had to make a recommendation to the Bierton Church as related in chapter

Introduction

An article written by William Wileman with appended remarks by F J Kirby were first published in the November 1921 issue of the monthly magazine "The Christian's Pathway". F J Kirby had commenced this magazine in 1896 and was its Editor for more than thirty years and written some 30 years after the Added Articles[90] were added to the existing 31 Articles. History has shown that such unresolved issues mention in these pages have cause a great deal of unrest among Particular Baptist.

There were originally 31 Articles of Religions adopted by Particular Baptists by 1843. The four "Added Articles" were specially written in the late 1870's; the effects of those circumstances surrounding these addition remain to this day.

The first 31 GS Articles were compiled in the mid-19th century based upon the Stamford Articles[91] of 1843 and various amendments and additions to those 15 Stamford Articles. The **"Added Articles"** of the late 1870s were put at the end of the 31 Articles to give the final set of 35 GS Articles. These 35 Gospel Standard Articles are the Articles of Faith written into the Trust Deeds of the Gospel Standard charitable societies which subscribers and beneficiaries.

Sepimus Sears

Septimus Sears, a particular Baptist minister, wrote

90 The term Added Articles refers to Articles 32-35 of the GS Articles. The GS Articles are the 35 Articles of Faith embedded in the Trust Deeds of the Gospel Standard Societies formerly known as the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Societies.

91 Stamford Articles: the 15 Articles of Faith written by J C Philpot based on J Gill and adopted in 1843 by the Church at Stamford Chapel under the pastorate of J C Philpot.

in his memiours about the conflicts that he faced regarding introduction of these added articles. He wrote that toward the end of 1875 there was a period of strife that resulted in the writing of the four "Added Articles". Septimus Sears died whilst under this sustained difficult conflict. Shortly before his death Mr Sears said to a friend:

"They did not mean to kill me but they have done a great deal towards it. I can and do most freely forgive them. They know not what they have done but they did not mean it. Strifes and contentions are not the thing for a dying hour but I have the sweet consciousness that I have spoken God's truth and that I am right and they are wrong."

["Memoir of Septimus Sears" (1880), page 144]

William Wileman

It is clear that the 1921 article by William Wileman had been written after some reluctance. No doubt the writing of it had been prompted by other internal controversies amongst Strict Baptists which had erupted in the preceding months and it had become necessary to counter the myths and half-truths which had arisen. As is often the case, those who would prefer to remain silent are sometimes compelled to break their silence

Gospel Standard Magazine John Gadsby

From a letter written by J. C. Philpot in 1847 it is clear that others, not connected with the Stamford church, wished to adopt his selection of Articles. Interest spread more widely a few years later when John Gadsby advertised the set of Articles on the front cover of his magazine "The Gospel Standard. Minor changes to the Articles were followed by major changes as the promotion was maintained in the 1850s and 1860s. J. C. Philpot died in the last month of the 1860s and the final few Articles were written during the controversies of the 1870s.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s John H. Gosden wrote a series of articles on the GS Articles for inclusion in the issues of the magazine "The Gospel Standard" of those years. In these articles on Articles he remarks on a few but not all, of the deficiencies of the GS Articles.

Some years after his death these articles were collated and published in a book. The title of the book (a title not used by J H Gosden) suggests that adherents to the GS Articles are satisfied with the deficiencies in them. A later book of articles on Articles stated that the GS Articles were "enshrined in Chancery", which to some indicated the popish progress of veneration for fallible dogma.

Trust Deeds

The terms and Articles (or Doctrines) in the Trust Deeds of a Chapel are binding on the Church using that Chapel. When a Church departs from the terms and Articles (or Doctrines) in the Trust Deeds of its Chapel its occupancy of that Chapel becomes illegal. The constitution of a Church must be in complete conformity with the terms and Articles (or Doctrines) in the Trust Deeds of the Chapel in which the Church meets for worship.

J.K. Popham on Trust Deeds

A paragraph from a letter written by J K Popham (this important letter was written and published in 1921 but has not yet been republished) explains the matter clearly. Addressing his remarks to all persons within the GS association he wrote:

". _ _A Trust Deed once executed settles the destination of the property placed under the control of Trustees to be dealt with as the Deed directs. If the acceptance of certain Doctrines is made by the Deed a condition of using the settled property or of receiving benefit from it, the law excludes from participation those who do not accept the specified Doctrines, although otherwise qualified; and at the same time equally

forbids the exclusion of persons otherwise qualified to accept them. The law will not esquire into the propriety of the Doctrines upon which the Trusts are based, so long as they are not contrary to public policy, but will enforce them as it finds them, as the founders of the Trust desired.. ."

The phrase "the control of Trustees" refers to the fact that it is the duty of Trustees to uphold the terms and Articles (or Doctrines) in Trust Deeds (their personal views being irrelevant to the performance of that duty).

21. The History Of The Four "Added "

Articles: 32, 33, 34, 35. November 1921

By William Wileman

Every earthly event and every human action has two aspects: that which is open and manifest, and that which is unseen and beneath the surface.

I am now advanced in years, drawing near to the end of my course, and shall shortly have to lay down my commission at the feet of my Master. It is well known that there has been much pitiable and unprofitable controversy with regard to the Four "Added " Articles. I have not been unobservant of this controversy, but have resolutely refrained from taking any part in it, believing that it has produced a great amount of harm and been a hindrance to our prosperity. I have not heard of a single instance of conversion as a result. At the same time, I am fully convinced that the spirit which prompted the addition of Articles 32 to 35 has been the cause of much of the declension we so sorely lament in our Churches ; and for this reason l think that daylight is better than darkness.

During the progress of this controversy I have noticed statements that were inaccurate through lack of knowledge of certain facts ; and yet I maintained silence. But as Mr. Kirby has applied to me to verify certain facts, and certain dates, which I alone could do, I have very reluctantly yielded to his desire. But let it be strictly observed that I do this not to add to strife and contention, but rather once for all to end them.

Only Person Living

I am the only living person who knows the secret history of the Four "Added " Articles. I was favoured with a lengthened interview with Mr. J. K. Popham in my home on January 26th, 1926 and during conversation I named to him that I had written this Secret History and that in my judgment it was much to be desired that this should be laid before the

Committee, as no present member of the Committee knows anything of the facts. At his request I sent the facts that follow to him on February 3rd, 1921, with the view of my statement being laid before the Committee.

On February 22nd Mr. Popham replied that he had decided that he was not the person to lay it before the Committee.

I am now an elder in the Church of Christ, both as a member and as a minister ; my first poor sermon having been preached in October, 1868. My mature judgment is that controversy, however desirable and even necessary at times, requires certain essential qualifications, and that very few persons possess them. Many persons who enter controversy fondly imagine that they are demolishing Nebuchadnezzans image, while they are only breaking their brother's windows. Right glad should I be if all of us who love and preach the same precious truths could come together and work in harmony ; and if the following statement, painful and sad as it is, should contribute to this, I shall be well repaid for what it will cost me.

I was assistant to Mr. Septimus Sears from the end of 1870 to his death on December 26th, 1877, aged 58.

Sub Editor Gospel Standard

I was sub-editor of the Gospel Standard under Mr. John Gadsby, Mr. Hazlerigg, and Mr. Hemington, from October 21st, 1874, to June, 1881; and editor of the Friendly Companion from its commencement in January, 1875, to June, 1881. I was therefore an interested witness of the controversies of those years.

At the end of 1875, as is well known, an ungodly strife was originated by Mr. J. Gadsby and his helpers concerning the Scriptural teaching of Mr. Sears. This contention continued until Mr. Sears sank under it. I have preserved the letters-nearly a hundred written to me by Mr. Sears, in some

of which he describes the exercises of his heart under this cruel persecution.

In October, 1377, Mr. Joseph Hatton, of Redhill, wrote an Article, in four paragraphs, intended by him to be an antidote to the teaching of Mr. Sears. This Article was approved by Mr. J. Gadsby, and laid before the Committee at its meeting in October, 1877; and notwithstanding the pressure put upon the Committee by Mr. Gadsby, it was laid aside for further consideration. Mr. Hazlerigg especially disapproved of it, as being calculated, and intended, to fetter God's servants in their preaching.

At the Annual Meeting in April, 1878, at the Old Bailey, this Article of Mr. Hatton's, the germ of the Four " Added " Articles, was laid before the meeting for discussion, and raised a violent storm. Mr. Gadsby, Mr. Hatton, and a few others pressed its acceptance; Mr. Hazlerigg, Mr. Hernington and many others, strongly opposed its adoption.

In a private letter to my mother, dated May 13th, 1878, I have my own notes of that stormy meeting. This letter, which came back to me at my mother's death, contains my account of this meeting; and as it was written while the event was fresh in my memory, it may be accepted as strictly accurate.

Mr. Hazelrigg's Opposition

Mr. Hazlerigg opposed the addition of any new Articles as unnecessary, and as calculated to limit the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in His servants.

Mr. Hemington's Opposition

Mr. Hemington said: "I am here as a godly man to speak and act in the fear of God ; and I oppose them on principle. 'I was present at this meeting particularly, to take notes for the Report and for the Gospel Standard for May ; and l reported Mr. Hemington's words verbatim as here given.

The contention grew so warm that 'Mr. Gadsby said he

should cancel the Deed of Gift if the new Articles were not passed.

It was at length proposed and agreed that the Four new Articles should be referred to a Committee of nine, for their consideration.

This sub-committee met on Thursday, May 2nd, 1878, and consisted of the following members :--Gadsby, Hatton Hlazlerigg, Hemington, Hinton, Knight, Mockford, Vine, and Wilton.

It should be stated that the Articles as proposed by Mr. Hatton condemned the use of words and expressions in preaching, rather than laying down principles.

This sub-committee sat for four hours. Hatton, Hinton, and Knight took the part of Mr. Gadsby; Hazlerigg, Hemington, Mockford, Vine, and Wilton opposed him : four kings against five, as in Genesis xiv. _

After considerable discussion, Mr. Hazlerigg took pen and ink and wrote four Articles in a modified form ; namely, very nearly in the form in which they now appear.

Mr. Hazlerigg, who had not forgotten his former attachment to Mr. Sears, pleaded very hard for the adoption of his Articles ; not so much as satisfying his own mind, but for the sake of peace, plainly stating that he was far from being satisfied with the entire transaction. Mr. Gadsby as strongly insisted on the adoption of Mr. Hatton's. It was then put to the vote, when it was found that Mr. Hazlerigg's Articles were carried by five votes against four.

Deed Of Gift Threat To With Draw

When this meeting closed, the members came downstairs and had a long discussion in my presence. The drift of this discussion was to the effect that it was desirable to arrive at some definite result, and even to make this compromise, rather than that Mr. Gadsby should withdraw his gift. But I am able to testify emphatically that both Mr. Hazlerigg and

Mr. Hemington strongly objected even to the compromise that had been effected that afternoon

Mr. Hazlerigg's manuscript was handed to me to copy. It was written in one long sentence, as he usually wrote, and l copied it out in four.

The next day, May 3rd, 1878, Mr. Gadsby commissioned me to prepare a new edition of the Articles of Faith, to revise the Scripture references to the 31 Articles, and to make suitable additions to those references ; also to attach Scripture references to the Four "Added " Articles, 32 to 35, and then to send the whole to press.

This occupied me for about three weeks. I added rather extensively to the Scripture references to the original 31 Articles; so that the Scripture references as they now stand were my own careful selection. But when I came to the Four " Added " Articles I hesitated so far as 32, 33 and 34 were concerned, and left them blank.

When this was completed, l took the "copy " up to Mr. Bishop to be set in type, asking him to let me have the proof-slips. One of these I retained for my own use ; the other nine I sent by post to the nine members of the subcommittee above named, with a note to each, stating that as Article 32 was unscriptural, and Articles 33 and 34 were unnecessary. I had left them without any Scripture references. This I repeated afterwards to Mr. Gadsby verbally.

To my intense surprise not one of the nine suggested any Scripture confirmation; and thus Articles 32 33, and 34 have been without such confirmation to the present day namely for 43 years.

On the G. S. wrapper, p. xvi, June, 1878, Mr. Hazlerigg tried his best to make an apology for passing these Articles ; and again, on p. xii and xiii of July wrapper ; but it is manifest that even therein he was writing against his better judgment and conscience, as l knew at the time, and as he himself very

frequently freely confessed to many persons besides m self.

In addition to this, Mr. Hazlerigg gives his mature judgment concerning the Four " Added " Articles eight years later, in his pamphlet, " A Momentous Question," published by me for him in 1886. He therein distinctly states that he entertained strong objections to those Articles, and gives the grounds of his objections (pages 27 and 28). This pamphlet should be reprinted and widely circulated. I retain the original manuscript.

When it is said that these Articles were "unanimously adopted at a General Meeting of the Societies," it should be realized that it is possible, by stating a art of the truth, to help the reader to believe either more than is true, or less than is true. The Added Articles were indeed laid before the General Meeting in April, 1879, and passed by that meeting; but it must ever be borne in mind:

1.That these meetings have never represented the Churches;

2 .That the Annual Meetings of the earlier years, held in the Old Bailey, seldom consisted of more than thirty or forty persons, beside the ministers.

It may be added here that an "Article of Faith " is a definite declaration of a truth to be "most surely believed among us," having the Word of God for its sure foundation. A mere expression of human opinion, however true, is not, and cannot be, an Article of Faith. This is the vital defect of Articles 32, 33, and 34.

Summery

To sum up, we have the seven following facts :

1. The Four Articles were added with the avowed intention of limiting the liberty of ministers in preaching. To deny this is idle and puerile.

2 . They were entirely unnecessary, because what there is of any good in them is contained in the earlier Articles.

3. They were passed under a threat from Mr. john Gadsby, and were thus forced upon the Societies.

4. In their final modified form they \\'Cl'€ yielded as a compromise, for the sake of peace, and to prevent a division.

5. This being so, and viewed in the light of all the circumstances, it is a. distinct perversion of truth to say that they were unanimously passed.

6. Their addition at all was most vehemently opposed by many godly men, both in private and in public.

7. Finally : Why were Articles 32, 33, and 34 enrolled in Chancery[92] without any support of Holy Writ, after the nine men had been challenged to produce such support? Are we to expect to find grapes growing on thorns, or figs on thistles? -

With regards to the question of Mr. Hemington's signature to the Added Articles, concerning which so much strife has occurred , the exact truth is as follows. When the New Deed of Gift had been prepared, after Mr. Gadsby had revoked the former Deed in 1879, he asked Mr; Hemington to become a Trustee, and of peace Mr. Hemington agreed to do so. This being necessary for him to attach his signature to the Deed as this Trust Deed contains the 35 Articles. By signing the Deed Mr Hemington signed the Articles as a matter of course, as the greater must always include the less. But this fact by no or alters the larger fact that Mr. Hemington never his disavowed his hostility to the four "Added" Articles, nor did he ever approve of their addition to the day of his lamented death.

I think that all who knew and loved Mr. Hemington, and still revere his memory, will be well able to understand, and even appreciate the apparent inconsistency.

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92 The term "Enrolled in Chancery" has no legal significance. It never possessed any legal significance but has been used by some (but clearly, not by W Wileman) in order to inspire veneration for the GS Articles. Some have imagined that enrollment in Chancery ensures an unalterable permanence for that which is enrolled.

And now what is to be the outcome of all this? Brethren, is better for us to do here below than to write pamphlets?

Whilst we are thus engaged the Holy Spirit is grieved : " Are these His doings ?" The churches are desolated; power is withheld from the ministry; there are few or no conversions; our young people are driven away ; the world rejoices ; Satan triumphs. Can we not meet together with the view of seeking peace? When the Jewish temple had ceased to be had ceased to be "Mine house," the Lord Jesus left it, never to enter it again, and said : " Your house is left unto you desolate". And it is of no use for us to ask Him to return to us until we first return to Him.

WILLIAM WILEMAN.
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Annotations And References

Upon The Forgoing "Secret History."

By The Editor.

In annual report of that Annual Meeting, held in April, 1878 (see G. S.1878, pp. ix to lo xii), we are told that, amongst others,the following were present : then appears a list of names of including ministers, and then the names of 11 ladies others were present we naturally conclude, when it was-as it appears to us-necessary to include the ladies, that the Articles of Faith, should look more imposing to consider, with other matters, some extra-ordinary Articles of Faith, should look more imposing. Generally these were attended by only 20 to 30 persons, in addition All money subscribers, whether men or women, possess the right to vote, no matter what his or her religious ' belief may be. This Report is most interesting. In respect to Articles XXXII. to XXXV[93] it reads:

93 Mr. Hatton drew up these Articles in one, about three months before the death of Mr. Sears.

"After considerable discussion in which several friends took part, it was resolved to leave the Articles to the consideration of a Committee consisting of the following friends :-Messrs. Gadsby, Hatton, Hazlerigg, Hemington. Hinton, J. Knight. Blockford, Vine and Wilton: and their decision as to the Articles themselves and also as to adding them, in their present or an altered form, to the Articles of the Society, was to be Final."

In the same issue, on page xi, we are told :

"The Committee appointed at the 'Aid Society' Meeting met at I7 Bouverie Street, on Thursday, May 2nd, all being present. After a sitting of four hours,

"It was resolved, That Articles XXXII., XXXIII., XXXIV., and XXXV., as now amended, be passed, added to the 'Aid Society and made Fundamental Articles of both Societies."

In the above "Secret History " the curtain is drawn aside, and we see, not a prayerful, humble, gracious spirit seeking the good of the Churches, but a spirit of another nature and finally a compromise effected. These Articles stand as the result of a threat. Probably some will be tempted to dispute the accuracy of this statement, but in the course of our historical research we have come across statements from Mr. Gadsby's own pen, which indicates his attitude. He says, when in October, 1877, he gave up the Gospel Standard' Magazine to the Societies :

" I made two reservation- (1) That should the Societies at any time depart from their Articles of Faith, my heirs or executors might take the magazine back. (2) That should l deem it necessary, I might myself take it back at any time during my life." ...

"I have revoked the Deed of Gift ; but I am prepared to execute another providing a proper understanding can be come to " (ssc Gospel Standard June, 1879, p. 292).

This revoking of the Deed of Gift took place subsequently

to the formulating of the Articles in the G. S. wrapper, p. xi, of June issue, 1878.

In July issue of G. S., 1379, on page xi, Mr. Gadsby says 1 "When I gave up the Gospel Standard to our Societies, I had quite intended that the gift should be permanent : and I think it was a great pity that power was reserved to me to take it back, as it subjected me to continual temptations from myself and others, so to do. However, I was led to see my error ; and I now, in accordance with my promise at the meeting on June 6th, unreservedly withdraw all charges of error as made against Mr. Hazlerigg. J.G."

In face of these statements there cannot be the slightest doubt that these Articles were a compromise under threat, and our Churches and ministers were thus brought into a peculiar position, amounting almost to bondage, for the sake not merely of peace but to retain the " DEED OF GIFT." No wonder strife continued.

Another point to note is that these " Articles of Faith," destitute of any Scriptural proof were enrolled as Fundamental Articles! One feels staggered, and the more deeply we have gone into these matters in our historical research the less we have wondered at the subsequent stumbling, confusion[94] and frequent controversies which have been occasioned by them. The Societies are not the denomination. The denomination as Churches existed long before these Societies have been planted in the soil so these Societies have been planted in the soil of our denomination, and are dependent more or lass on the Churches, and not the churches on them.

The Bierton Crisis, by David Clarke, Chapter 19 Bierton a Gospel Standard Cause; And Letter to Mr Royce of Luton, ISBN-13: 978-1508465959
http://www.biertonparticularbaptists.co.uk/resources/Bierton%20Crisis%2001/content.htm#bookmark279