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3 JOINING THE BIERTON STRICT AND PARTICULAR BAPTISTS.

At this stage I feel it is important to explain my joining the church at Bierton. I felt it right to leave the Pentecostal Church that I had associated with and attend the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church in 1973. I felt I could no longer in conscience stay or continue at the church even though I had affection for all the people there when there was a company of people across the road at the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church. They held to and professed the very gospel I had received. From that time I commenced to attend as a member of the congregation at this cause of truth.

Distinguishing Doctrines of Grace.

I began to attend the Bierton church in 1973. A friend, who lived in Wendover, Mr Alan Benning, informed me that the Strict and Particular Baptist Church, at Bierton, believed the doctrines of grace and that a Mr J Hill, a Gospel Standard minister (of Luton Ebenezer Church) was engaged to

preach on an anniversary service in the near future. I was keen to hear him preach. So I began to attend their week night prayer meeting.

My hopes had been raised that I would hear the truth about God's free sovereign grace for it was reported that Mr. Hill was a Gospel Standard minister. I was given to believe I would hear those truths preached by William Huntington, William Gadsby and John Kershaw.¹

I had read their autobiographies and found their writings very helpful and was encouraged by them as they gave all the praise and glory to Jesus Christ the Lord in man's salvation and not to man.

I started to go to the Bierton church just before Mr Hill preached that anniversary year on the Wednesday night prayer meeting, and sat at the back of the chapel. At that time I had no idea of the manor of service or church government nor of any other ministers engaged to preach on a Lords Day or week night services.

The Doctrines of the Gospel

I was convinced that the Word of God was infallible and true and the only rule of conduct for religious practice and belief. I believed the scripture taught us of a sovereign true and living God. That though God be one God, in essence, and the only self existent being, there existed three divine persons that subsisted in the divine essence, the Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. That these three were the one God that the divine nature was not divided. I believed the Son had become truly man at his incarnation being born of the virgin.

I believed the scripture taught that the Lord Jesus Christ is that only begotten son of the Father full of grace and truth, the only saviour of (Gods elect) lost sinners. He being one person yet having two natures. Being God from all eternity the divine Son of the Father and by nature truly God. Yet at the incarnation he took to himself that which he was not; our human nature and so was truly man and without sin, he was impeccable. Hence the glorious complex person of Jesus Christ is the Christ that should come into the world to save sinners. I believed that His glory was veiled during his time of humiliation.

It was this same Jesus that had called me by his grace directly and made him self-known to me, outside of the circles of any Christian church. It was he whom I sought and believed in when I went and heard Mr. Hill preach at the Bierton Anniversary Service. He preached the distinguishing doctrines of grace very clearly. At that time I did not know many preachers who preached these things except, I had heard Dr. Ian Paisley, preach on a record and that sermon was called "Second mile religion".

1 See our Further Publications list at the end of this book

I had also heard Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones preach but he seemed not to emphasize the distinguishing doctrines of Grace, although it was evident that he believed in the sovereignty of God.

The churches I had attended, until this time, around Aylesbury and district appeared to only know of Arminian doctrine and held to a the false doctrine of universal love towards all mankind and a general atonement, as distinct to particular redemption.

Alan Benning and I went to hear Mr Hill preach and we got on very well and made our selves known to him and he was very kind and invited us to his home in Luton.

Mr Benning also informed me of another Strict Baptists church at Linslade where Mr Collier was the paster, another Gospel Standard minister and we attended an anniversary service where a Mr Andrew Randall was preaching. We learned he had once been among the Brethren I could tell from our conversations that he was aware of doctrinal issues of the day, and he had a very serious disposition.

We began to attend other church anniversaries and one of my favourite anniversary was at Waddesdon Hill, where Mr James Hill was the preacher. This was a Gospel Standard cause and was founded as a Particular Baptist church, in 1752. I use to take Bertha and Ruth Ellis, Alan Benning and Grace knight to these meetings. I remember these meetings with fondness.

I Join the Bierton Church.

After a short while I wrote to the church expressing my wish to join the church at Bierton, as I believed that I had that responsibility having experience the new birth and being baptized. I reasoned that I ought to support the cause of Christ at Bierton.

I was received into church membership at the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, on 8th January 1976 but this was not without a problem. This was because the articles of Religion that were given to me to subscribe too were not those listed in the trust deed of 1831, and I could not subscribe to them. There were two articles that I could not subscribe too as they were in error.

Mr Hill of Luton Ebenezer Helps.

I discussed my concerns and misgivings with Mr Hill, the Pastor of Luton Ebenezer church, who fully understood my concerns and after looking at the original articles of Religion, for the Bierton Church, it was realized that there was no record as to how these articles had come into existence. So the church was bound to be subject to their original articles of religion. These were listed in their trust deed of 1831, and these did not contain these items

I could not, in conscience subscribe too.

The church was please to allow me to join them upon my confession of faith and my acceptance of the original Articles of Religion, and not the spurious ones. There was in fact no record of how these other articles of faith came to be in use.

Articles of Religion: The problem

The two Articles in question are as follows Article XII and XVI.

Article XII reads. 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,

Article XVI reads. 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.

My objections Article XII 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. A matter that the Gospel Standard articles 26 treats. The scriptures maintain the gospel of Christ is the believer's rule and not the Law of Moses commonly called the moral law². This gospel is that royal and perfect Law of liberty.

This is discuss in further details in **Chapter 16 Mr Crane's Response** and under, heading -I Join the Bierton Church.

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 Adam³ and the sovereign prerogative of God to show mercy to which

2 See Gospel Standard Article 16. 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 Gospel⁵⁴; 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.

3 See Gospel Standard Article 4.

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

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 damned by virtue of the imputed guilt of Adam.

I Am Appointed Secretary

Having been received into membership the came a time when we needed a correspondent and Secretary and I agree to take on this role and had the responsibility of engaging ministers for the coming year. It was all-new to me and found it very difficult and a real sense of responsibility.

I had to deal with a request expressed in a letter from Colnebrook Strict and Particular Baptist Church who had informed the church (via me the secretary) that one of their members, Mr Martin Hunt was under censorship. Martin Hunt was one of our visiting ministers, who I found to be a very nice and polite man and had a good understanding of scripture. How ever Mr King and I were asked by the church to speak to Martin about this issue being raised and it was difficult to understand the problem. It was to do with particular redemption so in the end I asked Martin if he could subscribe to our Bierton Articles of Religion of 1831. His reply was no he could not. This resolved the matter and the Church decided not to invite Martin to preach again. This helped us not to judge this issue he had with his church but rather enabled us to respond to the concerns of the Colnebrook Church in the correct way.

Not All Preaching at Bierton Good.

We had a range of visiting preachers at Bierton. Ministers from various parts of the country. But not all were Gospel Standard ministers.

A Range Of Doctrinal Differences.

It became apparent to me, through listening to the various visiting preachers and my conversations with them, that we had a range of ministers with differing degrees of understanding of scripture. We had some Gospel Standard ministers, some held to the 1689 confession of faith some the 1966 Grace Baptist confession, some who were convinced of the Presbyterian position. Some holding to “duty faith and duty repentance” and one who could not accept the Bierton Articles of Religion, of 1831.

transgressors against God¹³. 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.

A Call to Preach the Gospel.

I began to feel uncomfortable when I heard some doctrines preached which were not scriptural and not very well expressed.

I felt the need to express the word more clearly. It was this desire that led me to believe it was a call to preach. This desire was placed in my heart the day Jesus called me to hear him and I had believed in him. I had preached to the church on a number of occasions at Bierton Church during the weeknight prayer meeting from the table not the pulpit. Gradually however I felt more and more uncomfortable when sitting in the pew just listening to sermons when things were not very well expressed.

When I first became a Christian I learned there were Bible Colleges but I wasn't impressed by those who had attended them and I did not believe in Bible Colleges. I wanted God to teach me. From what little I had seen of vicars and so called trained men I felt Bible Colleges were of no use because it seemed so of these people are not even born again.

So I dismissed the idea of Bible college for me, never the less I wanted to learn all about God and speak his word in clarity and truth. This desire turned me to read about the lives of men of God. I went from reading the Beano and Dandy comics and James Bond books to the Bible and then on to the writings of John Bunyan, Dr. John Gill, John Owen and Calvin in a matter of two or three years. It was when I met my wife to be that she encourage train me to be a teacher and that is why I attended the Technical Training College in Wolverhampton, to learn how to teach technical subjects.

My motive was to learn how to teach so that I could then teach the gospel. I took one year out from work and studied at Wolverhampton Polytechnic and finally graduated with a teaching Certificate in Education. This was awarded by Birmingham University in 1978.

Wolverhampton Teacher Training Group



David (B Centre Right) at Wolverhampton Polytechnic

I believed that I could learn from secular professional teachers how to teach and then would then be able to take the substance of what God was showing me and then present it to men in a way they could understand. This was my desire.

I took my first teaching post at Luton College of Higher Education commencing teaching, in 1978

I inform the Church at Bierton of my felt call to preach.

It was during this time at Luton College and at Bierton Church that I felt it right to make known my desire to the church as I believed I was being called by God to preach the word of Jesus Christ.

The church asked Mr. Hill of Luton and minister of the Gospel and Mr. Hope of Reading, both Gospel Standard ministers invited me to share with them my calling.

Questioned about the Law of Moses.

Mr Hill questioned my belief regarding the Law of Moses and both he and Mr Hope listened. I expressed my understanding of the believers relationship to the Law of Moses⁴ and concluded that the Law of Moses did not make the Lord Jesus righteous as he was always righteous. He had an essential righteousness independent of the Law. He did not have to fulfil the Law to become righteous. He always was righteous. Had he been judged according to the law he would have been declared righteous and so he was.

That imputed righteousness is the righteousness of God, given to all who believe, that Christ's Righteousness imputed justifies us, without our works according to the Law. The the rule of life and conduct of believers was the gospel of Christ.

Mr Hill's Conclusion

Mr Hill concluded that my leading was right and Mr Hope agreed. It was then put to the church that I should preach and exercise any gift I had. This was duly done and people came from Albert Street Strict Baptists Church, Oxford and Eaton Bray Strict Baptist Churches, to hear me preach the word of God that week night meeting at Bierton.

Sent by the Church to Preach.

It was agreed without question that I should preach, as the Lord opened up the way, and from that day in 1982, letters came from different churches asking me to preach at various Strict Baptist Chapels throughout the country. This was my call by the Lord and being sent by the church to preach the

4 See a fuller treatment of the subject in Appendix 25 listed towards the end of this publication

gospel, as the Lord open up the door for me to speak. This came with the blessing of the church believing that the gifts and callings of God are without repentance.

I Preach At Various Churches.

In fact I was so overwhelmed with being asked to preach at so many places, I could have been preaching three times on a Sunday every week of the year and during the week on week night services. This was on top of my full time work, which involved teaching two nights a week at Luton College as well as continuing my studies with the Open University.

In a very short period of time I was engaged to preach and fulfilled preaching engagements in 15 Gospel Standard Churches throughout the country.