

GREAT RESOLUTIONS

Program Thirty-Nine

The Life and Work of D. M. Panton

David Morrieson Panton was born in 1870 in Jamaica, where his father served the Church of England as an archdeacon. At the age of 15, David was sent to England to continue his education. He spent four years at English preparatory school before entering Caius College, a constituent college of Cambridge University. Panton's goal was to study law and become a barrister / lawyer. The *Surrey Chapel Centenary* notes, "But God had other plans for the would-be-barrister. He brought him under the influence of a godly coach, Labarestier, . . . a follower of the teaching of Robert Govett through his writings. With other undergraduates D. M. Panton absorbed the truths of Scripture from the lips of this man, often sitting up far into the night in their eagerness to learn."

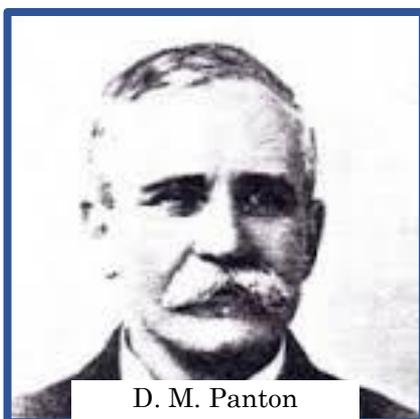
It was through Labarestier that Panton heard and considered many things that were new to him. The Lord's Second Coming, the Rapture of the saints, and the coming Millennial Kingdom were opened to him in a way that

caused him to respect and appreciate the careful consideration of Bible prophecy and also to love and serve the One of whom the prophecies spoke. Under Labarestier's tutelage, Patton and his companions studied the scriptures and learned that the Rapture would be selective, and that participation in the Millennial Kingdom would also be conditional. These and other truths had a great impact on Patton, so much so that he gave up pursuing a legal career. He did not want to be under the power of any worldly pleasures or advantages. He set his heart to live in a simple manner, and even had no intention of being entangled in marriage. He began to live for Christ and to pour himself out for others. Like his predecessor Robert Govett, Panton was led to obey the Scriptures and be baptized by immersion. He also followed Govett in leaving the church of England and all denominational affiliations.

Following in the Footsteps of Govett

After Panton graduated from Caius, he went back to the West Indies where he worked for a few years before returning to England.

While he was still in his twenties, he came to know Robert Govett personally by serving as his assistant for approximately seven months. After Govett's death in February of 1901, Panton was asked to take over as pastor of Surrey Chapel. *Keith's*



Histories notes that Panton was apprehensive about accepting, knowing the weight of responsibility that would come with the appointment. “When I was asked to accept the pastorate of this church,” Panton wrote, “I at first

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refused realizing the tremendous difficulties, but I went out for a ride on my bicycle in a snowstorm and during that half hour my decision was made. I know now that I never underrated the difficulties, but I underrated the marvelous grace and power of God to overcome them.” The Surrey Chapel’s centenary memorial booklet records that “from the beginning he [Panton] was respected and loved by his flock, not only for his gracious and dignified personality, but for the stand he always took on matters of church doctrine, yielding no points where Scripture of precedent were involved.”

A Shepherd-Teacher

Panton developed a close relationship with his congregation and served as pastor of Surrey Chapel for forty years, retiring in 1941. The believers young and old in the Norwich congregation held him in esteem, and his healthy teaching enabled them to be built up in the faith. Lord’s Day meetings, multiple weekly prayer meetings and Bible studies were all well attended. The Sunday school grew to include over 600.

In a lecture given in March of 1924 Panton declared what the stand of the Chapel was, that is, what their beliefs were. They stood first on the Bible as “the inerrant and infallible whole of evangelical truth.” They took the

Word as “fundamental, evangelistic, missionary, and devotional.” They were “committed to catholicity, that is we accept into full fellowship and at the Lord’s Table all who show credible evidence of saving faith, all regenerate.” Concerning the truths of the second coming of Christ, Panton said that they “hold the judgment of believers, selective rapture, the kingdom and exclusion.”

Perfecting Others in Service

D. M. Panton also perfected others in service and at one point had 60 teachers laboring in the Sunday School. He and his congregation also were burdened to make known the gospel to the nations of the world. Many from Surrey Chapel, especially young men and women, consecrated themselves to serve as missionaries overseas and at home.

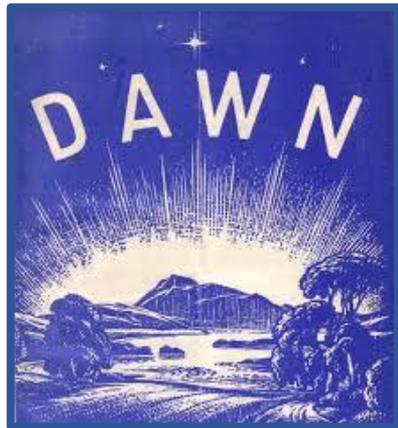
Margaret E. Barber (1866-1930) was one of many who received spiritual help and support from Panton. She was used by the Lord to edify and perfect another useful vessel, Watchman Nee. We will consider both Miss Barber and Watchman Nee in future podcasts.

Dawn Magazine

In 1924 Panton founded and edited a new evangelical bi-monthly magazine, *Dawn*. According to church historian Keith Ives, “God had shown his servant that he must fulfill a wider ministry and implanted in his heart the desire to broadcast through the printed page the truths he had taught at Surrey Chapel.” Panton was burdened to instruct, encourage, and incite other believers by the prophetic truths contained in the Scriptures. He realized that many Christians were not familiar with the teachings regarding the Lord’s coming and of the kingdom. His plan for the magazine’s content was that it would be

fundamental, evangelistic, prophetic, dispensational, and devotional. The stress accompanied with the responsibility of this endeavor weighed on his health. It was not long after the first issue of *Dawn* was published that Panton realized he should resign from his responsibilities at Surrey Chapel, so his burden for believers to come more fully into the truth could be carried out on a larger scale through the distribution of this magazine. Panton agreed to preach at Surrey Chapel once a month but resigned from all other Chapel responsibilities.

Panton wrote the main article for each issue and edited the other articles. He used the magazine to make known the writings of Robert Govett. Panton faithfully wrote to strengthen the “watchers of the last days” during times of confusion. He wrote to expose the satanic counterfeits of his day, like spiritualism and Gnosticism. He battled modernism, Darwinism, Christian Science, church amusements, and the growing influence of Rome. He wrote to uphold the truths of the resurrection and redemption. He proclaimed the truths of the godhead of Jesus and of the virgin birth of Christ and spoke against the tendency toward apostasy. He wrote of the Christian home and of marriage, and counseled young believers. He wrote about the Old Testament types, of Babylon, about the prize of our high calling, and of the judgement seat of Christ. Through this little magazine light and truth poured forth to many believers.



Although Panton mentored younger responsible brothers and spoke at conferences, his main burden of editing *Dawn* he faithfully discharged before God for thirty years until his death in 1955. Along with Peter he could say, “And we have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Peter 1:19).”

Thank the Lord for His faithful servant D. M. Panton and for the help he has rendered to the Body of Christ.

Marty Robert and Bill Lawson

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