

Nelson Parr (1886-1976)

by Keith Malcomson

John Nelson Parr's life was marked by a deep passion for the Pentecostal movement, leading to his involvement in the establishment of the Assemblies of God and a legacy of revival and ministry.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:3, 1 Corinthians 12:4, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 2:3, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "Pentecostal Movement", "Church Leadership"

Description

Keith Malcomson preaches about the life and ministry of John Nelson Parr, a dedicated pastor and organizer in the Pentecostal movement in Britain. Parr's journey from a troubled home to becoming a pastor of one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Britain is a testament to his faith and perseverance. His pivotal role in the formation of the Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland showcases his leadership and commitment to unity among churches. Despite facing challenges and disagreements within the movement, Parr's legacy as a preacher, organizer, and pastor continued to impact many lives and communities.

Transcript

John Nelson Parr was born in 1886 into a home "impoverished by drink". As he grew he had the ability to press on in education, but because of his home situation he was forced to go out and work as an engineer. From his youth he was always filled with great energy. It was in April 1904 at a youth meeting that he gave his life to Christ. From this early stage he was involved in open air work and the giving out of tracts. Parr was part of a group that had been put out of a well known holiness church in Manchester because of their hunger in seeking for the Baptism in the Holy Ghost with the scriptural evidence of tongues. He joined himself to a group of Plymouth brethren who also were seeking God in such a way. It was on Christmas day 1909 that as these believers met as usual, the Holy Ghost fell, and Parr was filled. That night from 8.30pm till 1am he spoke in tongues and interpreted. For the next four years he experienced the glorious burning of revival fires. Sadly with time this fellowship relapsed into its old Brethren ways. In 1917 he became the pastor of this assembly which by then had about 15 in attendance. By 1923 this fellowship was thriving as the Manchester Pentecostal Church, and latter grew to be one of the biggest Pentecostal churches in Britain, which he pastored for 37 years.

It was in 1922 that a number of pastors, influenced by Willie Burton had tried to form some type of organised fellowship of churches, but to no avail. Many of these pastors were strong concerning the local autonomy of their individual churches. They were opposed to denominationalism, organisation and central

government. Archibald Cooper, a preacher from South Africa while travelling and ministering amongst these churches saw the need for some sort of unity. He got in touch with both Myerscough and Parr concerning this. Myerscough felt he was too old to carry the burden of carrying this through but agreed to lend the full weight of his support to Parr who was much younger, filled with great energy, and was possessed of a good business ability. All this led to Parr working towards another attempt at unity. Being a Pastor he was able to allay fears of a controlling organisation and to stand solid for the independent sovereignty of each fellowship. Finally on February the 1st.1924 the Assemblies of God in great Britain and Ireland came into being. By March about 70 assemblies had responded, of which half were in South Wales. This number quickly rose to about 200 by 1929 and the blessing of God upon them was evident. Parr became both chairman and secretary of the newly formed AOG as well as the Editor of the new paper called Redemption Tidings, an amazing feat for someone who was still Pastoring and in secular employment at the same time. He came to be considered as one of their finest preachers and organisers. When Stephen Jeffreys left Elim and joined the AOG, Parr could see the great possibilities of him being the pioneer evangelist for AOG. At the end of 1927 and the beginning of 28, Parr arranged two great Gospel campaigns with Jeffreys preaching, which resulted in about 500 people accepting Christ, Parr leaving secular employment, and the commencement of the building of a new Church, Bethshan Tabernacle.

It is sad to say that in 1933 that he stood down from all his offices and responsibilities within AOG. This was caused by a disagreement between him and the other six board members over a minor issue of the wages of a typist. The heart of the problem was the fact that the Pentecostal movement was dominated by a belief in total trust in God for finance. The sting in this was that it threw up an accusation against his character. He was left feeling he could do nothing else than to resign. About four years later Howard Carter came to his home to apologise and the other board members wrote withdrawing their accusations.

By the time he retired in 1964 he had a normal weekly gathering of about a thousand people at the Tabernacle. These latter years were used in radio ministry and the writing of a few books. In 1972 he took full part in the AOG's 50th. General Conference as co-chairman.

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