

# MAINSTREAM IN THE FUTURE



MAINSTREAM was brought into existence to support and encourage those elements in Baptist life which made for life and growth. After ten years of existence we are encouraged at the life and growth which is currently being experienced. At the same time, we long for more and believe that what has been seen so far is only a beginning.

After ten years it is time to stop and think about the future. We have been attempting to do this. In the next months approximately one third of the present Executive will be standing down, including Jack Ramsbottom, David Coffey, Peter Grange and Pat Goodland. It is intended to recruit new members to the Executive from the ranks of younger leaders in the belief that only in this way can MAINSTREAM be kept from becoming static.

A new agenda is needed for the 1990's which must include clearer aims and deeper thought on the part of the Executive. The following are currently being thought through is this respect:

That MAINSTREAM, within the limits it necessarily has, should have as primary concerns:

1. The renewal and deepening of evangelical faith and life among Baptist churches.
2. The renewal and rediscovery of distinctive Baptist identity.
3. The advocacy of biblical reform in the local church, the Associations and the wider Union.
4. The appointment of men and women to positions of denominational responsibility who are mission-minded and forward thinking, to lead into the next millenium.
5. The fostering of healthy and life-giving relationships among Baptist Christians.

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The new Executive will carry forward these objectives and the task of calling upon the Union at this time of significant change to become a more effective agency of the Kingdom of God. Continuing to serve on the Executive are: Barrie White, Paul Beasley-Murray, Terry Griffith, Derek Tidball, John Weaver, Alastair Campbell, David Slater and Nigel Wright.

For various very good reasons there will be no conference in 1990, but Swanwick has been booked for 1991 and 1992. We will continue to hold occasional consultations on strategic subjects as we have in the past. These have already proved to be valuable to the denomination. The next planned is for Baptist evangelists to be held in June this year.

We value your comments and continued prayers for the future of MAINSTREAM.



## CHURCHES TOGETHER IN PILGRIMAGE:

### *Why my 'YES' will be 'YES'.*

Unless the 'No' lobby at the Leicester Baptist Assembly utterly convince me in the debating process, I will be voting 'YES' at the Leicester Baptist Assembly to the Inter-Church Process. I am also currently actively recommending 'Yes' to my Church and fellow Christians in the area. Why?

**YES.** Because I am happy with the agreed Basis and Commitment for the ICP as expressed in 'Churches together in Pilgrimage'. God's revelation in Christ; Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures; obeying the Holy Spirit in seeking a deepening commitment to Christ in and through His Body; a shared responsibility to proclaim the Gospel in witness and mission; the unequivocal Trinitarian basis as an indispensable sine qua non. This thoroughly biblical basis is moreover coupled to Aims which embrace the following: the encouragement of shared worship and prayer, learning, service and evangelism, developing 'growing and changing relationships as pilgrims together'; enabling 'the churches to respond to the needs of society at all levels.....'. Both the basis and the aims satisfy and thrill me - biblically. That is why my 'Yes' will be 'Yes'. Don't you question my theological integrity and I won't question yours. Indeed let him who is without theological sin cast the first stone. God, like all good Fathers, allows no stone throwing in Heaven anyway!

**YES.** Because at the heart of the Baptist Family at its best that I have grown to know and love is the vital importance of freedom of conscience in matters of religion complemented by a godly tolerance even where we disagree. Thomas Helwys, in Newgate prison, died for this. William Carey expresses this superbly: 'Let us conscientiously profess our own convictions; but let us love the man of our sect but little who possesses little of the love of Christ, whilst we love him exceedingly in whom we see so much of Christ, though some of his opinions are contrary to our own. So shall we know we are passed from death to life and sectarian quarrels will cease'. C. H. Spurgeon, too, knew the beauty of tolerance: 'However sternly a man may hold the right of private judgment, he yet can give the right hand with as tight a grip to everyone who loves the Lord Jesus Christ'. Would that his actions had always matched these words! The Downgrade Controversy it can be argued, has helped to drive nails into the coffin of effective Baptist expansion for much of the C20th. It gave the idea that the best way to express spiritual integrity, a sort of theological virility symbol, was to kick the bad old Baptist Union in the teeth. The spirit is still around today. Our heritage and our traditions of tolerance should repeatedly teach

us that it is possible to retain our own local church theological integrity without ostentatiously robbing others of theirs in the process! Whether our local church involvement, if the Union goes 'in', is in practice non-existent or very committed surely please God we can still respect each other and remain in the same Baptist family?!

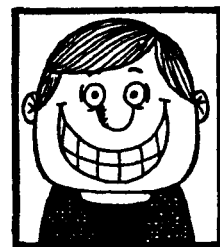
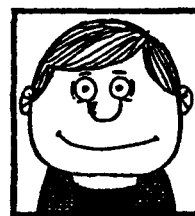
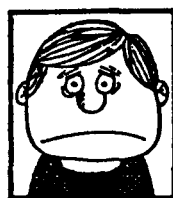
**YES.** Because I have seen the future and it works. Anyone wishing to understand why I and many are in the ICP with enthusiasm should read 'Better Together - Christian partnership in a hurt city' by David Sheppard and Derek Worlock (H and S). It began with the Beatles and still 26 years on Liverpool is showing the Country the way! The breaking down of at least some bigotry and theological misunderstandings; closer partnership in mission; high media interest and profile; regular and friendly Church Leaders gatherings. These I and many long to see reproduced across our land. 'When we arrived in Liverpool' they write, '.....it was plain that we must give time to replace a diminished but residual sectarianism with a positive partnership in Christian Mission. Soon we found that there was a call for us to help make the Christian voice heard nationally and more especially locally'. I can think of no better perspective from which to view the Vision of the ICP at its best for the 1990s than this book. Our local communities want to see us working together. They believe it is "the way it should be". Ask them. Knock on the doors. It is not our labels they are interested in and certainly not our particular brands of theological integrity. What we are doing as Christians in and for the Community is what will mainly count among those we are seeking to reach for the Kingdom as the 1990s approach. Better together indeed.

**YES.** Because my understanding of God grows bigger by the year. "'Aslan, Aslan. Dear Aslan' sobbed Lucy 'At last' ..... 'Welcome child' he said. 'Aslan you're bigger' ..... 'That is because you are older little one' answered he..... 'Not because you are?' ..... 'I am not. But every year you grow, you will find Me bigger'" (Prince Caspian). I was nurtured and remain an Evangelical. Mainstream - Baptists for Life and Growth is where I am at. But my Lord too has, so to speak, grown bigger over the years. At the heart of many Baptist objections to the ICP, let it be squarely faced, is Roman Catholic involvement. No amount of words can overcome the hostility or deep and sincere reservations Baptists have here and of course vice-versa. I have argued - I don't use the word lightly - with RCs over the years on issues such as the Pope; the tinkling bell of transubs - ah well; Mary; the role of the saints; the confessional etc, etc. But I have tried to do so always within a context of accepting friendship and gratitude. Friendship because, however much we disagree on issues I know I am closer to my Catholic friends than I am to many of the non-Christians I know or say, to the Muslim neighbours I meet in my son's school playground. Gratitude because, let it never, be forgotten that for some 1000 years it was the Roman Catholic Church which helped to, preserve our common Christian heritage through the Dark Years of The Middle Ages. In Catholic monasteries, Cathedrals and Churches the gospels, the sacred Scriptures, the great prayers, the classics of Western spirituality were treasured, protected and preserved, under God, for us all. All of us must go back historically through Roman Catholicism on the way to Christ and the New Testament. Think about it. Long before Henry 8th or Anabaptist pioneer Conrad Grebel it was Catholic Christians who preserved the faith I now hold dear. Put another way, I cannot unchurch, de-Christianise or spurn a tradition that has produced a Francis of Assissi or a Francis Macnutt. Nor a Mother Teresa for that matter. My pilgrimage years have helped me to see a bigger God - including in and among my Catholic friends. An appreciation of and respect for Catholicism is, I believe, still possible whilst cherishing a Free Church identity and a Reformation heritage. God doesn't always agree with me, but He still uses me and works with me, bless Him. And with you! Listen you who have ears to hear.

**YES.** Because above all I believe God's Spirit is in this call to Christ's Churches across Britain. I am either right or wrong. That is the nub of the debate. God cannot be leading His People in two ways at the same time. He either wants His children to be involved for the good of Mission and Evangelism to the Britain of the 1990s (with the higher Media profile that ecumenism at its best brings) or He doesn't. It's as simple as that in the end: one or the other. I believe this is a move of God's Spirit which human and therefore sinful Christians will either respond to or quite possibly frustrate. We are either, however sincerely, fighting against Him or with Him on this. Which way do we jump then?! God gathering His People more closely together for new initiatives in the 1990s or a spiritually dangerous "by-path meadow" devised by human enthusiasm.....or worse. What thinkest thou O wise one? As for me, my reading of this matter is that God really is in this and I want to co-operate with and obey Him - for the praise of Christ's Glory and the good of my land. Let it May our 'Yes' be 'Yes'!

Rev. Michael I. Bochenski, Blackburn.

# PASTORAL STRESS



## and some approaches to support (Part 1)

Since leaving Spurgeon's College 14 years ago the Lord has taken me through certain experiences which have caused me to become increasingly concerned with the needs of those involved in Christian ministry, and also with some of the ways in which support and supervision are offered to such people.

There have been a number of strands to these experiences. A major one has been an increasing awareness of some of the areas of need within my own life and also a growing awareness of some alternative approaches to pastoral supervision which I've found helpful and enriching. A second strand has been an increasing involvement in the support and supervision of a number of others involved in various ministries both in the local church and in other settings. A third strand has to do with a number of friends and colleagues who for various reasons have come out the ministry for negative factors. I imagine that most of us know those who have gone through the trauma of deciding that they have had enough of the ministry for whatever reasons.

These experiences have led me to explore some approaches to pastoral support and supervision which seem to be functioning in other settings, and also some of the approaches to support which people involved in the caring professions would regard as the norm.

### 1. The Problem Stated.

As far as I'm aware, most of the published research on the problem of negative stress in the ministry as well as alternative approaches to pastoral supervision has been carried out in places other than the U.K. and in denominations other than our own. Having said this, the research that has been done in these areas in other situations is quite extensive. Some research has also been done in the U.K. including a project I've been involved in for the past 12 months.

The U.R.C. commissioned a study into ministerial stress which suggested that "Two out of every three illnesses among ministers are stress related". The same report stated the view of a college principal that "10 - 15% of U.R.C. ministers may show evidence of what is called burnout".

Research done in the scottish situation found that "68.2% of the sample had experienced psychiatric disorders, neurotic problems, personality difficulties and emotional stress of sufficient intensity to require absence from work".

My own research, done in conjunction with 'Leadership Today' shows that of the sample who completed the survey, "30% have had time away from work in the past three years with stress related illness" and also that "33% have seriously considered for a prolonged period of time moving out of full time ministry".

Clearly more research needs to be done. However what has been done already suggests that pastors are experiencing a number of factors which are resulting in negative stress. These factors are firstly the stressors themselves. Secondly inadequate pastoral supervision. Thirdly an at times unnecessary defensiveness that refuses to receive the support which is potentially available. In this article we'll look at some of the stressors.

## 2. Job Related Stressors.

John Sanford, in his excellent book 'Ministry Burnout', suggests that there are nine characteristics of local church ministry which can contribute to an overloading of the pastor's circuits.

- The job of the ministering person is never finished.
- The ministering person cannot always tell if their work is having any result.
- The work of the ministering person is repetitive.
- The ministering person is always dealing with other people's expectations.
- The ministering person must work with the same people year in year out.
- The ministering person often works with needy people, which is a major strain on one's energy.
  
- The ministering person deals with some people who come not for solid spiritual food but for 'strokes'.
- The ministering person must function a great deal of the time out of their persona. (That public aspect of one's personality as perceived by others).
- The ministering person may become exhausted by failure.

If you place these characteristics alongside a piece of work produced by David Gardener and Rosemary Lancaster on 'Stress Management for Workers and Managers in the Helping Professions' you begin to realise how vulnerable to bad stress the pastor can be. They say that stress is an occupational hazard in a profession in which:

- There are no strict time boundaries within which to work and the dividing line between personal and professional life can easily become blurred.
- Results are difficult to assess but workers are expected to provide an efficient and effective service which will effect changes in the attitudes and lifestyles of their clients.
  
- Workers are expected to make sense out of situations that are often confused, and to solve problems which are often insoluble.
  
- Workers carry a great deal of the anger, frustration and anxiety of those with whom they work.

Possibly some will object to words like "Professional", "Clients", and maybe even "Boundaries", as being categories which are not suited to the idea of pastoral ministry within the local church. But whether you use those words or not, the factors at play behind the words are as much at work in the ministry of the pastor as in the service of the professional!

My own research with a sample of over a hundred pastors of all denominations and none, suggests that in terms of job related stressors the major factors perceived by ministers themselves are the following:-

- Role Overload. Too many responsibilities to perform to the extent that none can possibly be done in a satisfactory manner. This breeds a sense of failure.

- Role Conflict. This relates to a few areas. Firstly handling the differing expectations of individual members of a congregation which are often contradictory. Secondly handling the differing expectations between how pastors perceive their priorities and how those with power in the church perceive the pastor's priorities. Thirdly the conflict that can exist even within a pastor over chosen but differing functions. e.g. The possible conflict between the roles of preacher and counsellor, or the roles of leader and facilitator. This can breed a sense of confusion, anger, and frustration.

- Time Management. Which relates to the two significant areas of learning to prioritise, and learning to say no as well as yes! Of course there will be emergencies at times that need to be dealt with, but many of us need to learn about intentional ministry, so that we don't spend our lives feeling like victims of others' priorities.

- Conflict. Which for many seems to stem from the mistaken idea that somehow conflict is always less than Christian, and that pastors should never enter into it. Of course for some there is the opposite problem with conflict as they believe that the pastor is always right and that the congregation should never question anything. All of this can breed problems with misplaced anger, depression, and unnecessary aggression, all of which can contribute to significant stress.

- Isolation. Which can relate to one of three areas. Firstly the sheer physical aloneness as opposed to team which is the daily experience of many pastors. Secondly the sense that no one else really understands or appreciates the nature of pastoral ministry. Thirdly the danger of feeling that you are not part of something bigger. This seems to be a result for some, of our Baptist independency.

### 3. Personal Related Stressors.

Whilst there are clearly factors related to local pastoral ministry which can provoke unhelpful levels of stress, it is also clear that there are certain factors of an internal nature which also make a contribution. Why is it that one pastor can forget about a situation of conflict within a short time, whilst another will spend sleepless nights over the same situation?

Clearly our personal perception and beliefs regarding the significance of events and transactions affects the amount of stress that those events cause us. Our internal responses can be rooted in a number of factors.

- Our unmet developmental needs. According to Eric Erikson there are certain life stages that each of us goes through which have corresponding steps to maturity. At each of these stages there is an inner struggle between opposing forces. These positive and negative forces are as follows:-

Infancy - Trust versus Mistrust. Early Childhood - Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt. Childhood - Initiative versus Guilt. School Age - Industry versus Inferiority. Adolescence - Identity versus Identity Confusion. Young Adulthood - Intimacy versus Isolation. Adulthood - Generativity versus Stagnation. Maturity - Integrity versus Despair.

Where there has been a serious shortfall in any of these stages there is the danger of one of two things occurring. Either the individual will find it more difficult to relate helpfully and to grow into maturity emotionally, or the individual will discover ways of coping with the shortfall which are unhelpful.

One brief example. Why is it that some pastors always need to be right in a situation when they are challenged? Could it be that it's because they have learned to cope with a shortfall in the School Age and Young Adulthood Stage in a particularly defensive/aggressive manner?

- Our Role Models. Some seem to operate with a model for ministry which has never been seriously questioned. Most of us have picked up our models along the way either by observing others, or by following the models which seem to be increasingly thrust on us in recent years. There are some models which are particularly stress inducing.

The first is the 'heroic' model. These are the 'open all hours' pastors who are sometimes coveted by congregations who don't know any better. They are always available (or so it seems to their spouse and children) and they have acute problems with saying 'No'. This model is often applauded whereas it should be called seriously into question. The amount of stress which can be generated by an unquestioning belief in this model is very high.

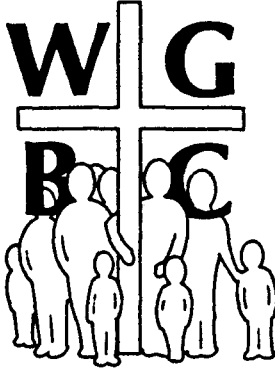
The second is the 'success model'. This model comes in various shapes and sizes and has become more popular in the past 25 years or so. It seems to have been generated in part by a mixture of the more extreme aspects of Church Growth Theology, Charismatic Experiences, Christian Journalism, and the ever growing Conference Circuit!

Praise the Lord for increasing expectations that He wants to use His people through the power of His Spirit to witness to the broadest dimensions of His Kingdom. But certainly at times there appears to be a blend of a lack of integrity on the part of some, and a certain gullibility on the part of others which results either in some pastors placing themselves under immense pressures, or in some congregations imagining that their church experience locally should be like one long Spring Harvest! If these expectations are around, then certainly significant amounts of stress will be generated within the pastor.

In the next article we shall explore some of the support structures that can be helpful to the stressed pastor, and also some ways in which the pastor can develop some self-help skills.

Keith Roberts,  
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# TESTIMONY: Ward Green Baptist Church.



It hardly sounds like the stuff of a 'testimony article' -

"Small church grows steadily to become a medium-sized church"

but there are features of the Ward Green story that I do find exciting so here goes.

The church at Ward Green, which this year celebrates its 25th anniversary, is situated in a mixed residential area some two miles from the centre of Barnsley. Originally planted out by Barnsley Baptist Church to reach a then expanding area, the church now serves a 'parish' of between six and seven thousand. Throughout its history the membership has fluctuated between twenty five and forty five. Over the years the fellowship has gained a reputation for its relaxed, even casual, approach to meetings, its emphasis on work amongst young people, and its record of sending people into full-time ministry, five in ten years with one more currently in training.

When I returned to the thirty nine member church in 1987 as its first full-time minister it was very much against the advice of some of my friends who became very fond of quoting Luke 4:24 - the one about a prophet in his own country. The verse that the Lord gave me to confirm the call was very different, Nehemiah 2:20, "The God of Heaven will give us success, therefore we his servants will arise and build".

Although the church had gone through a very difficult time during the Winter of '86/87, when a disagreement about whether or not to buy a large building next door to the chapel to use as a church and community centre had led to the resignation from membership of two prominent families, the atmosphere when I arrived in the Summer was one of expectancy. Since Billy Graham's Mission Sheffield in 1985 the church had seen a steady growth in numbers. The folk that I had known only four years earlier now comprised only half the congregation. People really did believe that what they had seen was only the beginning of something much bigger that God would do amongst them. (They had already set themselves the prayer target of reaching a membership of 100 by September 1991). Taking over the reins felt more like mounting a runaway horse than trying to budge a stubborn mule!

The events of the first three months confirmed the fellowship's expectations. An induction service with 400 people squeezed into a marquee on the school playing field was quickly followed by three baptismal services, a number of conversions and eleven new people attending the church. It was great to see lapsed Christians regaining their faith, brand new converts and others moving from the fringe to the heart of the church.

Knowing that if the church didn't grow I would have to leave after two years because the finances would run out, we quickly decided that our priority had to be evangelism! During 1988 we held a series of guest services, did door to door work and generally put outreach right at the top of our agenda. While the pace slowed down a little there were still signs of God working, sometimes behind our back just when we weren't expecting it. When the mother of one of our Sunday School children asked to see me to talk about how she could become a Christian, she wasn't to know that we were putting all our prayer and our efforts into reaching a different part of the community. Not that we were complaining, if God wanted to give us converts from the 'wrong' estate without our help then we didn't mind!



Come our annual church meeting in September it was good to be able to look back on a year which had seen eighteen new members, fourteen baptisms, a maturing of our approach in worship, the establishment of a mums' and toddlers' group, the reviving of one of our fellowship groups and a general raising of our profile in the community - it was good to hear people from the village asking, "What's going off up at yon' baptist church?"

It would be misleading in the extreme however to give the impression that the first year had all been plain sailing. The first couple of months in 1988 were some of the stormiest I have ever known. The number of serious pastoral problems - marital breakdown, nervous breakdown and the like - that landed in my lap from within the fellowship was unnaturally high. For about ten weeks I had to bear the heaviest pastoral load that I have ever had to bear, or ever want to. Praise God, there were real break-throughs but also palpable failures. That period taught us in an unmistakable way the reality of spiritual warfare, the song, "He that is in us" almost became our anthem. Furthermore, if truth be told, those hectic first three months were rather difficult for some to cope with. At times the pace of change was a little too much. People began to feel threatened, left behind and a little alienated from the church - in some respects at least it was no longer the church as they once knew it. There are still one or two who feel less at home than they once did. This is partly because of a lack of sensitivity on my part and partly because of the kind of changes that inevitably result from growth and the arrival of a church's first ever minister.

To bring things up to date God has continued to bless us. Since September '88 we have seen five more new members with another five applications pending. Membership currently stands at 62. Our evening congregation in particular has seen an increase in numbers, we now average between twenty five and thirty five as compared to about sixteen eighteen months ago. The increase in the morning over the same period has been from the mid thirties to the mid forties. These figures refer to adults. We also have about 35-40 children in the morning. The overlap between the congregations is relatively small.

As for the future, we are looking forward to opening the Kingwell Centre, our newly refurbished church and community centre (the one that had been such an issue two years ago). Originally a large co-op shop, the centre stands next to the chapel on the prime site in the village right on the central crossroads near the chip shop, pub, working mens' club and the schools. With its neutral, non-churchy associations in the minds of local folk, we trust that the building will be a useful tool as we pursue our vision of becoming more of a community church. Already accommodating three of our Sunday School classes, one of our open youth Clubs, the church office and the minister's office, within a month or two the centre will also house our Mums' and Toddlers' group, our coffee morning and other church activities. Approaches have also been made by the local Community Education Service and the village cycling club! We were particularly delighted recently to be able to provide office space for the Backyard Theatre Company, a community-based Christian drama group working in local schools, youth clubs and churches.

They say that Yorkshire folks are born awkward, and if we are anything to go by, they might be right. We are determined to be awkward in the future as we pray and work for the coming of God's Kingdom in our part of Barnsley.

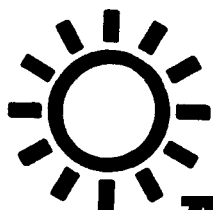
We are going to be awkward by deliberately working against becoming a mono-cultural church. Our area is socially mixed having unemployed people and manual labourers as well as professional people. At the moment the church reflects this and we are determined that it should stay that way - God has called us to reach all the people of our area. We are going to be awkward by continuing to hold together social action and evangelism - it might not be the best church growth strategy, but it does seem to be in line

with the Kingdom. We are going to be awkward by continuing to put resources into children's work as a means of reaching adults - it might not work elsewhere but it does seem to work here. We hope to be awkward above all else by continuing to grow in an area that's supposed to be a bit of a spiritual black spot. Growing a church in the Thames valley is one thing, growing one here, where the population is ageing and declining, is another.

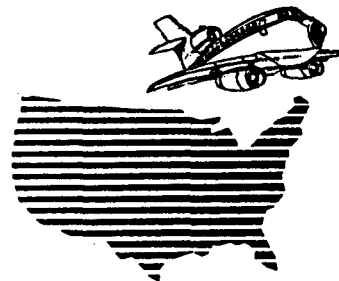
My main concern as we face the future is that we will become too busy, grow tired and become superficial. We all long for our Christianity to be real and I know too well that activism can be the deadly enemy of spiritual depth. We can only avoid this as we stay close to God and hear from him what his priorities are. The growth in the church at Ward Green may not have been spectacular but it has been significant. We dare to believe that God will continue the work he has begun and the prospect of working with him is one that excites us. As Nehemiah put it:

"The God of Heaven will give us success, therefore we his servants will arise and build."

Glen Marshall.



# A VISIT TO THE U.S.A.



As part of my Sabbatical Leave I was able to spend 2 months in America. This was made possible by the rich hospitality of friends and contacts coupled with an amazing offer on internal flights by T.W.A. which enabled me to visit 5 places.

My aim in America was 3 fold:-

- 1) To share in what God is doing elsewhere.
- 2) To observe and learn about making adult disciples which I feel is a strength of American Christianity.
- 3) To begin reading on my main study topic, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

The following are some of my impressions which relate in some way to adult discipleship.

(A) **COMMITMENT TO THE GREAT COMMISSION.** Certainly among church leaders I saw and was challenged by the taking seriously of the Master's command to make disciples. This was reinforced by a visit to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

(B) **THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL GROUPS.** (1) All Age Sunday School is the norm judged not just by the churches I visited but also by the many church notice boards which I saw. Denver's Bear Valley Baptist church with its commitment to ministry outside "the fortress" emphasised the need for a strong home base. (2) Specialist groups complement the church based ones. Breakfast meetings in restaurants provided a good setting for fellowship and Bible study and have inspired me to start a Men's breakfast in my own church. Ministry to Singles is obviously an important part of church life with

churches having Singles' Pastors. That need is obviously present in Britain but whether people would be willing to be characterised as "Singles" I am not so sure. Parachurch groups like Campus Crusade and Navigators are very active in places like the Pentagon (where one of my hosts works). While staying with friends of the Navajo Gospel Mission I met up with Noah's Ark, a Christian group which had built a discipleship programme around the experiences of white water rafting and climbing. Bear Valley Baptist provided Peer Counselling Training to "equip lay persons to be effective, supportive, listening friends".

(C) **MATERIALS FOR THE TASK.** The American culture's 'how to' emphasis can be criticised but it does lead to an attempt to provide material for the actual business of Christian living-witness for example Focus on the Family. As well as Marriage Enrichment courses help is now on the way for 'Midolscence', that is, for people trying to help teenage children into adulthood at one end and attempting to support aged parents at the other. My attention was drawn to the work of the parachurch organisation, Christianity at Work. It uses the picture of the Pentathlon competitor who has 5 areas to keep in balance. In the same way, it says the Christian man needs to keep in balance 5 areas - family, work, church, community and personal growth.

(D) **MINISTRY.** Ministry is an overused word but in the context of Ephesians 4 is still useful. My main reason for wanting to go to Bear Valley Baptist Church was that it seemed from the book Unleashing the Church that it was attempting to solve the problem of "getting people out of the fortress and into ministry", to quote its author. My observations, conversations and attendance of the orientation class for new members have convinced me that Bear Valley is actually getting people into releasing people to be involved in the community. I counted 19 Target Group Ministries but in a church that is determined that spirit determines structure there is always change. The couple who gave me hospitality said that it is no good being a member at Bear Valley unless you can face change!

I am not sure how well known Bear Valley is in this country. You can learn more from Frank Tillapaugh's two books Unleashing the Church and Unleashing your Potential, both published by Regal Books. Hopefully he will be in Britain in June 1989.

Whatever we see elsewhere has always to be digested and then applied in our own situation so I am still thinking through my American experience. The greatest challenge in considering discipleship is personal. It is striking that the apostle Paul, having warned the Corinthians against splitting into groups following leaders can still say "I urge you to imitate me" (1 Cor 4 v 16). Only disciples can make disciples, as Jesus said "Every one who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6 v 40b).

(Another interesting book which I came across in America is The Pastor-Evangelist, Preacher, Model and Mobilizer for Church Growth edited by Roger Greenway [Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co]).

Stuart H. Cook,  
Bury St. Edmunds.



Dear Terry,

Re: **Tongues and Plainsong:**

May I add to the comments in the October 1988 issue.

Plainsong dates from the early Christian era, but apparently owes its style to both the Jewish Style of music, which even today is noticeably "minor" or modal, and the system of scales invented by Pythagorus which led to the development of modes (those 6 different minor keys that give a cultural flavour to music).

In the late 4th Century, plainsong was regularised by Ambrose, a Bishop of Milan, and thereafter refined and developed right into the 20th Century.

The essence of plainsong is the recitation of the centre part of each sentence on a note a fifth above the keynote. The first part of the sentence rises from the keynote to the fifth, and the tail end falls to a cadence. Later forms of plainsong retain this form, even under the florid decorative style which may have been considered appropriate for the text.

Today, it is Anglican chant that is the descendant of plainsong, as anyone who has sung "As-was-in-bin, is now and ever shall be...." all on one note will immediately recognise.

I have not tried to analyse a song in tongues, but I have a suspicion that all the rules of scale, mode and key are - well, not broken, but merely edited a little, here and there, so that earthly limitations impose as few constraints as possible on it.

Also worthy of note is that the above generally refers to a solo. The kind of singing that sometimes follow a hymn or song is different again, and demonstrates the immense variety available from the same chord structure. Whilst most folk may be completely out of tempo and rhythm with their neighbours, the resulting effect (from a musical viewpoint) is still very orderly and regulated.

Here the rule is inflexible, yet the freedom remains infinite (or nearly so): one mode - Ionian (major), one key (the one from the preceding song) and no rhythm or tempo. And yet, notes that normally form no part of that chord now add an extra dimension to it, and give it a distinctive flavour and pattern, the feeling of a stationary framework containing constantly moving parts.

The Holy Spirit is not bound by earthly constraints, yet uses them to such a profound effect.

What amazing grace!

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Trahair  
Music Leader,  
Kingsbridge Baptist Church.



**Holding Hands in the Dark:** Alan Gibson, British Evangelical Council, £0.75.  
20pp.

Perhaps a tactically premature critique of the Inter Church Process from a non-participating body, but then the timetable of the ICP invites this. Written from a separatist viewpoint which, although I sympathise with it, I cannot hold.

Nevertheless the questions it poses need to be faced squarely before deciding whether to commit ourselves to the new ecumenical instruments. Firstly, the nature of theological pluralism presupposed in the ICP must be understood. Secondly, the nature of the Gospel which is believed to be held in common needs to be addressed. Thirdly, the implications of dealing with the official Roman hierarchy require careful consideration.

Evangelical groupings (e.g. the Afro-Caribbean churches) are already involved. If evangelical concerns, such as the need for explicit evangelism to be adopted in the definition of mission, are not to be embraced within the ICP then there can be little value in evangelicals remaining in the Instruments. Such concerns involve dealing with grass-roots problems e.g. do people of other faiths need to be converted through our 'mission'? What happens if we find that Catholics (or any others in denominational churches) are not converted Christians? Failure to give explicit answers to these questions in due course will demonstrate the bankruptcy of the ecumenical movement.

Some, of course, have already decided that it is bankrupt and will leave the BU over this matter. I would counsel them not to do so, although I understand the difficulties they have in coming to a decision such as this. Evangelicals must not be naive but we must also be generous. However, I have serious doubts that the structures that are envisaged can actually deliver the goods. Indeed, it must be asked whether they will actually hinder locally based ecumenism.

It is only fair that evangelicals within the BU study the case against this particular form of ecumenism. They will find it in this booklet. They will need to make up their minds accordingly. We will all need magnanimity when the decision is taken at Assembly.

Terry Griffith.

**Genesis, Geology and Catastrophism:** Michael R. Johnson, Paternoster, 171pp,  
£6.95.

Subtitled 'A Critique of Creationist Science and Biblical Literalism'. The author is a professional geologist and an evangelical Christian who has attempted to blow 'Whitcomb and Morris' 'The Genesis Flood' out of the water. This and other Creationist literature is subjected to devastating scrutiny with the result that many arguments are taken to pieces and left in a rather sorry looking pile. The lesson to be learned is that if Christians are to venture into scientific writing they must do so with a methodology that has scientific integrity.

Johnson believes that it is the Creationist and Catastrophist approach to Genesis 1-11 that is at fault and he spends much time on issues of hermeneutics, infallibility and inerrancy - in my view very helpfully. The author rejects a 'concordist' approach i.e. a view that accepts the findings of science and geology and attempts to harmonise this with Genesis 1-11. Needless to say he rejects a 'literalist' approach i.e. a view which treats Genesis 1-11 as the true scientific explanation of origins. He advocates a 'functionalist' approach to Scripture i.e. that Genesis 1-11 is to be interpreted in the light of its intent and purpose as a theological understanding of origins.

The relation between theology, history and science is very helpfully discussed. Those who wish to disagree with the author must find answers to some very difficult questions posed in the book.

Terry Griffith.

**Justification by Faith** What it means for us today by Alister McGrath (Marshall Pickering, 1988) £10.99 H/bk.

Alister McGrath is gaining a reputation for creative and relevant exposition of Christian doctrine. The lecturer in historical and systematic theology at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford has been prodigious in his output of both scholarly and popular works over the past five years, dealing with Reformation issues, modern German Christology and of course Jesus, the cross and our justification.

This book is a 'primer', an introductory book that aims to "help a new generation of readers wrestle with the ideas that so stirred individuals like Paul and Luther in order that they may grasp and proclaim to a disbelieving world the astonishing and thrilling truth of what God has done for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (p7).

So, in part one McGrath looks at justification by faith in the history of the Church - especially Augustine, the reformation and current differences between protestant and Roman Catholic understandings. In part two he turns his attention to the contemporary significance of the doctrine, especially in terms of how it answers the questions and needs of our unbelieving neighbours.

His style is easy. He makes complex arguments simple without being simplistic. He throws new light on old debates and leaves his readers with a much clearer understanding of our Christian past and the vital role this doctrine has in our faith. Indeed for McGrath justification by faith is the central doctrine of the Christian faith, "the spiritual heritage that has been passed down from one generation of believers to another, like the torch of liberty, and we must pass it on to those who follows." (p137).

The book is bristling with insights. His discussion of the task of theology is excellent. The theologian is there to support the preacher of the gospel by being the "translator and interpreter" of its timeless message to the contemporary situation. His description of universalism as 'rape' is glorious and well defended, if a little polemical. And his insistence that justification by faith is not a legal fiction but a transforming encounter with the risen Jesus that has necessary and inevitable consequences in our behaviour and lifestyle is spot on. We need more theologians like him.

But this is not to say the book is faultless. I found his discussion of the nature of Christian ethics decidedly one-sided. His emphasis on the personal and internal nature of Christian ethics seems to ignore the weight of biblical teaching on the social, economic and political responsibility of God's people. And this quibble leads to a more fundamental one. His biblical discussion of the doctrine of justification is good but thin and it is

heavily biased in favour of Paul. If we are to claim biblical authority for this most central doctrine of the Christian Faith (which I very much hope we are!) then we need in each generation to show how the bible - both Old and New Testaments - teach it. All McGrath does really is show how Augustine and Luther understood the bible. He even appears to give credence to Augustine's grossly allegorical interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan which, as every first year theological student knows, does not bear exegetical examination. Perhaps this is an indication of the systematic theologian's disregard of modern biblical studies. If so, it's a pity.

That said, the book is excellent. As an exposition of the contemporary relevance of the doctrine of justification you will not find better. And the biblical support for his exposition can be found elsewhere. For those of us who rarely preach on the great doctrines of the faith this book is real encouragement (not to mention invaluable resource!) for us to do so.

Simon Jones  
London Bible College.

**In Spirit and in Truth** Ed. Robin Sheldon. Hodder and Stoughton £6.95.

Few of us would be foolish enough to deny that we approach every aspect of our Christian life from our own perspective. Our background, training and experience all play their part in limiting our outlook. Robin Sheldon has given us a valuable book on the subject of Music and Worship, facing head on the variety in this area.

The first thing that catches the eye about this paperback is the diverse, yet distinguished and experienced, group that have contributed:

Colin Buchanan: Bishop of Aston.  
Graham Cray: St. Michael-le-Belfrey, York  
Lionel Dakers: The Royal School of Church Music  
Stephen Dean: Music and Liturgy Magazine  
Christopher Dearnley: Organist, St. Paul's Cathedral, London  
Dave Fellingham: Clarendon Church, Hove  
Philip Lawson-Johnston: Holy Trinity, Brompton  
David Peacock: Upton Vale Baptist Church, Torquay  
Carl Tuttle: Vineyard Ministries, International  
Andrew Wilson-Dickson: Cardiff College of Music and Drama

Each of these write unashamedly from their own perspective: giving us both insight from within their strands of the worshipping Church, and a challenge to those outside it. Some concentrate on the theology, others on the practice and still others on the experience.

This small book, only some 198 pages, is a good introduction to how others think - never being reduced to a caricature! It will serve well to broaden our knowledge and understanding of our fellow worshippers. The book is further enhanced by an Editor's introduction to each of the writers, and a good introductory Bibliography to the field of Music in Worship.

The most predominant theme, found to some extent in every essay, is the need for a greater respect for each other as we seek to worship "In Spirit and in Truth", leading on to less suspicion and a wider cross fertilization.

Anyone prepared to take the time to discover more about contrasting aspects of the worshipping Church would do well to read, and consider, this worthwhile volume.

Bob Stephen,  
Stoke Newington, London.

**The Glad Surrender:** Elisabeth Elliot, STL/Kingsway, £2.25, 158pp.

Three cheers for Elisabeth Elliot! She consistently delivers messages which we need to hear. Over the years she has produced numerous books packed with godly wisdom. She writes with discernment, refusing to be carried away by the latest trends in thinking. She has the courage to state the truth as she sees it even when it is unpalatable, and she is loving enough to call us to obey God whatever the cost. Her labours have enriched my life immensely, and I thank God for her.

"The Glad Surrender" is a call to disciplined Christian living. (Incidentally, the word "Discipline" appeared in the title of the American edition; if its omission from the British Title reflects a fear that any mention of discipline might harm sales, then the message of this book is needed more than ever). E.E.'s thesis is that God has called us to know and serve Him, and the totality of our response is discipline: a wholehearted Yes to His will. Individual chapters deal with the discipline of our body, mind, place, time, possessions, work and feelings. Her reflections on these topics are practical, thought-provoking and challenging. The ideals set before us are high, but the encouraging tone of the book ensures we are not crushed by them. For even when E.E. is focusing on our responsibilities, she conveys an overwhelming sense of the grace of God.

Here is a call to discipleship without compromise, and a help for the battle. Buy it, read it, and pray that we will all act upon it.

Eddie Larkman,  
Harlesden and Kensal Rise.

## **BOOKS RECEIVED**

**Mine Forever:** Cliff Richard, Hodder & Stoughton, £5.00 (Ten copy pack).

"The message of the Bible is that there need be no such thing as an insecure Christian". The whole booklet is a gem of basic biblical teaching on assurance. There doesn't seem to be any pretence i.e. it is written from a backdrop of personal suffering and doubt. Clear, concise and down to earth. (Paul McCreary).

**The Life of Joy:** Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Hodder & Stoughton, £6.95, 235pp. Eighteen sermons styled as a 'commentary' on Philippians 1-2 originally preached in 1947-48. Vigorous and vintage preaching from the 'Doctor'. Sermons average 12-13 pages each.

**Real People Real Faith:** Keswick Convention 1988, STL. £2.95, 254pp. Donald English on 1 Corinthians 1-3 and Stuart Briscoe on James, plus many others.

**Matthew Henry's Commentary: Acts to Revelation:** edited by David Winter, Hodder & Stoughton, £3.95, 541pp.

A fifth impression of this abridged edition of the classic Puritan commentary. Its secret is its pithiness and concern to draw out what God is saying in very practical terms.

**Seasons of a Woman's Life:** Jean Lush, Hodder & Stoughton, £2.95, 207pp. Deals with the link between the emotional and hormonal in a woman's life. Not much that is new to a woman who understands her body, and someone who doesn't probably won't be reading this book. A helpful introduction to mid-life and menopausal issues, bearing in mind that each woman's experience will be different. Single male pastoral workers would find help in understanding women here. Co-authored, and it shows a bit (DJG).

\*\*\* The Editor apologises if any reader or correspondent has had mail returned to them in January. For some reason best known to the Post Office, they took it upon themselves to return letters marked 'Gone Away'. Please note the slight change of address omitting the words 'The Flat'.\*\*\*



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