

DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST.



An evaluation of my working diary at a recent Deacons retreat revealed the awful fact that I was not engaged in any direct face-to-face evangelism. Could this be a major reason as to why I was feeling so lethargic in my ministry? Their rebuke and encouragement, together with a dose of Australian sal volatile in the form of Philip Jensen at a recent conference, prompted a significant change in my priorities. I now do several evangelistic Bible studies every week.

The result of this? I feel much better - note the surprising emphasis in 1 Corinthians 9:22-23, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings"; also note Philemon 6, "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ".

The spin-offs include an improvement in my preaching because it is much more effective for being applied to believer and unbeliever alike. The questions that unbelievers are asking, like the threat of execution, focus the mind. Indeed the whole atmosphere of the services has changed.

Also, the church as a whole is much more willing to be busy in evangelistic enterprise for being led from the front. Example does count for a lot - to paraphrase Hosea, "Like priest, like people." I feel that we have tended to exalt the Pastor/Teacher model and neglected the Pastor/Evangelist model. I am not denying the specific role of Evangelist, nor am I advocating a return to one-person ministry. I am trying to redress an imbalance in our thinking and praxis, and I would draw your attention to the fact where Paul says, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor.11:1), he has immediately prefaced it with the lesser known "so that they may be saved." (10:31).

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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.

I am sure that we all wish David Coffey every blessing and help in his new role as Secretary for Evangelism in the Baptist Union. However, nothing would gladden his heart more than to see every diaconate examining the Minister's diary with a view to increasing the proportion allocated to evangelism - not to mention the Church budget! Almost certainly the Minister's ordination vows included a reference found in the pastoral epistle of 2 Timothy, "Do the work of an evangelist." (4:5).

This issue of the Newsletter contains two articles on church planting (which was the form of N.T. evangelism; how else did the Church grow and spread?). I believe that every church has the potential to reproduce itself elsewhere given the right vision. After all, if only 10% of the population in your area were in church next Sunday, there would be no space left in any ecclesiastical building whatsoever. So what about the other 90%? Healthy churches are not full churches but multiplying churches. (This, and the implications for ecumenism, will be addressed at the next Mainstream Conference).

Come on Baptists - pull your fingers out and get cracking! Tear up your next meeting agenda and replace it with one item - EVANGELISM.

Terry Griffith.

MAINSTREAM CONFERENCE 1989

Join us for our 10th Birthday Celebrations, January 16-18, 1989 at the Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Theme: BAPTISTS - THE WAY AHEAD a perspective for the 1990's.

Key-note speakers will be:

Revd. Alastair Campbell - The evangelical faith in the 90's.

Revd. Douglas McBain - The ecumenical issue of the 90's.

Revd. David Coffey - The evangelistic task for the 90's.

Revd. Dr. Raymond Brown - Communion Address

The Bible studies will be led by: Dr. Larry Kreitzer; and the worship will be led by Alan and Lyn Pain of Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church.

Seminar and workshop leaders will include: Geoff Bland, Steve Chalke, Mike Huck, Lyn Pain and Roy Searle.

The cost is £36... each and a £10 non-returnable deposit secures a place. Book early and avoid disappointment.

CHURCH PLANTING.



Church planting is being talked about again. Some have always thought about it and even a few done something about it. But, all of a sudden, a number of Churches are involved, either in the doing, or at least the thinking about it.

There are some very good reasons for putting this on our agendas.

- * **Evangelistic:** something like 91% of the population have no regular Church allegiance or contact. Of the 9% that supposedly do, many would have only nominal allegiance. While the population in our country has expanded throughout this century, the number of Churches has continued to decline. We need to work and pray for a reverse in this trend. Many people will only be effectively contacted by a more localised Christian community.
- * **Demographic:** population grows and it also moves. There have been new town developments since the war. Nearly every town and city has its new estates - some of them vast. New communities need new Churches. What an opportunity they provide! People uprooted from older communities, broken from old networks of relationships and they are looking for new networks, in search of companionship and often open to consider new ideas. I make some large generalisations, but as generalities, our experience as a Church affirms them as true. In our own situation of new townships being built onto an existing city centre, the Baptist Churches back in the 70's took the decision that we could do nothing to meet the population expansion. It was a symptom of spiritual decline, which was in stark contrast to the last large-scale expansion of Peterborough in the Victorian era, when three Churches were planted in a 20 year period. We need to be alert to such population movements and meet the opportunities they provide.
- * **Ecclesiastical:** new Churches mean that you can explore new patterns and ways of doing things. What seems to be essential in Church life may only be secondary. Often some well established Churches have become so moribund that the best thing would be to give them a decent burial. But a new start allows the new life that is in our Churches today, to be expressed and explored. Someone has said "It is easier to give birth to babies than to raise the dead". It is right to seek to bring life to the dead, but it may be God's calling for the sake of the Kingdom to see new Churches established.
- * **Spiritual:** a new work stretches people, as gifts have to be exercised, that previously may have been locked up in the pew. People have a sense of vision and direction that helps to release spiritual life as they work together in this way.

So what types of Church planting are there?

- * **Pioneer church planting.** That's the sort in which Paul was engaged, together with his team. They lived and modelled Church before they planted Church. By and large we are not working in that situation today. We usually have some Christian grouping to work with. But increasingly this type of Church planting is what is required if we are going to re-establish Christian witness in inner-city areas or in vast municipal housing estates.

*** Mother-daughter Church planting.** This is where an existing Church nurtures the new life within itself, and then provides support and encouragement until such times as the daughter is able to take on the full responsibilities of Church life and so becomes independent. This could happen in a number of ways.

1) By hiving-off.

A group within the mother-church is identified from a geographical area, and they are encouraged to start a work in that area, albeit on a limited basis, until such times as they are able to support a fully independent work.

2) By colonisation.

This is a more strategic approach, on the way to becoming pioneer Church planting. This is where the mother church encourages folk to move into an area, or put resources into an area and over a length of time a local Church is established. When strong enough, links are severed with the planting Church.

3) By replanting

This is when a small struggling cause looks to a larger, more vibrant fellowship for help and support. The philosophy of ministry of that Church is then injected into the small cause, with the assistance of personnel and resources, so that a restoration of Church life takes place. This is just as valid and a much needed aspect of Church planting today. Independence takes place at the appropriate time.

4) By accident or schism.

This is one form of church planting that has survived throughout the 20th century owing to the foibles of human nature. Personality clashes, cliques and theological divergence lies behind this form of church planting. Although not ideal it is not to be scoffed at or dismissed, as our own roots as baptist Christians lie here.

*** One Church. Cell, Congregation, Celebration.** This form of church planting is a relatively new church model that is being explored in a number of areas. It is a model of church planting in pentecostal churches in South America and is in its most developed form in the Ichthus Christian Fellowship in South London. In this model, each area cell group is seen as a potential for growth and witness. When the number of cell groups has grown sufficiently, then they are combined to form an area congregation which meets in a public building, thus raising their presence in the local community, and so increases the chance of penetration into any adjacent community. This would meet regularly on a Sunday morning for instance. These congregations however, remain linked together in a regular gathering of celebration for unity and overall vision.

There are a number of benefits of this model.

1) It allows for the flexible use of personnel and resources.

2) It is low-cost (in the short term at least) because of use of public buildings rather than a building programme.

3) Rapid expansion is relatively easy, if the Lord gives the impetus to do so.

4) Focus remains on persons and community.

5) It allows for a diverse character of congregational life.....

- 6) While it also allows for the expression of being one body. While the homogenous principle may be beneficial for certain areas and groups, it may not be for others, and it strikes many as being theologically obscene.
- 7) It allows congregations to be targetted at cultures. In offering Christ to Muslims (a big enough stumbling-block anyway), we also offer a fine package of Western European culture. Some Southern Baptist churches have explored this aspect of the model very effectively.
- 8) It is self-generating. Once people see it happen, they can get a vision for their own area.
- 9) It is non-parochial in its view. It makes the church look further afield.
- 10) You have the benefit of being part of a small unit and of a larger unit.

Of course there are many difficulties and drawbacks as well. There are communication dangers. There may be a movement of separatism or independence in a local congregation. This needs to be discerned with sensitivity and it may well be right to let a congregation become independent. There is the problem of generating sufficient leadership. Some people joining a congregation may not identify with the whole model, and would only opt for cell and congregation groups.

None of these types of church planting should be mutually exclusive. Circumstances and situations require an openness and flexibility on the part of leaders and churches. What is important however, is that we do grasp how important church planting is, if the gospel is going to sound out into the nation. The occasional, even well-prepared nationwide evangelistic jamboree, while useful, is relatively irrelevant to the overall strategic thrust we need in our country. We have to see with new eyes what the early Christian leaders saw, that the church is the fundamental social unit used by God to sound forth the good news.

Evangelism is not just preaching or witnessing, but integrating people into the sign of God's alternative society, so "that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms." The apostles perspective is that "church" as a principle of God's intent, is at the very heart of evangelism here on earth, and of revelation to spiritual rulers and authorities. We need to get into step with God's heartbeat. Church planting is a must for every generation of the church.

Stephen Ibbotson.

Stephen is Pastor at Harris Street Baptist Church, Peterborough, and is currently President of the East Midlands Baptist Association.

SPURGEON AND CHURCH-PLANTING.



As a child Charles Haddon Spurgeon entered the field of journalism. He produced his own paper for his childhood friends in rural Essex. When his thirty-eight year ministry began in London he wrote features for Christian journals. Finally, in the mid eighteen-sixties he progressed to the publication of his own Christian journal. The Sword and The Trowel became the monthly mouthpiece of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and contained news and views from Spurgeonic enterprises. It was circulated to 15,000 people.

From its inception for about ten years one of the main features in the monthly paper was a report on various churches that had been planted by Spurgeon's students and graduates from the Pastors' College. These reports diminished in the mid eighteen-seventies. They gave way to reports on the growing and proliferating agencies of the Tabernacle e.g. the orphanage work, the almshouses, colportage and evangelistic associations. By the eighteen-eighties most of the reports concerned students who were venturing overseas to engage in a church-planting and building ministry.

In the ten years during which the planting of new churches at home and resuscitation of old ones was the most prominent feature of Tabernacle news, one may discern various secrets of the success of this fruitful ministry. What were they? First, a leading figure. There is no doubt that Spurgeon sits astride the whole enterprise of church growth in London. Statistically it is profound. Twenty-seven new churches were founded by students from the Pastors' College between 1859 and 1867. In the second half of the nineteenth century the number of churches in London doubled and nearly all of these were founded under Spurgeonic influence of one kind or another. When students were sent out to new areas or existing churches it was normally at the command of 'the Guv'nor'. Spurgeon was keen not just to plant missions but to found churches and it was his enterprising, imaginative, powerful and generous vigour which inspired many to venture out in Christ's name at a propitious time of revival activity.

The work was closely linked to the London Baptist Association and Spurgeon owed much to the friendship of two other London ministers - Landels and Brock. Nevertheless every major church-planting venture in a particular geographical area requires one person who becomes its catalyst. Spurgeon fulfilled that role.

2. Convincing theology - Spurgeon was an evangelical Calvinist who shared the principles of Calvin's theology derived mainly from Puritan literature of the seventeenth century and inspired by the revival preaching of George Whitefield and the insights of Jonathan Edwards. He proclaimed the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, resisting a hyper-Calvinism that did not evangelise and Arminianism that seemed to lose the gospel. Spurgeon preached himself as if the destiny of his congregation depended upon that word. He sent out men similarly inspired, believing that they were to go out to find God's elect and to bring them in to their eternal destiny by means of prayer and preaching.
3. Appropriate training - The Pastors' College was founded in 1856 in response to a need for local men who were already engaged in evangelistic preaching to be trained so that they might do it more effectively. Within the college a general education was given for those who needed it, and a specific ministerial education centering on biblical and theological studies was available. The students were

required to do little outside of the classroom except to be available for practical enterprises. They took no university examinations. They lived in local communities; and they trained in the classroom and on the job.

The nature of training is vitally important. They were trained in a practical atmosphere for a time that was long enough so that they gained knowledge but did not lose their evangelistic zeal or the cutting-edge of their proclamation.

He wanted to train men from all sorts of backgrounds, to enable them to plant churches in needy areas.

4. There was an ecclesiastical principle - It was obvious that Spurgeon did not only wish to send out local evangelists, or those who would use mission stations as agencies of social concern. His strategy was absolutely clear. He wanted preaching in a hired hall to gather a group of converts, and for that group to be established as a local church of people covenanted together with Christ and with one another to be an agency of the Kingdom in that local community. The foundation of a local church was basic to his understanding of mission.
5. There was financial fellowship - Spurgeon placed the funds of the Tabernacle and special building loans at the availability of those who were sent out in the Lord's name to plant churches. He was the most generous donor; often taking churches under his wing, preaching in various places and ensuring that the fee went to a particular cause. He led by example and he made sure that the Baptist family was committed to the principle of giving to others so that church-planting could take place.

It became the aim of the London Baptist Association that they should plant one new church a year. This kind of strategy is Association life in action at its best, and during these years in the mid-nineteenth century, financial fellowship gave rise to new churches.

6. Adequate buildings - Spurgeon was convinced that once a handful of converts had been gathered the essential need was to raise money to put up a building. Initially it might be a functional structure and then something better could be erected; but he believed that the establishment of a building not only gave opportunity for new enterprises on behalf of the church but it gave the local Christians a sense of belonging together in a particular place to the cause of Christ. In our own day when there are many people wondering about the viability of church buildings this aspect of his strategy is significant.
7. Local Leadership - In the reports in The Sword and the Trowel much is made of the induction services of the pastors of these new churches. This is indicative of the fact that Spurgeon was committed to the need of local leadership not just in the provision of a pastor but in the provision of Elders and Deacons who would share the leadership of that local congregation. If the church was to be established and continue to grow, then adequate, wise, and godly leadership was essential. He sent in the pastor before the people were there. He sent him not only to do the work of an evangelist but to become a pastor to the flock and to equip them for the service of ministry. A new leader was often linked with an experienced pastor for mutual help and support.
8. Perfecting the Church - Spurgeon's vision not only concerned the planting of new churches but the perfecting of that congregation. He not only wanted sinners justified but sanctified also. He wanted the local church to grow into a vision of the bride of Christ that would commend Christ to that local community of needy people.

He was thus concerned that the church should not only be properly constituted, properly taught, and properly led, but that its vision of all that Christ had in mind for its members should be clearly fulfilled and maintained.

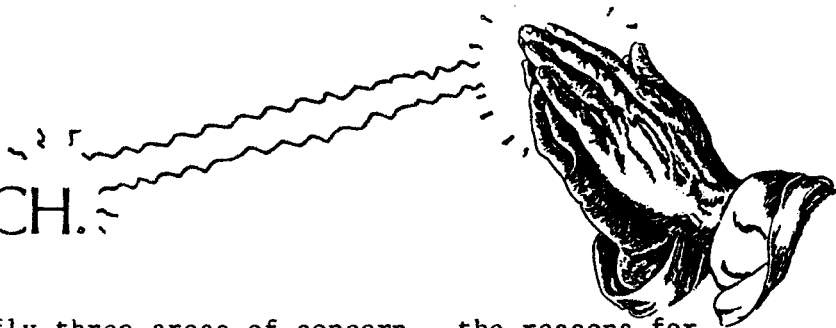
9. Encouraging Support - For ten years the annals of the Sword and the Trowel contained literally hundreds of reports of what was going on in these newly-founded churches. The record of the College does not consist of the academic prowess or achievements of the students, but of the number of souls saved under their ministry. All this was not to boast, but to provide encouragement for the local church who would know that other Christians were thinking of them praying for them and taking an interest in them. It intended to evoke support of the Tabernacle members, who needed to have a vision beyond their own local church to be delivered from self-satisfaction and to pray and give for the cause of Christ beyond their own doorstep. He also wanted the readers of The Sword and the Trowel, who covered an increasingly wide area, to share this vision and to be involved with it. All members were to be mobilised for evangelistic outreach using all available means.

Thus Spurgeon as church-planter is a significant indicator of what was possible in a very different sociological and religious context from our own day and yet provides an example and an incentive of those principles that may well be practised today, and enable Christians in the late nineteen-eighties to take part in a vigorous church-planting programme.

Mike Nicholls.

Mike is Vice-principal of Spurgeon's College and is completing a doctoral thesis on ministerial training in London in the nineteenth century.

INTERCEDING WITH THE CHURCH.



I would like to tackle briefly three areas of concern - the reasons for paying attention to public intercession, the resources we can use for intercession and the method by which we can facilitate the process.

Some time ago, being unable to get to my own local church, I dropped in on a church I only rarely attend. It was a week in which there had been terrible floods in Bangladesh and earlier in the day an Air India jumbo jet had been bombed, with appalling loss of life. During the an open time of intercession in the church no events, exterior to the life of the church, were prayed for. It was as though the congregation lived in a hermetically sealed container, insulated from the agonies and afflictions of the world they shared with other human beings. We prayed about animals being healed, financial deliverances, depressions being lifted etc. This is how Os Guinness describes such an attitude in the 'Gravedigger File':

"Many conservatives have so personal a theology and so private a morality that they lack the criteria by which to judge society from a Christian perspective. Their miniaturised faith could never create any friction with the status quo." (173)

This attitude by which the local church averts its attention and relinquishes its responsibility for the world in which it lives, is called by sociologists 'privatisation' - the faith of the private front room of the church. Domesticated faith. One way in which a church can be enabled to break out of the privatisation trap is to take firm control of the intercessions of the church and focus them on real issues. A help to this end would be 'Praying the Kingdom' by Charles Elliot (DLT).

The church is not an end in itself, but serves the emergence of something greater than itself - the coming of God's Kingdom. We are the servants of that kingdom, very human, frail and confused servants but ones who have a warfare to wage to bring every area of life under the dominion of Christ. The Dutch reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper said 'There is not a thumb breadth of all creation over which Jesus Christ does not say MINE'. We must pray that dominion into being and claim the kingdom for Christ our Lord.

That kingdom emerges through the work of the church - as it witnesses to salvation, as it reconciles enemies, as it contributes to political debates, as it gets its hands dirty in all aspects of life. But that work must be empowered by the Holy Spirit, for the coming of the kingdom, whether we mean break-throughs within the local church or in society, demonstrates the openness of the human world to God. The coming of the kingdom is a supernatural event in the lives of ordinary people and is provoked, directed and energised by the prayers of the people of God.

The Resources of Intercession

The daily newspapers will provide the backdrop and focus of our prayers. The minister or those he delegates to facilitate intercession must be informed people if we are to pray with intelligence.

Resources will be found in the liturgies of the various churches - the modern RC liturgies provide much useful material, as will collections of prayers for public use.

I found having a worship group which met regularly was a stimulus and help so that feedback could be obtained and the whole church could feed into the discussion and planning.

I regularly had working lunches with the professional people of the church, if possible, in the office canteen. This provided opportunities for them to witness, me to understand their jobs and the church to pray for them. We would ask all the nurses, for instance, to come forward, explain their jobs and the stresses involved and then the congregation would pray for them.

Missionary speakers from home and abroad give fresh insight and stimulus.

Stop for short times of prayer during church meetings - after an important decision, when the atmosphere becomes brittle.

Pray for healing during the Lord's Supper or a monthly corporate meeting.

Have a housegroup be responsible for informing the intercessions and leading from their own resources within the group.

Methods of Interceding

This really depends where you are coming from as a congregation. If we could accept that structured and unstructured intercession are both good, then both might be used. If the congregation is used to the minister doing everything why not:

Use an OHP at a children's service, write down the children's prayer requests and get members of the congregation to pray them (having previously asked them!)

Introduce church officers or church workers, explain their jobs, interview them and then get others to pray for them.

Brief three or four church members to pray about defined areas and have the prayer broken up by devotional choruses.

Enable thanksgiving or intercession by getting people to pray one sentence prefixed by 'Thank you Lord for....' or 'We pray, Lord, for'.....

Use Taize songs like 'O Lord Hear our prayer' between requests.

Explain what you are going to pray about and why, then pray briefly leaving times of silence in which others are invited to contribute.

If the congregation is used to open praying but stuck in front room concerns why not:

Put in a little structure by saying (a) will pray about this followed by an open time then (b) will pray about that followed by an open time.'

Use responsive liturgies or modern litanies.

Try some of the exercises in 'Praying the Kingdom'.

Use some modern prayers of intercession.

Use times of silence.

T. J. Marks.

Tim Marks is Director of Pastoral Studies at Moorlands Bible College and was a Baptist Minister at Bridlington and Woodbridge.

This is the second of three articles on the subject of public prayer.

LETTER

Dear Terry,

Re: singing in tongues. I am a musician and I've observed something about the phenomenon which may be of interest.

Singing in tongues, judging from the occasions on which I've heard it, employs neither of the two scale structures which prevail in most contemporary music i.e. the major and the minor, but harks back to the ancient modes used in very early ecclesiastical music - plainsong etc.

We have a chicken and egg situation here. Have modern charismatic congregations subconsciously reverted to a suitably mystical/ecclesiastical sound for the expression of singing in tongues OR, as I suspect may be the case, did the writers of plainsong, all those centuries ago, model their music on the singing in tongues in use in the early church?

You will note that I am assuming (i) that it was practised in the early church and (ii) that its form is much the same today.

We need a music historian who has experienced charismatic worship to unravel this one. I hereby pass the buck!

Yours,
Judy MacKenzie Dunn,
Music Leader, Altrincham Baptist Church.

WE'LL PAY YOUR EXPENSES OF COURSE.

ADMINISTRY'S latest ADMINISHEET takes the form of a letter from a Christian organisation to a local church, following the visit of one of its missionaries. The congregation are thanked for their desire to cover expenses and are then told exactly how much the visit has cost!

"When talking of 'covering the costs' of a visiting speaker, most churches are only thinking of travel expenses," says Lance Pierson, co-author of the ADMINISHEET. "They should be aware that the total cost of a typical visit may easily be over £200."

Hidden costs

In addition to travel expenses - the AA estimate 28p a mile for an average car - there are the missionary's and office staffs' salary and National Insurance costs relating to the visit and its preparation, plus telephone, postage, leaflets and video equipment costs.

Your bill

A bill is sent to the local church covering the difference between the full cost of the speaker's visit and their modest donation. There is a reminder that only something given in addition to this figure will amount to a gift towards the ongoing work of the missionary organisation!

A challenge to churches

The ADMINISHEET ends by asking churches to re-think their policy of paying the expenses of visiting speakers. "To pay less than their expenses and costs is surely immoral."

ADMINISHEET 21 may be ordered from ADMINISTRY, 69 Sandridge Road, St. Albans, Herts., AL1 4AG at £3.25 for 10 copies.

Essentials: a liberal-evangelical dialogue; David Edwards and John Stott, Hodder & Stoughton, 354pp., £5.95.

This substantial paperback provides a fascinating insight into the quintessential liberal mind. Edwards writes clearly and well and gives Stott the unenviable task of responding to the liberal agenda. This format is not ideal (and the style is sometimes too gentlemanly) but it serves to identify the issues and points of disagreement.

The chapter on the power of the Gospel is an attempt to show that some evangelical ideas are not essential to the gospel message, and indeed that they positively hinder the presentation of the gospel to the modern person. It is these ideas which are the subject of the book. Edwards' gospel is a reasonable one for reasonable people with a decidedly absent stumbling-block factor. It is almost as if our problem is purely one of communication. Cast aside outmoded ideas and people will accept the gospel! I have overstated the case but the gist of it is there.

The basic stance on the Bible derives from a view which understands the NT writers and Jesus fundamentally re-reading the OT. If they can do it, why can't we? Scripture is not set in concrete. Stott is given a hard time as the biblical data are so vast and incomplete. There is still much work to be done on understanding the Bible among evangelicals. This chapter is essential reading for understanding how liberals use Scripture. To my mind the liberal is fundamentally dishonest here.

The chapter on the cross reveals all. Penal substitution is the whipping boy. The atonement does not change God at all, it changes the situation of humanity. This view is still widely held by not a few leading Baptists. Stott is at his best in exposing the fallacies and gymnastics involved in denying the plain meaning and teaching of Scripture on the atonement.

There are chapters on miracles (the resurrection is just about in for Edwards) and ethics. In the latter the popular view of Pharisaism is used in the argument. I think that such a view needs revising in the light of Moises Silva's essay in Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon (Ed. Carson and Woodbridge, IVP).

The final chapter is a passionate plea for universalism. In reply Stott gives a lengthy defence of annihilationism as representing the biblical teaching on judgment and hell.

At the heart of this debate is the meaning of words, which are easily manipulated and metamorphosed. Hard and disciplined Bible study and research are called for because the Gospel is at stake. I am reminded of Psalm 50:21 when the Lord says, "You thought I was altogether like you". Let him (whether Liberal or Evangelical) who has ears to hear, hear.

Jesus and Power: David Prior, Hodder, 192pp., £6.95.

Power to the Powerless: Laurie Green, Marshall Pickering, 148pp., £5.95.

David Prior's book is an excellent study on the theme of power in the Bible, and is one of the better books in the Jesus Library series. Its strength is that it does not read back into the NT, agendas which reflect the twentieth century. Rather, it opens up the NT world in a stimulating way. Thankfully, we are spared the drivel about a revolutionary and political (as understood today) Christ, which is fashionable today.

The first chapter on the birth narratives and 'children' sayings of Jesus is most original and sets a high standard of exposition. Being a Christian is about having "the power to be like Jesus" in his vulnerability. This is followed by an above average exposition of the Temptations and is related to the temptations of the charismatic. The Lord's Prayer is examined in the light of the Temptation experience - again, a thought-provoking section. Further chapters deal with the poor in the NT, money (relying on Jacques Ellul), religious power (Matt.23) and political power (John 18-19). The book ends powerfully with Christ's resurrection victory and his exercise of power on the Last Day. I made many notes in the margin of my Bible.

Laurie Green's book is the story of how one church attempted to redress the balance of power in a parish in Birmingham. It is an interesting story but leaves me with a lot of unanswered questions.

A group of fairly ordinary and concerned Christians (but who read Milton, Tillich, Augustine, Frankenstein, the New Internationalist!!) are helped to wrestle with the meaning and implications of Jesus' parables for their situation. A lot of 'Kingdom' theology is thrown in and the group decides that they should put the parables into action by forming an advice centre (for which they got Inner City partnership funding).

The difficulties I have arise from moving from the particular to the general. This must be a fairly unique situation and I was wanting something that I could more readily identify with. Also, I felt that there was an unnecessary confusion between parables and signs in the book.

Of greater concern was a failure to apply the eschatological aspect of Jesus' parables. This results in no emphasis being given to the 'lostness' of people without Christ. I would love to know how the evangelistic strategy of the church was tied into this particular project.

I also think too much can be made of servanthood. Jesus was also Prophet i.e. a proclaimer of God's message of repentance and forgiveness. Also, I happen to believe that I do not serve Christ in my neighbour - I love my neighbour as myself! This quote also astounded me - "to purport to be the centre of the community would have contradicted the NT mandate to be the servant." How? What is required is a clearer focus of mission and a little less 'agendaneutics' to make this (expensive) book more useful.

When God's Patience Runs Out: The Truth of Amos for Today; Roy Clements, IVP, 189pp., £3.95.

The theme is that God judges societies. God's "patience, unlike some of his other attributes, is not infinite.....He can be provoked once too often."

This series of sermons reflects the Cambridge setting in which they were preached. For this reason it is stimulating for the serious preacher who is concerned to get to the meaning of a passage and apply it to the need of the hour.

Note how Roy Clements always attempts to grab his hearers' attention at the start e.g. references to the financial merry-go-round of the City; an 'Any Questions' question on the power of the petticoat, pulpit and the press; a theory of C. H. Dodd's is demolished with the aid of an account of a pastoral visit to a deaf old lady; childhood memories of lessons learned from an East End rag-and-bone man etc.

If you were wanting an academic guide to listening and counselling skills to supplement basic studies in pastoral care, then this is not the book to turn to, BUT, if you want to encourage members of the congregation to recognise their own potential as carers, and to introduce them to some very helpful insights into human behaviour, then this is ideal for putting into their hands.

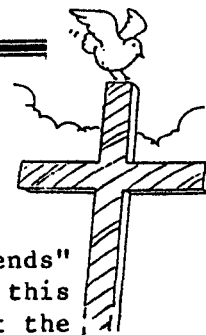
The personal style of the book makes it extremely easy to read. Its accessibility, however does not mean it is simplistic. Joyce Huggett skillfully teaches a great deal through her stories and the book is a mine of perceptive reflections upon the way people feel, and express their emotions, and how one can be more sensitive to others. She outlines her own experiences of bereavement, of suppression of grief and hurt, of deep depression and of stressed relationships, and her honesty in talking about her own life is refreshing and illuminating. It also makes the book useful not only to those who wish to become listeners, but also to those currently undergoing some kind of inner darkness.

My only criticism probably arises out of my own lack of faith or pastoral skills: Nearly all Joyce Huggett's stories have happy endings or neat resolutions, even if they take time. It gives the book an immensely hopeful feel which is encouraging, but I do wonder whether there is always a discernable answer or whether sometimes situations have to be left in the mystery of God's ways and trusted to his love?

The book's value lies in its central thrust that caring is not a specialist job. It should give people the confidence to realise that much of what they already do is of great importance, because listening requires only love and commitment to the person concerned. Used wisely, this book could take pressure off the Minister by broadening the net of people involved in pastoral care. I have already lined up some people in my church to lend it to!

Anne Wilkinson, Bath.

SHALOM MY FREINDS: Colin Marchant, Marshalls.



If you have a penchant for strident Marchant, then "Shalom My Friends" is for you. If, however, it is the word shalom that intrigues you, then this book is still for you. Colin, an "urban christian" (his words) tests out the reality of, rather than the hypothetical possibility of a working shalom.

A book written for friends and "other travellers" along the way. "Shalom My Friends" is in no way sentimental, and in every way challenges the reader to discover a fuller meaning to a rich biblical word. Colin's "verbal urban news speak" translates well on to the written page. It does help, however, to have had your brain encoded with certain underlying biblical principles of wholeness. Shalom, says Colin, is THE word for today's world. A DREAM word, a BIBLE word, an ACTION word. The book, with real determination, takes you into the Bible. Creation, Law, Psalm, Prophet; shalom is there. Re-creation, Hope, Life, Jesus; shalom is there. New creation, Victory, Action, Church; shalom is there.

The reader is left in no doubt that apart from God's "shalom rule" the world will continue to be, chaotic, disordered, unproductive, and unfulfilling.

A searching work-book to use and use again.

Doug. Hollidge, Forest Gate, London.

The Church in Response to Human Need: Edited by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden; published in the UK by Paternoster Press, 268pp., £7.95 net.

The past two decades have seen evangelicals recovering the largely buried treasure of a Biblical social concern. Since the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, 1974, the link between evangelism and social concern has been well established. "The Church in Response to Human Need" is a significant Evangelical statement on the subject of world development.

This book is not bedtime reading; as the published conference papers of the Wheaton '83 Consultation of the same title, it is, predictably, solid stuff. One of the Editors' stated aims in publishing these papers is 'to give practitioners in ministry amongst the poor.....a window on the theological issues underlying such work'. However, the book will provide food for thought for any who are concerned about issues of economic justice (and for those who are not!).

Contributors (who represent North and South America, India, Africa, and the UK, and include names such as Tom Sine and Waldron Scott) do not attempt to debate the issue; rather, they argue forceable and Biblically for a Christian understanding of world development. Central to the whole is the concept that much of the Church's thinking on the subject is based on a secular outlook ("westernise everybody") and is therefore flawed both ideologically and practically; consequently, it is argued that the need is not only for development, but for a "Transformation" that will change the lot of the poor and change the outlook of the rich. (Very relevant to Baptists in the year our President's theme is "Shalom".)

The book is liberally laced with shocking statistics and historical examples of inequality and cynicism, as well as practical illustrations of how transformation is happening in some places. There is material here that will stimulate a vision for what the Editors in their own contribution call "God's Intention for the World", and perhaps counter some of the daft things we hear said about the third world; there is also a chapter on "The Local Church and Development" which proposes practical ways for Local Churches in the West to go beyond our own doorsteps (and our policy of delegating the reaching of the whole world to the BMS) and become directly involved in "the joyous task of enabling God's Kingdom to come".

Speaking personally, I have been, stimulated, challenged, and encouraged, by this book. I reckon it's worth working at.

Gilmour Lilly, Swaffham.

Jesus and the World Religions: by Ajith Fernando, published by STL/MARC, £2.50.

Roland Allen's works on mission were an exposition of the apostle Paul's methods, and Ajith Fernando adopts a similar approach. He helpfully expounds Paul's methodology and demonstrates its timeless principles.

The author's own context enhances this book's value. Ajith Fernando is a Sri Lankan Christian, and he writes with authentic authority on evangelism within a multi-faith environment. It is a useful book, and I would appreciate a follow up, which would give us more of the benefit of his practical experience.

Building Bridges: by Philip Mohabir, Hodder & Stoughton, £2.50.

Philip Mohabir's presence and personality clearly witness to his profound desire to see the gospel of reconciliation both proclaimed and lived by Christians. His book is alive with this concern.

The book is a personal testimony and pilgrimage. It gripped, gladdened, delighted and ashamed me. Philip's lively and expectant faith is infectious, yet Philip's testimony does not daunt and threaten, and this is largely due to his winsome humility and great love.

This book is a benediction. However, do not miss the challenge and cutting edge. British churches largely missed heaven sent reinforcements when West Indians arrived in this country. Those who persisted within our churches often only did so because of their gracious large heartedness. We must not miss the present opportunity to build real bridges with black led churches, or with the black folk in our own congregations.

Paul Holmes, Camberwell.

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