

## “IPC: THE PAST” –

Transcript of Mark Harvey’s Address at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 18<sup>th</sup> September 04

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Winston Churchill said “Of this I am quite sure, that if we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find we have lost the future.” So I approach my subject with some trepidation. Today, I am in the presence of Elders who were part of that history and who may have strong views about it, and indeed different views. Furthermore, since 1973 when I first joined IPC, those elders were in authority over me, and to be frank, I think I was quite a difficult customer. Lawyers, especially judges, always are: I know this from my daily dealings with them. If I had the late 1980s version of me in my congregation today, and now knowing some of the problems that come with leadership, I am bound to admit that I would find “me” a difficult person. The Liss Session Minutes of 1988 and 89 are revealing. On 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 1989 we have this minute:

“How do we treat difficult people? Do we keep them at arm’s length or are we trying to bring them in to things more?”

Elsewhere between 1989 and 1990, the records reflect the grief I gave the Elders about certain things. So, I want to start by placing on record a personal apology to my former elders for behaving like a bolshie teenager does with his parents. Now that the teenager has become a parent himself, he sees that parenting is not so easy! I have to admit I was wrong before God. I apologise to you, and I take comfort in the fact that I know that you have really forgiven me for those days.

We all grow older and face decay – like dear Rod Nelson with Alzheimer’s disease – who of course cannot be here today, but whose wife, Carolyn, I spoke to you yesterday and who wanted you to know how they rejoice daily, in spite of the incurable disease, in God’s goodness to them. I mention Rod of course as he was one the early Liss elders, along with Jerram, Ranald and Clive Boddington. As we grow older, our memory of the past grows dim, but I am convinced that as we face the Lord in the Believer’s judgment we will see how every moment of our lives, and what we chose to do in that moment, really mattered in God’s economy.

If we shone a searchlight through 18,250 days (50 years) of IPC history, what would we see? What characterises the history of IPC? Is it possible to summarise in half a dozen words? I think I would put it like this: “The evident grace of God’s Providence.”

In a moment I’ll take more detailed look at some aspects of our 50 year history which I think support all that this phrase stands for. But now just briefly I’d like to examine that phrase – in the hope that you will find this very comforting.

First, why do I say “evident”? What is evident about grace? Evident – because as you look back, the only possible explanation about certain occurrences is God’s hand in it all. Deirdre Ducker, who was there from the beginning, told me it was

never by human endeavour. The WCF in section 5(7) has these most comforting and true words when it speaks about Providence and the church:

“As the providence of God does, in general, reach to all creatures: so after a most special manner, it takes care of His church and disposes all things to the good thereof.”

Second, why do I say “Grace”? Well, we do not deserve God’s providence because we are sinful creatures. We actually deserve his disapproval. My brother Elder, Wade Bradshaw, puts it something like this: “God chose to treat our repudiation of Him as His problem not ours.” That’s very revealing about the character of God.

Third, why do I say God’s Providence? What exactly is “Providence?” The Oxford dictionary definition is “timely care or preparation; or foresight” but I think theologically it is more than this. I think theologically it might be defined in a similar way to predestination. My definition would be something like this: “God upholding His creation and ordering history for the purpose of His glory, yet without in any way being responsible for sin, and without violating true human liberty and responsibility.”

One day in the late 1990s, I took a non-Christian friend along to church. I thought it was a wonderful service, but he was shocked, said afterwards “God must be soooo arrogant, wanting us to glorify Him all the time and wanting to control the world! I’m not interested in a God like that! We were liberated year ago from the stranglehold of Christian religion dominating us.”

Well, if you had 30 minutes over coffee with my friend, how do you reply to that? You might take him to the incarnation. You might say that I am really glad that things are this way – I am really glad that a good God is really 100% sovereign over His creation. Because the alternative is that man is in charge, or at least partly charge, and look what that means. “Don’t you see that the trajectory of our culture is really grim? Is this because of its Christian roots, or is it because it has left its Christian roots?” You might also usefully look at the Westminster Confession’s section on Providence which has some of the finest and most moving statements I know on this subject.

When it speaks about Providence, the Confession says that God controls everything by a concurrency of First and Second Causes. In other words these causes, His will and our free actions, happen at the same time. In the Lord’s Prayer we echo this when we say “They will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

We can see this happening in the life of Joseph and we can see it happening in the history of the cross. The acts of evil were encompassed within God’s plan not simply by bare permission, but as the WCF says, “through a wise and powerful bounding” which ordered and governed these events so that good might arise. You can think of it like the confluence of two rivers at the mouth of an estuary.

The first causes are the stronger river, which indiscernibly directs the flow of the second causes as they meet each other.

If we examine the very early IPC history in 1954 we see this confluence of First and Second Causes. Edith Schaeffer in her book “The Tapestry” has a chapter called “Bouleversement” – meaning destruction or ruin. It is in that chapter that she records the official formation of IPC on Thanksgiving Day – 25<sup>th</sup> November 1954. In the same year, the Schaeffers faced huge adversity in four areas:

- (1) Franky their baby son had suffered two attacks of polio.
- (2) Susan had contracted Rheumatic Fever
- (3) There was serious trouble in their sending church in the USA. In particular, fault lines had developed in the synod who felt threatened by Schaeffer’s pleading for balance and a greater reality. (In 1955, the split came about and out of it was born Covenant Seminary).
- (4) The Swiss Government had asked them to leave Switzerland because of “having had a religious influence on the village of Champéry.”

Who in their right mind would have thought of starting a new church in these circumstances? To make things even worse, Schaeffer’s father was not a Christian and had opposed his going into the ministry (in fact it was not until he was on his deathbed that he asked his son “Boy, tell me about your Jesus!”) Although they were tempted to doubt, they put prayer as their first priority. And one can see the stronger current of First Causes embracing the Second Causes, upholding them and directing them to achieve His glorious purposes.

The Schaeffers as you know did not have to leave Switzerland. The spur for starting the church was the trouble in the USA synod – which, as I say, had also led to the birth of Covenant Seminary. So, in many ways, Covenant Seminary is like a cousin to IPC.

So IPC as a denomination was born a year before L’Abri. They grew up side by side. L’Abri is the younger sister. Perhaps surprisingly, L’Abri of grew larger than IPC and had a greater worldwide influence. I say “surprisingly” because you might have expected that God would have had it the other way round – that His church should become the stronger of the two sisters. But do not be deceived here. L’Abri is a mission. The church is a church. The church needs mission but the church is more than mission. Schaeffer rightly did not want any machinery to be put in place which prolonged the natural life of L’Abri beyond what God wanted. But the same cannot be said of the church.

Historically the first IPC congregations, planted by L’Abri, were in Switzerland and Italy. I don’t feel qualified to summarise the history of them, even though I have

studied with interest the records of Switzerland. So I want to concentrate on the UK.

L'Abri planted the two main English IPC churches, Ealing first in 1969, then Liss in 1972. Ranald & Susan Macaulay were the church planters. Here we see the grace of God's providence in substantial gifts to L'Abri to enable them to buy property. 52 Cleveland Road was bought in 1969 for L'Abri use. Susan Macaulay started a small Sunday School there, and eventually this grew into a church. Janet Seaber used to bring her children, and her husband Terry came later and today he is a deacon. Other Mothers who brought there kids were Deirdre, Julia Kennell, Katie Easton, Judy Cradock (whose son Christopher got married last week here!)

Later an adult Bible Study group was formed, and slowly a church came into existence. In due course some of these Bible Study students fell in love with each other. There were several romances and weddings around 52 Cleveland Road. Sylvester and Janet Jacobs were married there, so were Kim and Cynthia, and so were Peter & Carol Geare. Unforgettably, in 1973, Mark Harvey also fell in love with Sue Harvey in the lounge at 52 during one of Andrew Newman's Bible Studies in Romans!!

What attracted us to this church? And how did it feel to be in the IPC in those days? Speaking for myself, I would say it was its love for people, and its emphasis on practising apologetics within the framework of that deep love of people. That combination was powerfully magnetic. The practice of apologetics in love seemed absent from other churches. I am not saying apologetics is a central ingredient of the gospel, but usually you cannot get to the centre without it. In the 1960s and 70s, to find apologetics in the UK churches was as rare as hen's teeth. We have our younger para-church sister to thank for this aspect of the IPC which has permeated it, and I hope we never lose it. Is apologetics still as important to the church today as it was then? To answer that would be overstepping my brief, but if you search for Wade Bradshaw on the internet, you will find his lecture "Capturing the Low Ground." That I would say addresses the question commendably.

In 1972, the Macaulays left to go to Greatham where a large Manor House had come on the market. Through a substantial gift, L'Abri bought this in 1972. Meanwhile, back at Ealing, Dick and Mardi Keyes took over the work begun by the Macaulays. We get this concise entry in the minutes:

"Sunday morning 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 1971:

Dick Keyes ordained and installed as pastor of the Ealing Congregation of the IPC. Ordained by Rev F Schaeffer and Rev R. Macaulay with the elders of the Ealing congregation present."

The other elders were Joe Martin and young Peter Geare, who died of cancer in the late 1970s when I was at Ealing. We sang his favourite hymn, "Now thank we

all our God” whilst gathered round his bed, as he died peacefully at home in the arms of his wife Carol.

Joe Martin held life-changing Bible Studies at his home at 26 Courtfield Gardens. It was his studies that first brought me to Ealing. But Joe’s ideas on Bible Study were at times a little unconventional. We have this entry in Mins of Ealing Cong Mtg 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 1973:

“Tuesday Bible Study:

Joe Martin suggested a study for men entitled “Learn to be a Man” – the material could be adapted for woman (*sic*) so that a separate study could proceed simultaneously.

It was decided that this study was not appropriate.”

In the early days at Ealing, it was difficult to distinguish L’Abri from IPC. And problems were soon to arise from this – as indeed they did with the other L’Abri churches in Switzerland and elsewhere: At Ealing there was the problem of financial support, because L’Abri were really supporting the Keyes – with the church only contributing £5 per month. So we have this entry in Mins of Ealing Cong Mtg 19<sup>th</sup> April 1972 which would make the Charity Commission’s hair stand on end:

“Finances:

On the question of the church’s monthly support for the pastor (£5) it was asked whether the church should stand at the receiving end of gifts given to L’Abri....Because of the impossibility of neatly dividing the work in Ealing into church or L’Abri work, it was felt that the church should not aim for total support....but that our contribution should be raised.”

But then (diverging for one moment) 12 years later on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1984, we have this minute:

“The Church’s Connections with L’Abri and other bodies:

Despite our connections with L’Abri we know very little about them.”

Three more years into Dick Keyes’ ministry, further problems arose as Ealing grew, so on 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 1975, we have this entry:

“A Larger Meeting Place

Much discussion took place about the advisability of finding somewhere to meet as the Sunday morning service particularly was becoming grossly overcrowded. A special prayer meeting was decided on for the 19<sup>th</sup> Nov in which to bring this need before the Lord.

Nine months later, the problem still existed, so we have this entry on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1976:

“The need for a place to worship:

A number of possibilities were suggested:

There is a piece of land off Drayton Green where there is a vandalised scout hut.”

In 1977, 52 Cleveland Road started to subside, and 9 months later the church had to move out. We moved to North Ealing School, where Dick, Joe, Paul Clowney and Tony Wales taught us in weekly sermons.

In 1978 there was Simon Hui's proposals for the purchase of St Helena's Retreat House and the a sub-sale of part to the IPC. I was the solicitor at the time and I can vouch for God's hand in that – how things just fell into place, like a jigsaw puzzle fitting together. The seemingly impossible suddenly became possible. The legal problems were manifold. We got advice from Lincoln's Inn counsel, and suddenly everything neatly fell into place.

Ealing moved into its new home, and expanded. Summer children's weeks were held (as was also the case at this time in Liss) and the Lord greatly blessed these works. Latterly, there was Steve Constable, then Nick Perrin, followed by Paul and Claire Levy in 2003. Paul was ordained into IPC. I have had the privilege of working alongside Paul in our Presbytery and I have seen at first hand his considerable gifts and capacity for hard work.

It was in the late 1970s that the first Korean Congregations were planted by Kim. The Presbytery minutes prepared by Jerram on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1979 read as follows:

“We had a very fruitful discussion on the need for evangelism and church planting....we are all very concerned about the spiritual need of the huge majority of people in this country, and the tiny number, proportionally, of Bible Believing churches that there are to cope. We are excited about all that the Lord has already done for us in the IPC as the congregations in Ealing and Greatham have grown, and as during this last year the new Korean Congregation has started in Wimbledon with Kim as its pastor. Despite the smallness of our numbers, we know we have a calling to spread the gospel and to start new churches if the Lord makes this possible.”

The Korean extension of IPC in the 1980s and 1990s, and the formation of a Korean Presbytery is a significant part of IPC history. In the space of 15 years, from 1979 to 1994, five Korean churches established. By 1994, Kingston Korean IPC had bought their building from the URC and Kim pastored this church with W.C.Park and Byung-Heon Yoo. Kings Cross Korean IPC was pastored by Young Jin Bae, with Y.E.Kim and Jae-Sung Yoo. Oxford Korean IPC was led by Stephen Pang and Joe Martin. London City Korean IPC was led by Young-Jin Bahk – the present moderator of the Korean Presbytery. And Ealing Korean IPC was pastored by Jung-Suk Lim, with Moo Youl Choi and Nam San Suh – who later became clerk for many years in the Korean Presbytery.

The Koreans were exemplary to English Presbytery in church planting initiatives. Kim tells the story about the how the two Presbyteries might set about building a tunnel through a mountain. The English take 5 years to plan something, and then begin slowly drilling through one side of the mountain to the other, which takes another 2 years. However, the Koreans don't plan at all. They just begin drilling

on both sides of the mountain, with the hope of meeting in the middle, but they don't meet. However, as a result they end up with two tunnels in 2 years!!

In 1994, Bob Heppe and his family, formerly an elder in a PCA church in Philadelphia, joined up with the Ealing IPC, with the goal of planting a church amongst the South Asians of Wembley and Southall. Bob came supported by World Harvest Mission, and established New Life Massih Ghar, now meeting at Heston. This was a natural partnership as Ealing (through the Weeks family) had always shared a burden for such a project. Today that church has grown and 70 people attend its worship services in Punjabi. It also has a very strong children's ministry. Bob works with two other leaders, Amjad Mahand (who last year gave a profound L'Abri lecture on Asian outreach), and Sunil Raheja, a Consultant Psychiatrist practising in West London. Both men have been undergoing a lengthy training period for IPC eldership prior to the church hopefully being particularised as an IPC church. Also within that leadership, although not training for IPC eldership, is Harish Patel. The patient work of Bob, Amjad, Sunil and Harish has contributed in no small measure to the international work of IPC. When fully particularised, I surmise it will become a jewel in the crown.

The Liss IPC started with a handful of people in the Manor House in 1972 and soon grew. The church then moved to the Greatham Village Hall, then to St Saviours in Liss Forest (known as "the Tin Tabernacle") then a few years later to Central Hall, then in 1988 to Bohunt Community Centre in Liphook. We discussed church planting a lot, especially in the 1990s. But it never came to anything. Providentially however, on the other hand, our children came to the Lord and brought along their outside peers, and we had a rich blessing of them growing up in a church where they are now young adults, still with deep zeal for serving God and with friendships with each other.

In Liphook, from 1990 onwards, constitutional problems developed until ten years later they mushroomed into what I call the IPC Millennium Crisis (which was wider than the Liss split). In summary, IPC Liss (worshipping at Liphook) had requested the Synod to allow Baptist elders to be admitted to the session, as it had no other men suitable for eldership. After much discussion and correspondence, the synod recognised this was a departure from the constitution but granted the request as a dispensation for a temporary period of five years – with a view to Liss finding paedo-baptist elders.

In 1995, Liss requested a further extension of five years, and this was granted, again after much deliberation. However, upon its expiry in 2000, Synod was not willing to renew the dispensation. So in 2000 the Baptist elders in Liss Session were required to resign as IPC elders. They decided, unsurprisingly, to form another church – Trinity Church – and to request the 174 IPC members to transfer their membership to the new church. Most did. Only about 20 remained in IPC.

In 2001 when all this took place, things looked very grim and very messy. Misunderstandings, fear and hurt feelings abounded. But I think in any careful and full study of the aetiology, you will see one major feature: God's gentle and gracious hand was in all this, disciplining the churches he loves. On the level of second causes, I believe IPC has learnt and is learning valuable lessons in the area of ecclesiology. It is fruitful for IPC to choose to see the problem as its own and not the problem of the other party. How would I summarise the problem? This is interesting, and you may think differently, and be right. But for me, I would say the problem stemmed from an undeveloped ecclesiology. Whether this was rooted in an unconscious imitation of L'Abri organisational style, I do not know. But most important of all, I am thankful that four years on, that there is an increasing measure of forgiveness and reconciliation on both sides. I say "increasing" because I expect more, although it may take a decade. Both churches – Trinity and IPC are true churches with Christ as head of both, and whose watchful eye is on both. Both churches, as part of the wider single body, want to please the same Bridegroom. Both want to heed the Bridegroom's warnings given in the Letters to the seven churches. And woe betide anyone who secretly wishes ill on the other. Because in obstetric terms, new IPC Liss was old IPC's unplanned baby and the Synod was the midwife. And to quote Isaiah, can the mother forget her baby – or indeed the baby its mother?

We see God's Providence, as well as His discipline in the Millennium Crisis. It has produced in 2001 the fruit of two churches and more gifts being exercised. It has also produced a better midwife in the form of the new Presbytery. In 2001, Bill Nikides appeared carrying a bucket of plant hormones. In 2002 and 2003 two more church plants grew into churches. In 2002, Hope Church in Timisoara, through the work of Liviu Lepadatu and Cristinel Neagu, initiated originally by Hong Key Chung formerly of the Korean Presbytery. Then in 2003 Grace Church in Warrington through the work of Roy Kunar and Brian Huseland which God has evidently blessed.

In closing let me say that I am overjoyed at the last four years when I see God's providence – for example in providing the right people at the right time. The prophetic advent of Bill Nikides is a case in point. But this is not to say that the work of church planting has ever been easy at any time in history. It is beleaguered by Satan's ploys to destroy Christ's church. IPC church plants are no exception. The growth of the early church thrived in the soil of persecution and martyrdom. Those ingredients have been absent in the Western church since the Reformation but they may yet arrive in our life-time and we must be ready and willing to face them. In reviewing the past of the IPC, it is indeed as Calvin said: "Christ preserves the Church by unknown methods and without the assistance of men....Though all conclude she is ruined, the Church will always rise again, and be restored." Amen to that!