

F.F. Bruce as a Fellow-Elder

Arnold Pickering*

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In April 1960 when we had the joy of welcoming the Bruce family into the fellowship of the church which meets in Crescent Road Hall, Stockport, F.F.B. appeared to have found a congenial spiritual home. He diligently entered into the activities of the church and evidently enjoyed the spontaneity of its worship and service. His particular ministry was immediately apparent and gratefully acknowledged. Here was a man with a unique insight into the Word of God and a facility in giving the sense and causing the reading to be understood.

By common consent his service in the church soon required formal recognition. Precisely two years from his first visit to the Hall to conduct a Broadcast Service he, and others, were presented to the church as additional elders. Very probably the manner in which this recognition was effected differed little from common practice, but for us there was one

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quite unusual feature. For the first time in its history the church was formally recognising a teaching elder. Not that F.F.B. exercises amongst us an exclusive ministry of the Word. He gladly shares our arranged ministry on alternate Sunday mornings with several of his brethren, encouraging them to stir up latent gift. He carries his learning lightly and never parades his knowledge.

This teaching ministry is far from representing the whole of his contribution to the well-being of the church. To watch him dedicate a babe (wisely allowing the child to repose in the security of mother's arms!); to hear him dedicate an offering and to listen to his counsel to young folk leaving the church and home to go up to University, is to be reminded that the true elder must be a man of many parts. His experience and heavenly wisdom are equally apparent in the necessarily wide variety of matters considered at the monthly meeting of elders. The efficiency and expedition with which business is despatched when he occupies the Chair cannot be wholly explained by the time of his homeward train! Notwithstanding that the world is his parish he maintains a great loyalty to our fellowship and among the other sterling qualities which have endeared him to us all are his dependability, unaffected humility and consistent thoughtfulness for others.

In his useful booklet entitled *Who are the Brethren?* F.F.B. wrote concerning the elders who administer local churches—'they try to guide by example rather than rule by decree'. Not easily could better words be found to describe the gracious and faithful manner of his services to our church in which the Holy Ghost has made him an overseer.

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