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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)  
BIDEFORD**

# THE LAW OF GOD

## *The Tenth Commandment*

*"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's" (Exodus 20:17).*

In a nutshell, covetousness is the worship of self; because self is on the throne of the heart, everything of the earthly life becomes subject to the gratification of the flesh. The controlling motive is, 'my right to my own desires'. Me, my and mine is the governing factor in the life of a covetous person.

This last commandment in the Decalogue is concerned with the matter of covetousness, which has been described by many as a 'mother sin'. Although it may be a long quote, this cannot be better put than in the words of Thomas Watson, the Puritan. Watson states, "Covetousness is a breach of all the ten commandments:

1. It breaks the first commandment, *"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me"*. The covetous man has more gods than one; mammon is his god. He has a god of gold, therefore he is called an idolater (cf Colossians 3:5).
2. Covetousness breaks the second commandment, *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, .... thou shalt not bow down thyself to them"*. A covetous man bows down, not to the graven image in the church, yet to the graven image of his coin.
3. Covetousness is a breach of the third commandment, *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"*. Absalom's design was to get his father's crown, which was covetousness; but he talked of paying his 'vow to God', which was to take God's name in vain.

4. Covetousness is a breach of the fourth commandment, "*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy*". A covetous man does not keep the sabbath day holy; he will ride to fairs on a sabbath instead of reading his Bible, he will cast up his accounts.

5. Covetousness is a breach of the fifth commandment, "*Honour thy father and thy mother*". A covetous person does not honour his father, if he does not feed him with money. Nay, he will get his father to make over his estate to him in his life-time, so that the father may be at his son's command.

6. Covetousness is a breach of the sixth commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill*". Covetous Ahab killed Naboth to get his vineyard (cf 1 Kings 21:13). How many have swum to the crown in blood?

7. Covetousness is a breach of the seventh commandment, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*". It causes uncleanness; you read of the "*hire of the whore*" (Deuteronomy 23:18). An adulteress, for money sets both conscience and chastity to sale.

8. Covetousness is a breach of the eighth commandment, "*Thou shalt not steal*". It is the root of theft: covetous Achan stole the wedge of gold; thieves and covetous are put together (cf 1 Corinthians 6:10).

9. Covetousness is a breach of the ninth commandment, "*Thou shalt not bear false witness*". What makes the perjurer take a false oath but covetousness? He hopes for reward.

10. It is plainly a breach of the tenth commandment, "*Thou shalt not covet*". The mammonist covets his neighbour's house and goods and endeavours to get them into his own hands. Thus you see how vile a sin covetousness is; it is a mother sin; it is a clear breach of every one of the ten commandments". What could be a better preface to this article than these words of Watson?

Covetousness is the consequence of a heart set upon material things; it is the very opposite to living by faith. The man of faith has his treasure in heaven, therefore his heart and chief affection is above; whereas the covetous man is set upon accumulating more and more

treasure upon earth. One of the Puritans said, "A man is seen to be covetous when he takes more pains to gain earth than to gain heaven". The word 'covet' in its Hebrew form means 'desire', an 'eagerness to obtain', an 'inordinate appetite'.

Covetous persons can quickly be detected by their conversation; our Lord Himself said, "*He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth*" (John 3:31). The conversation of the man of faith will be influenced by the things of God and of the eternal. His mind will be spiritually orientated; it will not have an earthly bias. Of Peter it was said, "*Thy speech bewrayeth thee*" (Matthew 26:73). This is true of all people. The Christian will soon be identified by his conversation, as will also the unregenerate and the materialistic professor.

Further evidence of covetousness is seen when a man overburdens himself with work and business; so busy that there is little time for God. Alas, there are many Christians like this. They have great difficulty attending the means of grace but can fit in most business meetings and appointments. They have little if any time to study the Word of God, yet can manage to study the market trends and financial reports. When a Christian is seen to encumber himself with material things to this degree, it is obvious that deep within there lies the spirit of covetousness. That man himself may not even realize it and in all probability would be indignant if one suggested it, but such is the case. It was not without good reason that the Lord spoke as He did, "*Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*" (Luke 12:15). **Take heed! Beware!** Sharp words of warning.

Covetousness is a highly dangerous thing; it is the enemy of sound Christian living. If a Christian becomes ensnared in this, it will hinder the efficacy of the Word of God when preached. Christ Himself said in the parable spoken in Matthew 13:22 that it is **the deceitfulness of riches** which choke the Word, consequently that

person will become unfruitful. The Holy Scriptures have little if any effect upon the one who is obsessed with material matters, for these things literally choke the spiritual life. Of the great men of faith, it has been said "Although they live on earth, yet they traded and banked in heaven".

Quoting Thomas Watson again, he once prayed a lovely prayer. "Lord, dig the earth out of my heart. Teach me how to possess the world and not love it; how to hold it in my hand but not let it get into my soul". What a prayer this is for young people. It is good to see them keen, industrious and having ambition; this is right but they must always seek **first** the kingdom of God (cf Matthew 6:33). The earth must constantly be dug out of the heart so that primarily they covet **spiritual prosperity**.

All the commandments apply to our everyday life, particularly in the case of "*Thou shalt not covet*"; thy neighbour's house, wife, servants and possessions are listed. Remembering the definition of the word 'covetous' - 'desire', 'eagerness to obtain', 'inordinate appetite', how prevalent is the sin of covetousness, how many are in breach of this tenth commandment! "*Thy neighbour's house*" is mentioned; 'neighbour' in its original Hebrew means 'an associate', 'anyone more or less close'. Are there not many today, even Christians, who have an inordinate eagerness to compete or even out-do another in respect of the neighbour's house.

"*Thy neighbour's wife*". It is all too common to see other men's wives not only coveted, desired; they are taken, stolen; so are broken the seventh and eighth commandments, as well as the tenth. How erroneous does this make the theory of those who hold to an exception clause concerning adultery, divorce and remarriage; such belief is in breach of the Law of God.

"*Anything that is thy neighbour's*". How foolish many are today, and sad to say not a few professed believers are any different. An

eagerness to obtain such things as our neighbours possess is all too common; this spirit of rivalry is covetousness. **Take heed, Beware.** says the Lord; to covet material gain is to err from the faith (cf 1 Timothy 6:10). Paul, that lovely character and faithful man of God could say, "*I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*" (Acts 20:33); "*For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content*" (Philippians 4:11). There is no better antidote to covetousness than to "*be content with such things as ye have*" (Hebrews 13:5).

What a Law God has given to man! It is perfect (cf Psalm 19:7). Then let the child of God delight in it (cf Psalm 1:2), for "*the statutes of the Lord are right*" (Psalm 19:8), "*And in keeping of them there is great reward*" (Psalm 19:11).

W.H.Molland

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## TRUTH

How is this word defined? 'Verity', 'Honesty', 'Fidelity', 'Conformity to fact and reality', 'The opposite to deceit and falsehood'. This is truth; it cannot vary; truth stands forever. A thing cannot be true today and false tomorrow. If any matter has been accepted in the past as true, but in later generations has genuinely been proved to be false, then it was never the truth, people were deceived. How often has this been the case in the world, particularly in science and politics. The same applies in the professing church. Many are the things which have been taught as the truth, but through diligent study of the Scriptures in later years, others have discovered it to be a distortion, not conforming to the real facts and therefore deceptive; not the truth at all. Truth is truth, it is absolute, perfect and unconditional and can never be proved to be erroneous. Where then can real truth, that which is the absolute standard be found? It will most certainly not be found in the world. Self-existent veracity,

unconditional truth lies outside this planet; it is resident only in the one eternal God. *"The Lord is the true God, He is the living God"* (Jeremiah 10:10); He is *"the only true God"* (John 17:3); He is the *"God of truth"* (Psalm 31:5); *"His truth endureth to all generations"* (Psalm 100:5); He *"keepeth truth for ever"* (Psalm 146:6).

If absolute truth is to be found in God alone, how can mortals know it, for He is the invisible One? (cf 1 Timothy 1:17); *"Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto"* (1 Timothy 6:16). True as this is, yet He, the eternal **God of truth** has communicated absolute truth to this world and He has done it through His Son. *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which was in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"* (John 1:18). *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son"* (Hebrews 1:1,2). The Son of God became incarnate for the express purpose of bringing the truth to this world. He said in most explicit language, *"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth"* (John 18:37). *"Truth came by Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17); *"I tell you the truth"* (John 8:45); *"I am .... the truth"* (John 14:6); Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, was the Word made flesh who dwelt among men (cf John 1:14). In Him is the personification of truth; He was manifested in human flesh to declare truth and to live truth. Transparent honesty was demonstrated before God, man and demons; absolute fidelity, utterly and completely devoid of falsehood. He was *"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"* (Hebrews 7:26); there was no deceit in His mouth (cf Isaiah 53:9); every word was verity, every action displayed fidelity. In this sense Christ is often referred to as the **Living Word**, He is the **declarer** of the God of truth and the truth of God.

There is also one other means by which God communicates His truth, that is by the Holy Scriptures; this is the **written Word**. Just as there

is total veracity with the Living Word, so is this also true of the written Word; the latter is a transcript of the former. Speaking of the Scriptures, Christ the Living Word said, "*They are they which testify of Me*" (John 5:39). The Living Word and the written Word are inseparable.

The Holy Scriptures are **the Word of God**, the words of the True and Living God. Just as Christ declared the truth, so do the Scriptures which God has both inspired and preserved. Only by preserving His Word as He had caused it to be written, can it be termed the Word of God, because it is absolute truth, it cannot vary otherwise it would cease to be truth. The very character of Almighty God is inseparably linked to the preservation of His Word. As the Living Word was the truth, so is the written Word the Scriptures of truth. For this reason the apostle Paul could unhesitatingly call them the **Holy Scriptures** (cf Romans 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:15). They are holy because they set forth the truth of a holy, unchanging God. The doctrine of inspiration, inerrancy and preservation is essential to the faith. It is not sufficient to say that truth is contained in Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture **is truth** in its entirety. The unqualified affirmation of Christ, the Living Word, concerning the written Word of God is, "***Thy Word is truth***" (John 17:17). That will never vary or cease to be preserved; it is forever settled in heaven (cf Psalm 119:89); "*Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away*" (Mark 13:31).

Men have endeavoured to destroy both the Living and the written Word, but because both are eternal, that is not possible. At the instigation of Satan, Christ the Word made flesh, was crucified by wicked hands but never destroyed, but through it further truth was revealed, that of the gospel which is the power of God unto man's salvation, for a **resurrected Redeemer** now sits at God's right hand, able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him (cf Hebrews 7:25). In like manner has the Devil sought to obliterate the



Holy Scriptures, but they, like the One of whom they testify, are indestructible. Why should the great adversary vent such fury upon the Incarnate Word and the written Word? It is because Christ and the Scriptures are the only channels of truth and he, Satan is the great deceiver, a liar, the father of lies, there is no truth in him (cf John 8:44). He is the great opposer of truth and this accounts for his relentless malice and venom upon them.

Through the preaching of the truth, men and women are liberated from bondage and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God (cf Romans 8:21); delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (cf Colossians 1:13); such become the children of God through faith. Becoming children of God and citizens of Christ's kingdom incurs responsibility; obedience to God and to His truth is required of every Christian. *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"* (1 Peter 1:14-16). The written Word which is truth, demands holiness of life and mortification of previous thoughts and imaginations. *"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5). Anything in the believer's life which exalts the flesh, panders to the world and is in conflict with the truth of God as contained in His Word; it is to be cast down so that our thinking is in obedience to Christ.

When writing to the believers at Thessalonica, Paul reminded them of the commandments of the Lord Jesus which He had preached when in their midst, namely, *"This is the will of God, even your sanctification"* (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Sanctification, holiness of life, separation from the world, being set apart for God is that which is enjoined for all Christians. This can only be accomplished through

the truth. Man's theories, ideas or methods will never effect sanctification. Our Lord, in prayer to His Father on behalf of His people, prayed, "*Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth*" (John 17:17). Sanctification is effected by the Word (cf Ephesians 5:26) and by no other means.

In a day when truth is disparaged and much of the Word of God called into question, when inspiration and inerrancy are looked upon in a restricted sense, there is a need for men and women to stand and "*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude v3). To contend means 'to exert oneself in defence and to support', 'to maintain by argument and sound reasoning'. This contending and defence is for "*all the counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27). It is **all** the truth which has ever been delivered to the saints by the Living and the written Word. In every detail it is authoritative, binding, and to be obeyed in all generations, because it is eternal, immutable truth; never will any part be altered, adjusted or rescinded.

W.H.Molland

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The Bible gives forth no uncertain sound. It speaks with absolute assurance, dogmatism and finality. .... It is not a question of what I think, or of what anyone else thinks - it is 'What saith the Scripture?' It is not a matter of what any church or creed teaches - it is, 'What does the Bible teach?' God has spoken and that ends the matter. "*Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven*". Therefore it is for me to bow to His authority, to submit to His Word, to cease quibbling and cry, "*Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth*". Because the Bible is **God's** Word, it is the final court of appeal in all things pertaining to doctrine, duty and deportment.

A.W.Pink

## ***Recollections of Spiritual Work in the County of Devon in Generations Past*** cont'd

The main figure in these reminiscences is a Mr William Surridge, born 1823, a miller in the village of Bridford, who was much used of God in that area in the last century. These details were written by his son, Mr Fred Surridge, in the middle of the present century.

*"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old" (Psalm 44:1).*

### ***George Baker***

On leaving school this boy went to work on a farm, and his master rather unfairly tried his mettle one day by putting him in a field with a plough and horses, just to see how he would get on with it. Naturally enough, without experience or teaching, things did not go right; in fact everything seemed to go wrong, and as one of our brothers was walking along the road outside the hedge he heard a lot of vile language, cursing, swearing and all the commotion of uncontrolled anger. So he went in by the gate and kindly said, "Hello George, whatever is the matter? Can I help you?" "Can if you like", came the ungracious, angry response. So our brother had a look at the plough and the traces, and then gave George some practical and kindly hints. Then he showed him how to work the plough up and down several furrows and said, "Now George, I think it will be all right; you try". George did so and our friend left him making good progress. After he had gone George began to think and said to himself, "Old Dick must have heard all my bad language but he never said a word about it. He just put me on the right road and never rebuked me at all. There must be something in these Methodists to do it like that".

This incident stirred up a great interest in the boy's heart and he regularly attended the gospel meetings and was soon very deeply convicted of sin. He told me afterwards that during this period, for

at least six weeks he would get out of bed at nights in fear and trembling, sometimes rolling in agony of soul, seeking forgiveness. One Friday night he was more terror-stricken than ever, for his master died suddenly in his chair and George knew that if he died like that he would be lost. Five days later at his master's funeral, some of the Christian young men got hold of him and he was happily led to the Saviour. He immediately joined the young men's Bible class and rapidly grew in the knowledge of the Scriptures. After a time he began to attend the Bible Readings at Bridford on Sunday afternoons and there he began to take part and do a little speaking. It was not long after this that one of the brothers in the fellowship said to me, "I cannot understand what it is about that young man, George Baker, for he has not been speaking ten minutes before most of us are in tears".

Some time later his cousin came home from Australia and persuaded him to go back with him. So he took a holiday to be free to go about with his cousin and visit friends. Mr Fred Glover was staying with us at the time and one afternoon George joined us in an open air meeting at Chudleigh. Mr Glover, myself and others spoke, but no one seemed to take particular notice or stopped to listen to what we had to say. We were about to close when George stepped forward and began to speak. At once there seemed a hush, everyone stopped to listen, doors and windows were thrown open, God's Spirit began to work and tears of emotion were in many eyes. I was as astonished as anyone, for this was the first time I had heard him speak and it was a remarkable experience. After the meeting Mr Glover said, "Whatever was it in the young man? I've never had such an experience before". "Well", I answered, "nor have I and I cannot explain it, except by pointing out that I noticed that as soon as he opened his mouth he began to exalt Christ, and he did not stop exalting Christ all the time he was speaking. This is the only explanation I can give. The Lord Himself said, *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"*." (John 12:32).

George went to Australia as arranged and got a holding for himself. In quite a short time he had gathered a number of Christians around and a local church was established in the district. The Lord blessed him and his, but the Devil was also busy. On three separate occasions after returning from the morning service, he found his homestead burnt down to the ground, but he simply thanked God for being worthy to suffer for His sake, built up his home again and carried bravely on. He died out there, still witnessing for His Master, a missionary in every sense of the word, a preacher, a pastor and a prevailing servant of Jesus Christ. May God raise up others to follow in his train.

### *Young Joe*

Young Joe was the son of a widow whose husband had left her with several children, two or three of whom were old enough to go to work, but the mother and her eldest daughter really maintained the little home by running the squire's laundry. Young Joe had just passed through three important stages of life, which had completely altered his outlook. Firstly he had just left school and taken a position under the squire's steward as handy boy, secondly he was one of the first of several young lads to be converted in our Sunday school, and finally he had just been baptised and received into the fellowship.

Just at this time the squire's son came of age, and in the usual celebrations of rejoicing, all the tenantry and their families, and all workpeople and their families were invited to a fete and a feast on the lawn. Among the various amusements and entertainments was a donkey race for the boys and the steward told Joe to ride one of the donkeys in the race. This rather upset Joe because, having just been baptised and received into the fellowship, his tender conscience said that riding races would not coincide with his profession, and as he did not wish to bring any dishonour either upon the Lord's name or His people, he summed up courage to ask his master if he would

excuse him from riding in the race. "Oh", replied the steward angrily, "we'll see if you won't ride in the donkey race". Sure enough the next morning Joe was told to pack up his belongings and leave, and his mother also had notice to give up the squire's laundry at once and to leave the house by the end of the following week. This double blow fell very heavily upon his mother, as this was her only means of maintaining herself and the little ones. In her distress, she came to father for counsel and help, thinking that as he was friendly with the squire perhaps he could intercede for her; but as she unfolded her tale of woe, father was very moved and said to her, "Elizabeth, you go home and *"trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed"* (Psalm 27:3), and we will give ourselves to prayer". So with this and a few other words of encouragement, she went home and made preparations for leaving the house. As soon as these circumstances became known amongst the believers, one and another offered to take one of the children; others offered to take charge of her furniture for a time until she could suit herself. Mrs P. was not only an experienced laundress but was a very clever needlewoman as well, and home sewing in those days involved all the little children's clothes, and all undergarments. Sewing machines had scarcely been heard of and many women of the neighbourhood were glad to get a needlewoman for a week or more to help with the sewing. So from one and another she soon found plenty of work.

Shortly after this incident both the steward and his wife were taken very ill and within a fortnight they had both died and were buried. A few days later when the valet was helping the squire in his dressing room, they had difficulty with the squire's collar. Do what they would, they could not get the collar to lie right, so the squire got very provoked and he said, "Whatever is the matter with Mrs P., she does not do my laundry a bit as she used to. Is anything wrong with her?" Then the valet had to say, "If you please sir, Mrs P. is not doing your

laundry now, it is being sent to the city". "Indeed", replied the squire, "why have all these alterations been made without my knowledge?" The valet then had to tell the squire the whole story. This made him very angry and he said, "What has become of Mrs P. and where are the little ones?" On being told of all the arrangements that had been made, he said, "You go immediately and find Mrs P. and tell her to go back to the house at once and carry on my laundry as usual". So this was done and in less than six weeks after the commencement of their troubles, she and her family were back again in the squire's household and carrying on the squire's laundry, but the unjust steward and his wife were lying buried in the graveyard. All these happenings caused a very great stir throughout the district, and great fear fell upon the people.

Some are inclined to say that God does not work now in the same way He used to in the days of old, but after seventy years of labour for the Lord and my own experience, I can testify that the Lord is just the same and is constantly proving that He is a living God and is quite prepared to fulfil His promises to those who put their trust in Him. Note especially such promises as are contained in Jeremiah 49:11, "*Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me*"; and Psalm 68:5, "*A Father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation*".

### ***Conclusion***

In writing this short history of the Lord's work at Bridford Mills during the last hundred years or so, I have had three desires on my mind, which I hope may be fulfilled by it. Firstly, that it may prove to the present generation that the Lord God of heaven is still in these modern days able and willing to listen to the heart's desire of the feeblest as well as the youngest of His believing people and to fulfil in them and to them the promise made to us in Ephesians 3:20, that He will do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Secondly to illustrate that the gospel of God concerning His Son is still the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, for it enables Him righteously to take up the lowest and deepest-dyed sinner, and through the new birth of the Holy Spirit, makes him to be an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ of all the future glories of heaven.

Thirdly, to stir up our minds by way of remembrance as we recall what others have been prepared to do and suffer to uphold the truth of the gospel, and purchase for us the liberties and freedom that we now enjoy. May the Lord Himself keep us from abusing them, but rather to use our privileges by the help of the Holy Spirit with reverence and Godly fear.

F.W.Surridge

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*Editorial*

As one reads the Christian press and listens to various lectures and addresses given at conferences and seminars, it becomes obvious that tremendous emphasis is being placed upon the Protestant Reformation and the so-called 'Reformed' faith. Men of this persuasion eulogize the Reformers and 'Reformed' churches with such fervour and passion, that by the emphasis given one would almost conclude that there was no true church before this movement began in Europe and that the church was founded upon the men of that period, great stress being laid upon them, rather than *"the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone"* (Ephesians 2:20). Constantly are calls being made for a return to the teachings held by the Reformers and to become grounded in the glorious beliefs and practices of the Reformation. Should not the call be made to return to the Scriptures of Truth? A 'Reformed' church would claim that they believe the Bible in its entirety to be God's Word, without error or any kind of



fault. 'Reformed' men will say that they hold the Scriptures to be authoritative in every detail for both faith and practice. In this they will quote Calvin who vehemently affirmed the veracity of the Holy Scriptures; Martin Luther referred to them as 'pure truth'; William Tyndale is reported as saying, "Without God's Word do nothing, and to His Word add nothing, neither pull anything therefrom .... Serve God as He hath appointed thee". This was good in theory but did they practise it? What is the position in 'Reformed' circles today?

Much as one appreciates and gives thanks for the manner in which God used certain men in the past to bring neglected aspects of truth to light, which had been suppressed and often denied under Romanism, yet it must always be remembered that throughout those dark ages, there were great numbers of people who held to "*the simplicity that is in Christ*" (2 Corinthians 11:3). These people adhered to much truth which the Reformers would not accept and because of this, some of the Reformers were responsible for putting vast numbers of that faithful remnant to death. This can hardly be the way of serving God in the manner which He has appointed! Those who have the true spirit of Christ never persecute; invariably they are the persecuted.

Were the Reformers right in their practice of infant baptism and their vicious opposition to believer's baptism? Were they right in their dogmatic and dictatorial stand for the link of church and state? Were they right in putting to death through the state, untold thousands of sincere, Godly men and women and that, by the most foul and vicious of methods? Why is this not made known in 'Reformed' circles? (More information on this will be found in booklets listed on the last page of this magazine). In these matters they were no better than the Romanist. Surely this can hardly be classed as a glorious faith and practice to which we should return!

Is it **truth** when many 'Reformed' men today claim that children born of one believing parent are in the Covenant of Grace? Others claiming to be 'Reformed', state that their doctrine is according to the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion and their worship is to be according to the Book of Common Prayer (1662), membership of the church being on the basis of baptism, confirmation and approval by the local presbyter. Can all the contents of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer be termed 'truth'? There is little difference in the Westminster Confession where one has only to read the teaching on baptism contained in the 'Directory for the Public Worship of God', p.382-384 to discover that much of this is far from the truth of Scripture; it may be 'Reformed truth' but it is not the truth revealed in the Word of God. Why then is there a continuous call to return to the historic 'Reformed' faith of the Protestant Reformation? In many respects this is the very thing we do **not** want to see. The urgent need, and this should be the clarion call of **all**, 'Reformed' men included, is a return to *"the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"* (Jude v3), which differs greatly from the 'Reformed' faith, for it was delivered by the Holy Spirit, not Protestant Reformers; this alone is **truth**. A 'Reformed' witness and testimony, by its very designation, falls far short of a full and balanced witness to the truth for in many respects, it is at variance with truth. The great need of our day is not 'Reformed' churches, it is Biblical churches.

It is to be deplored that men should be categorized as 'Calvinists' because they stand for the absolute sovereignty of God in the election of sinners by the Father, their redemption by the Son and their regeneration by the Holy Spirit. This is not Calvin's faith which is being set forth, it is the truth of Holy Scripture. To label Divine truth and those who stand for it as 'Calvinistic' is a serious matter.

For those who adhere to the independence and autonomy of the local church, totally rejecting any link of the church with the state and who practise baptism of true believers by immersion to be termed

'Reformed', borders on the ridiculous, for rightly understood, the opposite is the case. Why those who would claim to contend for New Testament principles countenance and approve the designation is hard to understand.

The common denominator in this seems to be the term 'The Doctrines of Grace', sometimes referred to as 'The Five Points of Calvinism'. It is thought that where people adhere to these principles, they should rally to the 'Reformed' cause. When carefully examined, such a conglomeration of shades and persuasions is nothing short of a '**Reformed ecumenism**'. Far from this giving a clear note, it gives an uncertain sound.

Gathering under this banner of 'Reformed' are seen Church of England bishops, Right Reverend men, who hold to a hand book of doctrines which, (whatever they like to say) has much of Romanism in it, plus its **national** identification. Presbyterians who teach covenant theology together with infant sprinkling, which erodes the doctrine of the total depravity of **all** who are born of Adam's race, making the salvation of children born of believing parents to be 'of blood', natural birth. Baptists who claim to be independent, practising baptism of believers only by immersion and holding to the autonomy of the local church, many of these sadly take to themselves titles which no mortal should ever assume. How inconsistent for men to speak against the Pope of Rome for accepting the title 'His Holiness' when they themselves are known as 'The Reverend'; wherein lies the distinction? (cf Psalm 111:9). When used by a human being, one is as profane as the other.

Reference to the Directory for the Public Worship of God was made earlier; whilst some of its content is good, there is much which can only be seen as at variance with the truth of Holy Scripture. Concerning infant sprinkling it states, "It is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ: it is a seal of the covenant of grace, of our engrafting

into Christ, and of our union with Him, of remission of sins, regeneration, adoption and life eternal". "That the water in baptism, representeth and signifieth both the blood of Christ, which taketh away all guilt of sin, original and actual; and the sanctifying virtue of the Spirit of Christ against the dominion of sin and the corruption of our sinful nature". "That the promise is made to believers and their seed, and that the seed and posterity of the faithful born within the church have, by their birth, interest in the covenant and right to the seal of it". "Children by baptism are solemnly received into the bosom of the visible church, distinguished from the world and them that are without and united with believers; and that all who are baptized in the name of Christ, do renounce and by their baptism are bound to fight against the devil, the world and the flesh: that they are Christians and federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptized" (p.382-383).

It is also interesting to note the Act of Parliament of the Kingdom of Scotland approving and establishing the Directory for Public Worship. Here it is stated that "the same do ordain to have the strength and force of a law and Act of Parliament'and execution to pass thereupon, for observing the said Directory, according to the said Act of the General Assermbly in all points (p.371). Is any of this according to New Testament order and teaching? It is all a part of 'Reformed' dogma.

It is very confusing to many believers to see those who would claim to be contenders of the truth, being so aggressive in propogating the 'Reformed' image. If questioned on this matter of fellowshipping with those of mixed belief and practice, the usual explanation is 'We are all agreed on the fundamentals'. This immediately infers that there are certain truths in Holy Scripture which are essential, whilst others are of little if any account.

Some fifteen to twenty years ago, particularly in connection with Billy Graham and one or two other evangelists of international fame, much was being said and written about primary and secondary separation. This was on account of Graham's involvement with Liberals, Modernists and Romanists. This raised the question how far could one go with those who did support Graham and other evangelists who saw no need of ecclesiastical separation. Little if anything is heard of this two-level separation today, although if it was applicable to Billy Graham on one count, could it not be argued, if not on the same issue, that it should apply to others in connection with afore mentioned facts. This question of fundamental truth and less important truth is an extremely serious matter. How grievous to view the Word of God as setting forth two levels of truth. It is not uncommon in 'Reformed' circles to hear of primary and secondary truth; there is no such thing. Truth is truth, it cannot be any other. When Christ said to His Father, "*Thy Word is truth*" (John 17:17), was He suggesting that there were two levels of truth in the Word of God? Did the Holy Spirit inspire some truth which was fundamental, and other truth which was less significant and could be disregarded?

The argument put forward is that the things which pertain to salvation are the fundamental matters. Baptism, church practice etc. is of lesser importance. In other words as long as a person is going to heaven, his attitude to the will of God in other matters is relatively unimportant. This is equivalent to saying I will have justification but not sanctification. However both truths are equally binding **and** authoritative. 'Truth' in its original Greek means 'true in doctrine and profession'. In the setting forth of this there is to be 'no concealing'; Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ said, "*I kept back nothing*" (Acts 20:20); he declared **all** the counsel of God (cf Acts 20:27). Belief and practice must never be presented in a two-level manner; the will of God is not only to save us - **justification**, His will is also our **sanctification** (cf 1 Thessalonians 4:3), and to be obedient in **all** things (cf 2 Corinthians 2:9).

The Christian can only be sanctified through the truth, which is God's Word (cf John 17:17). All that is contained therein is for our profit, no part is of lesser importance. Concerning the Holy Spirit, the Lord said He is the Spirit of truth and He will guide you into **all** truth (cf John 16:13).

How can anyone contemplate the Holy Spirit of God being more concerned over one part of the Word of the eternal God than another? The thought that His great work was to firmly enlighten men on the matter of salvation, but that discipleship and obedience were lesser matters, did not come from the God of truth. The very suggestion of primary and secondary truth borders on the blasphemous, yet in many churches this is the line taken. Separation from the world is seldom taught in all its aspects. Believer's baptism by immersion is far too often optional; modesty in dress for both male and female is considered a dangerous line to approach, so never mentioned. Head covering for women, by which is demonstrated a vital truth, namely the headship of the husband over the wife, and typically of Christ's headship over the Church, is reckoned not only as secondary truth, but by many it is looked upon as taboo - not truth at all. Reverence and Godly order in the gatherings of the Lord's people is also not popular teaching; even though the Word of God states, "*Holiness becometh Thine house O Lord forever*" (Psalm 93:5).

In conclusion, the questions to be asked are: Should Christians be entitled 'Reformed' when this identifies them with the teachings and practices of the Reformers? Should Christians treat the Holy Scriptures as containing primary and secondary truth, thus diluting the Word of God and denying its absolute authority. This can only engender a spirit of bondage rather than the glorious liberty which the Spirit of truth would bring us into (cf Romans 8:21).

**Biblical truth is that for which we must contend, not 'Reformed' theology.**

## Announcements

On Lord's Day, 27 April 1997, Mr Peter Nutkins of Bideford, N.Devon, was baptized and he and his wife, who have been meeting with us for many months, have now been received into the membership of the church. We thank God for the encouragement of their presence among us and pray His rich blessing to be upon them.

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Booklets which tell something of the attitude of the Reformers towards those who would not accept their teaching on such matters as baptism and the church-state link; available for cost of postage only, from the Bookroom Secretary.

Anabaptist and the Sword	Charles H Shofstahl	20p
The Trail of Blood	Dr.J.M.Carroll	20p
Why Baptists Are Not Protestants	C.E.Tulga (D.D.)	20p

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## Visiting Preachers D.V.

Lord's Day 6 July	Mr A McNabb(Dudley)
Lord's Day 3 August	Mr F J Harris (Cheltenham)
Lord's Day 28 September	Dr S.S.Short (Weston-S-Mare)

Due to health reasons, Mr J. Roberts will no longer be able to take the Annual Bible Convention as advertised in the previous 'Link', but the speaker will be, God willing, as advertised below.

## ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION

Saturday 2 August 1997 D.V.

Speaker: Mr F.J. Harris (Cheltenham)

Afternoon 3.30 Tea 5.00 Evening 6.00