

My Staring Contest with True Father When I Was a Young Member

N. Barrett

May 1978

Recalled in May 2020



Photo date and location unknown

In May 1978 I was working as a printer in Rowlane Farmhouse (just outside Reading in the UK). I had been a member for a year but only living in a centre since July '77. At that time True Father came to spend three months in the UK.

Denis Orme picked Father up at the Heathrow airport and the first place he brought him was to Rowlane. As the cars came up the drive we all stood waiting to greet them. I was so new in the church that I had no idea that you should bow in greeting and was surprised when I saw everyone do that.

There was a barn close the end of the drive that we called the Big Barn though it was actually quite small. That is where we kept our two-colour Heidelberg printing press. This was the first place that Denis took Father. As you can see from the photo [below] there was not a lot of space in there for people. Father came in and looked around, "Too narrow!" he said.

Of course, we knew he was coming so we gave the place a bit of a tidy up. Unfortunately, the printing press was very close to the wall on one side and this small space had loads of paper, dust, ink, cobwebs, etc., down in it. We had forgotten about it during the clean-up. Father walked straight over and looked down the side. N. and I cringed – feeling that we had not lived up to True Father's standard.

I cannot remember how many people were living at Rowlane but I suppose about 20 people. Mostly people do with design, print, print finishing, and packing. But also, the UK Accounts team had moved in there from Lancaster Gate. It was into the Accounts office in the Farmhouse that Father was taken.

With Father in the room there were four accountants, Denis Orme, Col, [San Kil] Han, Tony Dixon (centre leader) and some others. The rest of us were looking through the door. Some standing with their heads bent to the right looking round the door frame. Some to left. Some kneeling down on the right, and some on the left. One lucky person was kneeling on the floor directly in the doorway. We took turns taking that position.

When it came to my turn Tony turned round and beckoned me into the room. I came forward and knelt beside him about six feet from Father who was sat on a bench that curved round the bay window.

After a while I noticed that Father would look at a person, stare at them really, until that person looked away. Then he would move on to the next person – keeping talking all the time. Going sequentially round the room. I could see that he was getting closer to me. I wondered what I would do. Should I try and win?

Eventually it was my turn. Father stared at me. I stared back. I did not know what to do. I tried thinking things like "Thank you Father for bringing me to the Principle" but mostly I was wondering if I was doing the right thing; and why was Father doing this anyway?

Suddenly Col, [San Kil] Han (while translating) made a big arm movement and my eyes flicked to the right to him. When I looked back Father had moved on the next person. He had won.

Of course, not really winning as such but he was gaining dominion through voluntary surrender of Cain.



Members in Rowlane Farmhouse in 1978