

# CONNECT

Magazine of the Evangelical Connexion

June 2012

Volume 2: 3



The June 2012 Family Conference at Emmanuel Church Workington

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## Editorial

The June Family Conference in Workington has been most successful and very encouraging with good attendance and most appreciated hospitality, catering and leadership! A number of photographs indicating much of the event will be placed on the Connexion's website soon. John Richardson was speaker and expounded the First Letter of Peter from the New Testament, the first two sections of the five he delivered are in this edition, and the rest will be published in following copies. In addition, there are CD recordings of them available as delivered at Emmanuel Workington at the Conference itself. Should these be desired, make contact with me and I will organise their provision for you.

Sadly Bishop Dominic Stockford has resigned due to considerable ill health early this year. In order to respond to this circumstance, the Business Session at the Conference responded to the General Council and Emmanuel, Workington Church Council and agreed to Tony Pietersen's role as Co-ordinator for the Connexion until September in order for the Connexion to have clear leadership. At the September Convocation, there will hopefully be decisions regarding future effective action to strengthen the Connexion.

The September Conference will take place in Fleetwood and will also involve the ordination of Virgil Tountas as Presbyter and his induction as Rector of St Paul's, Fleetwood.

In response to Joseph T Busfield's articles, Lee Potter has contributed an article for this edition entitled *The Other Side of the Coin*.

*Michael John Smithson*



# THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

## Paragraph II

Paragraph II of the Declaration of Principles states:

*This Church recognizes and adheres to Episcopacy, not as of Divine right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of Church polity.*

It is interesting to note what this paragraph says, and what it does not say.

It says we recognize and adhere to Episcopacy – the form of ecclesiastical governance that utilizes bishops as ruling elders. We see episcopacy in the Bible. James the brother of our Lord, was reportedly the first Bishop of Jerusalem and as such had to step in and settle the disagreement between two Apostles, Paul and Peter. We see in Acts 15:19 James handing down the decision of the Council of Jerusalem:

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

Christian history is full of the acts of bishops. Ignatius was the *third* bishop of Antioch around the turn of the second century (98-117 A.D.) and a student of Saint John. Surely that gives credence to the office of bishop.

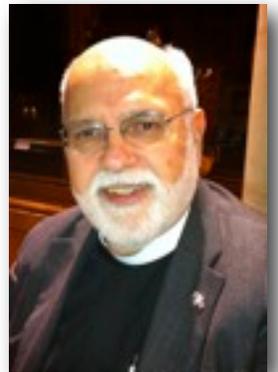
The EC-FCE bishop is a Presbyter elected and consecrated to hold the office and execute specific duties traditionally assigned to the bishop, ordination and confirmation. Why these two? Because the Bishop, as he ordains and confirms is standing in the place of the wider church. These actions are not only local. A man is ordained into the EC-FCE specifically, but also into the catholic, universal church. As a person is confirmed, he or she is not just becoming a member of the local church, but is proclaiming his or her faith in our risen Lord. A proclamation “confirmed” by a representative of the broader church. Thus the EC-FCE uses bishops to make the connection from the local to the universal Church. Yea, even from the Church Militant, to the Church Triumphant since the office of bishop is a “very ancient and desirable form of Church polity”.

But it is important to note also what this paragraph does NOT say. While recognizing and adhering to episcopacy we do not *believe* in episcopacy. Our form of government is not an article of belief as it is with some others. The churches the FCE and REC left would cling to Apostolic Succession as a requirement for a true church. The Neo-REC (Reformed Episcopal Church) now requires confirmation by an “acceptable” bishop for a layman to hold office. Those ministers ordained in a Presbyterian tradition have to be re-ordained by a bishop to be truly set apart. We hold no such nonsense! There is no biblical warrant for such. It is an invention of man carried over from the pre-Reformation days, the days when Rome held sway over the doctrines of men. The Reformation freed us from such heresy. The Tractarian movement restored this heresy to the church from which the FCE separated. And the latter day Oxford Movement is now restoring this error in the churches that once vehemently denied it.

There is a phrase in the FCE Book of Common Prayer (and the traditional REC Book of Common Prayer) that clearly points out the difference in the positions of the EC-FCE and other Anglican bodies regarding bishops. Apart from the fact that our service is a service of consecration – setting apart versus ordination – investing with ministerial authority, the opening phrase in the Ordering of Presbyters is very telling. The Presenter addresses the Bishop as “Reverend Brother in Christ”. Compare this with other orders (1662 and the new REC BCP for example) where the Bishop is addressed as “Reverend Father in God”. An untoward elevation of a man, hopefully a sinner saved by grace just as you and I.

Much more could be said. But for a more complete apologetic of our position on episcopacy, see the article by Bishop Charles Edward Cheney on The Office of Bishop at the EC-FCE website News page, <http://www.ec-fce.org.uk/news.htm>.

*Joseph T Busfield*



# THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

The Canadian liturgical scholar Dr Dyson Hague wrote:

*“The Articles of Religion, commonly known as the 39 Articles, have ever been regarded as the sheet anchor of the Church of England’s doctrinal position. They stand as a bulwark of the true principles of the Church of England, and of their teaching no loyal Churchman need ever be ashamed. They are embedded in the Prayer Book as the doctrinal monument of the victory of the Reformation.”*

Writing in 1939, Bishop Hensley observed:

*“In the Articles we have the Anglican version of the Catholic tradition of Faith and Discipline. It is not open to any loyal Anglican to form any other.”*

Dating from 1562, the 39 Articles are the Anglican Confession of Faith. His Majesty’s Declaration by Charles I, issued in 1628 and found in the 1662 Prayer Book, states that the 39 Articles *“do contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God’s Word.”* They are to be understood *“in the literal and grammatical sense”*. That clear principle of interpretation excludes any Roman twisting or modernist denial. Anglo-Catholics date from the 19th century.

Abuse does not prevent use. Should automobiles be banned because people die in them every day?

The 39 Articles are clear, biblical statements devoid of ambiguity. Article 17, which the Free Church of England accepts without reservation, states:

Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they they which be endued with so excellent a benefit be called according to God’s purpose by his Spirit

working in due season: they through God obeying the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God’s Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

Furthermore, we must receive God’s promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that the Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.

Compare that with Article 18 of the REC 35 Articles which states:

While the Scriptures distinctly set forth the election, predestination and calling of the people of God unto eternal life, as Christ saith: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me”; they no less positively affirm man’s free agency and responsibility, and that salvation is freely offered to all through Christ.

This Church, accordingly, simply affirms these doctrines as the Word of God sets them forth, and submits them to the individual judgement of its members, as taught by the Holy Spirit; strictly charging them that God commandeth all men

everywhere to repent, and that we can be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ.

Unlike the 39 Articles, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, which have strong objective statements, the REC 35 Articles all too often descend into Victorian subjectivism and sentimentalism, revealing a suspicion of the visible church. Let us hold fast to the principles of the English Reformation, purchased with a price.

*J Lee Potter*



# 1 PETER

## 1: CHOSEN STRANGERS, 1 Peter 1<sup>1-12</sup>

### Introduction — where are we?

How should we see our community — in which we are set? How can we reach them?

Ultimately it depends on how God sees them — but it also includes how God sees us and therefore how we see ourselves.

1 Peter addresses the *maturing* church. No longer a tiny band in Israel, or a new movement spreading out across the empire, but already becoming established, and therefore facing the questions of establishment — the questions of the long haul.

In many ways we face a *very* different context. Christianity has been around for a long while. We have been at the long haul for millennia as an institution, and in many cases decades as individuals.

At the same time, we are past the peak of Christendom. We face the extra challenge of being ‘old hat’.

Nevertheless, the gospel is the same and the church has been here before — there have been periods of decline and periods of revival.

Our calling must be faithfulness and availability — but that does not mean doggedly carrying on doing what we’ve always done and saying what we’ve always said, or even believing what we’ve always believed.

Don’t misunderstand me. We must not abandon the tradition we received from the apostles. But sometimes — perhaps often — we need to re-examine ourselves in the light of that tradition and ask to what extent we are really following it.

The gospel is a constant challenge to us as well as to the world, and sometimes the reason for our failure to impact the world more effectively is our failure to live the gospel more committedly.

## Who are we?

And with that in mind, the first thing we discover in 1 Peter is that we stand in a challenging relationship to the world, but, in the economy of God, a familiar one.

Peter writes *“To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia ...”*

The term translated by the NIV ‘scattered’, however, is ‘diasporas’, which is a technical term. James uses it in introducing his epistle with the words, *“To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations”*, or as the ESV puts it, *“To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion”*.

This ‘dispersion’ was, of course, in the first instance the Jewish community — the people who were ‘strangers’ because they lived away from their home in the land promised to Abraham.

The same word ‘stranger’ is used by Abraham in the LXX of Genesis 23<sup>4</sup> when he says to the Hittites, *“I am an alien and a stranger among you.”*

At its most basic, then, it says that, in the words of the old gospel song, *“This world is not my home ...”*. We live here as strangers and exiles.

But in another sense, it gives to the Christian community the status that formerly belonged to the Jewish community, who also knew the experience of exile. And in their exile they had to learn how to live positively — as did Daniel — faithful to God and his promises, but also as representatives of God in a community often hostile to him and his people.

## How did we get here?

With that in mind, we must also remember how we got here. Peter writes in v2,

*... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood ...*

Notice the trinitarian formula, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This, of course, is the gospel in a nutshell, and we do well to remember it. This is one of those things that must *never* change. We must always preach from the basis of a sovereign God the Father, and active Spirit, who is the promise to you and your children and those who are far off, who sanctifies us, and a Jesus who died for our sins and who calls us to obedience.

We do not preach a mere ‘belief in Jesus’ who died for sins, but a personal faith which places our whole selves and our entire lives under his authority. Only then can we truly be the people of God and nothing less will do.

Only then are “Grace and peace” ours in abundance.

## Our perspective

With all this in mind, we can begin to address our present context. And for this we have to understand where we are in God’s unfolding plans and purposes. We have to see things in perspective.

Peter writes in v 3:

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ...*

I sometimes think if we could believe the resurrection more we would fear the things of this world far less. What if they take everything away from us? What if life deals us hard knocks and misfortunes? We have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus.

That should surely be our first point of reference when we consider how to live in this world.

Secondly, v 4, but in the same vein, we have,

*and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade— kept in heaven for you ...*

Let me say, though, the key word here is inheritance, not heaven. Inheritance is a very ‘Old Testament’ word. An inheritance is what each tribe had in the land, even before they entered it. But of

course the inheritance they received in the land was eventually lost.

And so we have an imperishable inheritance being kept for us in the heavens. But we might also remember that the priestly tribe of Levi had no inheritance of land because, as Deuteronomy 10<sup>9</sup> says, *“The Lord is their inheritance ...”* So we must remember that land is not the great thing.

But thirdly, that inheritance is not staying in heaven, it is coming to earth. According to v 5 we,

*.... through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

When Christ comes in glory, we will see our inheritance — indeed everyone will see it. And until then we are shielded by God’s power through our faith. This is faith at work and active!

#### **Now look around**

With this perspective, and only with this perspective, we can look around. And we need this perspective because around us we see griefs and trials, v 6:

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*

We must not underestimate this. Life can deliver burdens we find almost impossible to bear. But we must confront them in the light of our hope and see them for what they truly are, as Peter says in v 7:

*These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

We are in a battle, earning our battle honours.

What do you think of faith? Is it a belief, a trust, a grim holding on despite everything? Peter says it is a thing worth more than gold. Usually we think of faith as temporary — for this life only. Now we have faith, then we shall walk by sight.

But I doubt that even when we walk by sight, faith will disappear. I wonder, rather, whether faith is not something that will last as part of our character for eternity, which is why it needs to be proved genuine, like gold.

#### **Wait and see**

But meanwhile we do wait for Jesus whom we do not yet see, v 8:

*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy ...*

Well, for some of us that may be going a bit too far. We don’t feel inexpressible and glorious joy. In fact we feel burdened and sad and at the end of our tether.

But that is why we have the word of God and sermons, because we need to hear this as a challenge. Love Jesus, believe in him, rejoice in him, even though you do not see him, because one day you will.

#### **The goal of salvation**

When that happens, salvation will be yours. But you don’t have to wait until then. Peter writes in v 9,

*... for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

The verb is in the present tense: we *are receiving* the goal of our faith — its outcome, end and purpose. Already we are experiencing the salvation of our souls.

This is something obvious to us, but also visible to the world — or at least it ought to be. I became a Christian because I met Christians who were different — who had something I hadn’t got.

It wasn’t just that they were more ‘religious’ or ‘churchy’ — I had plenty of that at home. They had faith that made a difference. And that ought to be our normal experience.

#### **A great privilege**

What we have by way of salvation — this ‘salvation now’ that Peter speaks about — is a fantastic privilege.

In v10f he observes it was *not* available previously:

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, <sup>11</sup>trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*

The Old Testament prophets, he says, spoke of things they knew they didn't fully understand. They knew, in other words, that they were prophets.

But notice also what they knew they were prophesying — Peter does not want us to forget this — the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

This is the sequence Peter wants to impress on his readers: sufferings, *then* glory. That is the way of Christ, that is the essence of Christianity, and if you don't understand that you are in for a very bumpy ride indeed.

But still, we are very privileged. As he says in v 12,

*It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.*

We are the privileged recipients of the gospel, the preaching of which is a work of the Holy Spirit for us and in us.

To be a Christian is to be in a tough spot. But we are fully equipped for this by our understanding of the gospel, by our faith and by the work of the Holy Spirit.

I am reminded of the incident in the TV series *Band of Brothers*, based on true events, when Easy company is on its way to the town of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

One of the retreating soldiers warns Major Winters if they go that way they'll be surrounded by the advancing Germans. "We're paratroopers," he replies, "We're supposed to be surrounded."

Well we're Christians, we're supposed to be in the midst of trials and sufferings, aliens and strangers in the world. This is the right place for us — not the result of some mistake on our part or God's. So let us learn how to live and to fight the good fight of faith.

## **2. GOD'S HOLY PEOPLE, 1 Peter 1<sup>13</sup> - 2<sup>10</sup>**

### **Introduction**

Are you ready? After Peter's introduction to his letter you should be ready to hear what it means to live as a Christian.

However, there is not much comfort here if you were expecting to have your brow mopped and a cushion put under your feet, in spiritual terms. Instead, there is a call to arms, v13: "Therefore," Peter writes, "prepare your minds for action ..."

Literally this is "gird up the loins of your minds", and those of us familiar with older translations will know that 'girding up your loins' is what you do to get ready for serious hard work.

It is a state of alertness, but in our case it applies to our thought life. And therefore we must be 'sober'. The NIV says 'self-controlled'.

And our hope, therefore, must be "set ... fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed." This is our controlling thought — Jesus is coming and we must be ready.

### **Readiness is Holiness**

And readiness means holiness, and holiness means turning our backs on our old way of life.

Peter address his readers as children — as those starting out on a new life and learning new ways. But this means also a new relationship, for, as he says in v17, we have heavenly Father.

But if God is our Father then as children our nature must reflect his. Once, as v14 says, we lived in ignorance and conformed to evil desires. Now, v15f:

*... just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;  
<sup>16</sup>for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

This is the great Old Testament refrain. Of course the people of Israel generally failed to live up to it, but they were called to have

the same character as the God who called them his people: that of holiness, which meant separation from all contamination.

Moreover, when we call on God as Father, we must not forget we are calling on the judge of all people who is impartial about people's works. He doesn't look at our lives and our works more *leniently* than other people's.

Sometimes I think Christians think justification by faith alone means God sets a lower bar for our works. On the contrary, the bar is the same: Be holy. (Read JC Ryle).

Therefore we must live in the fear of God — and yes that means respect, but it is, as we say, a 'healthy respect' which has a due regard for the object of our fear.

### **Understand salvation**

And in this regard, it will help us if we understand salvation and meditate on what made it possible, vv18-19:

*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect ...*

Occasionally we read in the papers of people for whom a ransom has been paid — it has happened recently in the case of people kidnapped by Somali pirates. It makes us cross that this can happen, and we are staggered sometimes by the effort it took and the money it involved.

Yet we too have been ransomed, but not with silver or gold. It took something far more precious than that — it was the precious blood of Christ.

But if that was the ransom, then how precious are we to the one who paid it! And that, too, should be a motivation to holiness. When I sin, I am presuming on the blood of Jesus. I am, as it were, despising the ransom paid for me.

### **As was planned**

This knowledge is part of the business of having our thoughts right.

We don't have time to go into it now, but you might like to read Proverbs 8<sup>22-31</sup> with what it has to say about Wisdom and creation, and then reflect on the fact that Jesus' death was ordained 'before the creation of the world' (v20).

To know that is to have true wisdom, because wisdom is what enables us to live rightly and effectively now. Jesus was ordained then, and has been revealed now, and so we can live in that light.

We know what v21 tells us: that God raised and glorified him who died for our sins, and that is at the heart of our faith and gives substance to our hope. That is how we live.

### **The path of obedience in love**

Our obedience to the gospel ('the truth', v22) issues in a new manner of life, and that begins with love for the brethren — a love that is deep and from the heart. We are reminded once again that the Christian life is not a solo performance.

It is not even 'my relationship with Jesus'. The Bible is emphatic that 'my relationship with Jesus' is only as good as 'my relationship with the Church'.

This shouldn't surprise us. The first and greatest commandment is to love God, the second to love my neighbour, and who is more of a neighbour to me than the people in my church?

But in our fear of wrong understandings of the Church, we sometimes erect false notions of individualism, and we flit from church to church, or drop out altogether, thinking we are the centre of the theological universe.

We are not. And we must not forget that most of the admonitions addressed to 'you' in the epistles are to 'you plural', not you singular.

### **Children born of the Word**

And now Peter returns to the theme of our new beginning as children, v23:

*For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

We are indeed, as the hymn says, 'Frail children of dust and feeble as frail.' V24 reminds us of this fact:

*For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall ...*

But over against this, v25, "... *the word of the Lord stands forever.*" So there is something that lasts and, as Peter says, "*this is the word that was preached to you.*" The very instrument of our salvation is that eternal, abiding, word of the Lord.

Once again we are reminded of something we easily forget. The word of God is not just a formality. Nor is it just an unfortunate necessity. That often quoted saying attributed to Francis of Assisi, "*Preach the Gospel always, and if necessary, use words,*" not only wasn't said by him but is pernicious nonsense.

Words are not an added extra — they are the very heart and soul of the gospel, bringing us new life.

### **The new life**

And now Peter goes on to tell us what that new life of holiness involves, beginning with leaving behind the old life (2<sup>1</sup>):

*Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.*

Work through the list on your own later.

Secondly, seek the nourishment of the new life, vv2-3:

*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

The KJV translates this, "*the sincere milk of the word*" and although the word 'word' isn't really part of the Greek text, the idea is surely right. We have come to God through the word of life, and that word will continue to feed us.

### **A holy house**

But again, this is not just about me.

The address is plural in v4 and the outcome is also necessarily plural. As we come to the living Stone (v4), we are built into a spiritual house, v5.

A house is not just one brick! Nor is a house just a pile of bricks. A house is bricks stuck together in an orderly manner.

So our coming to Jesus must not be understood as me coming to him — it is us coming to him and coming together.

### **A holy priesthood**

And as we come to him to become a spiritual house — the new temple of the Lord — so we become, v5:

*... a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Now once again, this sets us apart, as vv6-8 point out quoting Isaiah 28<sup>16</sup>, Psalm 118<sup>12</sup> and Isaiah 8<sup>14</sup>.

On the one hand there is a trustworthy cornerstone, on whom we have relied. On the other hand, the cornerstone must be trusted, and if he is not trusted then, by that very rejection, he becomes a stumbling block.

The NIV says they stumbled because they disobeyed the message. Literally, they disobeyed the word — which is exactly the thing which, according to v23, gave us new birth, and which (although it uses a different word for 'word') v25 says was preached to us.

So we are not word-rejecters, and we must not fall into the trap of being word-rejecters. On the contrary, we are ourselves called to be word proclaimers.

### **The fulfilment of Exodus 19**

In Exodus 19, we read what happened when the people of God arrived at Mt Sinai after leaving Egypt. In a sense, this is the goal of the Exodus, insofar as God gave this as a sign to Moses.

When Moses, standing before the burning bush, asked how he could prove that God had sent him to deliver the people, God replied:

*And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will serve [NIV, 'worship'] God on this mountain." (Exodus 3<sup>12</sup>)*

And when they got to Sinai this is what God told Moses to tell the people:

*'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* (Exodus 19<sup>4-6</sup>)

Well, it didn't quite work out like that for Israel, but the promise was not forgotten, and now it is finding its true fulfilment in us. Peter says in v9:

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God ...*

But what is our priestly task? How do we serve God — or if you want to hold on to the language of worship, how do we live lives that worship him?

The answer is in the second part of v9:

*... that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

We are proclaimers of God's mercy, and as we work through the rest of this epistle we will see how that is to be done.

### **Recipients of mercy**

But as we finish this section, there is an encouragement for us which is also a warning in v10:

*Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

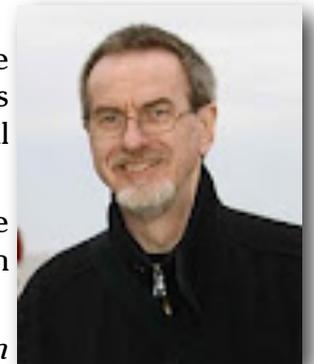
The reference is to the children of the unfortunate Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer — children with the unfortunate names 'Not loved' and 'Not my People' — children who were a standing rebuke to Israel, but also forerunners of God's mercy, as Hosea 1<sup>10-11</sup> shows.

We are no better than anyone else. We are just blessed by the God of grace. We were not his people, and we were objects of his wrath. Yet God saved us.

And when we declare his praises we declare above all that he called us out of darkness into his wonderful light. And so we live to call others.

That is central to our relationship with the world. It is in darkness, we are to call them into light.

*John Richardson*



## **EVENT DATES FOR 2012**

**CONVOCATION CONFERENCE 28-30 September**  
[at St Paul's Fleetwood, Lancashire]

**GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS**  
**7 July** [at Church Lane Evangelical Church, Stafford]  
**28 September** [at St Paul's Fleetwood, Lancashire]

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