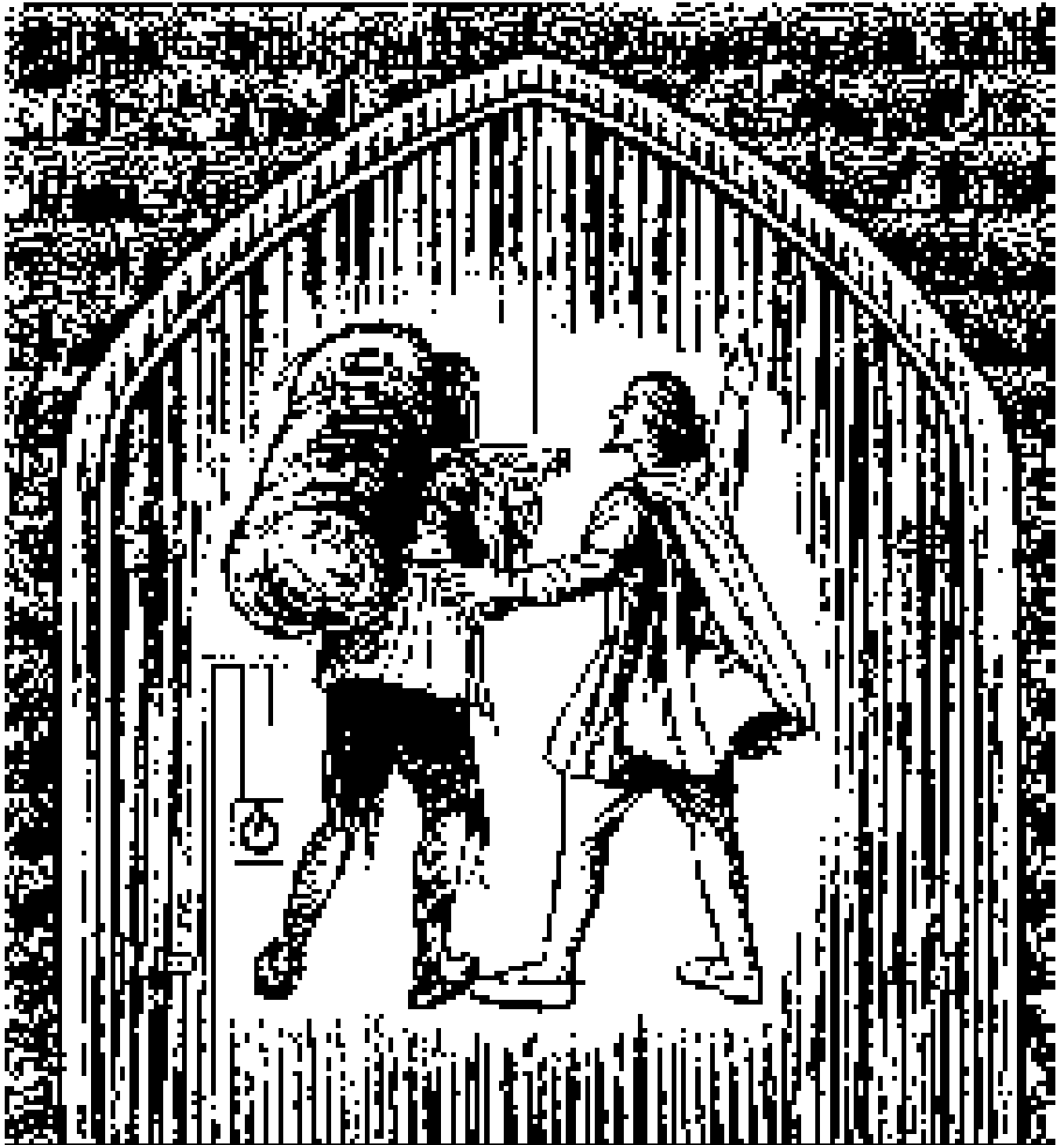


The Wicket Gate



‘Do you see yonder wicket gate?’

Dear Friends,

It was with much thanks to the Lord that we celebrated twenty years of the church's life over the period – 15th-19th September. We don't observe *yearly* anniversaries, but judge that after twenty years of the Lord's goodness to us we should mark that in a special way. The proceedings began with a gathering of members and friends on the Saturday when just over a hundred of us met in the Caledonian hotel in Inverness to enjoy a meal and a time of fellowship. The invited preacher for the anniversary services was Pastor Al. Martin from Trinity Baptist Church New Jersey who began his time of ministry amongst us, on the Saturday, with a heart-warming and challenging word from Romans chapter 11 "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever; Amen." Pastor Martin then preached on six other occasions with great clarity and power, and both his preaching and his presence proved to be owned of the Lord to the glory of Christ and the good of all our souls.

Included in the Saturday's proceedings was a "visual" pictorial history of the church's life, covering the past twenty years in old (and new) photographs and newspaper articles etc., and also a verbal resume of how the church came into being and has continued up to this point. We thought that some might like to share in this and have devoted the present copy of the Wicket Gate to that purpose. We are, and remain, thankful for all the prayerful and practical interest and love shown by many over the years that have gone and trust that you will still bear us up before the throne of grace. As we concluded our opening gathering by singing, "Now thank we all our God," I'm sure we all meant that from the heart. "To Him be glory for ever," indeed!

Yours sincerely,

W. J. Seaton.

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH INVERNESS

Origins & Early Beginnings

The origins of the Reformed Baptist Church of Inverness are embedded, to some degree, in a measure of controversy. From 1966 - 1969 I had been the Pastor of the Inverness Baptist Church, which was in association with the Baptist Union of Scotland. The Baptist Union, in turn, was a member-body of a grouping of churches then known as the Scottish Churches Council. Up to that point the activity of this grouping had been fairly low-key, but in 1969, it began to make very definite "ecumenical" strides. It was proposed that an invitation be extended to the church of Rome to send "observers" to future meetings of the council with an eye to better relationships being established with that religious system. Needless to say, the church of Rome was more than happy to accept this invitation, but to our own heart and mind, this raised a question of association that had to be dealt with. The clear statements of God's word declare that there is but one saving gospel - justification by faith alone in Christ alone. The word of God is also very definite as to our action with regards to any who deny that: "from such withdraw thyself," (1st Tim. 6:5.) The church of Rome is the epitome of the denial of the gospel of justification by faith alone, and I could see no way of being associated to any degree with that system and still retain a conscience void of offence to the Saviour who was crucified to grant us the gospel.

Accordingly, a protest was made to the Baptist Union Assembly in October 1969 that the Union forthwith withdraw from the Scottish Churches Council. This was roundly defeated, and although the Baptist church of Inverness resigned its membership of the Union the resignation, at best, was only half-hearted. This was shown to be the case at a later date when the church returned to the fold of the Union once again. With such an unsatisfactory state of affairs, then, there seemed no alternative but for me to resign the pastorate of that church; this took place in December 1969, when we moved, as a family to Edinburgh.

The immediate purpose of the resignation was an attempt to allow the Inverness church to settle into its previous mode of working and thinking. In spite of this, however, the following months were to see some other resignations by a number of people who had come to the same convictions regarding any form of ecumenical involvement, and who had also come to embrace the "doctrines of grace" as the true expression of the gospel of God in the scriptures. Following a meeting in May 1970 with a small group of this number, it was decided that, with God's enabling, a church of "Reformed" and "Baptistic" persuasion be constituted. The necessities of such a move were seen to, and for our own part we returned to Inverness in the November of that year, when I took up the pastoral office of the church

Just how wise, or necessary, those actions were, came under scrutiny by some at the time, and have done so ever since. All we can say is that the passing of the years has only made these actions all the clearer.

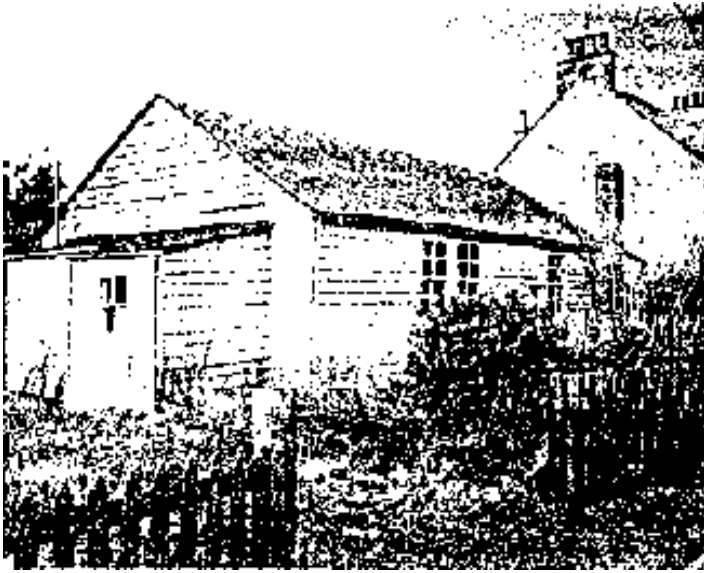
Compared to the present day, the ecumenical scene of twenty years ago was but a little acorn. Then, it was the question of R.C. "observers" etc.: now, it is full-blown "action together" in the so-called "work of the gospel." Then it was a "Protestantism" that allowed within its ranks men who questioned the vitals of the saving truths of the Bible; now, it is the acceptance of openly avowed Sodomites within the "ministry" of some of the participating churches of the ecumenical movement. Then, it was a proposed world church of all professing "Christian" churches; now, it is the vision of a "multi-faith" organisation comprising every religious system that the fallen heart of man ever concocted.

We would not be begrudging towards the Baptist Union of Scotland in its recent withdrawal from the Scottish Churches Council - now known as Action of Churches Together in Scotland and including the Roman Church in full membership. This we acknowledged in an earlier edition of the magazine. But, in reality, it does little to alter the real state of affairs and could never answer the burning issues of our own hearts that caused us to act in the way we did those many years ago. Regardless of any "majority" decision taken at Assembly level by the Union, at *local* level a full-blooded ecumenical programme is engaged in by numerous Baptist churches in Scotland, and the question of being in

association with those who deny the gospel is an open question and an un-addressed question within the ranks of Scottish Baptists. As things stand at present, each passing year only confirms the necessity of having heeded the Bible's call for withdrawal and separation. When someone can convince us that there are *two* gospels, two ways of salvation, two Saviours and that we safely mix the two and present them as one, then we may reconsider what we did and continue to do. Until such a time the die is cast.

Some words of a saint of a bye-gone day are often upon our lips and in our hearts - that the religion of the Bible is "Jesus only, and only Jesus." That means, "not only nothing *apart* from Him, but also, nothing *along* with Him!" It is "Jesus only, and only Jesus." Those are the only permissible grounds for gospel association and united endeavour. Here we must stand always. If there should ever come a time when this is not the sole ground, or the sole reason for this church's existence, may the Lord come speedily and *reform* it and if at such a time it will *not be* reformed, may the Lord *remove* it, that it be not a blot on the *true* gospel whatsoever. The Lord keep us from that "Anathema" that is pronounced on those who preach "any other gospel."

EARLY BEGINNINGS



Our own return to Inverness took place in November 1970, but prior to this the church had already been constituted, in the July of that year, and had begun to formally meet together. Articles of Faith had been drawn up and subscribed to, and this intervening period presented many challenges.

When it had first been decided to commit unto the Lord the possibility of forming an independent reformed witness in Inverness, two needs were faced: a place to gather to worship for the church, and a home for myself and family. Under the Lord's hand, the Town Council of Inverness met the latter, and a local undertaker met the former, providing us with the use of his funeral parlour! This was, no doubt, something of a unique meeting place for a company of the Lord's people, but as we were persuaded that God was going to do a "new thing" for us, we were not to be surprised at any of the strange turns that events were possibly going to take in the days ahead. We accepted the offer of the Chapel of Ease with gratitude and began services there in November. At this time, the church met under the name of the Inverness Independent church, but this was later changed to the present name of the Reformed Baptist church of Inverness.

Although grateful for the use of the funeral parlour premises it was apparent that we must search out a "settled place" to carry on the church's work and testimony. Again, we were forced to turn our eyes away from the "obvious" (perhaps a vacant church building, etc.) to what the Lord, in His determinate counsel and foreknowledge had reserved for us. That, in fact, turned out to be two very old and dilapidated wooden bungalows, sitting amidst high, overgrown grass and bushes: (see picture). As we paced-out the dimensions of the larger of the two structures we discovered that with all the interior walls taken

away we could renovate it into a meeting-house to accommodate over a hundred people.

The incidents involving the provisions and providence of the Lord over this period of time - beginning from when we first looked at the buildings, eventually purchased and renovated them, and began our worship there - are legion. One such occurrence, right at the outset, was a great encouragement to us, and well-remembered.

As stated, the one thing necessary to begin the conversion of one of the houses into a church building was the removal of all the interior walls. We had consulted various people about this, and all had given a rather hesitating "Yes - it *could* be done," provided we were ready, with pillars, to shore-up the roof if the need arose. We decided to go ahead. One night as we were engaged in the work, an old gentleman called in to see what was going on. He turned out to be the man who had actually erected the house some thirty-six years previous; hence his interest. As he went on to relate how he had constructed the building, our hearts rejoiced in the goodness of the Lord. He told us that he had not, in fact, built it as a house, but as a hall-structure - spanning the roof from wall to wall, and setting up the room partitions only after the whole thing was completed. Our task was simply to remove the wall partitions, strengthen the existing beams, and turn the "house" back into what it had been some thirty-six years previous in that determinate counsel and foreknowledge of our God.

In July 1972, after much labour, and numerous tokens of God's grace and sufficiency, we moved into the buildings, with much thanksgiving to the Lord. Over the years, we have endeavoured to improve the premises in various ways, but above all things, looking to that which goes beyond the four walls, to the building up of the "spiritual house," which is the "habitation of God through the Spirit." *Please pray for that.*



THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

From the commencement of our meeting together we have always made an endeavour to give a “round-ness” to the church’s work and witness. Although few in number we believe it necessary to give some degree of support to the work of the gospel overseas, be engaged in evangelism at home, and take an interest in the spiritual well-being of little children. As the years have passed, we are thankful that God has caused all the various workings of the church to increase. We are ever conscious of our many failings and acts of self and sin; but must also acknowledge His grace that has brought us safe thus far. Our thanks go out to the Saviour for the degree of “maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace” over the years of the church’s life. We have had our “fightings without and fears within;” our disappointments, heartaches and perplexities. But on the whole, the good has so outweighed the bad that it would be sinful not to “rejoice in the Lord” in all ways. Over the past number of years we have had much cause to return our thanks to Him; for souls saved, our hearts warmed and challenged, and others being added to the work of the gospel amongst us, bringing with them their zeal and their experience of the Lord.

As to the future, who can really say what that holds for any of us? One of the most searching words that our Saviour ever spoke is the one concerning His finding the faith on the earth when He returns. “When the Son of Man returns, shall he find the faith on the earth.” If, in His will, we remain “unto the coming of the Lord,” may we be found

faithful; if He chooses to “call us home” before that, may we depart, faithful to His name and in His cause.

“’Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come.”

WHAT IS A REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH?

As stated earlier, when the church was first formed it met under the name of Inverness Independent Church. The reason for this title was to avoid any offence being given to the existing Baptist church. Over the early months, however it became increasingly clear that this designation in no way stated our true position and purpose. The original Baptists in Scotland could be traced back to 1653, and to a Confession of faith which strongly upheld the doctrines of free and sovereign grace on which our own church was doctrinally based. Even though the vast majority of Scottish Baptists had now lapsed into a thorough-going Arminian theology, we, nevertheless, felt that we should be identified with "our fathers in the faith," so to speak. Accordingly, in April 1971 the designation of the church was changed to the Reformed Baptist Church of Inverness.

REFORMED

This part of the title is to signify that the doctrine of salvation that we hold to is the one which God so graciously re-discovered to His church in the days of the Reformation, under such men as Martin Luther and

John Calvin. It is that which centres on the sovereign work of God in the gospel in saving men and women from their sins.

As He is sovereign - His own Free Agent - in all matters pertaining to creation and providence, so He is also in all the issues of salvation. He sovereignly chooses to save whom He will; He sent His Son to die for all such: and He sends forth the Spirit to regenerate those for whom the Saviour died so that they are gladly and willingly brought to see their saving interest in Christ their Lord. When the Bible states that "Salvation is of the Lord," the "doctrines of grace" are simply the expansion of that glorious statement in the light of all that God has revealed to us in the scriptures. God makes the dead sinner to live; He gives eyesight to the spiritually blind, and hearing to the spiritually deaf. He *is* the God who does His will among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and that omnipotent will is most displayed in "His highest work, redemption."

It is unbiblical, and unbecoming the sovereign nature of God to declare that man's salvation is within his own capability or according to the power of his own will. The Saviour's words make that very clear - "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life." It is the interposing of God's gracious and powerful will over that of fallen man, and the malicious will of the devil, that brings salvation to all who believe. Belief in such a doctrine of salvation is meant to give us all confidence with regards to its proclamation to the ends of the earth. It is that alone which can meet men's need and show God's glory.

BAPTIST.

Although at one with the reformers concerning the doctrine of salvation, Reformed Baptists adopt a different position in the issues of the church

and the doctrine of baptism. We would hold that on the question of baptism the reformers "left-off reforming", and simply followed on in the footsteps of Rome.

The *theological* approach, of course, was different, but the main point of baptism - viz. *who* is it that should be baptised, remained the same. To the early reformers Presbyterian or Lutheran it is the children of believers who are the main subjects for baptism; to Baptists, it is believers only who are to receive the ordinance.

The unremitting burden of New Testament revelation makes the latter position clear. In stark simplicity the command is spelled out - "Believe and be baptised;" in simple terms the corresponding reaction is brought before us "They that believed were baptised." Nowhere do we ever read of anyone other than a professing believer in Jesus Christ ever being baptised. There is not one instance in all the Word of God of an infant being baptised, and there is not one command in all the Word of God to baptise infants. This must surely be a weighty consideration. there *is*, of course, an Old Testament command for *Hebrews* to *circumcise* their *male* children, but the theological reasonings necessary to turn this into a command to baptise infants is tortuous in the extreme. In all the incidents, symbolism, meaning and directives it is clear that baptism has to do with "much water and believers only."

Acts chapter eight gives the lovely account of the conversion and subsequent baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. As Philip preached Jesus to the man the man believed, and on the basis of that believing he baptised him. "Here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And they went down, both of them into the water, and he baptised him there." John 3:23, "And John also was baptising in Aenon near to Salom, because there was *much water* there." Matthew 3:16, "And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway *out of the water*" "The Lord's

command holds good the order has not been reversed: "***Believe and be baptised.***"

CHURCH

As already stated, although one with the reformers in the vital issues of the doctrine of salvation, Reformed Baptists differ greatly on their doctrine of the church especially on the question of *who* constitutes the "visible" church of Christ on earth. Paedo-baptists those who hold to child baptism believe that it is a "a society made up of all such as in all ages and places in the world do profess the true religion, ***and their children.***" (Larger Catechism, A.62.)

Baptists believe that the visible church is constituted only of those who make profession of Christ as Lord and Saviour, and who go on to manifest a life consistent with that profession. In accordance with the New Testament pattern, baptism and church attachment are integral. "Then they that gladly received the word (believed) were baptised and added to the church." All who believe in Christ are "baptised into Christ," in connection with their eternal union etc. with Him; and all who believe in Christ are part of the whole Church of Christ that will spend eternity with Him. But those eternal and heavenly and mysterious relationships have visible, earthly reflections, in our being baptised with water, and added to a valid church of Christ under Christ our Lord.

In all the addresses to all the churches in the New Testament scriptures the title, or titles, given to those who constitute those churches are ***saints, called, those who call on the name of Christ*** etc. Children of believers are in a very privileged and blessed position in being within the orbit of the preaching of the word, and the prayers of the saints etc.,

but they may not be looked upon as "members" of the church until there is good evidence that God has regenerated their souls and given them a mouth to profess His Son. This view of the church we would hold to be essential to the two purposes of the Church's calling in the world viz. the worship of God and the work of the gospel. Whereas there will always be those who gather "with" the church who have not, as yet, professed Christ as Lord and Saviour, that is a different matter from the "church gathered" to the honour and glory of the name of her Saviour. And then, if the church is to be God's agent in the work of the gospel, who but those who have felt the grace of that gospel in their lives can engage in that work? Imperfect and all as the reflection must ever be, the church on earth must reflect the essentials of that which will be above and forever; where they all know their Lord as the One who loved them and washed them from their sins in His blood.

We humbly submit the foregoing as the briefest of statements as to our understanding of the terms employed in the name of Reformed Baptist Church.