



THE LORD IS THE SPIRIT.



(Being mainly a review article of Don Carson's 'Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14' (Paternoster, 229pp, £10.60, pbk); and Herbert Carson's 'Spiritual Gifts for Today?': Evangelical and Charismatic Come Together' (Kingsway, 219pp, £4.95).

I feel at last that Paul's wish in 1 Corinthians 12:1, "Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant", is beginning to become true for us. Ignorance has abounded on both sides for the want of rigorous exegesis on the crucial chapters at the centre of the Pentecostal/Charismatic debate with Evangelicalism during this century. We have been served up in turn with arguments based on experience (both pro and con), appalling exegesis, and partial exposition that tells us more about the preacher's thoughts than what God actually says. Now at last we have some sane material to guide us through the thickets of 1 Corinthians 14, and some reliable observers to comment about the state of things charismatic in the Western churches.

Both Carsons take the Written Word as their starting point and proceed by building scripture upon scripture. Both are Reformed Baptists who are bold enough to let the Bible speak for itself. Both submit experience to the bar of Scripture and both emphasize the sovereign aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. (If there had been any large measure of disagreement between the two, I would have been tempted to call this review 'Karson vs. Karson' - but that's another story).

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Facing Death and the Life After

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Herbert's book has a definite sermonic feel to it. His style is sure but slow, but this is compensated for by the wide range of illustrative material drawn from church history to show that spiritual gifts have not lain dormant for 18 centuries. The approach is topical rather than consecutive, but this enables his treatment of individual gifts to be better than that of his namesake, and also allows other important passages such as Matthew 8:17, James 5:16 and John 14:12 to be dealt with. All in all, a fair and helpful exposition.

Don's book demonstrates painstaking exegesis (the select bibliography runs to 18 pages!) There are occasional 'preachy' sections and pertinent illustrations. Each chapter is headed by a summary of the argument. Key words are dealt with in depth resulting in familiar passages yielding new insights. Don is at his best when setting the context of the Corinthian church (an over-realized eschatology; internal division; Paul's pastoral methodology and concern for orderly conduct of congregational life) and in demonstrating the logical connections in the sustained argument. The relevant Acts passages are also dealt with.

Don Carson handles the biblical material with a deftness and fairness that is most remarkable and stimulating. He concludes that the manifestations of the Holy Spirit not only inaugurate the New Age but also characterise the New Age. Miraculous gifts would only cease with the passing of the Apostles if they were theologically tied to a function of attestation, which they manifestly are not given the Old Testament expectation of the New Age (esp. Joel 2:28-32).

When dealing with tongues, Don notes that they occur in Acts only in groups; they are not said to recur; they are public and may serve various purposes of attestation. In 1 Corinthians 12-14, however, tongues are individual; may be used in private; must be translated in public and serve no purpose of attestation. There is an interesting discussion on whether Corinthian tongues are identical with Pentecostal tongues - according to Don they're of different kinds. Don presents a case for viewing Corinthian tongues as 'encoded' language to which the interpreter is given the key to decipher the code. Like the Nazi enigma codes these may be one-off ciphers which have no resemblance to human languages yet contain specific information.

Don takes issue with Herbert over the latter's belief that tongues should only be used in private, as there is no biblical warrant for this. However, both Carsons reject the current practice of corporate 'singing in tongues' as this seems to break all the rules which Paul lays down in the practice of tongues. (I would like to publish an article from an informed person on this topic - how does such singing in tongues function is worship? What is happening musically? How is it interpreted? Are the Carsons correct?)

Both books contain hefty doses of Wayne Grudem's dissertation on prophecy (see Mainstream 21) which has now been published in the UK. Prophecy is seen to be distinct from preaching, but Don notes that he thinks it occurs much more often than is recognised in non-charismatic settings and much less often than charismatics would like to think. Don has an important section on inspiration and revelation. He is careful to distinguish between the mode of inspiration and the result of inspiration. Acts 16:9 records an instance of apostolic revelation being evaluated by others. It seems that a case can be made for revelation that results in inscripturation (because that result is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit); and revelation that is evaluated and not inscriptured, because that revelation was not given for that purpose. The latter was found at Corinth and may be found today, as then, without detriment to the sufficiency of scripture. Both Carsons are against the current practice of prophecy in the first person.

Don finishes his book with a helpful chapter on pastoral implications. The result of his biblical approach is a positive assessment of the charismatic movement (and Wimber) without in the least bit pulling his punches on what he regards as unjustifiable excesses and average charismatic mumbo-jumbo. He is very firm in insisting that tongues attest nothing (that's way 1 Corinthians 13 is where it is), and very firm in calling upon leaders to rectify abuses of authority, heretical utterances, sensationalism and triumphalism.

All in all, both books complement each other well and should be studied if 1 Corinthians 12-14 is to be tackled seriously in our churches.

But where, in fact, are we in our churches? Some, no doubt, are over the top and need biblical anchorage. Others regard the whole issue with fear or disdain (and not necessarily without reason). Surely though, as Baptists, we are concerned to understand and implement the authoritative Word of God in our lives. So what does the Bible actually teach on this matter? This alone is our measure.

Firstly, we must allow the Holy Spirit to be sovereign. The Lord is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17). Our prejudices and experiences (however elated or awful) must not be allowed to reinterpret the plain meaning and intention of Scripture.

Secondly, we can only approach the ministry and gifts of the Holy Spirit with pastoral integrity if we are prepared to live with one another at the foot of the cross. We cannot require anything of one another except to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to demonstrate love. We have no right to judge what the manifestation of the Spirit should be for the other if these two requirements are met.

Thirdly, our worship together must cease to be the point of division. This is the proof of maturity. "Let ALL things be done DECENTLY and in ORDER" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Our meetings together should be characterised by intelligibility and orderliness, quietness and exultation, the manifest and the inward presence of God. Where any of these elements are lacking in a congregation's experience of worship together, it is because there has not been an adequate perception of and response to God in all his attributes and ways of working.

When we have all learned humility and love in the fulness of the Holy Spirit, we will be like the first Christians, and the New Testament will begin to make amazingly relevant sense to us.

Terry Griffith.

The Leader at Prayer



Introduction - Preliminary Considerations

This series of articles will attempt to examine three areas of the minister's or worship leader's public ministry of prayer. They will be the leading of worship, interceding with the church and the conduct of communion.

I am making an assumption that while we recognise the importance of the Baptist tradition, we also recognise historically that our tradition of worship has not emerged into the twentieth century out of an hermetically sealed container, but has been developed over centuries out of dialogue with and reaction to other traditions of worship. We are part of English Christianity and one stream of a wider tradition - this continuity is helpfully and readably examined in Horton Davies's various volumes entitled *Worship and Theology in England*. This assumption may be carried forward by saying that a tradition is helpful when it continues to learn and assimilate those elements of other traditions which can be absorbed without substantial change of fundamentals, but not helpful when it attempts to spray some supposed safe position with a cultural or theological fixative. I believe we may helpfully learn from Anglican, Catholic and charismatic renewal of worship but not if we intend to surreptitiously become something other than what we are. This would be an exercise in aping rather than assimilating.

The leadership of worship must be natural to the leader - that is to say, he, or she, must have a relationship with God capable of being shared and which is integral to his, or her, being. If that is the case, what is prayed will not be forced (appear unnatural), will be experienced as a warmth of genuineness and not be a case of studied effect (praying like a prayer book, praying like a Puritan, praying like an illiterate - there is a vogue for a studied casualness which is both demeaning and ugly).

In all worship which is genuinely rooted in the Bible, there should be a tension between the prophetic (or unstructured) and the liturgical (or structured). The present enthusiasm for unstructured worship is sociologically a child of the Romantic movement - unprepared is more likely to be genuine than prepared. This is nonsense - just try it out on sermons. Biblically, we inherit a rich tradition of liturgical material (the psalms, Jewish lectionaries etc.) and an openness to the Spirit reflected in a willingness not to wrap up everything too tightly in the worship programme - is there room for God on the agenda? Traditionally in many circles, the prophetic is left for the midweek meeting and the liturgical is normal for Sunday. This approach is favoured by Evelyn Underhill in her book *Worship*. The present climate favours more adventurous mixes.

The leading of worship is not to perform but to enable. Those who are called to lead the congregation are called to lead this (and not another more ideal) community into the realm of prayer and worship. The words, the length, the eloquence have to be geared to what is helpful to the community being led. Granted that much is learnt theologically by the community from the prayers, nonetheless we pray in certain way with children, with a mixed congregation, with a mega congregation, with a small group etc. No use booming away at 20 people - this requires a quieter approach to be helpful. It is their worship, not our performance, which is important to God.

LEADING WORSHIP

I would like to begin by making a statement regarding the importance of worship and then proceed to some practical suggestions to make the leading of worship a more accessible business viz. not an ability solely and simply granted by the gifting of the Spirit but an activity, which granted that gifting, may be learned.

There has been a tradition in Baptist circles in which "going to church" has been experienced as "going to sermon". The important thing is what we hear from the minister and everything else that occurs is largely a preliminary to this event. This attitude has two had effects - it renders the congregation largely passive and puts too much concentration on the sermon. The success of the service is determined by the success or otherwise of the sermon. Without detracting in anyway from the vital necessity of Spirit - empowered preaching, we must be convinced that we should go to church to give worship rather than to get ministry. "Did we worship?" rather than "What was the sermon like?" should be the question after the service.

Leaders should always pray together before the service. This says, 'Here are some dry sticks, Lord, gathered and laid with care. Light them with your Fire". I remember driving three hours in the rain to a Welsh church with a feeling of jaundice about the day. I was invigorated into praise and ministry by the enthusiastic prayers of the deacons.

The praying, whether it is to be read or spontaneous, should be prepared and not thought through hurriedly during the singing of the previous hymn. Key your thoughts into the hymn before, which should be chosen with care. Think out what specifically should be given thanks for in terms of congregational life, community life and what will be studied in the Word that Sunday. It is generally helpful when the service is experienced as a whole - learning may occur not only through the sermon but through the hymns and worship. Let everything be connected and lead to a conclusion of obedience and affirmation.

It is good to say 'I believe' somewhere in the service - possibly in song, possibly in words. We are credal Christians with a rich content to our faith - this should be frequently affirmed. We say this to God primarily rather than intellectually rehearse belief. His community says in the midst of confusion and doubt and darkness, "We believe in You!"

We need to own what and who we are before we really grow spiritually. We need to say 'This is me'. Confession is an integral part of worship because it enables us to start together with realism, both as individuals and as members of a world community. Make up confessions, write them out, read them from the many books available. It helps us to be honest to God.

Silence and words are two sides of the same coin of communication. Speaking and listening. The Quakers talk about centering down, getting it together inside. Most of us arrive in church in precisely the wrong mood for worship after the Sunday hassle of getting the family all together in one place. When the children have gone, help the adults to be quiet for a moment, to feel a sense of integration inside. Then, maybe, quietly sing a short chorus, read a hymn fragment until there is a tangible sense of GOD.

Maybe people would find it helpful to be enabled to participate in thanksgiving and worship. Many will find it difficult or embarrassing to pray in front of everyone. Help them. Make it easy. Perhaps they

need a priming sentence like 'Thank you Father for...' 'We worship you for....' Many brief interjections of thanksgiving are far better than long monologues to God by the more loquacious.

I have become re-enthused about the corporate reading of scripture which I found initially to be a turn-off in student days (charismatic snobbishness) after exposure to the community reading of scripture in a Franciscan retreat house. I am concerned that, in comparison to other traditions, Baptists are beginning to give less place to the public reading of the scriptures. We need to listen attentively to the Word of God as well as to its exposition from the pulpit. Possibly through having pew Bibles, or using material in the back of the hymnbook we can share together in the great declarations of scripture as acts of worship.

Lastly, we have a constantly increasing wealth of musical material in songs and hymns which may be used either as exercises in centering or as acts of quiet worship or celebration. Some may find the music of Taize appealing, as I do. Others, a rediscovery of old hymns with up-dated words from 'Hymns for Todays Church'. There is much to choose from. We need to live in the resources of the past without being antique and in the resources of the present without being merely chic.

T.J. Marks.

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ON OUR IMAGE



"You're doing good work but it's not fully appreciated....."

"Essentially building on what's already there....."

"Make sure you communicate effectively what you are and what you have to off....."

"You could achieve a significant step forward"

Not, as you might think, some tub-thumping rallying cry at a Spring Harvest seminar but words from the former head of marketing for Butlins Holiday Camps, telling members of Great Yarmouth's Publicity Association how they should approach selling a seaside resort in the late 1980's.

But Tony Wright the speaker could just have easily been talking about our denomination. While we could - and maybe should - look at the image we present to the outside world what about the image and impressions we create among ourselves within the denomination. Just how well - or badly - do we communicate?

The merest hint of the word "image" is likely to bring some people out in spots. Visions of multi-million pound Saatchi and Saatchi advertising campaigns for a variety of products and causes may well spring to mind.... arms will be raised not in some kind of gesture of worship but as an expression of horror.

But I ask again. What sort of image does the ordinary member of a Baptist church in 1988 get of what's going on in the denomination? I'll stick my neck out and suggest it's likely to be a poor one.... and our communication is to blame.

Let's face it, the majority of Christians don't join the local Baptist church because of some deep commitment to Association life, the Home Mission Fund, the Baptist Missionary Society or the work of Baptist House and Area Superintendents. They join because they are in some way attracted to the local bunch of Christians who happen to be called a Baptist church; they enjoy the form of worship; they like the teaching and they might just be aware that the church is in some way independent.

But get more involved and you find all is not what it appears. It's a bit like marrying for the excellent reason of being attracted to your partner and then realising that you've wedded a family and are lumbered with the responsibilities of Great Aunt Matilda and her 16 cats.

This is not the place to start a radical re-think on the way we are structured.

But, for example, do we really believe that associations and annual assemblies actually achieve a great deal?

As the editor wrote in the last edition of the Mainstream newsletter: "Is there enough vision in our Association life? And if there is why isn't it being communicated in such a way that our imagination is immediately captured?"

Ay, there's the rub. If we are going about things in the right way then it must be our communication which is the problem.

Even in this technological age of the video it's still the written word which is the most widely used - and can be the most effective. But most of what circulates round our denomination in my twenty-odd years experience is poor, to say the least. The impression created is not a good one.

So much of what comes out (and I'm sorry if I'm treading on any corns) is amateurish. And there is no need for that to happen today.

Take Home Mission. What sort of impression has been created over the years by its posters, magazines and leaflets? More often than not printed on rough, cheap paper, the layout and presentation lack imagination. No doubt there's lots of exciting news to pass on and, to be fair, we do glimpse it. But it's not fully conveyed.

The ideas are often there. What's lacking is a professional hand licking into shape. Just look at the material from Tear Fund or Scripture Union and see the difference. Good design and plenty of impact are the order of the day.

As I write, the Easter edition of Home Mission News is on my desk. It's a strange size which is uncomfortable to handle and immediately off-putting. The cover has a large picture of some blossoming spring flowers. I know what they're getting at but it doesn't quite work.... the impression is that it's a bulb catalogue.

Then there's the dwelling in the past. Last summer a 75th anniversary edition of Home Mission News came out and frankly the more I look at the less I understand what it was supposed to convey.

Headlines which didn't make sense: "I asked the supers" says one. What does that mean to anyone who's been around for some time in one of our churches, let alone a newcomer?

"1912 to 1987 - some dates to remember" Why? What for? And whatever is a Sustentation appeal when it's up and dressed? And who is Dr. John Shakespeare anyway? What does it matter? (There's even a church in Norwich named after him - the J.H. Shakespeare Memorial indeed! Sheer Baptist navel-gazing when the rest of the world - not to mention a good few of our own members - would quite right assume that a Shakespeare memorial has something to do with the Bard of Avon).

Indeed much ado about nothing. We seem (again it's back to impressions) to harp on about the pioneers of Home Mission in the same way the Methodists glory in Wesley. What's the point? Surely our reference point in history is Jesus while our sights should be set on what we are doing now - not then.

Charles Swindoll comments in his book "Strengthening your Grip";

"In some ways people and organisations are alike. Both tend to lose vitality rather than gain it as time passes. Both tend to give greater attention to what they were rather than what they are becoming. It's easier to look back into the past and smile on yesterday's accomplishments than it is to look ahead into the future and think about tomorrow's possibilities"

All of this may or may not be true - and people may like to argue strongly that it isn't the case.

What I'm saying is that this is the *impression* which comes across thanks to the 1950's style look and approach of much of the printed material which comes our way. The dated Uriah Heap image may well be incorrect but who's fault is that?

I'm not sure that the Baptist Times is a great deal better. It's layout and use of pictures wouldn't generally win any awards. If the Lord is doing exciting things among us it's not the impression which comes over in the BT.

The BMS Herald has improved over the years but not before time and even now it could be better. Why are we not ahead in good design rather than catching up?

As a passing thought I've often wondered why we have so many publications. Why not a bright new monthly colour magazine which could incorporate the Baptist Times, the Herald and Home Mission News in one lively bundle? (Oh horrors..... just imagine the endless rounds of committee meetings, assemblies and association rallies such a radical idea might trigger off!)

This isn't just an isolated view from the far East coast, others do feel the same way about the way we present ourselves to ourselves. And I don't intend this to be a personal swipe at those who work hard to organise the denomination and produce the material which I'm criticising.

But it comes down to this. If we are doing the Lord's will and functioning correctly then we ought to convey it more vibrantly and effectively. If Tear Fund and Scripture Union and other Christian organisations can do it why can't we?

And if it means bringing in outside consultants (and there are plenty of Christians in the field) why not do so?

"Make sure you communicate effectively what you are - and what you have to offer".

That's the challenge from the marketing man.

Do we? I'm not convinced that we do.

Tony Mallion.

Tony Mallion is a news producer with BBC Radio Norfolk and a member of Gorleston Baptist Church.

WHY THERE ARE NO WORKING CLASS SUPER CHURCHES



It is often felt in this country that the working class are particularly unresponsive to the gospel. Churches in working class communities are generally seen as being smaller in size than churches in Middle class areas.

Whilst this is true of churches in general, it is particularly true of Baptist churches.

Our own fellowship is set in a mining town (Now an unemployed town), which was one of only six areas classed as Educational Priority Areas, by the last Labour government.

As our church has begun to grow rapidly over the last five years I have turned my attention to the question of why there seems to be very few 'SUPER CHURCHES' (330+ members) in this sort of non-book culture. And also why Baptists seem to fare particularly badly in this sort of culture. I believe that I have identified ten reasons for there being no 'BAPTIST SUPER CHURCHES' in working class areas, three of which are of particular relevance to Baptists the other seven being generally applicable.

The seven general weaknesses hindering growth, in working class areas are as follows:

1. YOUTH AND CHILDRENS WORK

Whilst churches generally have tried to reach young people, as their main evangelistic activity, the weakness of this policy has been particularly pronounced in non-book areas. Children growing up under the influence of the gospel have often responded to Christ, but also have experienced social lift which has led them to work away from their home area, or go to college or even accept the challenge of the mission field. The mother church will lose their carefully nurtured young people at the moment that they are about to become valuable workers in the church. This is related to the second point.

2. TRANSFER GROWTH - DECLINE

How often do you read stories of growing churches which include the comment, 'THE LORD BEGAN TO DRAW TO US SEVERAL KEY PEOPLE'. Many times it seems that a rapidly expanding fellowship attracts other mature believers looking for a place to be of service. When was the last time you read of this happening to a working class church? It doesn't. The able people move out, or at best COMMUTE to church. There is only very rare transfer growth into working class churches. Indeed our own fellowship, here in Conisbrough has seen 55 new regular worshippers in a five year period, 50 from non-church backgrounds and 5 by transfer.

3. LOVE OF FAILURE

There does seem to be an element of working class culture which LIKES FAILURE. Maybe that is a little strong. Perhaps it would be better to say that SUSPECTS SUCCESS. Someone who is successful is treated with resentment - 'Who do they think they are?' or jealousy, 'Why should he have that?'

Thus in a sense a large and successful Church in a working class area of Britain will prove unattractive to those from the culture in which it is set.

4. LACK OF FORWARD PLANNING

One of the main differences between the Middle and working class cultures lies in the concept of time. People in a poorer community often have difficulty planning ahead. It is hard to imagine a situation that may arise in two to three years time and plan accordingly. This leads to a failure to anticipate needs, and think strategically. This in turn means that the Church is often moving from one crisis to another, and will not have a planned growth, but will just wait for the Lord to bless.

5. WALKING COMMUNITIES

Because the Working class generally have less access to transport they are often restricted in how far they will travel to church. Thus the catchment area for a church is quite small. Immediately around the Church building there is probably a very high concentration of Church attendance, but few people travelling more than half a mile to Church.

6. DESIRE FOR RELATIONSHIPS

The focal point of church life in a non-book culture is the relationships between members, and the relationship with the minister. Whereas in a more academic community people will go to Church to hear a great preacher, or be involved in a lively act of worship, in the non-book setting these are of less value. It is a case of going to church to hear your friend preach, to join with your friends in the service, and to meet with your neighbours.

Yet often our working class churches, echoing their middle class sister churches, are concentrated on the sermon, rather than on relationships. People want to know how they should love their neighbour, whilst we talk abstractly about the needs of the Third World.

This desire for strong relationships also leads to the fatal divisiveness which seems to afflict working class churches.

There seems to be a significantly higher tendency to schism amongst working class churches than is normal. I think that this is not necessarily over worship, or theology, though these are often the symptoms. Rather I think that it stems from a breakdown in these relationships between individuals, which are so important. Thus once a church reaches a certain size it seems almost guaranteed to self destruct, because of the breakdown in relationships which have not received sufficient attention as the Church grows.

7. LACK OF WORKING CLASS MINISTERS

Whilst our colleges are to some extent to blame for this, I received NO TRAINING in the culture of the working class, and it is well known that colleges emphasise the intellectual attainment (a middle class value) rather than personal life style and community living (working class values). The colleges do not bear the major responsibility for this. How sad it always seems that men from working class backgrounds are unwilling to enter the mission field from which they come.

Middle class churches find themselves ministered to by working class men, who are trying to preach cross culturally, whilst the non-book culture is served by people such as myself, who are like fish out of water.

Yet try suggesting that working class lads should take up the privilege of ministering to working class communities, 'why should I have to?' Is invariably the sad response, as if it were some prison sentence, instead of the great joy which it truly is.

These then are my seven general reasons for it being difficult for large churches to develop in non-book areas of England.

Now three reasons that make it even less likely that such a large church will be Baptist.

1. BAPTISTS APPEAL TO THE MIND

The Baptist pattern of life tends to be centred around an intellectual appeal and a logical response. Baptist life is centred around learning more, reasonable arguments, and a response of the mind which then flows to an outworking in lifestyle.

But the working class culture works on an emotional level, 'Don't tell me show me.' It is what we FEEL that is important.

The two main events of Baptist life are the Sunday sermon and the mid-week Bible study. There is a lack of colour. Yet the Working class wants to respond to the brightness of the Catholic Mass, the emotionalism of John Wesley, or William Booth.

It need not be so - indeed the act of Believers Baptism is so clear a picture and so emotional an event that it OUGHT to make Baptists better equipped to work in areas where people think in pictures. Yet we have lost the Biblical pattern of story telling and pictorial communication, which is such a vital part of reaching the working man.

2. INVOLVEMENT BASED ON INTELLIGENCE

The two major lay-activities in a Baptist Church are the treasurer and the secretary. Both of which need a high level of academic achievement to manage. The natural desire to be involved with working for Christ is limited to areas for which most working class people are ill equipped. While people are wanting to do practical things, making things, spending time together doing things, we are appealing for people to be book-keepers, letter writers, Sunday school teachers, and Bible study leaders.

People need to be encouraged to use their creative talents to the glory of God.

3. PASTORAL PRESSURES

A non-book culture needs a lot more time from its pastor. Whilst a concept can be explained briefly and followed up by the appropriate book written by John Stott or David Watson, in an intellectual environment, this does not work in a non-book culture. The help has to be based on real life situations. This is vitally important because it will have arisen out of a real event, rather than from abstract thinking, and cannot be followed up with a book. What sort of person expects someone whose normal reading is the Daily Mirror to grasp the arguments of most Christian books?

Clearly a larger amount of time has to be spent with the pastor, receiving personal advice, and watching a lifestyle. So if a church can normally be expected to grow to 175 people with one minister, I believe

that the figure will be SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER in a non-book area. Probably less than 100.

Now a church of this size in the Anglican system can probably persuade the diocese to provide a curate, and can cope with the additional work and can continue to expand its ministry.

In our Baptist pattern of things, however, it is not possible to provide extra ministry. Working class churches do not have the resources to have a second minister, and Home Mission is only available for the first minister. Benefactors who may be willing to leave money for such projects are usually involved in our suburban churches, not our working class areas.

The result is that when a church has grown to its natural limit, it cannot afford the additional ministry necessary to continue to grow. The pressures on the pastoral care stop the growth, and numbers remain about the same level. The Minister becomes disillusioned with lack of progress, and leaves. The new minister finds many of the congregation have left and has to start the growth path again.

Thus it proves impossible to break through the growth barrier. Hence no Baptist Super Churches in working class districts.

WHAT ANSWER IS THERE?

Having identified some of the growth limiting factors it is my intention to overcome these weaknesses. Five years ago our church had only four people out of 45 who had come into the fellowship as adult converts. The rest had either transferred in, or grown up through the Sunday School. About a dozen having come through this last method over a sixty year period. We changed the emphasis away from youth and childrens work and now have seen 50 regular ADULT worshippers come from non-church backgrounds.

The transfer growth is not something that can be solved in the long term. MIDDLE CLASS CHRISTIANS ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY COMMITTED TO THE WORK OF CHRIST TO MAKE LONG TERM COMMITMENTS TO WORKING CLASS COMMUNITIES. Nor are working class Christians willing to remain in the area of their roots.

In our fellowship we have tried to alleviate the problem of the walking community by running a bus service to the outlying areas of our catchment area. This however can only be a short term solution. In the long term it will prove necessary, I think to plant satellite congregations LINKED to a central fellowship for administrative purposes, but meeting in groups of about forty to fifty in local areas. Coming together for celebration but remaining independent for styles of worship and fellowship. The main concentration being on relationships in the satellite groups.

It would be helpful if patterns of training were to include some serious thinking on how to minister in non-book cultures. Ministers and congregations need to adapt and generate an authentic working class pattern of church life.

Finally as Baptists we need to be prepared to provide lay training and leadership, to stimulate local endeavour. We must not think in terms of reproducing the Middle Class Baptist Church in the council estate, but must provide humble leaders ready to give up their own desire for the sake of the kingdom in the working class community.

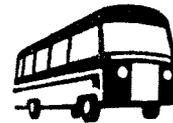
We need to be flexible enough to put resources into our successful churches in working class communities, in the way that those churches want.

ABOVE ALL ELSE WE NEED TO REALISE THAT THERE IS A TREMENDOUS HUNGER FOR THE GOSPEL IN OUR NON-BOOK COMMUNITIES OF BRITAIN. PEOPLE ARE READY TO RESPOND TO THE GOSPEL - ARE WE READY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL?

David Newton.

David is Pastor of Conisbrough Baptist Church, Doncaster. This is his first pastoral charge.

IMPRESSIONS OF ISRAEL



It was a great joy for me to spend Easter in Israel, and because impressions are recent and vivid in my mind it seems good to set them down in a way that could be shared with others.

First - go with a good group. My time in the Holy Land was greatly enriched by going on a well-organised tour staying in hotels where one was free from concern about the quality of the food and water, having an air-conditioned coach for touring, and a very knowledgeable guide who, with profound respect for Scripture, enhanced one's knowledge of the land and its history. There are many cheap routes to Israel, but I do believe it is worth going on a trip where the conditions will be propitious and the fellowship rich. Certainly that was my experience.

Secondly, it is my personal conviction that in the Old Testament the significant events of Exodus and Exile fulfilled the prophetic purposes of God for Israel. Those prophecies came to final climax in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus through whom one new people, belonging to God through Christ, was created. The kingdom of Christ is growing and being built through the agency of His people the Church. I do not, therefore, believe that the modern nation of Israel can be called the People of God, nor that they have any special place within the immediate purposes of God. Therefore it is important that Christians do not give thoughtless and unstinting support to whatever the Israeli government does. God is at work in that nation as His kingdom purposes work themselves out in the lives of all the nations.

Thirdly, it is clear from speaking with Israelis and reading their newspapers that there is a profound division of opinion over what to do with the Palestians. This will be the major topic of a forthcoming general election. The division of opinion is not based on regional disparity, sexual distinctions, or age variations. The nation is literally split on this issue; some wanting a triumphalist approach which claims the fullness of the land and evicts the Palestinians; others wanting an accord with Arab neighbours, granting the Palestinians a responsible homeland within the borders of Israel. A situation of such potential division and conflict demands the urgent prayers and thoughtful consideration of God's people everywhere.

Fourthly, I was profoundly impressed with the topography and geography of the country. To be in Jerusalem over Easter was to gain some clear impression of what those first events in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus must have been like. To walk through the Garden of Gethsemane, the Kidron Valley and the Via Dolorosa, was to grasp

afresh something of the significance of the suffering of Jesus. To see the Temple set apart, surrounded by the people of power, was to grasp something of the conflict into which Jesus entered. To spend Easter morning at the Garden Tomb was to capture afresh something of the marvel of God's powerful Resurrection of His Son. to spend time in Galilee was a delight. To break bread on the shores of the lake; to be in a boat in the same way that Jesus was; all these experiences have enriched my understanding of Scripture. I shall never read it in the same way again.

Fifthly, as you read my reflections on Israel, you could contemplate the thought that my concern for the land is minimal. That would be quite wrong. I have come back with a profound desire to mobilise Christians to pray for Israel, and supremely to pray that a clear, living, vibrant Christian witness will be established in the towns, cities and rural communities of Palestine. That is the most urgent need. Believers are few and far between. Many of their fellowships are struggling and beleaguered. For many Jews the typical impression of the Church is of rather miserable money-grabbing monks who man the various holy sites. There are other believers who are in Palestine for reasons of their work. Many of them are well-intentioned foreigners who certainly bear their witness but do so with little compassion, thoughtfulness or fruit. There is an urgent need for Christians who do live and work in Palestine to find good fellowship which will build them up. The local population must be confronted with a living witness to the kingdom of Christ so that they may be convinced of His Messiahship and turn to Him in the profound numbers that the Bible seems to promise in Romans 11.

If you have not been to Israel I counsel you to go. And if at the moment you can't go, then I certainly urge you to pray.

Mike Nichols.

Mike is Vice-Principal of Spurgeon's College, London.

LETTERS



Dear Terry,

We were very interested in your Editorial article in Mainstream Newsletter 28. the members of our Association Team read it with interest and we find ourselves in agreement with much that you say.

It was very encouraging to read of the progress being made in London as new churches come into being and as old ones find new life.

We here in Yorkshire are engaged in a co-ordinated church planting programme in which we are beginning to see some very encouraging results. The thrust of this programme comes from the Association Team which consists of John Nicholson, Keith Jones, Roy Turvey and myself, and we have the full support and co-operation of the committees and structures of the Association as we seek to implement this programme.

We take the point you make about the structures sometimes inhibiting the vision, but our experience is that if these structures are used as they were intended, they can actually become vehicles for the promotion of the work rather than hindrances and obstacles. The key would seem to lie in a close relationship between the full-time members of the Team, the Officers of the Association and the various committees. We seek to keep all sides informed of what is happening, and we are always open to new ideas and initiatives wherever they may come from.

We would not claim to have all the answers, but we do feel that we are developing a model that other Associations could follow.

We always appreciate the Newsletter, and we would like you to continue to keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely,
Harry Weatherley,
Association Missioner
Yorkshire Baptist Association.

Dear Editor,

Regarding Church Meetings, AOB, and elbow room for prophets, can I suggest a compromise?

We have removed AOB from our Church (and Deacons) Meeting agendas. Instead we have AOUB, the 'U' standing for urgent. Our weekly news-sheet reminds folk of forthcoming Church Meetings and encourages them to submit items for prayer and discussion in advance. However, we do feel it is important to create space at meetings for appropriate matters to be raised by the membership.

God's initiatives do not always come from the leadership nor do they necessarily fit in with our agenda deadlines. Because of that letter 'U', however, I feel perfectly free to refuse to discuss why the hoover is not working or who left the lights on last Sunday night.

One final comment, and this is not a reflection on Steve Gaukroger - but am I the only one who is puzzled by the tendency, of those who wish to encourage participation and spontaneity in worship services, to batten down the hatches at so called business meetings?

Yours sincerely,
Glen Marshall,
Minister,
Ward Green Baptist Church, Barnsley.

Thank you for your practical suggestion. About your last point, I wonder whether membership size has implications for the orderly conduct of decision-making? I'm used to chairing meetings of 20-30 people. What happens if you've got 200? Has anyone got some useful tips? Editor.

BOOK Reviews



When Jesus Confronts The World: D.A. Carson, IVP, 155pp. £3.95.

Six chapters ohn Matthew 8-10 showing how to teach theologically through sustained exposition. One common theme is the expose of all attempts to domesticate God in current Christian experience and Church life. The Jesus of the Bible towers above all merely human ideals, categories and concerns.

The chapter on the compassion of Jesus provides an excellent analysis of the nature of ministry. One good quote taken from p.111 reads, "compassion in ministry is not so much the characteristic of a certain set of priorities." A perceptive comment on Matthew 9:36 reads, "The activity that we might berate as mindles he sees as the result of being leaderless".

The book finishes with a chapter on the divisiveness of Jesus (too often overlooked) and this is related to the prevailing idolatry of pluralism in our day. Two quibbles: I thought there were too many hymns quoted; and is "principal/ly" (many times) a proper word?

This book and Carson's commentary on Matthew (in the Expositors Bible Commentary) cannot be too highly rated.

The Hodder and Stoughton Illustrated Bible Dictionary: General Editor, Herbert Lockyer, 1128pp, £16.95, hbk.

This is the British edition of the Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary. The contributors are nearly all based in the USA with the exceptions of F.F. Bruce and our own Martin Selman.

It is specifically aimed at the non-specialist Bible reader who might want to delve a bit more into the background of the Bible. Everything from Aaron to Zuzim is clearly laid out with many colour and black/white photographs. Theological themes are also dealt with.

There are many such Bible aids on the market now. This book has the advantages of being a one volume dictionary, relatively cheap (yet high quality) and recently published (1986 in the USA). It is also cross referenced to all the major English translations.

Dilemmas: Richard Higginson, Hodder & Stoughton, 238pp, £7.95.

Perhaps it isn't the best idea to review a book written by an old friend, but I begin with an amusing story. A mutual friend of ours was at the local Chinese take-away one Saturday night and while waiting for his order was watching the TV which surprisingly was tuned into Channel 4. Suddenly, Richard Higginson's face appeared on the screen being interviewed by Ludovic Kennedy about his book 'Dilemmas'. Apart from being a surreal experience, our mutual friend was now in a dilemma - should he return home straightaway as he had promised his wife, or should he stay and let the take-away get cold? Answers to the Editor.

This book is well written with many stories illustrating the various ethical conflicts we all experience and may have to deal with in pastoral situations. It does not attempt to give answers but shows what considerations must be brought to bear when making decisions. The

author outlines the main ethical approaches - deontological, consequentialist, personalist etc., and charts a path which recognises the strengths in the deontological and consequentialist positions by delineating a heirarchy of first and second - other principles.

He lays down the challenge in the last paragraph. "Christians who resolve their dilemmas in an inconsistent manner and on spurious grounds should not abdicate responsibility by claiming direct dependence on the Spirit. Dilemmas are a call and a challenge to do some hard thinking".

Readers will find much reference to Helmut Thielicke (the subject of the author's doctoral dissertation) and to several of the modern dilemmas involved with nuclear power, medical ethics and ecology. This is an excellent and enjoyable introduction for examining the bases of Christian moral decision making in an increasingly complex world.

Terry Griffith.

'Facing Death and the Life After' Billy Graham, Word Publishing, 273pp, £2.95.

A most helpful book that takes the reader from the reality of death, through the problem of suffering, to the Christian hope of eternal life.

There are some most useful insights into the death of children - "his life was not cut short, it was completed"; and into suffering - "God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters".

When it comes to the life after Graham believes that we are just as reticent as we are when talking about death. He asks if we are too comfortable in this world to talk about heaven? and then goes on to stress that the Gospel is not good news for the poor only. He longs that his readers might echo Vance Harmer's words, "I'm homesick for heaven. It's the hope of dying that has kept me alive this long".

My one criticism of the book is that there are too many "happy endings", which although may help the pastor, may not necessarily be of help to the bereaved.

John Weaver.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The NIV Student Bible: ed. P. Yancy & T. Stafford, Hodder, £14.95 Hbk.

A very well produced Bible aimed at encouraging undergraduate students to read the Scriptures intelligently and consistently over a 3 year period. Contains brief notes with introductions, explanations (set in bold within the text), 'insights' (with 'Life Questions'), 'track' reading plans for each book, a useful subject guide, and tables and maps. Would make an excellent going away present for your departing students this September. But I have to say that the NIV Study Bible is better value.

Your Verdict: Val Grieve, STL/IVP, 117pp, £1.50. A Manchester lawyer goes for the jugular in presenting a concise and lively case for the integrity of the evidence for the resurrection. A very challenging, yet easy, read for the serious enquirer. Buy two and give both away to pagan friends.

Beyond The Minarets: Kellsye M. Finnie, STL, 151pp, £1.95. Bishop Dehqani-Tafti (formerly Bishop in Aran) recommends this biography of Henry Martyn especially for young people in search of a meaning to life. It is to be hoped that our Christian young people will learn about the worthies of our Christian heritage and attempt to emulate their faith. Islam is now on our doorstep - where is the missionary vision?

A Fistful of Heroes: Great Reformers and Evangelists: John Pollock, Marshall Pickering, 120pp, n.p. A good title, but who is this aimed at? 14 worthies from the last 200 years are introduced to the reader in brief compass. A spiritual pot-pourri.

Take My Silver: Peter Maiden, STL/Paternoster, 59pp, £1.25. This booklet deserves to be widely read. God's work everywhere is hindered by lack of financial resources. An excellent basis for a bible study series. Give a copy to every deacon!

The Way of Jesus: Bruce Farnham, STL, 208pp, £2.25. STL seem to find some unusual authors. Dr. Farnham is a scientist who has lived for many years in the Middle East. Undoubtedly this background has shaped his approach to the subject of this book, viz. the life and teaching of Jesus. I imagine this would be especially helpful for those who have an opportunity to get to know Muslims and are wondering how to present the Gospel to them.

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