



O Happy Day

This coming Sunday we have a baptismal service. In one sense I'm not looking forward to it, for I know that I will be all tensed up. To those who know me this may seem strange, for normally I'm a fairly relaxed kind of fellow. Why then the tension? No, it's not that I'm afraid of dropping the candidates - we have plenty of doctors around to cope with that eventuality'. The tension stems from the fact that on baptismal nights more than on any other night I am conscious of the awful responsibility God has placed on me to preach the Gospel. Perhaps I should explain that at such services the candidates have strict instructions to fill the church with their relatives and friends. This means that on this coming Sunday there will be as many present who in the normal run of life would never darken the door of a church. That service will perhaps be their only opportunity to hear the Gospel. And it's my duty to present the Gospel.

But, thank God, there is another side of the picture. Baptismal services are also glorious affairs. On this night more than any other night the church comes alive. There is nothing quiet and ordinary about our baptismal services. It's a place for trumpets (wow! wouldn't it be great to mark each baptism with a fanfare of trumpets!). One young teacher once accused me of making baptismal services like some kind of Cecil B De-Mille Spectacular. And he was right! For rightly understood baptism is a great spectacle. It is the moment when salvation is dramatised for all to see. But above all baptismal services are glorious affairs in the sense that there is a tremendous spirit of expectancy. People come expecting God to work - and time and time again he does graciously work amongst us.

In the last issue I had the audacity to declare that Praise God, (the Baptist Union's collection of resource material for Christian Worship) had little help to offer to those who wish to truly celebrate the Lord's Supper. Alas, I believe that Praise God has little to offer for those who wish to add the note of celebration to a baptismal service. (This does not of course detract from the value of other useful material found in the book). This being so, I again lay my head on the block by sharing with you a typical order of service I use for baptism. Indeed, to be precise, the order I shall use on Sunday:-

Prior to the service: scripture songs.
Scripture sentence: Psalm 100: 2.
SONG: 'Jubilate everybody!' (Songs of Worship 134).
Prayer of praise and confession.
Scripture: 1 John 1: 5, 8, 9.
SONG: 'God forgave my sin' (Fresh Sounds 101).
Offering.
Welcome and notices (alas!).
Scripture: Isaiah 53: 4-11a.
Acts 8: 26-39.
Prayer for illumination.
Sermon
HYMN: 298: 'O Jesus I have promised'.
Testimony.

SONGS: 'Jesus how lovely you are'.
 'Jesus take me as I am'.
 Scripture: Matthew 3: 13-15; Romans 6: 3, 4;
 Matthew 28: 18-20.
 Baptisms - after each baptism a verse of 'Alleluia, give thanks to
 the risen Lord' will be sung (Songs of Worship 47).
 Appeal.
 Youth Choir.
 Scripture: Matthew 3: 16; Acts 1: 8.
 Laying on of hands and prayer for baptismal candidates.
 HYMN 32: 'To God be the Glory'.
 Benediction.

- Note: 1) our baptismal services are marked by a spirit of praise. In spite of the importance I attach to the sermon, it is increasingly clear that what impresses our visitors is not the sermon but rather the overall atmosphere of celebration and worship. Our prayer is that through our worship people will become aware of God's presence with the result that they will become open to receive God's word. See 1 Cor. 14: 24, 25: *"If an unbeliever entershe will worship God and declare that God is really among you"*.
- 2) Hymn 298 was not my choice - it is somewhat lugubrious. Furthermore at this stage in the proceedings ideally I would have wanted an "evangelistic" hymn, but this was the special request of one of the candidates.
- 3) For the most part we encourage the giving of testimonies at baptismal services. Apart from anything else it establishes the candidates as "people" for those many members of the congregation to whom they will be unknown. To help the candidates I normally ask them two questions: "What Scripture verse has been especially meaningful?" and "Why?". It's amazing how much human interest can emerge from those two simple questions. It also provides an informal way of sharing the faith. However, I recognise that first and foremost *"the great confession of faith"* (1 Timothy 6: 12) is not the word of testimony, but the act of baptism. Thus I allow more nervous candidates the option of choosing a song that has been especially meaningful.
- 4) Recognising that many visitors will never have seen a baptismal service before, I find it necessary to offer some words of explanation. Normally these three brief passages of scripture suffice.
- 5) We have experimented with various songs as the candidates are baptised. No doubt it is a matter of personal taste, but to my mind "Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord" lends the right note of celebration. Other possibilities include: "O Happy Day", "Up from the grave He arose", "And I will raise Him up" from the song "I am the Bread of Life".
- 6) Immediately after giving the appeal I rush out to change, like the majority (?) of Baptist ministers today, I baptise in "mufti" - waders and all the traditional gear look weird in a modern setting! In the meantime one of my young deacons takes over and our youth choir celebrate

the faith in song. The candidates and I normally make it back for the last song. Here the service really reaches a crescendo.

- 7) But we are not finished yet, for we have revived the Scriptural (and old Baptist) practice of prayer and laying on of hands. Our prayer is not that the candidates receive the Spirit (the Spirit is theirs since the moment of conversion) but rather that they be filled afresh with God's Spirit and thus empowered afresh for service. Needless to say, this "filling" is not a one-off event only to be associated with baptism. However, our experience is that God does often richly bless the candidates with His Spirit at that time. (This is not all that surprising for the candidates in taking this step of obedience, are seeking to make Jesus Lord of their lives, and thus fulfilling a necessary precondition for the Spirit's filling). It is interesting to see that many Baptist churches are currently reviving this practise. Some, however, prefer to pray for the candidates before the baptism - either in or out of the water.

There is so much more that I could say. However, hopefully I have said enough to encourage feedback. I recognise that in many churches the above order of service may seem tame beyond. If so, I'm sure that many of our readers would be most interested to know how you celebrate the faith on baptismal night (or morning or whenever). So please write in and share with us your experience.

Paul Beasley-Murray.

Feedback

In the last issue feedback was invited. By and large most of our readers failed to respond, but one or two kindly put pen to paper:-

The President (Rev. Fred Wilson) wrote:-

"Just a note to say how much I appreciate your word in 'Mainstream' on the Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The order you give seems to me to be truly Evangelistic. Oh to see real praise and thanksgiving growing in our Churches.

It is significant that you should deal with this at the same time that the Baptist Times is opening it's columns to those who will write on their experiences of blessing at the Table. Let us pray that God is moving among us."

A not so complimentary letter was received from another Baptist minister, of which some extracts might be of interest to readers:-

"As a reader of the Mainstream Newsletter, I have forgone the right to reply to some of your more outlandish, egotistical and ill-considered opinions which you scatter with consummate abandon before those of us whom you obviously regard as the proverbial swine. However, Newsletter 8 really got through to this particular pig and I thought I would venture a snort or two in your direction!

I can only agree that in the September Newsletter your contributions were 'prepared without a thought to writing an article for Mainstream'. That is exactly my problem; your pieces seem to have been written without thought by you, or for those whom you condemn so easily.

You are entitled to your opinion on Gilmore, Smalley, Walker, Winward and the rest. They may be on the dung heap from your end of the pig-sty. They may see you in much the same place.

A more careful reading of Celebration and Order, for example, dismissed by you in such a cavalier fashion, would have provided a starting point for an answer to Graham More's question. Winward gives some thought to it.

It is also a fact that Anglicans and Roman Catholics, fully involved in charismatic renewal within a liturgical form of worship have an answer quite different from yours to the place of the lectionary (see John Gunstone). They by no means regard it as 'a fly-by-night nibble here and there' or an 'ecclesiastical straight jacket'. In fact they would urge it as a serious safeguard against the madness of a personality-cult type ministry, and the subjectivism of the preacher, and a provision for declaring the whole counsel of God to all God's people."

Gleanings From The North West

For nearly two years, a small group of ministers have been meeting in the North West of England in response to what we believe to be the call of God. Our purposes in meeting together are as follows:-

- We aim:- to grow together in a committed covenant relationship in order to exercise a ministry of encouragement and correction toward one another and to be enriched by opening ourselves to one another's lives and ministries,
- to explore the New Testament vision for the church as a radical and spiritually powerful community and to encourage one another in the fulfilment of that vision in our churches,
- to reach out in love to fellow ministers encouraging them to participate in the vision we share,
- to explore the meaning of the translocal ministries of Ephesians 4/11 and to work toward their full implementation in our lives and the life of the church.

As we have met together over the months, among the things that have encouraged and excited us has been the sense that we are characterised by a distinctive theological approach. In bare outline we have sought to set out where we are coming from and where we sense we are going to.

We are a product of our times and it would be foolish to imagine that we are not substantially moulded by our theological environment:-

- (1) We have been nurtured in the evangelical faith and are grateful for our heritage stressing, as it does, the doctrines of grace, the sinfulness and helplessness of men,

the importance of conversion, the authority of the Bible. All of these doctrines we adhere to most firmly although our expression of them belongs to an evangelicalism of a newer and more open kind than former varieties.

- (2) We have been substantially influenced by charismatic renewal and through it have had our eyes opened to the breadth of the Holy Spirit's work. Renewal has been significant for us both experientially and theologically. It has caused us to look with fresh insights at Scripture and has set us on a theological pilgrimage surrounding the doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit, with which most of us have struggled. The current stage of pilgrimage leads us to reject a second-blessing theology (although recognising varieties of experience) seeing baptism in the Spirit within the context of initiation and especially of an expanded baptismal theology. We believe that one of the areas of future theological work must centre around the doctrine of Christian initiation/baptism.
- (3) The house church movement has left its mark on us. We are grateful for insights gathered from it especially relating to the nature of Christian ministries. At the same time we are anxious to disentangle helpful insights from possibly dangerous ones relating to authority and submission. Our fear is that some brands of housechurch theology could prove to be a new form of authoritarianism and consequently of spiritual slavery. We believe in the freedom both of the individual conscience and of the local church. In this sense we are essentially Baptist and are rediscovering the insights of our forefathers relating to the church meeting, and the headship of Christ. We reject the tendency for human leaders to take to themselves a lordship which is Christ's alone and we believe there is an urgent need for theological dialogue in this area.
- (4) We are conscious of our Anabaptist roots and share their vision for the church as a voluntary and radical community. We see the purposes of God centring, not around the political arena, but around the church. We are conscious of a work of restoration taking place among us. At the same time we are anxious to bring our own established local churches through to renewal and restoration thereby preserving the best of our heritage while being obedient to the present move of the Spirit. We believe this to be the better way leading to spiritual depth and maturity.
- (5) We are partially influenced by the restatement of Anabaptist witness represented by John Howard Yoder and 'radical discipleship' in relation to the State and social witness. It is our belief that at this point there is a highly distinctive contribution to be made solidly rooted as we are in various communities. We are not ivory tower theologians but pragmatic and involved pastors. We proclaim a prophetic word but we are seeking to lead our communities towards a balancing prophetic lifestyle. To do this adequately we need both a critique of society and a strategy for action. Much Christian social comment we find to be motivated by an unconscious retrospective conservatism which appeals to the Bible to bolster the status quo. We

are feeling our way towards something which challenges this approach and places us firmly on the side of the poor and oppressed. Our belief is that Yoder's book 'The Politics of Jesus' is an essential and formative text for us, especially the analysis of social structures under the heading of 'Principalities and Powers' and the strategy he outlines as 'Revolutionary subordination'. Our vision is of Christian communities vibrantly alive in the Spirit composed of deeply spiritual men and women whose evangelism and witness has broken out of the narrow, censorious and self-righteous mould we are all too familiar with and embarrassed by into a new dimension of intelligent, informed and compassionate witness. This will touch issues such as war, power, wealth and privilege. Talk of Radical Christianity which does not reach into these issues is not yet radical enough and has not yet transcended the old pietistic mould.

- (6) This leads us onto another theme which distinguishes us. We are conscious that the way of Jesus is the way of the Cross. Some current teaching seems to miss this category altogether. If the way of the cross (powerlessness, servanthood, non-retaliation) were adequately proclaimed perhaps there would be fewer split churches arising from charismatic influence. Legitimate ends cannot in Christ be gained by illegitimate means. The exercise of coercive power (even in Jesus' name) is incompatible with the way of the cross.
- (7) Underlying much of our approach to things is a fundamental optimism which betrays an implicit eschatology. We believe that the church is going somewhere; that God has a purpose for it within history. Although all of this needs further unpacking our perception would be that we are heirs to the Puritan hope and that we work for a renewal and world wide expansion of the church before the coming of the Lord.

Nigel Wright,
(Minister - Ansdell Baptist Church,
Lytham St. Annes.)

(The book 'The Politics of Jesus' by John Howard Yoder is available from the London Mennonite Centre, 14 Shepherds Hill, Highgate, London, N65 AQ.)

Scrap The Sunday School ?

It never ceases to amaze me how many of our Baptist folk have views about children which are dictated by sentiment rather than the Bible. Only last year, for example, a Baptist minister in a South London church decided to close down all his "childrens' organizations". Whether he was right or wrong is not a question to be debated here. The volume of mail received by the Baptist Times showed that there were strong feelings on both sides. What worried me, however, was the rather mawkish tenor of many of the letters, depicting a tendency to be swayed by emotion rather than reason.

Take, for example, the widely held notion of an "age of innocence"

or an "age of discretion". Such ideas are foreign to both the Old and New Testaments. It is true that in later Judaism any transgressions of the Law's prescriptions were not reckoned as sin until the age of 13. Similarly the child was not reckoned in civil law to be fully accountable until reaching the age of 20. Yet this is not the same as children being without sin. On the contrary, Ps. 51: 5 seems to be a classic formulation of the doctrine of original sin, while Ezekiel, a prophet well known for his stress on individual responsibility, nowhere attempts to define the age at which a child or youth becomes responsible before God. Some have used Num. 14: 28-31 to establish 20 as the age at which moral responsibility was accountable, but this does seem an unusually mature age, especially as marriage could be contracted at an earlier age!

Similarly in the New Testament we find no evidence that children cannot be held responsible for what they are. The corporate wrong in which the whole race is involved does not exclude infant members. Salvation means life in Christ, new life by the Spirit and resurrection life in the new Creation. Surely no infants are born into that? Some look to Rom. 7: 9 as a proof text that all children are saved in Christ until they "fall" out of it through their sin; perhaps Paul is speaking about his Bar Mitzvah. But closer examination of the text reveals that Paul is speaking about man's experience before the Law was given, i.e. either Adam in Gen. 1: 28 or man before Sinai. We would all love to say that infants before the age of reason/discretion are in some sense included in God's purpose of salvation. However, no such age is defined in the Bible. The data is not there to define with precision the relation of children to God. If a child dies in infancy and is saved, then it is because of God's graciousness, not the child's "innocence".

Let us turn to another area, the attitude of Jesus towards children. Here we see God's love for the infant with Jesus showing warmth and acceptance of children. However, it is important to see that Jesus is not saying that all children, as children, are within the Kingdom of God. For example, in Matt. 18: 1-6, verse 6 refers to the "little ones who believe in me". Similarly, the text "Suffer the little to come unto me and forbid them not", a favourite text of many well-meaning people, does not per se say much about the status of children. It certainly does not prove what many would want it to say, viz. that all children are Christians. All Jesus is saying is that children should not be denied access to Himself.

Look at our churches. How many man (or woman) hours have been put into the outreach of children? Would not such time and energy be better used in adult evangelism, trying to win the head of the family for Christ? For example, it is a well known sociological fact that parents (and especially Christian parents) occupy a strategic position: their own personal attitudes affect the children from a very early age. As far as conversion is concerned, autogenous growth (the addition to the church roll of members' children) has always produced the more permanent results. Allogenuous growth (the addition of those who have no family connection) has produced less permanent results, especially if "conversion" is at an early age. The conversion of adults ought to be our primary target, then we could win their children as well. Instead we plough on from year to year using a traditional Sunday School set up and then wonder why we get little success. The story of children being sent to Sunday School by non-Christian parents and then leaving at a later age (say 12/13) is all too familiar. By all means have a Sunday School, but keep it for children whose parents are in the church. As for the children who have non-church going parents, if they want to come to the church, then great! But provide something completely different on, say, a Wednesday evening - perhaps a club with pleny of games and a short talk at the end. When we teach many of these children in Sunday School, unless the teaching can be backed up by parental explanation, then all we end up doing is giving a childish view of God and thus making

evangelism that much more difficult when they grow into adults.

Can we move towards a theology of the child? We can, providing that we avoid the stumbling block of sentimentality; we have to stop thinking about infants a few days old burning in the fires of hell, and see infant/child mortality as the exception, with God's purpose being that children should grow to adults and live at least their "three score years and ten". The correct starting point, therefore, is the biblical teaching on original sin, judgement, salvation and faith. We then apply the "adult" approach to children, leaving us with only one conclusion: all children are non-Christians until they are converted. Only after we have established this fact can we consider exceptions, e.g. children who do not reach an age to exercise faith. Once again Scripture is not dogmatic here. All we can say is that as the circumstances are exceptional, so will be God's dealings. With this in mind, we can, as Baptists, rightly reject the idea that the child is a Christian because of birth/parent(s)/baptism. This way we can confidently oppose paedobaptism with theology and exegesis on our side, present the gospel to children in a relevant and applicable way, and give a dedication or thanksgiving service a meaningful and realistic content.

We have the right theology of baptism. Let us not blunt our Baptist cutting edge by having a gospel of believers' baptism which applies to adults, yet conveniently forgets the ecclesiological and soteriological issues regarding the status of children.

Roland Wort,
Royal Navy Chaplain.

Hymns Are Where The Power Connects

What would you say if you received a letter from America asking if you could have a Minister of Music come and share your ministry with you for six months? He would not require any remuneration - just a house and hospitality for himself and his family (wife and two children). I gulped, then I asked what on earth would he do? Then I heaved a sigh of relief because we couldn't have him - we had no house!

What a pity the Lord didn't seem to see my point? He brushed all our objection aside, provided a house and so transported Phillip and Gloria Landgrave to Gillingham. Phillip is Professor of Church Music at the Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. They came lovingly and gently into our midst as nervous of us as we were of them, but it quickly became apparent that in Phillip we had involved ourselves with a spiritual whirlwind. "Spiritual" because his whole heart and mind and life is submitted in complete obedience to his Lord; and "whirlwind" because anything that was not firmly based on the inspired leading of the Holy Spirit was likely to be turned upside down. So began an exciting six months, the results of which continue to stimulate and stir us and to be a blessing to us.

Phillip's coming naturally affected the music within the Church most. However, whilst I confine myself to that area for the purposes of this article it must be emphasised that you cannot affect one part of a service without affecting the rest.

Firstly, we were encouraged to discover and use the talents that God

had given to us. We discovered we had quite a few musicians and vocalists of varying kinds but many of them were so involved in music outside the Church that they had little time for the Church "Choir". In the past they had found no satisfaction or fulfilment in our Church music and so had quickly been swallowed up by Choral Societies, local Orchestras, local Drama Groups, etc. Phillip challenged them to make a full and visible commitment to Christ and to put Him first. The response was incredible.

Secondly, we were shown that we needed to train and sharpen the talent we have in order to deepen and widen its application. When did you last have a lesson? Many of them would be deeply offended if you were to suggest they needed it! But this, of course, applies to every facet of our Church music. Phillip set the pace by attending sessions every Tuesday at our Royal School of Church Music. If he, a Professor of Church Music, still felt the need to learn, what of our own musicians?

Thirdly, we were encouraged to use an imaginative and varied approach to all our expressions of praise and worship. Obviously we used modern methods - O.H.P. illustrating hymns or providing new words; instrumental accompaniment and vocal background which includes descants as well as harmonies. Obviously we make use of choirs, ensembles and soloists and groups as well as dramatic presentations. But we were also challenged to ask such questions as - Why do we always slavishly sing all the verses of every hymn when perhaps only one or two are truly appropriate for that moment? Why do we expect everyone to sing all the hymns right through? - Why not use a soloist, the choir, a group to sing one verse and the congregation another? Why not alternate the choir/soloist with the congregation in a question and answer, or challenge and response? e.g. The Choir sing the first verse of "I gave my life for thee.....What hast thou given for me?" and then the congregation respond with the first verse of "Saviour, the dying love Thou gavest me, Nor should I ought withhold, dear Lord from Thee". Then the choir sing their second verse followed by the congregation singing their second verse and so on. Try it and see the impact it makes. Why do we only sing the hymns available - why not encourage the writing of new songs and hymns and music? This we have done and now the result is truly exciting.

All of this demands careful and corporate preparation. I have often heard lip-service paid to the need for the Minister to get together with his organist and choir master on a regular basis, but if we are honest, how often does it happen? I have come to realize that at least as much time must be spent in preparing and planning the service as is spent on the sermon, not necessarily by me, but I must be involved. So too, the others involved in leading worship must be prepared to mould their own ideas and ways for the benefit of the whole. For example, it can no longer be left to the organist or musical group, to dictate the pace or tempo of the music. Sometimes the same tune needs to be played with gusto and challenge, whilst on another occasion that tune will require a more tranquil and solemn tempo - depending upon its place and purpose within the whole service. It requires imaginative co-operation to achieve this. So too, the organist or group can all too easily be influenced by the drag of the congregation - especially if it is large, and they are also more often aware of the music for its own sake rather than as the vehicle and instrument of celebration. In the same way, the choirmaster is often more aware of his desire for a beautiful vocal sound than he is of the impact of the congregational singing upon the individual heart and mind.

All of the attitudes and approaches have to be submitted to and moulded by the Lord of the Service. Therefore, all those who plan and prepare for worship can do so only when they have learned to pray together for the common end of lifting the people of God into the presence of God

with joy in their hearts and praise on their lips.

In everything there should be dignity without dinginess, holiness without humbug; life without lethargy, so that Christ might be glorified and that His people might enjoy His presence.

Tom Rogers,
Minister - Gillingham.

Review

"MAKING KNOWN THE GOOD NEWS TO RESIDENTS OF COUNCIL HOUSING ESTATES" -
compiled by Lewis Misselbrook (NIE) 75p.

The Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism, and our own Lewis Misselbrook, have done a great service in producing this booklet. Based on the experience of churches in 30 council estates in England, and on the sharing together of 156 people at the NIE National Assembly in Nottingham, it provides valuable food for thought and action.

The report is in two main parts, followed by three appendices. The first part gives basic facts and figures of council housing estates, followed by more detailed descriptions of these estates and their people. In 1978 one third of the people in England were living in council housing. But these areas provide the lowest percentage of people attending a church or Sunday school (2.0% and 1.5% respectively). By and large the church has failed to understand the people who live on these estates, and failed to really communicate the Gospel.

The second part of the report looks at the church's approach in seeking to reach these people with the Gospel. After considering the people's awareness of Christianity, it asks three basic questions: Who can best reach them? How are converts to be nurtured? How is the Gospel to be communicated? These sections deserve careful study by anyone working, or thinking of working, in council housing estates. Useful study questions are provided in appendix 'C'.

What conclusions, if any, does this report reach? It is clear that there are no easy answers to working in council housing estates, but the following principles are important:-

1. Christians need to be living in the estates, and thoroughly identified with the estates. There is no place here for the commuting Christians, let alone the commuting leaders.
2. Ministers need to be mature, stable and experienced, not students straight from college! They must be willing to stay long enough to grow alongside and truly relate to the people.
3. The church needs to be a living demonstration of the Gospel. In its worship and its fellowship it must reveal clearly the love, joy, peace and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The main thrust in evangelism needs to be to adults and to families, not to children and young people in isolation. "Win the child and you are more likely to lose him. Win the parents and you are more likely to hold all the family."

5. The church needs to go to where people are, not expect them to come to where it is. "Go to share with them their life, your life and your faith in Jesus."
6. Supremely, there needs to be Christians whose hearts are full of the love of Christ and of prayer, and whose lives and homes are genuinely open to people.

This report has been well produced, and could open the door to one of the greatest areas for evangelism in our country. I, for one, am most grateful.

Graham A. Thomson,
Minister - New Addington, Surrey.

On Gagging God!

In 1969 Hodder and Stoughton published Gavin Reid's well known book "The Gagging of God". At the risk of further repetition, may I quote yet again one of the most significant passages in his book.

"The greatest threat to the gospel today in our Western industrial societies is not communism, apathy, humanism, impurity of doctrine or worldly compromise. It is this breakdown of communication not only from the Church to those outside, but also a breakdown of communications in every field of daily life. Unless Christians can find ways of saying things to modern non-community men then not only is modern man in a desperate plight, and not only is the Church facing extinction, but Almighty God Himself is gagged."

Twelve years later we are still struggling to bridge the communication gap between the Church and those outside. The charismatic movement and the church growth movement are tremendously encouraging signs of the Church coming to grips with new or revised forms of worship, structure and outreach. Contact with the outside world however is still incredibly limited. Local church evangelism is reaching a number of people. Tent crusades and special missions continue to reach a few, the majority of those responding to their message being those who have lapsed or are already in close contact with the Christian community.

Mass evangelism and local church evangelism and personal evangelism all have their place and all must continue. There is however another form of witness that is needed. It is the strategically placed demonstration of the Christian approach and attitude.

It is said that William Booth once asked "Why should the devil have all the best tunes?" It could well be asked today, "Why should the devil have all the best methods?" An international network of terrorism is organised so that at strategic points around the globe, certain persons of this international team move in to hold a demonstration in favour of the worldwide left-wing movement. It may be a march; it may be a riot; it may be an assassination; it may be a hijack; it may be a stirring speech. Of course I am not suggesting for one moment that these are the types of demonstration we should have! What is needed however, are continuing acts of witness at strategic national or international points. This is no more than the plan of Jesus when He witnessed in the market place, or in the

temple courtyard or in the busy street or at a significant point in the local village. Local churches have followed this pattern in times past, but of late it has been forgotten. There are fewer open-air services of witness than there used to be, and it is perhaps because they need new forms of method and structure.

International and ecumenical teams of trained Christians with an evangelistic gift could be used around the world supported by and linked in with local churches. They could operate where they could be noticed; where they would catch the attention of the media; and where what they said and did would be noticed by as many people as possible.

Not since the days of the 1950 Billy Graham Crusades has the gospel been on the front pages of our newspapers. It could happen again. It must happen again otherwise as Gavin Reid says "modern man is in a desperate plight.....and God Himself is gagged."

Powerful witness in strategic places is what is missing the churches efforts of witness and evangelism. For all the new life that has been seen in the Church of recent years, we still have made little or no impact on the nation as a whole. Jesus still remains "The man nobody knows".

David Beer
Minister - Tonbridge.



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 The text of an address given by the Author at Mainstream's 1980 Conference. The booklet is designed to aid the Christian in assessing his commitment to Christ and his Church.
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 This latest Mainstream booklet examines Baptist Churchmanship in the light of the breath of the Spirit moving through a considerable number of Baptist Churches in Britain. The chapters cover Roots, Pressures, Actions and Dreams, and the Author seeks to plot the course ahead to show something of what God is doing in our midst and where He is leading for the future.
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