



# **Mainstream** *baptists for life and growth*

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## **MAINSTREAM – The Fountain Trust in another guise?**

Is Mainstream the Fountain Trust in another guise? Does one have to be a card-carrying member of the charismatic movement to be a true-blue Mainstreamer? This was the question raised in at least one or two minds at this year's Mainstream Conference. On reflection, this reaction was not surprising – for the two sessions on worship together with the main act of celebration were led by prominent charismatics. Furthermore, at all the worship sessions there were more hands raised than ever seen at all the Baptist Assemblies put together.

So, does one have to be a member of the renewal movement to be a full member of Mainstream? The answer is clearly 'No'. The composition of the Mainstream Executive is less charismatic than more charismatic. (It would be fun to organise a competition entitled 'Spot the executive charismatic', with the first correct answer winning a trip to Houston or wherever.) All who are in the mainstream of Baptist life are welcome. In this respect we are glad to publish Peter Hetherington's letter.

But we need to recognize that charismatics too are in the mainstream. Indeed, in one southern association I am told that two-thirds of our churches have been influenced by the renewal movement. Alas, all too often at Association and Union level charismatics are not seen as being in the mainstream, but rather are regarded as people who caused problems. Yes, of course, there are problem charismatic churches – but then it has always been much easier to deal with a dead cause than with a misguided bunch of enthusiasts (shades of William Carey!).

I long for the day when at every level of Baptist life we treat one another as equals – this might mean that at our Baptist Assemblies we would recognize that Praise for Today is not the only modern songbook! Let's not be afraid to incorporate all the good things the renewal movement is offering us – without at the same time doing away with the insights of the past. Maybe some charismatics have straight-jacketed the Holy Spirit into operating only in certain ways – but are not others guilty too? Brothers and sisters, if we want life and growth, let's be open to the Spirit: his grace is "kaleidoscopic" (1 Peter 4, 10).

Paul Beasley-Murray.

# Out from the Ghetto!

The other day, as the inevitable Committee Meeting by which we Baptists organise ourselves plodded along, a chance phrase started the chimes in my semi conscious. We are discussing (don't we always?) the church's mission, when someone remarked that The Gathered Church fosters a Ghetto outlook. No one took up the point, but it's been rattling around in what serves for my brain ever since.

We regard ourselves as 'called out' people, gathered from here and there as well as together. So the language of escape creeps into our liturgies. Sundays are "Oases in the desert", we leave behind the 'cares of the world', we 'recharge the spiritual batteries', we pray that the world outside won't interfere with our concentration. Is this escapist religion? If so, how does it fit with the Gospel affirmation that the world is the object of God's love and the sphere of His Mission?

Our young people are clearer eyed on this than the rest of us. We've got a normal bunch of unswinging youth, who get together in a Talk-about session when sermon time is on during family worship on Sunday mornings. They are 14-18 year olds, about 30 attending each week out of a catchment of 60 or so. The Group's in its seventh year and during that time over 150 mid-teens have been part of it. They set their own agenda with no interference by the team of eight 'heavies' which work with the group. Each session we brainstorm on any and everything anyone wants to talk about and then as a group vote on the topics to include. Last September 34 topics were suggested. 28 suggestions were made for this current session which began in January. We only get 10 or so mornings in each session so there's never enough space and time to tackle the groups total agenda. Looking back over the 200 or so suggestions, they fall into the following categories:-

Christian Faith	e.g. Virgin Birth, Holy Spirit, Life after death.
Christian Experience & Living	e.g. Witness at School, Tongues and Spiritual gifts, Prayer.
Sex, Family Relationships	e.g. Living Together, Premarital Sex, Parental authority.
School, Education	e.g. Exams, Why School?, Discipline, Teachers.
Religion, Philosophy, ideology	e.g. Islam, Exorcism, Mormons, Marxism.
The Church	e.g. Denominations, Livening up Worship, Future of Missions?
Ethics, Behaviour	e.g. Drinking, Honesty, Smoking, Drugs, Food.
Culture, Attitudes	e.g. Prejudice, Punk Rock, Censorship, Freedom.
Law, Government, Social Issues	e.g. Capital Punishment, Vandalism, Abortion, Racism.
Economy, Politics	e.g. National Front, Nuclear Energy, Union Power, Inflation.
International Affairs	e.g. World Greed, Arms Race, World War III, Russia, China.
Environment, Nature	e.g. Cruelty to Animals, Conservation, Whales.
Miscellaneous	e.g. UFOs, Life on other planets, Fake Science.

These young people are clearly concerned about the world in which they are growing up and their part in it. Not all of them of course feel deeply about the same things. The team of us who've worked with the group have had our education expanded. We have the task of providing some input on which the whole group, sub-divided in an ad hoc way, into smaller groups of 5-8, can chew and relate the issues to God's mind in Scripture. But where do we get help to develop a Christian mind, informed by the Bible on these hot issues and concerns. Not in the corporate life and teaching of our gathered congregations. We do our own homework.

Going through the list in that same Committee, someone pointed out that the issues our young people are concerned about are not peculiarly their exclusive concern. They are common to all of us. Indeed the frustration our young people feel is precisely because they often see things clearly but haven't the power to do anything about it in a world where adult 'thems' hold all the strings and call all the shots!

So who is being equipped to enable the people of God to minister in a complicated world? Who can use the Bible in developing a Christian mind on complex issues? Where are the skills being developed to enable Christian people, the younger and older to bring their experience and understanding to bear jointly on the urgent questions faced in being God's people in God's world?

Do we stay in our Ghettos because its safer, cosier, and much less demanding than the real world outside?

Michael Eastman,  
(Frontier Youth Trust,  
Member of Main Road, Romford).

## WORSHIP: A letter to the Editor. 11th February, 1981.

Dear Mr. Editor,

I came away from the Mainstream Conference experiencing a mixture of challenge, stimulation, rejoicing and concern. It is over my particular concern that I write namely on the subject of "worship".

Jim Graham was careful in his address on worship to remain loyal to his charismatic position, but at the same time to include us all within its reference.

However, when it came to the workshop on worship the "careful" approach disappeared and we were told that if we are to receive "the Holy Spirit's best" then we must all worship in a "charismatic" way. The implication of this is that those who, throughout the history of the church have not worshipped in this manner, have not experienced the fullness of the blessing of the Holy Spirit. To say the least this denies history and divides genuine believers into two camps as first and second class christians. The first class will comprise the "charismatics" and the second class all the rest.

In spite of this I hope that a number of things unite us. For example, that our worship must be with the understanding as well as the spirit; that it is not sacramental; that it must be sincere and an expression of our personal relationship with God. Of course, it must also reflect our convictions concerning the truth and will, therefore,

include the ministry of the Word of God. All four "means of grace" - the Word of God, prayer, baptism and the Lord's Supper - can be experienced within the fellowship of God's people, His church, while the first two can be entered into individually as well.

Besides these things, I hope we are united on our aim in worship, namely, to glorify God. This will obviously mean that we will attempt to worship in a way which is pleasing to God. We discover this in God's revealed word, the Bible. This will be definitive for us in our worship.

It is at this point that we will possibly begin to divide. Should we go with Luther in believing that whatever has traditional support and is not forbidden in Scripture is permissible in worship? Or should we go with Zwingli in saying that only what is specifically authorized in Scripture is permissible in worship?

But that is only the beginning of our divisions! For example, those who would like to quote Luther as their champion might wish to introduce into worship things which have no traditional foundation and are merely novelties of the moment. By this means they divide those who take a Lutheran view of worship. Then, of course, if we follow Zwingli we will find some who will want to take the whole Bible as their authority while others cite only a part or parts of the Bible as theirs. It is this latter point which was raised at the Mainstream Conference.

To my mind one fundamental question we must ask is, "Is the whole Bible authoritative in worship or only certain passages such as 1 Corinthians 14?"

If 1 Corinthians 14 is the only authority then obviously any liturgical, reformed or other view of worship is not simply mistaken but positively dangerous to spiritual life. But surely, in the Bible as a whole, there is more than one pattern for worship. Among these patterns is the charismatic, but it is only one among several and not an exclusive pattern.

Must we be pushed into a position where we must choose between liturgical, reformed or charismatic worship? Or is it possible to opt for the best of each. For example, I cannot prove my figures, but I suspect that, most of us on the "reformed" wing would accept that the gifts of the Spirit are valid and in operation today.

One thing which concerns me greatly is the way in which we dismiss each other with disparaging remarks as if they are arguments. For example, I have heard some "reformed" among us dismiss charismatic worship as a "charismatic knees-up". That is not an argument. If given seriously it is an ignorant and rude comment. Equally it is no argument to attempt to dismiss a "reformed" view of worship by describing it as a "hymn-prayer sandwich". Many have been transported into the heavenlies through this kind of worship. I feel sorry for the upbringing of those who try to dismiss reformed worship in this way.

There are many examples in church history of false teachings which have been firmly based on one verse or passage or small selection of the Bible while the rest has been overlooked or deliberately ignored. For example, there is the Roman Catholic teaching on Peter, there is sacramental religion, there is the havoc wrought by pre-millennialism in parts of the world today. There are grave dangers in forcing the whole Bible to fit under one concept - even when it is a biblical concept - when there are other biblical concepts to cover the same points. Hegel was right, "We learn from history that we learn nothing from history". Many Christians seem to be no exception to this dictum.

If we adopt a one-sided and exclusive view on worship then we will be impoverished and instead of receiving "the Holy Spirit's best" we will receive only part of His riches for us, or worse, a perversion of them. Our churches will be split into first class and second class christians and each "side" will spend its time "sniping" at the other. Scripture will be denigrated and parts will be invalidated by a man-made theory. As evangelicals we do not like this approach applied to, for example, the atonement. "Substitution" is denied by some on exactly the same kind of premise.

Mr. Editor, Mainstream includes those of each theory on worship.

Yours in the truth of the Gospel,  
Peter Hetherington,  
(Minister: Rye Lane, Peckham, London).

## WHATCOMBE HOUSE

Whatcombe House is a small Christian Conference Centre working and praying for spiritual renewal in the lives of individuals and local churches. It is situated in the beautiful Dorset countryside near the town of Blandford Forum and about twenty miles from the sea, and staffed by a small community of about ten to twelve people. Most of them, including the Warden and Chaplain, are Anglicans, but this is not by deliberate intention. Certainly the Anglican emphasis is very small, being limited mainly to the use of "Series 3" at the Communion service, which many Free Churchmen (myself included) greatly appreciate. The Community are responsible for the practical running of the house and its spiritual ministry, except on those occasions when they invite outside speakers. They hold weekend and midweek conferences, and in the summer five or six "holiday conferences" which include spiritual ministry, but also allow plenty of time to relax.

Whatcombe came into being about ten years ago, as the result of the vision of one man, Reg East, together with his wife Lucia. (His book Heal the Sick, is a very helpful introduction to the ministry of healing in many of its aspects, including inner healing.) He was told by God that it would be a place of peace, and this was certainly my experience when I spent a week there last August. I found that a sense of the presence of God pervaded the house, and that the quiet, relaxed manner of the community and their simple dependence on God communicated to me. I had been told that Whatcombe was "quietly charismatic", and this proved to be true; there were emphasis which were so helpful and positive, yet one never felt that one was being "pushed" in any way, but quietly and lovingly encouraged. I felt that I experienced a great deal of the best of the things which we associate with the "Charismatic Movement". If you want to do the same, in an atmosphere of peace and love, Whatcombe could be the place for you.

Maurice Markham,  
(Minister: Meredith Road, Coventry).

# MAINSTREAM CONFERENCE 1981

Does it really do anything or is it just another grand jamboree for Christians that generate a lot of activity for a few days and then dissipates in the routines of church life?

I want to share with you something of the reaction that this year's conference has had on our church. It began last year, with the enthusiasm of the few who went to the Conference, kindling a kind of anticipation for next year. So it happened that this time round, with a little prodding from the pastor, 13 of us went to Swanwick; Deacons, Elders, Pastor and others. Our Church Treasurer was one, and as he said to our congregation:-

"Curiosity took me there. Me, an old stager, traditional Baptist from birth, suspected it to be way out, gimmicky - you know, charismatic, not quite respectable, get you thinking and doing things, making you go all pink and hot. But nosey chap me, so curiosity was allowed to take me. Sit near the door. Slide out if goings on too uncomfortable.

The truth is, it was respectable - top brass of the denomination there, and taking part too!

Not a men's movement, but we outnumbered the other sort so singing was terrific - terrifying I am sure to our adversary. But so powerful whilst so gentle, almost tear jerking - me tear jerked!

It was almost foreign country - Derbyshire, a cold, grey, wet place. But if your spirit was not immediately warmed you were a cold fish indeed.

Enough to bring you quickly back to life - real life. But that's what it's all about - 'Mainstream - Baptists for Life and Growth'.

Perhaps like the Gulf Stream warming the shores a bit."

Certainly our church life was warmed a bit through the Mainstream Conference. The fact that so many of us were there has given us a depth of fellowship in sharing with the church the blessings of the conference. It has strengthened the impact of the teaching at Mainstream for our church. This is not just the emphasis of a hothead on a spiritual high after his conference blessing, but rather the solid impact on the leadership of the church of what God is doing right across the face of our country. It has made us realise that we are not out on our own, trendy, gimmicky, drifting from our Baptist moorings, rather we are being taken along on the tides of God's Spirit that are not only touching us at Banbury, but refreshing and revitalising churches all over the place. We have been encouraged to think radically about our work and fellowship, to change our structures if necessary, to set worship at the peak of our church life and to sense the glory of God that awes and inspires and then to respond to God in the joy of celebration.

As one of our Elders observed:-

"I was greatly encouraged by attending the Conference with my wife. This stemmed firstly from the sight of 400 people from all over the country enthusiastically praising God, secondly from the fact that many of them spoke of growth in their churches, and thirdly from the fact that scholarly men were sure of their faith and unashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ ..... looking back over my notes I find myself responding again to some of the punch line statements made by the speakers. For example, the observation made of some church services - 'if they came under the Trade Descriptions Act they would be prosecuted'."

Please do not think that our views about the Conference and its effects have been all positive. We were not so affected by the heady new wine of the Spirit that we could not assess the value or otherwise of what was being said and done. The honest appraisal that we try to make of our church life together enabled us to put the Conference into a balanced perspective and we were particularly disappointed with the Seminars. Despite the fact that we were led by talented people whose gifts are widely appreciated, as Seminars they did not meet peoples' requirements. Drama and Music did not produce any drama and music, more was said about it than was actually done, and what was done did not involve the delegates enough. Our folk came to learn and went away disappointed. Changing patterns of worship at least stimulated thought, plenty of discussion and penetrating questions so that what was presented by the speaker was balanced and enlarged by the discussion that followed. Why not have a real workshop session where the delegates are made to do something other than be sponges to absorb the ideas of others.

"I would also suggest that in a future conference we incorporate a session under the title: How would you deal with.....? and list ordinary situations with which Christians are faced. Perhaps a drama group could put on a presentation of such a situation. I am sure we would derive a great deal from such a visual aid, for as Graham Ashworth said, 'most is learned by doing'."

So the point must be made by our folk that we would like to participate more as those with something to give as well as something to receive.

"I have a feeling that we, the delegates, did not do a tremendous amount at the Conference. It might be worth considering the suggestion that at the next Mainstream Conference the delegates are drawn more into the programme. For instance, I enjoyed the prayer times because they were held in small groups and I was involved."

Clearly this will impose greater demands in preparation for the Conference. It is easy to invite speakers and leave them to do their own thing, but busy men in pastoral charge do not find it easy to give the time to preparing a conference that involves the delegates in more than mere listening. Many pastors have found exactly that tension in preparation for worship in the church. It is easier to do it all yourself, but not necessarily the way that honours God or that is most likely to enrich God's people.

Mainstream Conference is to stimulate life and growth in our churches. We came to learn and learn we did. We learned again the thrill

of shared worship, the joy of celebration, the diversity in response that encourages some to be physical in expressing worship whilst others may be more inhibited. We learned through strong teaching and clear convinced Bible exposition. We learned through fellowship with others. Clearly we could have learned by personal involvement and by more small group involvement.

Mainstream has much to say to the churches, but perhaps at this point some of our churches have something to say to Mainstream. We think so. We are grateful for Mainstream Conference 1981 and expectant at the new things that will emerge in Mainstream Conference 1982.

Brian Butcher,  
(Minister: Banbury Baptist Church).

## WANTED - Cybernetes !

Could you be a cybernete and not know it? Do they still exist in our churches? I just think we should be on the look out for them. They have an important job to do.

Yes, I know, I am showing off a little. I am trying to find the word which best covers the people who have that spiritual gift referred to in 1 Corinthians, 12, 28. A gift which seems to have given translators a bit of a problem over the years. As an "ignorant peasant" in matters of translation, it seems to me that the problem is the verse starts off with references to roles in the church: apostles, prophets, teachers and then in the same breath goes on almost ungrammatically to recite a list of spiritual gifts. So we are then left with this word "kybernesis" and are not too sure what to do with it. You will know that the A.V. translates it "governments" whilst my New American Standard Bible surely reaches a lexical low with "administrations"!

I can see that our word "cybernetics" comes from the same root and from my concordance I note that the word has links with boats. There is this idea of piloting or steering as a captain or helmsman might so do. The G.N.B. is probably not alone in suggesting that the gift refers to those who have the power to direct their fellow Christians. So we have this idea of governing, administering, steering and directing. It all sounds like a job specification for a church secretary!

But you don't seem to find many persons with this gift in our churches. From my limited observations here in London suburbia, it seems to me that the more a fellowship encourages and develops the other spiritual gifts amongst its members, the more the "kybernesis" goes haywire. Can we have churches which are not only "spiritually alive" but also "spiritually directed"? Or are these aspects mutually exclusive? Surely not - for Scripture shows us otherwise.

I have visited churches with large memberships which might claim to be in the "Mainstream" mould where you can be reasonably certain that there will be no-one on the door to welcome you (the steward system is not taken seriously), the service will start five minutes late (pastor and elders are still in prayer in the vestry), the preacher will not be the man you expected (the notice-board outside has fallen into disuse and it would be unthinkable to put an entry in the Baptist Times!) and two out of the four choruses that will be sung are not on the sheet (a new book has been promised for 1982).



But these churches are lively; these churches are growing. Is it unworthy to ask for more?

This is not a plea that our churches are administered by soulless insensitive businessmen of the kind who take great pride in the hyper-accuracy of the minutes of the deacons' meeting and who deliver the Sunday notices with great aplomb and wit - spare us from those! No, this is a plea that we find in our churches men and women who are "people people" and who, yes, may make mistakes, but who have a flair for quiet organisation; for relating to people (they can handle that difficult Boys' Brigade Officer), who can smell out trouble before it happens. People who with pastor and deacons can help prayerfully plan the winter programmes in the spring. (You may also know of churches which believe that the Lord will come between July and September!)

Even this esteemed newsletter does seem to need a little help in the "kybernesis" quarter. Having paid for two copies of each issue to be sent to me, no amount of polite persuasion has yet produced more than one copy in the post each time!

So, Baptists for life and growth - yes, of course - but let us too seek out the "cybernetic" Christians in our churches - they are there somewhere. Scripture says so!

John Humphreys,  
(Member: Main Road, Sidcup).

## A Message from the new B.U. President

Mainstream's declared intention of making a contribution to the ongoing life of the Baptist Union is one that I welcome. There is a tremendous need for this positive attitude in these days of need and opportunity.

One of the weaknesses of Evangelicals has been a tendency to spiritual schizophrenia. When we have found ourselves in a situation of disagreement we have taken the easy way out and disassociated ourselves from those with whom we disagree. This certainly hinders the Church in its mission and it is certainly in scriptural. Every person who splits off from those with whom he has hitherto worked weakens the body of which he has been a part and belies the commission that we are to be ministers of reconciliation. The parable of the wheat and the tares warns us against trying to ruthlessly tear out the error. If we do we are likely to tear out much that is good.

It seems to me that Mainstream is doing a work of healing in the Denomination. Not only is there recognition that there is, and must be, diversity among us, there is also a recognition that we must be together. Each viewpoint has something to contribute to the whole. This is the way to get rid of the fears that have been so prevalent among us and to develop a spirit of trust.

This does not mean that we will live and work together without tension. Tension is a valuable part of life. It can be a dynamic to move us to new, realistic, positions. It does mean that tensions will be faced in a spirit of worship and prayer and study. In that spirit God will be able to use them for His Glory and the blessing of His Church.

It was an exhilarating privilege to be at Swanwick. My prayer is that Mainstream will not be trapped in an Annual Conference. The Con-

ference must be a focal point of inspiration from which each of us will go back to be involved in the ongoing life of the Associations and the Union. The only way the vision of Mainstream will be fulfilled, will be if each of us the Fraternal and every Association event in which we should be involved, be made a priority. Only in this way can real Commitment to Christ, and the Union in which He has placed us, be worked out.

May Mainstream ever be a movement, a moving of the Holy Spirit, in our united life and work.

Fred Wilson,  
(Minister: Carey, Preston).

## Opportunities in the Heart of England.

Both the concrete jungle of Milton Keynes and the highly successful Plessey electronics have gone to explain the massive increase in population, the building of new homes and the influx into the Baptist Church at Towcester. Towcester Baptist is at the present experiencing numerical growth as has not been seen for many years. In the New Year of 1979, the Church grafted their membership down to 21 and at present (February, 1981) the membership stands at 46.

Two major events are significant in this upsurge. In June, 1979, the faithful few pledged themselves to finance a new hall to accommodate the increase of numbers. The figure given on pledge was fourteen thousand pounds which would cover the cost. The work, however, did not begin until June, 1980 by which time the price had increased somewhat. A further blow was caused when there was found to be almost twice as much top-soil in places as had been accounted for. Nevertheless, despite these setbacks, the work was finished, apart from decorating, by December, 1980, the cost probably being well over twenty-five thousand pounds. As depressing as this could have seemed, the Fellowship has been in no doubt that this is just another lesson for us to learn, that is, to rely more on the God who is able rather than on man who is unable.

The other major event has been the launching of 'One Step Forward'. We are at the present well into Operation Agape which is proving most valuable to us all. It has also given us an opportunity to be much more conscious of the importance to plan well.

The fact that, at one time, we have had nine different denominations worshipping in our Church together has meant that the whole Fellowship has needed to do a lot of thinking in accepting one another. Love is acceptance could have been our motto, on the other hand, it has been an opportunity for us all to learn from one another and concentrate on the fundamental issues at stake, such as 'worship and witness'.

It has not been a bed of roses (although even roses have prickles that hurt), but it has given us an opportunity to see God working in a small fellowship in a big way. Our vision is big because our God is big.

Michael Jones,  
(Minister: Towcester & Nether Heyford).

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CHIPPING NORTON? INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DISABLED PEOPLE



1981  
The International Year  
of Disabled People

Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, is a Cotswold town with a population of 5,000. The church has an active membership of about 30. Two village causes, each with memberships in single figures are also under my pastoral charge. Only by a large H.M.F. grant are we maintained. What makes the ministry unusual and deeply satisfying is a close involvement with mentally handicapped adults and physically handicapped children. Therefore, the International Year for Disabled People on the one hand, and Gwynne Edward's report on 'Rural Mission' on the other, focus attention on issues that mean a great deal to us.

The National Childrens Home has about 50 resident disabled pupils. As facilities have improved in recent years, more severely handicapped children have been admitted. As more need wheel chairs, more attend our church, because we are next door! This can mean half of the 36 or so 5-10's at the Monday Club Gospel Meeting being disabled. There are rather fewer on Sundays because of weekends home. Some teenagers attend our youth activities. Some do attend the Anglican and Methodist churches.

How does a small church adapt to an all-the-year-round PHAB situation? On a practical level, we have eliminated steps and removed some pews to accommodate wheel chairs. This has been part of a quite radical alteration to make the chapel, previously seating 400, more economic and compact. We can rarely use the first floor. Renovation of toilet facilities is already long overdue where better access needs to be made. This has been costly in money and manpower, but the church responded magnificently. The handicapped children are integrated as fully and unobtrusively as possible. People help them where necessary, but no more than is necessary. Their N.C.H. training encourages them to be as adaptable and independent as possible. They are cheerful and plucky youngsters, and compete in party-games on virtually equal terms, and often win. Some one-to-one help is needed and this has given able-bodied children and young people the rare opportunity to meet and accept handicap without embarrassment. From a practical point of view nothing has been beyond a solution. We have been grateful for the use of the N.C.H. hall from time to time, also their transport and staff.

Possibly the greatest challenge is posed in the teaching situation. It is not unusual to have say, a group of four to six children, half of whom are disabled; and of them, one or more may be unable to speak, or perhaps hold a pencil. But we never segregate them: Able-bodied - Physically Handicapped. On several occasions disabled young people have joined in weekend camps with their able-bodied contemporaries. One teenager has been baptised. The practical problems weren't great in her case. Conceivably the time could come when a Baptismal service will be held at the school's new hydrotherapy pool.

My mental-handicap chaplaincy work doesn't directly involve our lay-membership on any regular basis at the moment, but there is now a small community home near our church. Several ex-patients of the hospital live there with a degree of independence and some of these have attended our services. They have been welcomed warmly, and again I think have fitted in 'unobtrusively' - if anyone can be unobtrusive in a congregation our size! I spent a recent sabbatical, reading largely on mental-handicap

(as distinct from mental-illness). Clearly it has helped me to be aware of recent trends in mental handicap provision. The more we are informed of the circumstances and needs of the handicapped, the better. However, most important of all is to accept them as people, warmly and naturally. Over many years our situation has allowed this to happen for our people, particularly in respect of the physically handicapped.

Many years of numerical decline has taken place here. After nearly six years ministry we can only report marginal increases in active membership and attendance, but we have seen some encouragements, including baptisms in 1979-80, the first for a decade. We know the difficulties common in the rural areas, the movement away particularly of young people, a largely ageing membership, financial limitations and so on. In consequence, we can scarcely seize all the opportunities, particularly in the villages. However, we have a range of pastoral ministry that must surely be rare. We are grateful for that.

Gerald A. Forse,  
Chipping Norton, Little Compton and  
Ascott-under-Wychwood, Oxon.

## **BEACON LOUGH BAPTIST CHURCH - GATESHEAD, TYNE AND WEAR.**

Beacon Lough (pronounced 'Loff' and meaning, not an Irish lake, but a hillside) is situated on the southern boundary of Gateshead, a town which agonises in high unemployment and which sometimes expresses a sense of despair and has its own Brendan Forster to boast about.

On the Evangelical scene, only a few places of witness shine undiminished by the general air of doom and gloom. Whilst most of the traditional churches are showing alarming decline (like in unemployment the area seems well above the national average for diminishing congregations) there are Fellowships which are truly being blessed of God - Anglicans, Pentecostals, Brethren - and even Baptists. This is the background in which to evaluate what God is doing in these places on Tyneside.

In what is traditionally 'Methodist' territory, the building of the Beacon Lough Baptist Church on an expanding housing estate was truly a venture of faith. It began when due to population migration from the town centre a new work was pioneered by the late Graham Swift, who was then the Minister of the 'parent' Church at Durham Road, Gateshead.

In 1963 twenty-four people of assorted ages and limited experience were established as the new witness at Beacon Lough, meeting in what was affectionately known as the 'Hut'. In 1968 the then fabulous sum of £20,000 was borrowed to erect an all purpose building (not so fabulous), with a Sanctuary to be built later.

By 1970 the membership had reached 48, but the challenge also proved too much for some in the difficult years that followed. With the part-time help of a well-seasoned campaigner, the Rev. Edgar Wright, the Church was prepared for its first full-time Pastor, who was duly appointed, but only served for about 15 months.

Numerically the Church declined until it reached the 24 (not necessarily the same 24) as it had been at the time of its formation and those who remained faithful to the vision God had given pressed on despite the debts and declining membership.

In 1977 the Lord called me into the full-time ministry and to my first pastorate. With an equal amount of faith on both the part of the Church and myself a new phase in the work began. By this time I was 50 years old and leaving behind me a successful business career for the challenge and uncertainty of a full-time ministry.

What has happened here in these last 3½ years? - What has God been doing?

I suspect that He has been doing more with my personal life than this brief account allows me to tell - but a few facts that cover what He has been doing with the Fellowship and congregation.

1. Church Growth - Membership and congregation has increased by 100%. This brings the membership back to near its highest level.
2. Conversions are frequent - generally from the area served by the Church.
3. Baptisms, which had never been frequent, began to follow with 13 in 18 months.
4. The Church programme has become Evangelistic instead of just being Evangelical and much blessing has resulted from using the 'One Step Forward' study and learning programme together.
5. In 3 years all outstanding debts on the building have been cleared and giving has increased to a point where soon consideration will be given to asking to be able to go ahead without H.M.F. grant aid.

These are the facts - but what is the cause?

I believe it is because we are learning to stop asking God to bless what we are doing and are beginning to ask Him what we should do that He waits to bless.

This has resulted in:-

6. Worship becoming more meaningful and relevant - witness becoming an active obligation as people warm to the twin thrust in ministry, teaching and leadership of (i) Openness to the Spirit and (ii) Obedience to the Word.
7. The deacons (5 loyal men and true) meet with me every Saturday morning at 7.30 a.m. and share prayer and toast together. This has proved to be the place where the decisions are made as God speaks to us as a team and the Deacon's monthly business meeting has become the place where we 'officially' record what God wants us and the Church to do.
8. The Midweek Fellowship meeting of the Church has new meaning too and approx. 25/30 attend each week. This is an all-age meeting with teenagers praising and worshipping alongside the senior citizens.

The facts are, of course, matched by an equally imposing list of problems which the Church never had before the new people came - isn't that encouraging?

Not everything is plain sailing:-

In a Church which is still in its infancy, it is surprising how much tradition and inefficient practice has to be overcome. The usual problems outlined by others who have contributed to Mainstream are ours as well:-

- i The need for responsiveness to changes in structures and methods.
- ii The overcoming of fears that as new people begin to outnumber the faithful pioneers that the 'cosy club' atmosphere will be threatened.
- iii The training of adequate and effective leaders to work with the Pastor as the demands continue to grow.
- iv The means of inspiring the loyal, though nominal members, to see the potential of their lives given over to the God, the Holy Spirit, in their worship, witness and service.
- v The need to raise our sights so as to see and anticipate what God is yet to do and of which we have only so far had a foretaste.
- vi Finally, perhaps the biggest problem of all - Me. Like many other Ministers who find it easier to do it myself than train others and who finish up with so many balls in the air at once that some are bound to fall.

Pray that the question asked by a member of a nearby declining Church may continue to be our experience - 'What is God doing at Beacon Lough?' - and continue to make this little Church on the hill the light it was meant to be.

Norman Hiley  
(Pastor).

From an article by Dr. R. T. Kennell  
published in the Westminster record.

## Money & The Church

The blame for England's financial woes lies at the door of the Church. We must take the blame. Our Lord told us to take such blame when he said, *'Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men'* (Matthew 5. 13). Had the Church been what she was called to be, Britain would not be in the melancholy mess it is in now. But we are hardly the salt of the earth today; neither Parliament nor people generally take notice of us. We have no credibility.

One reason why we have lost our credibility is the way ministers of the Gospel are treated. Paul said that ministers that *'rule well'* ought to be counted worthy of *'double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine'* (1 Tim. 5. 17). If you wonder what this means you simply need to read the following verse to know that Paul refers particularly to the minister's standard of living; *'For the Scripture saith, Thou shall not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the Labourer is worthy of his reward'* (1 Tim. 5. 18).

When ministers of the Gospel live below poverty level, it hardly enhances the witness of the church in the world. It is disgraceful the way ministers are paid in Britain. Soon after we came to England we were made aware how poorly ministers over here are paid. Frankly, it nearly broke my heart. I still don't know how most ministers make it. I really don't. Obviously God steps in and supplies the bare need, but this is not (in my opinion) God-glorifying, for a minister who has *'double honour'* should not be made to live from hand to mouth. This, I repeat, is disgraceful. The Bible speaks on this subject most clearly, leaving us without excuse.

'Double honour' means that the Minister deserves double the respect of his members and double the financial security. He should be looked after in such a way that he wants for nothing - including his retirement days. Nothing is sadder than a minister having to live in a church's manse across the years of his prime and then come to retirement only to be thrown out into the streets like any labourer who lives on the premises of his employer. Nothing is sadder than a minister being paid less than the mean scale of his members when he should have double. This is an evaluation I make in the light of God's infallible word.

I say the following with all heaven and earth bearing me witness; you cannot out-give the Lord and you cannot be too kind to God's worthy ministers. To honour your minister is to honour God; to be less than what God calls you to be is to dishonour God. The warning '*Touch not mine anointed*' (Psalm 105. 15) refers not only to speaking unkindly about God's preacher, but treating him with less care and giving him less financial support than the Scriptures teach.

I have a secret conviction that I will lay open to all who read these lines; if a church pays its minister as it ought, that minister will preach better. More people will come to hear him; more will be converted; England will be on the road to recovery. I believe that with all my heart.

You may say: 'Don't forget that the '*double honour*' refers to the minister who does 'well' in the word and doctrine'. And you may wish to add: 'We get what we pay for'. I answer: double your minister's present salary (not in stages, but all at once) and you will again get what you pay for. I'll tell you why; not only will he preach better, but you will listen better. For the same God who will have opened your heart (i.e. cheque book - see Matthew 6. 21) will simultaneously open your ears. You will be so different that even if his preaching does not improve one whit, you will enjoy it more.

There are two matters I have not dealt with. They concern the minister himself. If you are a layman (and most of this article has obviously been addressed to you), please put this aside right now, for I'd prefer that you did not read what follows.

Ministers who don't preach tithing:-

There are two possible reasons you don't preach it:-

- (1) You don't want the people to misunderstand your motives or
- (2) you don't actually believe in tithing.

I sympathize with the former, but if you see it as the biblical method for the support of the Gospel, you have a responsibility to preach it. I doubt not that some of my members (across my twenty-four years of preaching on the subject) have thought I was motivated by personal gain. But this is their problem. I do not care what they think about what I preach on any subject - whether on tithing, evangelism, Heaven or Hell. I answer to God (John 5. 44).

If you don't believe in tithing yourself, what a pity. You betray your blindness to God's word and cheat your people out of one of the greatest blessings promised to God's Word (Mal. 3. 10). If you say you don't believe in tithing because that would be upholding the Mosaic Law and, according to Galatians 5. 18 we are delivered from the Law, I answer that, the law simply legalized what Abraham (430 years before Moses) did willingly (Gen. 14. 20; Heb. 7. 2). The Gospel frees us to do what Abraham did willingly. We are not under Law, thank God. But as Paul admonished men to live holy lives (which is gratitude) not

because that earns you heaven but because it glorifies God, so do Christians need to be taught and exhorted to show gratitude to God by their giving. Abraham is our chief example of such gratitude as he was also Paul's chief example of justification by faith alone.

(2) Ministers who quite enjoy living at the poverty level! This is usually justified as a sign of godliness. I call it religious masochism. In the same letter in which Paul wrote that '*godliness with contentment is great gain*' (1 Tim. 6. 6) are to be found the aforementioned references to '*double honour*'. Obviously there is no incongruity between a minister having double respect and security and being godly with contentment. Not only that; I argue that it takes more grace to receive the '*double honour*' than it does to live at the poverty level. I argue that men who don't want the '*double honour*' are rejecting the dignity God intends His servants to have. To maintain that living from hand to mouth is a sign of godliness is not only a false modesty but perilously close to repudiating the latter part of Psalm 37. 25. A small congregation seriously jeopardize the church's witness in the world and so does the poorly paid minister. How can we expect the world to take us seriously when we treat God's prophets as we do? (I knew you would keep reading, you naughty layman!).....

Dr. Kendall has been Minister of Westminster Chapel since June, 1977. He is a graduate of the Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, and Regents Park College, Oxford. His Oxford Doctorial thesis has been published under the title Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649.

## BOOK REVIEWS

WHAT IS RENEWAL? by Robert Gordon. GEAR Monograph No. 2, 25p.

This short essay might easily be ignored, and that would be a pity. It might be ignored by those who pride themselves on 'doing theology' on account of its brevity - it is just twelve pages long. That would be a mistake, because this is a serious piece of theological writing, closely argued and wide-ranging. It deserves to be read and pondered by anyone theologically concerned with Christian experience, with the working of God in the world, with the significance of Jesus, the body of Christ, or with Christian hope. Robert Gordon succeeds in showing that the charismatic renewal is more than tongues and choruses.

'What is Renewal?' might also be ignored by people who are themselves 'in' the renewal. Do we have anything to learn from so slight a tract? I think we do. We need these reminders that the renewal is wider and deeper in its implications than we often think. Having begun with the Spirit, it is very easy for us to end with the flesh, replacing a movement of God's Spirit with a party of God's people. Robert Gordon challenges all of us to look again at our lives and ministries and ask, What is God doing here? Have we been guilty of domesticating the renewal, of cutting it down to our size and shape?

This booklet is studded with quotations from a wide variety of sources. One in particular got home to me:-

*"Religious work can be done by natural men without the gift of the Spirit, and it can be done well and skilfully. But work designed for eternity can only be done by the eternal Spirit. No work has eternity in it unless it is done by the Spirit through the gifts he has himself implanted in the souls of redeemed men." (A. W. Tozer Pathways to Power, my italics).*

How loudly is that being said in our theological colleges and places where there is concern for a 'trained ministry?'

Alastair Campbell,  
(Minister: Broadmead, Northampton).



## RECOMMENDATIONS

WORSHIP THE LORD - Jock Anderson, I.V.P. £1.75.

Revolution in worship, forms and freedoms, find many asking questions as to the basis of Christian Worship. Jock Anderson shares biblical insights in a fresh manner from a wide missionary experience.

THE CHALLENGE OF MARXISM - Klaus Bockmuehl, I.V.P. £1.95.

The infiltration of Marxism into many educational and industrial establishments requires believers to be conversant with Marxist teaching and its new appeals.

This book demonstrates that Christians have adequate and superior answers to the contemporary political and economic pressures. It is a beginners book.

HOW CAN I BE SURE - Michael Griffiths, I.V.P. 65p.

Assurance is the theme and those who lack Christian Security its target. Comprehensive and very readable.

T.M. A COSMIC CONFIDENCE TRICK - John Allan, I.V.P. 75p.

John Allan reveals some disconcerting answers to some contemporary questions about the Meditation movement.

THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE DICTIONARY - Three Volumes £13.95 per volume. Special Introductory price £37.50 per set. Inter Varsity Press.

When the New Bible Dictionary was first published in 1962 it was described by one leading biblical scholar as 'the best one-volume Bible Dictionary in the English language'. That verdict was endorsed by Bible students throughout the world. Their constant demand for it kept it in the 'best-seller' category year after year. With such success it would have been easy for the publishers to rest on their laurels and to leave such a popular work just as it was. But new discoveries, particularly in the fields of archaeology and linguistics, are continually taking place and these throw new light on the interpretation of the text. So, after fifteen years, it was clear that, if the standard of excellence was to be maintained, the original text of the Dictionary should be reviewed and where necessary revised, and the opportunity taken to base the work on a more modern version of the Bible.

The first thing to note about the IBD, therefore, is that it is a book for the 1980's, completely up-to-date and reliable in its scholarship. There are many outstanding names among the editors and contributors. The recognition they have achieved in the realm of international biblical scholarship is itself a guarantee of the book's excellence, reliability and usefulness.

But what about the illustrations? This is where the book differs so much from its predecessor. And what a difference they make! Where else could one find so easily such a wealth of visual material as is provided in these 1600 or so photographs, maps and diagrams? Dictionaries are not normally books you can browse in. But this one is! Page after page provides fascinating information in visual form. And the use of charts and diagrams to convey detailed historical information which can be grasped at a glance is quite brilliant.

One final point. A dictionary of this kind becomes much easier to use if there is adequate cross-referencing. A feature introduced for the first time is a very comprehensive index occupying forty pages of volume three and in itself a work of art. This, and the use of bold cross reference in the page margins, make it possible to introduce wide-ranging general articles on, say, animals, plants, vegetables, arts and crafts, writing, pottery, etc. etc., which relate different aspects of the subject to each other and where the particular piece of information one is seeking can be quickly found.

Publishers' blurbs can sometimes be accused of exaggeration. The Inter-Varsity Press describes the Illustrated Bible Dictionary as 'superb'. In this instance, at least, they are right!

Pat Goodland,  
(Minister: Gorsley, Herefordshire).

#### GIFT TO HOME MISSION

Those who came to the 1981 Conference will be pleased to know that as a result of the large numbers attending, we have been able to send a gift of £100 to Home Mission.

## 1981 Baptist Union Assembly 27th-30th April

This year Mainstream are providing a service for all Assembly goers. We are to run a refreshment lounge at Westminster Chapel following the main sessions. Proceeds from this will go to the Home Mission Fund - Do call in, have a coffee, and meet your friends.

THE SECOND MAINSTREAM FRINGE MEETING promises to be an event not to be missed. It will be on Tuesday evening at the Central Hall, Westminster in the Library, beginning at 8.30p.m. The programme will include music and interviews plus much more.

MAINSTREAM CONFERENCE

At the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick 18th-20th January, 1982. The total cost will be £20.00. A none returnable deposit of £5.00 books a place.

Please book ..... places at the 1982 Conference. I include a cheque/PO of £5.00 for each place booked. Cheques payable to Mainstream please.

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