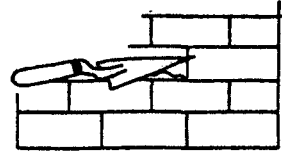


BUILD that Leadership



Any similarity between the title of this editorial and the title of a recently published book is entirely intentional. It so happens that this newsletter has a theme of leadership running through it. Whether we like it or not (and I hope we do), the structure of leadership in the churches is changing. It would seem that we have at last recognised that the many gifts and abilities which are finding expression in congregational life require a new approach to leadership in our churches.

As the varied and growing responsibilities of pastoral work are being shared with more and more people, the whole question of training for leadership becomes increasingly important. Discipleship is no longer seen as just a matter of grounding converts in the faith and discovering spiritual gifts. Discipleship must also involve the equipping and training of mature believers for responsible service and the service of taking responsibility. As at least half of our members will be women this is forcing us to re-think the role of women in leadership. And not before time, too.

All over the country, pastoral teams of housegroup leaders and/or elders and deacons are being set up. Full and part-time workers are being commissioned as evangelists, administrators, pastoral visitors, community workers, youth workers, music directors etc. Excellent people, who have taken early retirement, are offering their experience and services in the work of the Gospel. Redundancy, for others, may prove to be a pathway into full-time Christian leadership. And many of these are being found within the ranks of the local congregation and have no formal or baptist college training.

We ought to rejoice in these developments and the opportunities which they represent. However, we ought to be mindful of the responsibility to provide adequate and relevant training and teaching. We cannot afford to fall into the trap of thinking that enthusiasm alone will equip for the task. This would be an equal and opposite error to that of believing formal qualifications alone to be sufficient. In future editions it is hoped that the building up of wise and spiritual leadership within the local congregation will become a major concern of the Newsletter. Your views and comments on this topic would be most welcome.

Terry Griffith.

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'Mainstream' Newsletter is designed to encourage life and growth within the Baptist Union. On the assumption that contributors are in sympathy with this aim, they have full liberty of expression. Views expressed in the newsletter are strictly those of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editor, or of the Mainstream Executive and Advisory Council.

Training is IN!



Sifting through the mega-bump that has hit the doormat over the last few months, I have discovered amidst the brochures for last minute holidays and cheap-rate double glazing, that the small-ads and the not so small-ads (how do organisations afford it?) in the Christian press, continue to reveal a growth industry, both within the organised church and the disorganised church, regarding training. Two days here, four days there, a week, a month, a year of your life, every fifth Monday for the next five years, why, the perpetual trainee/conference can develop every aspect of his or her life from 'creative silence with instructions on how to use it' to 'drama, pottery and singing for the Lord!

If you are, unborn, born again, or reborn, you can be trained to develop to maturity. If you are black or white you can be trained to live together. Training is in.

Now you don't have to be the world's greatest guesser to realise that the continuing theme of this article is on the subject of training. I quote the worthy editor who gave me this brief, "There are different types and levels of leadership needed in the Church and my concern is to stimulate the training of leadership potential already within our churches, within the local scene"

A more laboured title for this article would be 'Alternative patterns of training and developing non-collegiate courses. A Model. The East London Institute'. The East London Institute does not exist, it is not a building, it is simply an idea at the moment that is currently being worked at by a number of folk - an idea that embodies the training of lay-leadership within the local scene. We are using resource people available from christian colleges, and local christian agencies, as well as local christian enablers who are adept at setting free and encouraging the leadership potential that does exist at grass-roots within our churches.

The model, we believe, has a sound footing in the biblical understanding of this sort of leadership training - Moses/Joshua, Elijah/Elisha, Jesus/Disciples, Peter plus others Acts 10, Paul plus others Acts 20, Paul/Timothy.

The privilege of being with Jesus as his disciple, walking around Galilee and ministering to the needs of people in his given power, gave the opportunity for learning and developing skills, being tested, stretched and judged by the Lord himself. Jesus it was who made you look at a field to see the way the crops were growing; the sea, to see its resources and power; the sky, to see its glory; a bird, a child, a wedding, a funeral. Jesus made you look at life around you and learn the wonder of the coming of the Kingdom. On the job experience with the Master in the midst.

The apostle Paul's first learning and training experience was with Ananias and the disciples at Damascus.

The apostle Peter's new awareness of the gospel for the Gentiles was an experience he shared with others from Joppa who accompanied him, on the job, to Caesarea to the house of Cornelius.

The missionary journeyings of Paul was a teaching experience for others who accompanied him. When Paul writes to Timothy, "his beloved son in the faith" he writes to one who has also 'observed his teaching, conduct, aim in life, faith, patience, love steadfastness, persecutions, sufferings etc" 2 Tim. 3v10,11. Timothy observed these aspects of christian living be being with Paul.

In those heady, early days of the expanding life of the church, the training in discipleship and leadership was an on the job training experience. There was no other facility available. Who is there to judge that the development of residential college training is superior to that early learning technique? That there is much questioning currently going on in college circles concerning training development, gives hope and added inspiration to lay leaders involved in inner-city church life.

The East London Institute idea was born out of discussions in inner-city settings. Discussions that questioned the validity of present leadership training programmes that constantly withdraw people from the church/work process and into the world of Academia.

In late February of this year, twenty five people holding leader positions in our churches were gathered together at Woodgrange Baptist Church. This group was made up of Lay/Ministerial, In work/Out of work, Married/Single, Men/Women, Black/White. They had been drawn together at the initiative of the London Baptist Association's Inner London committee to pilot a possible project on "In Context Leadership Training." They were asked their views on current ministerial training as it appeared to them. These are some of the replies:

- Too middle class
- University approach
- You must go away from home to do it
- Not relevant
- Too much theory
- Academics more important
- Lifts people out of background context
- Makes people think they are special
- It changes people
- Creates gap between ministers and people

All of these comments have been heard before (sometimes in college common rooms). But within the setting of that February meeting they were presented with a quiet passion that had to be heard. The plea was not to undermine the present system of training but to supplement it in such a way that the denomination and the wider church would benefit at ground level where there was a real demand for practical training in leadership and ministry.

I am already aware of the straightforward comment that some might be making, saying that this level of training should be in operation already in the hands of ministers in pastoral charge sensibly developing the discipling skills that will produce more effectively trained local leadership. Much has been written on this subject. But then again, not all churches have someone in pastoral charge nor do most ministers believe that they have such a complete list of God-given gifts to enable this to be done without some help.

The on-going discussions from that initial meeting have produced some basic areas of concern.

1. The undergirding of the bible and christian belief in a developing multi-faith society (particularly pertinent for city christians, but valid also for the whole family of the church).

2. The pursuit of worship, stemming from involvement with the innovative as well as the traditionalist model.

3. The preparation of lay leaders with a view to counselling and pastoral situations.

4. Evangelism and communication of the gospel that speaks to urban situations.

5. The taking care of the families of leaders. When one is 'called' to a ministry, if the 'one' is part of a family unit then the whole family must be made aware of what that call might mean.

6. Small group leadership. Priorities, support and management of groups.

These, amongst others, were the areas where help in training was sought. So what has been the response?

Discussions have been shared with college representatives from Spurgeons and they have committed themselves, and whatever back-up the college might provide, to take part in an experimental 'roller-coaster' programme of six Friday night to Saturday tea-time sessions commencing in October of this year, to be held in the East London area.

Discussions have also been shared, and support, as a consequence, promised from other christian agencies prepared to give input and backing for the idea of an 'East London Institute' giving training in context for urban christian leaders.

- each of the sessions in the autumn will have key resource people present (Spurgeons and other christian agency people).
 - each theme will have consistent biblical underpinning and foundation.
 - leaders for each session will be drawn from the lay group involved.
 - there will be a time for real sharing, opportunity for follow through (to placements, link up with more local expertise).- we shall be doing theology together, beginning where we are and moving on.
 - we shall be holding together biblical faith and contemporary reality.
 - we shall be coming from and immediately returning to our churches.
- What will follow we do not know.

Our immediate involvement is with East London but, recognising the need, it is hoped that in three or four different sectors of our vast London constituency something might be developed in the future. There has been real interest across the denominations as the response to the ACUPA report, and similar questions coming out of city life, put pressures on the church to come up with valid training procedures.

When Terry asked me to write on this theme, he said in his letter, "I don't see it is either/or, but both/and; colleges and churches need to be much more aware of each other." The East London Institute idea is a 'bridging' idea, linking good resources with needs and opportunities and it must be prayed for by the wider family within the denomination.

Harking back to the very first paragraph of this article. A word of warning. Beware the advert in the small-ads of the mega-bumph that might say "New appointment. East London Institute seeks to appoint etc., etc., etc.," Let me conclude on a more serious note. If any would like a continuing up-date following the autumn sessions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Doug Hollidge,
Forest Gate, London.

"Do you see this woman?"

(The articles "Do you see this Woman?" and "My best Men are Women"(to be published in the next issue of Mainstream) were written by Trisha Dale and Jane Hassell in consultation with each other. Trisha's piece explores Jesus' attitude to women, and Jane's work builds from that towards a biblical understanding of the importance of women in the leadership of the church).

At the Mainstream conference in January, Sister Margaret Magdalen reminded those attending her seminar of our marvellous experience of having been baptised. She suggested that we should use the words of Luther, who said every day 'I have been baptised', and she exhorted her Baptist audience to draw on our memories of our own baptism, and to realise its significance.

Baptism by immersion as believers is a special treasure for women in the revolutionary reign of Jesus. In Judaism, the initiation rite of circumcision was exclusive to men. In Christianity 'when they believed.... the good news of the Kingdom of God and about Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women' (Acts 8:12). Underlining that baptism transcends both racial and sexual divisions, the same chapter of Acts includes the exclamation of the newly-converted Ethiopian eunuch, 'What is to keep me from being baptised?'

The fact that the initiation rite of baptism was conferred on men and women alike is of 'incalculable significance', since 'rituals normally have more practical influence than theological declarations' writes Laurentin. (1) He further states that 'Baptism by immersion presented, in that culture and community, problems of modesty which led Christians to have recourse to the services of women for the baptism of women.'

As Paul makes clear in Galatians, it is the fact of baptism 'into Christ' that is of vital importance. 'In Christ' men and women are new creatures (Gal. 6:15) and 'in Christ' there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28).

In Judaism only free Jewish males enjoyed religious privileges, and the contrasting place of women and others is expressed in the teaching of Rabbi Judah ben Elai: 'One must utter three doxologies everyday: Praise God that he did not create me a heathen! Praise God that he did not create me a woman! Praise God that he did not create me an illiterate person!' (2) F.F. Bruce (3) points out that Paul

'takes up each of these three distinctions which had considerable importance in Judaism and affirms that in Christ they are all irrelevant.... It is not their distinctiveness, but their inequality of religious role, that is abolished "in Christ Jesus"... No more restriction is implied in Paul's equalizing of the status of male and female in Christ than in his equalizing of the status of Jew and Gentile, or of slave and free person. If... A gentile may exercise spiritual leadership in church as freely as a Jew, or a slave as freely as a citizen, why not a woman as freely as a man?'

Bruce asserts that Gal. 3:28 is Paul's basic principle for male and female in the church and that if restrictions on it are found in other Pauline texts they are to be understood in relation to 'no male and female'.

Matthew tells us that Jesus gave the great commission so that all people should become his disciples and be baptised. Women including Mary (Jesus' mother) met with the apostles to pray before Pentecost (Acts 1:14). When the Holy Spirit came both women and men were filled, spoke in other

languages, and were presumed to be drunk. In explanation Peter quoted Joel: 'Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message.... Yes, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will proclaim my message.' (Acts 2:17-18)

Jesus' teaching and life style paved the way for women to be fully involved in spiritual activities alongside men. His attitude to women was 'new enough to shock even his disciples' (Laurentin, op. cit.). He clearly believed women were no different from men in their need of his salvation or in their trustworthiness as his messengers. The gospels show women who were close followers and supporters of Jesus, women for whom Jesus raised relatives from the dead, women who learnt from Jesus, women who were healed, women who were delivered from evil spirits, all of them women whose lives were transformed by Jesus.

A group including Mary (Magdalene), Joanna, Susanna and 'many other women' accompanied Jesus (Lk. 8:1-3). Their resources were of help to Jesus and his disciples. While making the point that obedience to God is more important than family ties, Jesus went out of his way to show that he included women among his true followers by using the designations of both mother and sister. 'Stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother."' (Mt. 12:49-50)

Jesus turned to a woman in the crowd who called out a blessing on his mother. He told her 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it' (Lk. 11:27-28). Jesus saw no special benefit in being his physical relation. It is not sex, or gender role, or status in the accepted scheme of things, or, for women, relationship to men as wife or mother that counts, but the receiving and doing of the word of God. Obedience to God is open to all.

In a day when the rabbis said, 'He who teaches his daughter the law, teaches her lechery' and 'Were the words of the Torah to be burned, they should not be handed over to women'. (2) Jesus' actions were astonishing. When Jesus went to Martha's house, her sister Mary behaved like a Jewish man, and sat at Jesus' feet, listening to him and learning. When Martha appealed to Jesus to tell Mary to help her with the serving, Jesus recognised Martha's anxiety, but said, 'just one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her.' Jesus insisted that being with him and learning theology from him was more important than doing things. Jesus did not think women should remain in the kitchen when there were opportunities for them to learn. He commented that Mary had chosen. He gave her status and the right to a mind of her own. Jewett says, 'he fellowshiped with these women who were his disciples even as he fellowshiped with men who were his disciples. He showed the same intimacy and esteem toward Martha and Mary as he showed toward men.' (2)

At the house of Simon the Pharisee an unnamed woman came to Jesus with her head uncovered and her hair loose. This was shocking. Perhaps worse to our way of thinking, she was weeping, in public. Jesus was not shocked. Jesus accepted the tears, the drying of his feet with the woman's hair and then anointing. Public emotion, extravagance, and an unusual gesture; all are welcomed and accepted by Jesus. He challenged Simon, 'Do you see this woman?' All Simon saw was the sinner. Jesus understood her motive of love and gratitude for forgiveness, which he declared to Simon in the parable. Simon, and others, only knew her as a sinner, Jesus the sin was over and he reminded her that her sins were forgiven. It is implied that Simon's sins were not yet confessed. One of them was the low view he had of the woman. Simon bracketed Jesus, his guest, with the degradation he ascribed to the woman, thinking Jesus ought to know her type if he was any good as a prophet. Jesus recognised and commended her, 'She loved much'.

In John's gospel, Jesus is shown relating to women in unprecedented ways. The wine was made from water after Mary, his mother, approached Jesus with the problem. When Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water, he 'shattered five social norms'. (4) Jesus should not have been in non-Jewish territory. Jesus should not have looked at a married woman in public, let alone talked to her. She was notoriously promiscuous. She was a Samaritan woman and thus considered by the Jews to be perpetually unclean. Jesus deliberately defiled himself. "On top of all this unconventional behaviour, this is the one and only person in His entire ministry to whom He privately announced His messianic identity." (Fraybill, op. cit.)

Jesus told Martha 'I am the resurrection and the life' and raised her dead brother Lazarus. Jesus accepted their sister Mary's prophetic anointing of his feet as a sign that she understood his coming burial. After the resurrection Mary Magdalene was the first to go to the tomb, believe it to be empty and to tell other disciples the news. More than that, she was the first person to see the risen Jesus, who commissioned her to "go... and tell".

Jesus healed many women. He healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law. In the midst of the throng, on the way to raise the twelve year old daughter of Jairus to life, Jesus noticed the touch of a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. To Jesus' disciples, the contact was insignificant. By Jewish standards the woman herself was insignificant. She was ritually unclean. She was poor, having spent all her money trying to be healed. She was a woman. Jesus spoke words of encouragement, peace and healing to her. Physically, emotionally and spiritually she was made whole. Jesus then went on to raise the young girl from the dead. Jesus raised the widow of Nain's son from death, feeling compassion for her, and gave him back to her. Jesus healed a woman who had been bent over by a spirit of infirmity from Satan for eighteen years. When he was criticised for healing her on the Sabbath, Jesus turned on the ruler of the synagogue, calling him a hypocrite, who would give an animal water on the Sabbath but did not have the same attitude to 'this woman, a daughter of Abraham'.

When Jesus was talking about God, he used female pictures to describe God, as well as male ones. God is like a woman who searches for something precious to her that is lost, who does not stop until she finds it, and when she succeeds celebrates her joy. Jesus compared the kingdom of God to yeast mixed with flour by a woman making bread. Jesus expressed his concern for the people of Jerusalem by identifying himself as feeling he wanted to put his arms round them in the same way as a mother bird gathers her chicks under her wings.

Jesus asked Simon the Pharisee, 'Do you see this woman?' He asks us the same question. So far Christianity has not followed Jesus' example in his attitude to women. Jesus never treated women as inferior to men. Why do we?

Trisha Dale,
Charlton, London.

NOTES:

1) Rene Laurentin, "Jesus and Women: An Underestimated Revolution", in Women in a Men's Church, edited by Virgil Elizondo and Norbert Greinacher, Clark, Edinburgh, 1980.

2) Paul K. Jewett, Man as Male and Female, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1975).

3) F.F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Galatians, Paternoster, Exeter, 1982.

4) Donald B. Kraybill, The Upside-down Kingdom, Herald, Scottdale, Pa., 1978.

Growth in Somerset

The Editor is pleased to reproduce this interview which originally appeared in Administry's Broadsheet No. 10 in September, 1985. John Truscott, the interviewer, is Project Co-ordinator for 'Administry' (details in the last Newsletter). Adrian Prior-Sankey, who is 26 years old, was appointed Pastoral Assistant (Administration) at Zion Baptist Church, Creech St. Michael, near Taunton, in April 1985. Since the interview was first given, the church has grown to about 180 members with 9 housegroups; attendances on Sunday mornings are between two and three hundred, and the church is in contact with 400 people altogether; Keith Judson has joined the team as full-time youth worker and evangelist; and an office suite and large community room with service facilities have been completed. The current church programme includes a Bible School, Life in the Spirit seminars, Discipleship classes, a Network Course in evangelism and Leadership Training.

Adrian would very willing to talk with any churches considering the appointment of an Administrator. He can be contacted at the Church Office on 0823-443692.

- J. Adrian, I'm intrigued to hear how a church whose membership a few years ago was a mere 35 comes to appoint a full-time administrator.
- A. I'll try to sketch the story over the last few years. Creech St. Michael is a village outside Taunton that has developed into a dormitory area for the town. The village Baptist Church grew from a handful to 35 members during the 60's and early 70's but then there were four years without a full-time Minister and no more growth took place.

In 1981, despite the very poor state of the church building, the church decided to call a Minister and the Revd. David Goodyear was appointed. He had 16 years teaching experience and had been an Assistant Minister at Taunton Baptist Church. He challenged the church to adopt a programme of growth first over six months, then over three years. Membership now stands at 144.

J. Where has this growth come from?

- A. At least half has been conversion growth - the Mission England meetings at Bristol played a significant part in this. We booked 800 coach seats and had 30 referrals.

I would say that about two-thirds of our members live locally - within two miles of the building. Others live in villages around Taunton. We have one home-group in the Ilminster area where there is no Baptist Church!

J. Humanly speaking, why has there been growth?

- A. I put it down to an atmosphere of warmth and love coupled with clear Bible-teaching and visionary leadership. We have done the One Step Forward course twice now, with its emphasis on God's special love, agape.

J. At what point did you appear on the scene?

A. Hazel, my wife, had been involved in the church since childhood. After our marriage we lived in Taunton for a year, then moved in 1982 to Creech St. Michael. At that time I was the Senior Administrative Assistant for Taunton's Social Services.

J. So, how did the big change for you come about?

A. I had been considering 'full-time Christian work' for some time, but I did not feel comfortable about the idea of ordination. From 1982 I became steadily more involved in the diaconate and David Goodyear, almost jokingly, suggested I might join the staff. But it wasn't a joke. As I was thinking more about future work, the church were beginning to see the need for a Pastoral Assistant - and David, with his study of church growth principles, felt this should be an Administrator. It all came together this spring.

J. 'Pastoral Assistant (Administration)' is an unusual job title. What do you do?

A. We have a pastoral team comprising David, myself and a local GP (who oversees three of our home groups). Next year we shall have another full-time Assistant for Youth Work and Evangelism.

In the mornings I'm in the office (in the vestry for the moment!). I'm concerned with the building development - we put up a new church centre in 1983 and further plans are in hand. Then there are celebration and outreach events, magazine production, a large church holiday and so on. I include the work of Church Secretary in a traditional Baptist set-up and work closely with the secretary to the diaconate.

In the afternoons I visit. This frees David for counselling and teaching preparation; he is especially gifted in these areas. I also find I can get alongside many people differently from a Minister - and I can often find an administrative excuse for calling on people, even if only to distribute a magazine! My Social Services background was ideal training. I realise my job involves a greater element of this kind of pastoral work than would be the case for many administrators. Evenings are taken up with meetings. I am usually available behind the scenes at our Bible School, Discipleship Classes etc. which take place on Mondays. Deacons and Church Meetings take place on Tuesdays. I lead a home-group on Wednesdays. I have continued to run the village Cub Scout Pack which gives me an 'outside' interest. Hazel and I often entertain on Saturdays.

J. Do your family ever see you?

A. Oh yes. The church insist I have a day off each week (Sunday is mainly a working day), and I usually take an additional evening as well. In fact I get more time with my family now than before I joined the staff! Then I had a full-time job plus all my church activities to work around it.

J. I'm often asked how big a church needs to be before it can consider a full-time Administrator. Your church started considering your appointment when it was smaller than most churches with posts like yours.

A. The congregations tend to be double the number of committed members which, with continuing growth puts us in active contact with about 300 people now. This is too many for one man to cope with on his own. I believe that within the overall staffing structure for any church, an Administrator should be considered high on the list of possibilities; at least the work of an Administrator should be covered in some way. We have made it the second full-time appointment.

J. What of the future?

A. My vision is a steady expansion of various areas of my job specification enabling the church to move further towards the New Testament principle of every member ministry. Each person, especially the Minister, should be free to exercise their primary gifts.



Lifestyle

(This article is based on the content
of a seminar held at the
Mainstream Conference in January of 1986).

Community - there is something about the very word that calls up all kinds of feelings among contemporary Christians. For some there is an unfulfilled longing to "make a total commitment". For others there are the memories of failures some of which have been personally painful. Definitions therefore are a priority in any attempt to talk about the subject. By community, I am not referring to communal living or extended family, rather I am talking about a New Testament view. I am talking about believers who share: 1) a common identity, 2) a common geography, 3) a common mission, 4) a common care for each other including material needs, 5) a unity in worship and 6) a committed relationship. I believe these ingredients are necessary for a thriving community. And they must be worked out in a practical way - hence the word 'lifestyle'. Thus defined, I maintain that community lifestyle is rooted in the Gospel itself.

One of the priorities of our time is to re-examine our understanding of the Gospel. As such we must go back to the Scriptures themselves and examine the content of the message we preach. Central to most of our Gospel presentations has been an emphasis on getting to heaven. Being reborn meant knowing that you are going to heaven. When a person becomes a Christian, s/he repents from their sins, is forgiven and receives the gift of eternal life through faith in Christ (and that "eternal life" is understood in the sense of getting to heaven). As such, we have what I call a "pudding Gospel". Let me explain. If you sit my six-year-old down to supper with a full course meal (meat and two veg. plus the pudding) and then give him the freedom to begin eating, what do you think he will go for first? That's right - the pudding! Now the pudding is great as a conclusion to a good meal, but it isn't adequate nourishment on its own. In the same way, eternal life it isn't adequate nourishment on its own. In the same way, eternal life (getting to heaven) is good news at the end of a life of discipleship, but it isn't adequate nourishment for the here and now. When Jesus spoke with Nicodemus (John 3), he didn't say that he had to be reborn to get to heaven. Rather it was to see and enter the kingdom of God for which the birth of the Spirit was necessary. (And the kingdom of God is for here and now - just as eternal life, rightly understood in the Gospel of John, is more the life of God beginning in the here and now and continuing into eternity.) Jesus prayed for the kingdom to come on earth. We have prayed for believers to get to heaven.

We tend to live with spiritual bi-focals on. (You know about bi-focals - the kind of glasses which are divided in half so that if you look through the top half you can see distant things clearly, but the near things are a blur; and if you look through the bottom half the opposite is true.) Well Christians today are much like that. They come to worship on Sunday and look through the top part of the spiritual bi-focals and "turn their eyes upon Jesus". They find that "the things of earth grow strangely dim". Then on Monday they go out into the world and look through the lower part of their spiritual bi-focals and the problems of the world become strangely clear, but "where is God in all this mess?"

Many of us preached a "Gospel of logical conclusions" in which we followed a logical sequence of points designed to bring about agreement to the need of the new birth. We thought that if people simply assented to our reasoning and prayed, they would be reborn. But that was not the New Testament pattern. At Pentecost, Peter pointed to the presence of the Spirit and then concluded that it was evidence that the Gospel he declared was true. "This (the work of the Spirit) "is that" (verification that God has made Jesus Lord and Christ. Acts 2). With the coming of the charismatic renewal we were excited that this needed dimension was being restored to the church. But we have discovered that with a renewed Gospel message, we are simply throwing a spiritual boomerang. We may throw it harder and further than before, but somehow it always comes back at our feet. Unless we have a renewed Gospel message, we simply are preaching new wine with old wine skins. (Or perhaps old wine in new wine skins.) With a Gospel of logical conclusions we are still saying, in effect, "That is this".

A renewed Gospel is about lifestyle not primarily about doctrine. It is not a matter of a theological quiz, it is about a new way of living - a way of living so radically different that its beginning is called by Jesus a new birth. In the great commission, Jesus did not command us to make "converts", but "disciples". He told us to teach them not simply to "understand" but to "obey" what he had commanded. A renewed Gospel is about lifestyle! A renewed Gospel is also about community. The epistles were not written to individuals, but to communities of faith. The very context of the Gospel is community. But the response to the Gospel is also community. New believers: 1) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship (common identity, 2) broke bread together from house to house (common geography), 3) spoke the word of God boldly (common mission), 4) sold their possessions and gave where there was need (common care), 5) met together in the temple courts (unity in worship) and 6) were of one heart and soul (committed relationships) (Acts 2:42-47; 4:31) Finally, we find that the very work of the Spirit is community, for we are all, by one Spirit, "baptized into one body" (ICor.12:13).

Along with a renewed Gospel, we must also examine the currents of our society. People began to see the kingdom as though it were on the other side of a river. In a leap to total commitment, they dived into the river and began to swim across, only to discover that the current was too strong and the river too wide. Turning back discouraged and exhausted at their efforts, some conclude the kingdom must not be for now. This is nowhere so obvious as in the different attempts at Christian community over the past ten or so years. Do we, therefore, conclude that community is not for today? Was the goal wrong? No! We must conclude that we underestimated the power of the currents. The currents of our society are increasingly contrary to the Gospel. The Gospel call is a "cross-current" call. If we fail to discern these currents we are in danger of being "swept along" and even of concluding (mistakenly) that these very currents are the will of God.

Individualism is certainly a major current in our twentieth century western society. The results are loneliness, isolation and moral bankruptcy.

Militarism is another current. Materialism is a third. Has the Church seen these and other currents as contrary to the Gospel? Have we seen that we must be a community whose lifestyle is consciously cutting across these streams? If we don't, we are in danger of being salt which has lost its saltiness.

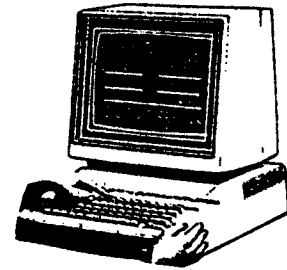
It is not enough to be theoretical. We must be practical. If one current of our time is materialism, what can we practically do to counter it? We may not form a common-purse community, but we could agree that the priority of the finances of the congregation are such that no member will go without food, shelter or clothing as long as there is money in the treasury. We could establish a fund for those who are needy among us. There are many ways in which a "traditional" Baptist church can be very unconventional. If moral bankruptcy is a current in our society, the church can set up groups for single parents; it can do pre-marital counselling; it can run marriage enrichment courses. It needs to actively say what the world is not saying. Instead of a defensive posture in which we fight against change, the church can be on the offensive, pointing toward the possibility of real change - repentance, forgiveness and moral purity. Against the currents of racism and classism, the church can be actively involved with a black congregation in its mission, can take a clear stand against racism, and openly encourage inter-racial worship. It can stand against the divisions of class which allow some "privileged" children to get a good education while other capable children are deprived solely because of their backgrounds. Churches could set up free tutorial classes for children to help them prepare for their exams. We can say within the community of faith that we are living by a different value system from the world. Finally, against the current of militarism, we can say "No!" to the insanity of nuclear weapons - weapons which, far from being defensive, "come to kill, steal and destroy" (John 10:10). We can actively pray for leaders of governments on both sides of the divide. We can establish links with Christian congregations in communist countries in order to affirm that Jesus makes enemies into sisters and brothers.

Proclaiming the Gospel is the task of a community. The Church must be good news if it is to proclaim good news. Our preaching must be against the backdrop of a people who, by the power of the Spirit are a "cross-current" people. Proclaiming the Gospel is the task of a community.

Proclaiming the Gospel is a matter of lifestyle. We must live as those who are following Jesus, not the world. We must live as members of a new community. It is out of a community lifestyle born of the Spirit that evangelism becomes authentic and effective.

May we hear such a call and give out all to it.

Wally Fahrer
London Mennonite Centre.



Secretary's Scratchpad

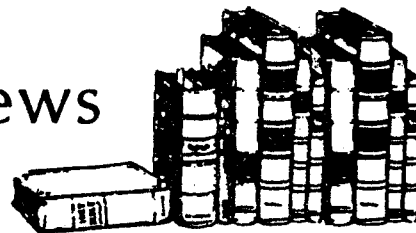
A little reminder first of all. Calling all Church Computer Users - have you registered under the Data Protection Act? If not, do so immediately! You are late, but I'm sure the government is 'user-friendly' in that respect.

Mission France takes place from 20-27 September with Billy Graham speaking. A number of church members here in Kingsbridge have personal contacts in France and speak of the general dearth of spiritual life there. To give you an idea of what the country is like, very few people have heard of Billy Graham. So pray for him and for Paris where the Mission takes place.

Lastly, many changes in the pattern of ministry in our churches have been noted. There has been the rather painful (both for Pastor and People) transformation from the one-man omniscient Minister to sharing the work of ministry with more and more people. That's the main reason for the word 'lay' dropping out of our vocabulary. Some of our churches have developed a very successful ministry without a full-time paid leader. Recently, many more churches have been appointing teams of leaders working full-time, not all of them ordained in the accepted sense of the word. Many of these changes have proved to be a blessing. However, I see the pattern of ministry is going to change still further. We have recently appointed a full-time worker who has taken early retirement from school teaching. Willing to serve for payment of NI stamp and expenses, who could say 'No'? Surely God is going to call many others who have great experience and wisdom, who have retired from secular employment and yet have years of service to give. I see here the balance to the 'youth cult' in Renewal which will benefit God's people enormously.

David Slater,
Kingsbridge.

Reviews



Serving Grace by Michael Griffiths - published by Marc Europe 127pp. £1.75.

This is a helpful book on spiritual gifts written from outside the charismatic movement, by a distinguished evangelical leader.

It begins by stressing the connection of gifts with grace, and says, "we have traditionally been so pre-occupied with the grace in the form of God's common grace to all mankind, and particularly his saving grace to all believers, that we have tended to overlook this further usage of the word 'grace' which we may call 'serving grace' or congregational grace."

It shows that the gifts mentioned in the New Testament are not fixed job descriptions, but overlap considerably. Like the colours in the spectrum, they are distinct, yet merge into one another. Gifts are received, not only before we were born, and at our conversion, when we received the Spirit, but also when the Church lays hands on us, and commissions us. For this reason, he doubts whether it is proper for an individual to seek a specific gift, although he Church may seek the gifts it needs and the individual may seek to develop the gifts he has.

The largest section of the book is a discussion of what each gift actually is, marked by a determination to get behind the traditional Church understanding and the meaning of the word in contemporary English, to find out what the word meant to the New Testament writer. There are useful treatments of the gifts of Apostle, Prophet (taking into account Grudem's work reviewed in *Mainstream* No. 21), Encouragement, Healing and Miracles and Administration, and a rather inconclusive treatment of Tongues. The book closes with a chapter showing that most, if not all, of the gifts are given to women, both in Scripture and in contemporary experience, and challenges evangelicals to be more open to women's ministry.

The whole book is marked by sanity and an irenic spirit and is sharpened with a number of good quotes and useful examples from the author's missionary experience. A useful addition to the growing bookshelf of books on this subject.

Alastair Campbell.

Build That Bridge by David Coffey (Kingsway, 1986, £4.95).

This book ought to be read by all who hold pastoral and leadership responsibilities in our churches. It is written from relevant experience of, and careful reflection upon what is our common concern - the life and witness of the local congregation. David Coffey states that "though we can never expect renewal without tears, we should strive to experience a reformation of congregational life without needless division and carnal schism" (p. 17). The author shows how we may begin to plan for change and to deal with inevitable conflict constructively. He points the way forward with concise and lively treatments of Romans 14 - 15 and 1-2 Timothy. A very helpful chapter on 'Discipline as Discipleship' is included in which David Coffey says, "To be answerable to your fellow believers within a loving covenant is the mark of mature discipleship" (p. 103). The bridges between church members need to be shortened as well as strengthened if renewal is to become genuine reformation.

Some readers may have used W.E. Sangster's "A Spiritual Check-Up" with its searching questions on personal discipleship. David Coffey's book would make a good basis for examining our corporate discipleship in all its varied aspects. A thoroughly practical book and wholeheartedly recommended.

Terry Griffith.

Colin Brown, That you may believe, Miracles and faith then and now 232 pages. Paternoster paperback £6.95.

In the wake of John Wimber's seminars on Signs and Wonders, it is fascinating to read this popular version of Colin Brown's larger work, Miracles and the critical mind.

In this eminently readable book, Colin Brown seeks to answer three questions and divides the book into three corresponding parts:

1. Can we still believe in miracles?

ii. What do the miracle stories tell us about Jesus?

iii. Part i. deals with the philosophical debate about miracles and in particular examines the objections to miracles as stated by the 18th century sceptic David Hume as well as looking at C.S. Lewis's argument for belief in miracles.

Part ii. looks at the evidence of the gospels and examines some of the mis-conceptions of both opponents and defendants of the miracle stories.

Part iii. grapples with the contemporary debate under the twin headings 'Health and wealth for all?' and 'My grace is sufficient'.

Although parts i. and ii. are very valuable in themselves, there is little doubt that most people will be above all interested in Colin Brown's own position in Part iii. Certainly it is here that Colin Brown is the most controversial. He believes for instance that the teaching of James 5. 13-18 deals with a word of comfort to the dying. The "greater works" of John 14. 12-14 relate to a conviction of sin and forgiveness, judgment, salvation and eternal life. Again with the Wimber teaching very much in mind, he warns against looking for demons behind every sickness.

I warmly recommend this book to all Mainstream readers. The last two chapters in particular would make interesting discussion material for deacons meetings or for ministers fraternals. For, whatever the readers viewpoint he will be bound to find this book most helpful.

Paul Beasley-Murray.

The Stewardship of Life - Lewis Misselbrook, CTP, Baptist Union.

The author's aim is to show that, for the Christian, life and stewardship are co-terminous: all life is to be stewarded and stewardship covers the whole of life. He succeeds! After opening chapters on the meaning of the word and its biblical base, stewardship becomes the lens through which we look briefly at world problems, like poverty and war, and problems in society, like family breakdown, work and unemployment and the welfare state. No pat answers here, but the basis for Christian thinking. Stewardship then poses the questions we need to ask of the life of the local Church, its worship, fellowship, leadership, structures etc., and of our own personal life, our time, talents and possessions. Finally, there are units on the stewardship of money, both personal and Church, and the stewardship of the gospel, in other words, true witnessing. These are the longest and most detailed units, full of searching questions, illuminated by helpful experience.

This book would be a tonic for any group of believers who have got stuck in a rut, or narrow in their concern. An Eldership or Diaconate could well work through it. A House Group that was prepared to work hard would do well to commit themselves to it. We must hope that, like some other CTP manuals this one will soon be produced in a handier format.

Alastair Campbell.

The Upside-down Kingdom by Donald Kraybill (Marshalls) £2.50

"Jesus is very popular. Almost everyone thinks He is one of the great moral teachers of all times.... hardly anyone ever criticizes Jesus. Or obeys Him."

So begins this fresh and stimulating book by Donald Kraybill, lay theologian and sociologist. He writes as an evangelical Christian deeply concerned with society but above all with plain obedience to Jesus. His exposition of the Lord's teaching is direct and disturbing and shows up our institutionalised Christianity.

The book was published by the Mennonite press in Canada in 1978. Its publication here is overdue and we congratulate Marshalls on producing it.

This is not a comfortable book. It is not one you will always agree with. But it is a book which must be read.

Lewis Misselbrook.

The Humiliation of the Word by Jacques Ellul.
Eerdmans & Paternoster. £14.95.

Jacques Ellul is the one theological/philosophical/sociological writer whose books I just cannot put down once I've started. They rivet me to my desk. There is that spark of originality of thought, that daring exploration of uncharted waters, alongside a profound loyalty to the God of the Bible, which makes him, in my judgment, the most important author of our generation.

This book is among his best. The main thesis is that the world of 'visuals' - films, charts, T.V. diagrams, demonstrations etc. - has squeezed out language as the means of communication between man and man, and especially between God and man. Only a return to the word can save us.

In his view the visual reduces communication to the limits of the scientific method. The only reality we can know by this means is space/time reality. It fosters an entirely materialistic concept of the universe. It leaves no room for revelation, imagination, freedom of thought, worship of God and all the uncertainties of 'the-world-behind-our-world'. As a result, faith is out.

He includes in his critique such things as religious films, visual aids in teaching, icons, mass emotional meetings, religious drama, gospel pop music etc.. At least he warns against them as substitutes for the spoken and written word of God.

As I lay down the book I return to my task of preaching the word with new confidence and enthusiasm, and with no apology for letting the world of visuals pass me by. That world by its nature deals with a very limited reality. I can, with the word, and only by means of the word, "put out my hand and touch the face of God", and hopefully also the hearts of men. I am not a performer on a stage, but a man of the pulpit, a channel for the word.

Humphrey Vellacott.

MAINSTREAM CONFERENCE 1987

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Monday, 12th January to Wednesday, 14 January 1987.

Theme: The Living Church in a broken world.

The speakers are:-

Leslie Ball	Colin Marchant
David Cook	Malcolm Widdecombe
Joyce Huggett	Nigel Wright

David Hewitt and David Peacock will lead the worship and Steve Chalk the Late Night Extra.

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The 1987 Mainstream Conference will be held at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire from Monday, 12th to Wednesday 14th January. The conference theme is "The Living Church in a Broken World". The cost is £30 and a £5 non-returnable deposit will book a place.

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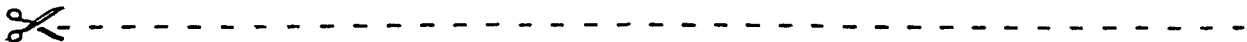
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