

EXCERPTS FROM

April - June 1974

THE LINK

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

Internet Edition

How welcome are the signs of Spring? The rich variety of greens in the fields, the bursting buds on the trees and bushes, the flowers, first snowdrops, daffodils, tulips, primroses, all bursting into life after the cold, dormant days of winter, - Dormant days, but were they? indeed not, for during those dark, cold months even in the banks and hedgerows, there was unseen, but vital activity, as tiny fibres began to grow, and roots were going down, long before tender shoots appeared upwards. Then, of course, in the cultivated sector of nature, hard and arduous toil was going on, particularly with the horticulturalist, digging, dressing, planting, pruning, weeding, burning, all vitally important in the life of the gardener, and all essential to growth, blossom and ultimate fruit. What lessons for us as a church.

Recently in conversation with a Pastor in a truly independent and biblical church in another part of Great Britain, he related something of his experiences. Entering this particular fellowship some eighteen years ago, to use his words "they were all sixes and sevens", many wanting or trying to do something, but each one interested only in his or her aspect of things, each one having a scripture to quote as authority for their activity, but the desire to stand together in prayer and fellowship, to uphold the Word of God in its entirety, was well-nigh non-existent, to use a modern phrase, he said "everybody was doing their own thing". So he settled down to the consistent preaching of the Word, twice on Sundays and once during the week. As the Word was ministered, so God began to work, and the result said he, on a human level, was discouraging indeed. The words of the Saviour concerning the vine and the branches took on a new meaning, it was obvious that there was dead wood in the church, there were also branches which were seemingly making tremendous growth, putting out enormous shoots, but this had to be curtailed and cut back as it was reverting to its old natural state of a wild vine, which would produce nothing but leaves, and so, as the Scriptures were brought to bear, this pastor said, "God began to vindicate His Word", first by pruning, and some who would not face up to God's terms of discipleship withdrew. We were then faced with much criticism, this necessitated the work of weeding and burning, for slander and backbiting must be totally obliterated from any church

which, is to prosper and know God's blessing. After this first and devastating action, we looked, said he "a rather sorry and shaggy little bush", but backed by a few Godly elders and sincere deacons, the ministry continued, digging and dressing, then planting the truths of God's Word into the hearts and minds of the people over the years. Very gradually, roots began to go down, the fellowship became possessed with a sense of purpose and direction (the same direction) and the little shaggy bush was developing into a sturdy shrub, with real root establishment, sap was beginning to run, buds were appearing, not of leaves only, but of blossom, which is indicative of fruit. Now, said this man of God, over the past four or five years, we have had times of real encouragement, men and women (not only young people) have been truly born again and baptized, and are real "HELPS" in the church, other believers from fellowships which were drifting into liberalism, have joined us, and so God has honoured the faithful and consistent preaching of His Word, and through it, His name has been magnified, and the result, blessing to both believer and unbeliever, and the church now really established in the faith and unitedly standing for the truth.

We would all agree that in the natural world, the experiences of the dark, cold days of winter are not always the most enjoyable, nevertheless they are days which are vital to nature. So also in the spiritual, when things would appear barren, when days seem dark and lifeless and the sun seems to have gone down, these are so often the days when God is most active, doing work amongst His people, which is absolutely vital to future fruitfulness. How we yearn and earnestly pray that God will thus deal with us at North Road, but let us ever remember that a church consists of members, and it is as we react to Him and His Word as individuals, that the church will be affected for good or for ill, so may each one of us in our fellowship, be "GROWTH CONSCIOUS". This is a thing which affects us all, regardless even of age. In the physical realm, growth stops probably in late teens. Over the years, gradual deterioration sets in, but not in the spiritual life, here there should ever be progress, steady growth, continuous development.

It may do us good to refresh our minds with the words of John in his first epistle, chapter two verses 12-14. He

speaks first of "LITTLE CHILDREN", your sins are forgiven he says, you are born again, you have spiritual life - wonderful experience! But we must move on from here, this is the start. The fact of having sins forgiven and spiritual life imparted, should result in growth, not perpetual childhood, we must not be content with toys, and playing at spiritual things, but must move on and get clad in the armour of God, and step into the arena of battle, not live in a nursery.

Then in verse 14, he mentions "THE YOUNG MEN". Ye are strong, says John, the Word of God abideth in you, ye have overcome the wicked one - Have we thus developed? Have we grown to this extent? Must we not hang our heads in shame? So often we are not strong, we become tired, weary in well-doing, when efforts don't succeed. The strong Christian works on whatever the result may be, giving, praying, preaching, visiting, according to what his or her particular work and gift may be, they are strong in endurance. We must also be strong in faith - are we? We can only be strong here as the Word of God abideth in us. Do we really know the faith once for all delivered to the saints? Have we really got a grip and a grasp of the Holy Scriptures? In actual fact, can we contend for SOUND DOCTRINE? Let us flood our minds with the Word of God or we shall never over-come the evil one.

John speaks also of the "FATHERS", - the elderly, ye have known Him, yes some very many years, but nevertheless, a stage is never reached where further development is not possible. Perhaps the process here, could be more aptly described as RIPENING OR MATURING. Shall we take as an example a tree - an apple tree, - bare and stark in winter, no sign of life, but with the warm breath of spring upon it, the sap runs, the bud appears, signs of life, then blossom, fresh, beautiful, attractive, is not this the "LITTLE CHILDREN" state - your sins are forgiven, first signs of life, the wonderful sight of a young convert.

Then the blossom gives way to a small green berry - the fruit has set, another stage has been arrived at, soon the berry is so enlarged that it is visibly an apple - there is growth, later still, we see fruit decking the branches, swaying in the breeze, defying the wind, firmly grafted to the tree, deriving their nourishment from the sap. Is

there not a similarity here to the YOUNG MEN - ye are strong, the Word of God is in you.

Then at length, the fruit begins to take on (or should do) a new lustre, it begins to mature, it takes on greater colour, not harsh colours, but beautifully blended, yellow, soft green, russet, red, - all in harmony. To touch this fruit is not hard nevertheless, solid, not soft and flabby, it gives off a peculiar aroma, a fragrance, yes altogether objects of mature beauty.

When the fruit reaches this stage, one has only to touch and it will let go the tree and fall into one's hand - yes they are ripe and ready to be gathered. Such is a mature Christian - YE FATHERS.

God help us all in this vital matter of growth, that we go on to maturity for His glory.

W.H.M.

QUOTES

Let us do our duties, and let the Lord do as pleaseth Him.

THOMAS BROOKS (PURITAN)

THE WORD OF GOD: Know it in the head,
store it in the heart, show it in the life,
and sow it in the world.

The following article appeared in the monthly magazine of the "Reformed Baptist Church, Inverness", and is reprinted in our "Link" by kind permission of the Pastor:-
Mr W.J.Seaton

SUPER-STAR, The film version of the Rock Opera, *Jesus Christ, Super-star*, has just had its first showing in Inverness, and, as ever, on such occasions, it has been interesting to observe the reactions of many professing people of God. We find that by far the strangest reaction is that which is produced in the average Arminian-type evangelical who has no scruples whatsoever about entertainment evangelism and the like and yet, registers great feelings of disapproval and even disgust at such a production. Why won't such people face the fact that such productions are only the logical sequence and outcome of the evangelicalism of the past number of decades? Sow guitars and you reap rock operas. Show the world how to jazz-up the gospel, and don't be surprised if the world takes your example. Stir up the sleeping lion of man's love to denigrate the Son of God at any particular point, and don't be surprised if the lion devours more than you anticipated. We say with absolute conviction that this *Super-star* production, if it is different at all, is different ONLY IN DEGREE to what has long been held as acceptable and evangelistic in the vast majority of fundamentalist churches for years now. And if one thing should emerge from the whole thing, it should be a willingness on the part of the evangelicals to examine their proffered "success" in evangelism in the light of the "success" of *Super-star*. In other words, where does the world end and the gospel begin? What is the essential difference between a cinema having continually big congregations - sorry ... audiences - for a Jesus Opera, and a church having a good audience - sorry ... congregation - for basically the same kind of thing at a lower level of technique and ability? Surely, both may be equated with catering to the spirit of the age where people are markedly "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God". Entertainment is "in" - has been for a long time; and the rule holds good - the bigger the show the bigger the crowd. One interesting side-light; should we interpret the numbers who crowded along to see *Super-star* at our local cinema as "blessing", or commercial interest? I don't suppose the manager would worry what we called it!

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION

We prayerfully look forward to the Annual Bible Convention on Wednesday, 24th April, when Mr David C. Potter, joint editor of the Evangelical Times, will be with us. His subjects are in the afternoons: "The Ministry of Compassion", and in the evenings: "Should we pray for revival"?

We hope to recommence the "Drive-in" church services on Sunday, 12th May, at the usual site (Kingsley Statue). We are thankful to God for his goodness and for the cooperation of the authorities of our town. Let us all take this vital work to heart, and really support by presence where possible, and everyone by prayer.

A PRAYER

LET US PRAY: The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers, let Him not leave us, nor forsake us, that He may incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments, and His statutes, and His judgements, which He commanded our fathers. That all people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else".

KING SOLOMON