

NOT THE BAPTIST TIMES



A serious lack in the Union is the absence of a publishing house that exists to promote and distribute serious and interesting writing by Baptists for Baptists. In my penultimate editorial I have decided to grasp the nettle of the Baptist Times and discuss its role within the denomination. I may live to regret taking this precipitate course of action, but I feel that I must voice the concerns of many who are dissatisfied with the BT.

Let me state at the outset that I have nothing but admiration for the small staff of the BT who somehow manage to produce a weekly paper without fail. It is not so much the content of the BT that I wish to criticise, as the concept of a denominational weekly newspaper that I want to question. It is for this reason that I have asked the Chairman of the Committee of Directors to reply, rather than the Editor of the BT. The issue, simply put, is this - is the denomination as it now exists best served by a weekly newspaper?

I also have to confess that I am the only person in my church who receives the BT. It is difficult enough to get members to read anything and I'm afraid that the BT is not the kind of required reading I would encourage others to sell their shirts for. This state of affairs is all too common. I sense that the BT is read loyally by the few but not with much interest or consequent usefulness. There are many criticisms of content that could be made (as they can be made of this Newsletter), but it is the concept that needs a thorough-going reappraisal.

Firstly, there is simply not enough newsworthy material to warrant a weekly publication. No matter how good the editorial team is, if you have a lot of 'chaff' all you can do is publish it.

Secondly, a weekly deadline militates against producing thoughtful material and responses. I do not think that most religious news needs to be reported and dealt with as soon as it appears. It is still of interest to the committed Christian weeks later.

Thirdly, an increasing number of Baptist leaders are getting their news and theological/ecclesiological/pastoral input from monthly magazines such as Leadership Today, 21st Century Christian, Christian Family, Renewal or

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

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Evangelicals Now. In these days of searching for a distinctive Baptist 'identity', who is going to shape and influence the thinking of our churches? Certainly not the Baptist Times (nor the new Baptist Hymnbook for that matter but that's another story).

I believe there is a gap in the Baptist 'market' which is crying out to be filled and that the BT cannot fill it. We need a publication by Baptists for Baptists and it needs to be well produced and in a magazine format. According to the 1989/90 UK Christian Handbook the United Reformed Church (approx. 125,000 members) circulates 'Reform' to 18,000 subscribers monthly. The Assemblies of God (50,000 members) circulates 'Redemption' to 8,000 subscribers monthly. The BT manages under 16,000 per week. I understand that the Scottish Baptists have a monthly publication. Isn't it time to look at this other option?

I happen to believe that the Union is worth belonging to, but how can I convince others in my church (nearly all of whom are converts or from non-baptist Christian backgrounds) when I have little informative and interesting means by which to do so? The BT just cannot fulfil this need while it remains in a weekly newspaper style format.

Several of our ministers contribute regular and stimulating columns to some of the monthly periodicals mentioned above. Do their names appear regularly in the BT? Several of our ministers are well known outside our denomination through their writings. One such received the Christian Book of the Year Award recently. Another has published six books. Have these books been brought to the attention of the BT's readers? The answer is a resounding 'NO'. The monthly periodicals are able to give space to the consideration of vital and complex issues. However, the sheer quantity of material that needs to be found to fill sixteen pages of newsprint every week becomes the priority. We need less paper, more discrimination, and better targetting of key issues that affect our churches up and down the land. In short, our leaders and members need to be better educated and informed about things baptistic.

An attractively produced monthly magazine by Baptists for Baptists (perhaps even incorporating the BMS and Home Mission?!) will appeal to a much wider readership with much greater effect. It would be something that I could put into the hands of a prospective church member with confidence. There might just be other publications I could recommend but, unfortunately, not the Baptist Times.

Terry Griffith.

REPLY



The Directors of the Baptist Times welcome the attention given to the paper in the editorial and particularly the invitation to respond. Positive discussion and constructive criticism are always appreciated and help both Directors and staff in their constant effort to improve its form and structure and to make it a better servant of the denomination.

The writer's acknowledgement of the valuable part played by a small staff in producing the paper week by week was especially appreciated and is a judgement which they heartily endorse.

Initially the issue is said to be one of the paper's concept (do we want a Baptist Times?) its function and format. By way of response the Directors would make a number of points.

First, it should be recognised that bearing in mind the 'pass-on' rate the Baptist Times is probably read by between one quarter and one third of the denomination. That hardly suggests that it is superfluous or insignificant.

Second, that Baptists read other papers may be no bad thing, but none of those quoted is able to provide the denominational information and reflect the breadth of theological, doctrinal, liturgical and ecclesiastical interest with a varied ecumenical and political perspective in a way that the Baptist Times does. This is why we believe in the paper's existence and is one reason why many Baptists still look to the Baptist Times for it. Of course there are some churches where sales are low and we regret that the writer of the Mainstream article seems to have tried hard without success to do something about. It is still, however, by no means certain that this is the fault of the Baptist Times. It might just as easily be attributable to many other factors.

Third, whether it would be better in a magazine format as a monthly is a highly debatable point. The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive and this is a matter on which other readers might like to comment. We are not however convinced that 'less paper' and better targetting of key issues is the answer. One of the features of our denomination is that there is such a variety of opinion as what the key issues are. Moreover, the writer already complains that some Baptist writers and publishers do not get a mention. They would be less likely to do so in a monthly and since the targetting of key issues would have to be even more selective it could mean a narrowing of the topics covered and the people used.

Our thanks to Mainstream for raising these issues. Rest assured the Manager and Directors will continue listening as the debate continues.

Alec Gilmore,
Chairman, Baptist Times.

Readers are invited to send their comments to the Editors of both publications. Terry Griffith.



WHAT'S HAPPENING TO SUNDAY EVENING?

I was talking not long ago to a fellow-pastor who said that he and his church were thinking of discontinuing their evening service. His church is quite small - less than fifty members - and the feeling is that low numbers on a Sunday evening render the service unviable.

My friend put it in as positive a way as possible. It is, after all, no law of the Medes and Persians that there must be two services on a Sunday. Why should we be enslaved to a tradition that has outlived its usefulness? Would not a couple of small house-groups be of far greater effectiveness for worship and prayer and fellowship?

He may well be right. To discontinue Sunday evening services is not necessarily a sign of failure. And what is right for one church, of course, may not be right for another. Better to discontinue a service, if that is God's will, than to keep it struggling along just for the sake of it.

But having said all that, I must confess that I wasn't easy in my mind. Even if it isn't one, it certainly seems like an admission of defeat. Even if not in my friend's case, I've no doubt that many churches that close down their evening service do so on the "If you can't beat them, join them" principle, rather than on the "More than Conquerors!" principle.

When I was a teenage concert in London in the 1960's the evening service was the big one, drawing a far larger congregation than the morning. In some churches I believe this is still the pattern. But generally speaking, no doubt because of the switch to morning Sunday School - a switch, incidentally, which must surely rate as one of the healthiest developments in the church in recent years - the pattern seems to have been reversed. The evening service often takes on the character of anti-climax after the atmosphere of the morning.

I've heard various justifications of this. One church secretary (no less!) to whom I spoke had made a conscious decision to use Sunday evening as a time for the family. He spoke of the very heavy pressures upon himself and people like him - a taxing job a weekly house-group, regular deacons' or elders' meetings, and so on. Again it is not for me to say that he is wrong: that's a matter between him and God. But....!

I can't help wondering if a bit of bluff needs calling in this area. Yes, the pressures of life are great for many of us. But when all is said and done, were they any the less great 20 or 30 or 40 years ago? I think of the people I looked up to as older Christians when I was a teenager. They too were bringing up young families, coping with demanding jobs, hurrying from meeting to meeting. Am I being unduly cynical if I suggest that perhaps the major change since those days is the increase in distractions? There seem to be infinitely more opportunities now for the pursuit of hobbies and interests, not to mention the lure of the television.

Attitudes towards Sunday itself have also changed. They were far stricter 20 or more years ago. Many Christians today seem happy to mend their cars on a Sunday, decorate their houses, catch up on their housework and other tasks.

I stress again, it is not for me to judge. How people view Sunday is a matter between them and God. But perhaps it is not a bad thing to point out that, under cover of plausible reasons, there is at least a danger of quite simply rationalising sin and lack of commitment. At the end of the day (!) it's difficult to avoid the bald question: Just where are all these Christians, church members, on a Sunday evening? What are they all doing? One aims, of course, to be charitable. Perhaps they're grouped as families around God's Word? Perhaps they're enjoying times of fellowship and prayer? Perhaps they're out there witnessing in their own locality, going from door to door? Perhaps.... And perhaps they're slumped in front of the television?

I have a young man in my church who has the somewhat disconcerting habit of being totally honest. When he and his wife were asking for membership we talked a bit about the level of their commitment to the church. Having just had their first child I tried to make it as easy for them as I could. "I know it's difficult for you to get along on a Sunday evening", I said, "what with your work commitments and the new baby and all the rest...." To which came the reply: "Thanks, but it won't do! One of us could be there on a Sunday evening if we really wanted to; it's just that we've never really got our act together." Well, I wasn't going to argue.

One thing we need to remember about Sunday services, whether morning or evening, is that they are more than simply a gathering of Christian people for worship, fellowship and teaching. They are also, whether we like it or not, the church's shop-window. They are public gatherings, advertised as

such, to which any are welcome. The non-Christian outsider may know a few Christian people in his circle of friends, but his perception of the church as a whole will be controlled largely by what he finds when he turns up on a Sunday. If he finds the building locked and in darkness he can be forgiven for saying "So much for that church!"

Mind you, if the building is open and he goes in to find a scattering of a dozen people in an auditorium that will seat 500 he's not likely to be terribly impressed with that either! But this, surely, is where a little imagination is needed. The problem with many Sunday evening services - indeed, with many Sunday services full stop - is that they are trying to be something they aren't. They have failed to adapt to changed circumstances. It's as if the faithful handful are saying "All right, there may be only a dozen of us here - but by gum we're going to convince ourselves that there's 500!" So - the preacher stands aloft in his pulpit; the secretary creaks solemnly down the aisle to "give out the notices"; the organist booms away from his eyrie; and the congregation, all remaining 8 or 9, look surreptitiously at their watches and long for the moment of their release. And who can blame them?

But put those same dozen people in a comfortable, warm, well-lit room; sit them in a circle rather than in straight rows; encourage them to share their experiences and offer prayer; let the sermon be given sitting down and eyeball to eyeball (Jesus sat to preach, did He not?) - and, by God's grace, you've got the possibility at least of a lively act of worship, and one too in which the outsider can be made to feel at home. Such a gathering has a welcoming feel; the seeds of growth are there. It may well be that before too long the circle will have to be enlarged; eventually (and sadly?) a return to the "proper" church may be necessary.

Such a gathering, incidentally, also provides ample scope for experimentation in worship. It can take on a completely different character from the morning service - far less structured, far more informal, with less pressure of time than in the morning.

If my experience is anything to go by evening services build up a clientele of their own. There are always those who for perfectly genuine reasons are only able to come in the evening. There are also the fringe people, those who may not yet be persuaded concerning Christ, but who wish to draw near to God and to hear His word. Single people, childless couples, students, people who work odd or irregular hours - these are often the kind of folk for whom Sunday evening is the best opportunity for worship. And, of course, there is always the surprise visitor, the person who may for a long time have been considering the possibility of turning up at church, or who suddenly decides to obey an impulse. It seems sad to discontinue something which is precious to such a wide variety of people.

When all is said and done, Sunday is Sunday! It is the Lord's day, the day of Christ's resurrection, the first day of a new week. It doesn't end at midday, when we pour out of morning service. Where better for a Christian to be on the evening of the Lord's day than worshipping God in the company of his brothers and sisters in Christ? And lives can get changed on a Sunday evening, every bit as much as on a Sunday morning! The principle that God's word does not return void still operates after midday! Should not those of us who are preachers be grateful for another opportunity to make God's word known, and be determined to make the very best use of it?

A few months ago we were on holiday. My wife and two children and I went along to the local Baptist church on the Sunday morning and enjoyed the worship. As a preacher starved of other people's sermons I was keen to worship also in the evening, but I thought it would be refreshing and

interesting to go along to another church. I negotiated an agreement with my wife. If she was prepared to put the children to bed and babysit while I went to church I would do anything - but anything! - she asked of me during the rest of the holiday. (What generosity and magnanimity!) She readily agreed and I set off. I had made a mental note that morning of a large imposing church which dominated much of the town, so I headed in that direction in keen anticipation. But the church wasn't there. Oh, the building was there all right. But there was no church. "Morning worship - 11.00 a.m. said the notice outside. I drove off, feeling cheated and disappointed. Where were all those Christian people on the evening of the Lord's day?

Although I knew I would be late I decided to make for the Baptist church from that morning. I was greeted with cheering lights and the sound of hearty singing. Yes, the congregation was significantly smaller than in the morning. But at least they were there, worshipping God and waiting to hear His word. I took up my song-book with gratitude: it was good to be among God's people!

For some churches the decision to close the evening service may well be right. But it's a big decision to make. And before making it it can't be bad at least to examine prayerfully other options: not least, "Shouldn't we be seeking to pray it back to life?"

Colin Sedgwick.
Scunthorpe.

Responses please to the Editor.

LETTER FROM BRAZIL



Since my wife and I came to Great Britain in January 87, we have been given the privilege of visiting many churches and speaking to many people all over the country, on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society which sponsors both of us in our studies over here. What I will be sharing through the following lines is the fruit of these visits and contacts. Therefore I must say that it will be a general view and personal opinion, not focusing on a particular church.

There are four main things I have observed so far.

1. A LACK OF EXPECTANCY

This has been one of the most obvious points. People keep going to the churches Sunday after Sunday, but they do not expect anything to happen either in their lives or other people's lives. They do not expect to be changed, challenged or that somebody will be saved. Let me try to clarify this. I have been to Spring Harvest this year and I enjoyed being there despite the "lovely" weather at Skegness. There I saw people committing their lives, accepting Jesus as their Saviour and so on. However I have to say that the quality of the teaching there was not better or deeper than the teaching people have in many churches. The difference is that when they go to Spring Harvest they go expecting that something will happen. This is the reason why they take and encourage their friends to go as well. The result of Mission 89

is also a proof of what I am saying. People took their relatives and friends to hear Dr. Billy Graham expecting they would be saved. Sadly we do not see the same sense of expectancy in the churches. Sometimes this lack of expectancy is seen in some pastors who preach but are hope-less.

They do not seem to believe that their sermon will produce any result or that anybody will be challenged at all, some are even afraid of applying the message to their people's lives. William Carey once said that if we "expect great things from God", He will do great things!

2. A LACK OF COMMITMENT

I have noticed that the church is seen more like a building where people go every Sunday as they go to a cinema or a theatre to sit in the places already booked, rather than a body, in which every member has his part to play, using the gift or gifts that God has given to them. I come from a country where the church is part of people's lives, they feel that they are the church. In the local church where I used to be the pastor in Brazil, we had professionals (doctors, dentists, psychologists, social-workers, etc...), housewives, students, who gave their free time to serve the neighbourhood. Apart from their jobs they used their capacities and gifts to serve during the week. Some time ago we invited a family to come to our valediction and they wrote back saying that they could not come because on that day they would be involved with their church inviting the neighbourhood to Mission 89. That letter showed their commitment and priority.

3. THE CHURCHES ARE HELD IN THE PAST

I have observed that the churches are still looking back to the past, not aware of the new opportunities and challenges around. I have heard very often people still speaking how good and crowded the churches were in Spurgeon's time. There is nothing wrong with it, but it is dangerous when it holds you in the past. I am not very familiar with British History, but I guess that in Spurgeon's time, there were not so many religions as there are nowadays. Perhaps this country was not so mixed-up in terms of races as it is now. These things maybe a problem but they are without doubt a real challenge. I firmly believe that the same God who used Spurgeon and other men in the past to face their challenges is the same today and He will be forever and that He can use His people to change things in this generation.

4. THE FAILURE TO REACH OUT

There is a great concern for Mission, but Mission Overseas mainly, which is brought by organizations like B.M.S., Christian Aidi, Tear Fund and others. We in Brazil are very grateful for this concern and I do believe that many other countries are. However, I would say that there is a gap between the local churches and Mission Overseas, that would be the local mission, the mission of the church where she is. I think it is easier to concentrate on the problems of the third world and forget your own problems. The churches over here cannot forget to look at their mission locally with great care. They must be aware that one of the highest figures in terms of suicide is not found in the third world where people are struggling to survive, but it is here in the first world. Also that Spiritism is increasing here, as there are quite a few people, mainly lonely elderly people, trying to speak to their beloved one who have died. Some months ago as part of my training at Spurgeon's College I went to take part in a mission (Missionary Project) in which I did door to door visitation with another fellow from the College. In one of the houses we visited we met a woman who was a Spiritualist who told us that she was "converted" into Spiritism because a friend took her to a Spiritualist session where she "spoke" to her mother who had died some years ago. She tried very hard to "convert" us into Spiritism. As we left that house I felt very sad indeed as I realized that the Devil had been their

first and that woman was deceived. Even so, I still believe that the light of Jesus can shine on her life, one day taking her out from her darkness.

I would like to close here by quoting a statement of the National Evangelical Anglican Congress, I found in the book "Skilful Shepherds" by Derek Tidball.

"We are keenly aware that the church is no longer a pastoral institution in a largely Christian country, but rather a minority in a missionary situation".

Xavier Dos Santos,
(formerly Spurgeon's College, now Cardiff Baptist College)

MISSION PRAISE CLASSIFICATION



Dear Terry,

I warned you that I might be sending you the following... if I finished it. Well, I have and wonder if it might be useful to all those who use Mission Praise 1/2 either as their only hymn book or to augment the Baptist Hymn Book.

Because it is most likely that your readers are already familiar with the BHB, I have used the exact same classification. However, many hymns appear in this classification under more than one heading, making it even more useful (e.g. Abide with me is under 'Victory over Death' as well as 'Evening Hymns').

I enclose two styles of listing, the numbers only index probably being preferable if you think it a good idea to actually incorporate this into a future edition of Mainstream, though obviously the full listing (first line index) is ever so much more useable. If you cannot publish the full listing then I am prepared to send anyone a copy free of charge if they provide an addressed A4 envelope with a 22p stamp with their request to my home address.

This whole effort was born of frustration in trying to choose suitable hymns from Mission praise and I hope it can be helpful beyond the confines of Wilton Baptist.

Oliver Vellacott,
Kings Orchard,
Teffont,
Salisbury. SP3 5QP.

Oliver Vellacott is on sabbatical leave and some delay in answering requests is inevitable.

Mission Praise Classification

 WORSHIP AND PRAISE

6	7	19	24	26	32	46	48	53	54	65	73	74
77	87	96	98	99	102	108	130	135	138	144	159	163
173	178	179	182	185	187	188	191	192	203	210	215	225
228	240	241	242	248	250	264	272	273	276	278	286	287
291	295	300	303	304	327	341	343	344	356	357	363	370
376	401	411	412	427	462	468	471	474	479	487	498	507
512	514	516	519	539	540	557	560	577	581	598	612	616
626	637	647										

THE HOLY TRINITY

44	46	56	75	185	224	228	231	244	256	257	304	340
345	350	352	364	465	611							

GOD THE FATHER

14	40	41	44	45	62	103	142	187	221	227	229	241
313	328	347	348	354	356	371	375	390	416	419	427	433
501	503	511	515	561	566	608	610	640	645			

GOD THE SON: His Advent

35	176	180	271	315	335	341	342	359	365	385	489	506
528	544	627										

GOD THE SON: His Birth

237	302	305	310	315	317	325	326	336	379	384	437	439
442	504	509	530	552	553	558	580	606	622	624	629	

GOD THE SON: His Earthly Ministry

360	458	547	573									
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GOD THE SON: His Suffering & Death

11	20	57	70	107	110	139	147	154	160	171	173	175
230	258	265	282	331	455	521	522	623				

GOD THE SON: His Resurrection

9	18	69	86	94	117	150	238	252	255	282	308	322
324	415	425	438	447	454	456	545	550	554	585	594	

GOD THE SON: His Ascension & Exaltation

117	154	282	308	382	448	456	475	535	545			
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GOD THE SON: His High Priesthood

66	67	78	115	126	162	248	383	387	422	449	461	476
525	532	542	587	605								

GOD THE SON: His Kingship & Final Triumph

5	12	15	28	33	64	65	67	79	83	123	126	141
146	173	180	195	206	208	220	226	235	236	260	268	323
332	358	443	448	450	452	463	467	473	491	500	526	547
584	592	597	615	625	628	639						

GOD THE SON: His Praise & Glory

3	7	15	26	31	37	39	64	67	71	72	74	91
101	118	119	122	128	129	131	133	151	165	168	186	189
191	204	216	225	232	242	249	253	259	266	267	270	277
279	280	289	299	308	325	329	330	332	400	406	407	412

414	420	441	446	451	460	463	472	473	493	494	496	499
505	541	542	578	590	599	620	633	634	635	636	642	644
646												

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

13	25	34	36	38	47	58	88	125	134	145	146	164
166	170	174	196	198	200	209	222	293	314	319	377	380
388	395	397	417	418	445	529	538	543	548	557	563	564
565	571	588	590	631								

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

76	177	181	201	205	215	316	367	486	533	562		
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THE CHURCH OF GOD: Its Nature & Purpose

27	59	217	222	247	309	369	440	484	485	538	543	607
609	614											

THE CHURCH OF GOD: The Lord's House & the Lord's Day

68	97	125	130	239	253	355	399	492	568	618		
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THE CHURCH OF GOD: Baptism

49	84	100	169	172	604							
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THE CHURCH OF GOD: The Lord's Supper

80	120	128	318	350	387	394	457	470	480	570	575	613
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THE CHURCH OF GOD: Corporate Prayer

43	125	190	218	251	262	290	478	534	537	586		
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THE CHURCH OF GOD: The Ministry - Pastors & Teachers

32	181	362	574									
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THE CHURCH OF GOD: The Fellowship of Believers

13	21	108	124	131	134	137	224	233	251	254	256	283
294	301	311	338	349	396	435	457	466	474	485		

THE CHURCH OF GOD: Its Witness & World-wide Mission

9	47	50	61	88	105	111	139	164	177	183	196	198
218	224	243	254	255	261	288	293	301	346	351	373	378
391	393	402	484	531	555	556	582	583	600	602	617	630

THE CHURCH OF GOD: The Church Triumphant

12	27	51	79	109	206	208	217	220	235	252	268	281
284	290	323	413	450	452	526	589	592	593	597	609	632

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: The Gospel Call

35	85	116	199	202	234	285	381	559	572	591	595	
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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Response in Repentance & Faith

8	10	11	20	30	38	81	85	89	104	113	120	121
132	143	193	197	223	237	263	264	265	285	320	334	361
430	431	455	477	482	488	498	501	518	522	536		

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Obedience & Consecration

1	4	16	17	30	48	82	90	92	93	104	105	127
152	155	174	200	209	211	212	219	265	269	297	307	386
403	405	434	453	462	469	479	495	508	546	551	562	588
604	643											

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Joy & Thanksgiving

22	23	52	95	98	101	114	156	169	194	199	216	281
292	353	396	398	400	404	408	410	421	424	425	428	436
457	525	527	576									

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Self Discipline

84	207	214	360									
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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Service & Witness

60	100	111	148	152	153	268	274	305	361	393	444	483
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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Venture & Guidance

43	49	63	116	158	163	172	201	211	296	312	389	423
464	465	510	569	621								

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Temptation & Conflict

26	82	92	207	262	274	275	284	524	579			
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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Trust in God

17	29	41	45	77	106	114	140	145	179	184	190	221
227	229	232	245	246	292	337	347	368	372	392	401	409
416	426	432	497	513	549	601	603	638	641			

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Growth in Grace

8	25	34	107	112	129	136	148	149	157	161	166	167
181	213	306	314	319	321	334	339	377	381	395	406	429
459	502	517	523	533	548	596						

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Victory over Death

2	11	18	42	113	147	158	171	180	184	275	296	
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OUR LIFE IN SOCIETY: Marriage

520

OUR LIFE IN SOCIETY: Work & Recreation

55

OUR LIFE IN SOCIETY: The Care of the Sick & Needy

351 528

OUR LIFE IN SOCIETY: Our Country & Our Citizenship

142 374 481

OUR LIFE IN SOCIETY: International Relations

372 373 435

OUR LIFE IN SOCIETY: Travellers & Absent Friends

340

TIMES AND SEASONS: Morning

161 266 320

TIMES AND SEASONS: Evening

2 218 306 366 478 567

TIMES AND SEASONS: The Seasons

199 298

TIMES AND SEASONS: Harvest

52 178 298 333 471 619

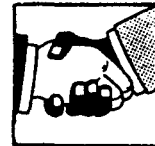
FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

289 298 310 403

THE CLOSE OF WORSHIP

490

WORDS OF WELCOME



85 Churches from a wide range of denominations contributed to the new ADMINISTRY resource paper 89:1, **Words of Welcome**.

The paper covers all types of welcome literature: pew cards, packs, letters and notice-sheets. A wide range of samples is illustrated. The paper also investigates how appropriate wording - without jargon - can attract the interest of the newcomer and also glean useful information for the church.

Strategy

Findings of the paper show that any literature produced must be part of an overall welcome strategy. The printed word is a tool to enable newcomers to discover more about the church they have visited - the general 'philosophy' as well as specific Sunday and midweek activities.

"Entering a church building must provoke uncomfortable feelings for those who are not used to it," comments The Revd. Dr. Derek Tidball (Senior Minister of Mutley Baptist Church, Plymouth and soon to become president of the Baptist Union), who gave his 'Reaction' to the research findings. "Attempts to make them welcome and help them find their way round are vital." He goes on to explain that literature needs to be followed up if it is to be effective. A visit or some other personal contact is essential if newcomers are to be integrated into church life.

RANGE

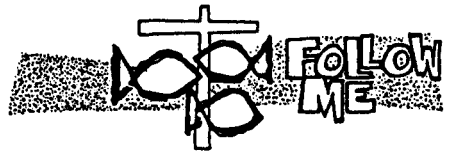
Welcome cards, packs, letters and notice-sheets are used by a number of the 85 respondents. Some more unusual items include a special card for funeral attenders and a car-sticker. Much welcome literature should be seen in terms of a 'take home advert' for the church - and must be attractively presented if people are to be encouraged to return. Illustrations of the range of items and details of cost are included in the resource paper.

WARNING!

A warning is given to readers by Derek Tidball. "The production of literature, whether a simple card or a complex pack of materials, can never take the place of a personal welcome." He goes on to say that a sensitive and sincere welcome, as well as a genuine interest in newcomers, is vital if the literature is to have any credibility. There is a call to beware that we actually deliver what we promise - we must not fall into the trap of only welcoming people for what they can contribute.

The paper is available to all ADMINISTRY members. Details of membership from: ADMINISTRY, 69 Sandridge Road, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 4AG. Tel: St. Albans (0727) 561370.

COCKNEY SPIRIT



I've been in the ministry nearly 25 years, the last fifteen at Castlehold, Newport on the Isle of Wight, and have not managed a Sabbatical. It's been on the agenda for some years - the right time and the right thing never seem to have materialised. Then one day I was reading, the words lifted off the page, it was the classic experience of guidance known by so many who read the sacred page - but this time it was the Baptist Times. There was this advert in the Jobs section: 'Skipper wanted for Christian Sailing Project, Yachtmaster certificate required'. So began my association with Cockney Spirit. It was put to the church that I should have ten weeks 'extended leave', using that description to avoid criticism of it not being a proper Sabbatical.

The Cockney Spirit Sailing Trust has its origins at the Mayflower Centre in East London, where some 10 years ago concern about youth unemployment led to a ferro-cement boat building programme. Despite countless setbacks, the boat is afloat at Tollesbury in Essex, and provides a wonderful resource for small groups of young people (up to eight can be accommodated) and as a training facility for potential leaders. Built by inner-city youngsters, the Trust is keen for it to be used by their successors, but as and when space is available, other groups would be welcome.

Cockney Spirit is a 40ft ketch and sails around the East Coast rivers between Orfordness and North Foreland. Groups are welcome for weekends, midweek or a full week. As I write I am in the middle of my term on board, and I have learned a lot about today's inner-city youngsters and the various styles of leadership exercised with them. Being an Eastender myself, I thought I would have a head start - how wrong I was! The most I have in common with them is support of West Ham. However, the stresses are very different from those of leading a church. I've met some great folk, sailed in some new waters and even done a bit of reading. But most surprising of all, I'm looking forward to a return to the Isle of Wight. Maybe for me, that's what it is all about.

More information about the Cockney Spirit Sailing Trust can be obtained from Joy Skinner, The Flat, The Baptist Church, Frampton Park Road, London. E9 7PQ. Tel: 01-983 1467).

Richard Steel.

BOOKS RECEIVED



People Like Us: John Davis & Bob Moffett, Scripture Union, £2.50, 95pp. Ten Bible studies for homegroups on practical problems as illustrated in the lives of biblical characters eg. Ruth and loneliness; family difficulties and Hannah; Gideon and inferiority; Mary and practical parenting. Full instructions and suggestions included. Aimed to help those with little biblical and Christian background. John Davis is Minister at Edmonton Baptist Church, London.

The Evangelicals: The Story of a Great Christian Movement. Paternoster, £5.95, 154pp, large pbk. Various contributors and commentary by J.D. Allan. The briefest of church histories with an emphasis on the growth of the missionary movement and third-world Christianity. Many illustrations and pictures. A book to dip into or to have as a basic reference in the church library. Not really a coffee table book. If someone is asking about who the 'Evangelicals' are and what they stand for, this will prove to be an attractive and interesting read.

Crack in the Wall: Life and Death in Kowloon Walled City. Jackie Pullinger, Hodder & Stoughton, £5.95, 144pp, large pbk. Many colour photos by Nick Danziger. Definitely a coffee table book. Many short testimonies illustrating the work that Jackie Pullinger has been doing in Hong Kong among drug addicts (old and young), prostitutes, the Triads etc. A warm and hopeful book out of a desperate situation. Compare this book with the travel brochures in your local Travel Agency.

Healing: Fiction, Fantasy or Fact? Dr. David Lewis, Hodder & Stoughton, £8.95, 384pp. In so far as a healing conference (Harrogate, 1986) can be statistically analysed, this is a thorough work. From an initial survey questionnaire at the conference, one hundred randomly chosen individuals are followed up in depth over a period of up to a year and an analysis is given. There are many encouraging testimonies and apparent failures are not glossed over. This is not an 'objective' or 'scientific' survey in the strict sense. A lot of Wimber's teaching is summarised and associated phenomena are analysed. The author's use of Scripture at points seems naive and speculative. A descriptive book (with many fascinating statistics) that will encourage the 'converted' but will not convince the sceptical. I must leave it to others more competent than I to judge whether the author's methodology is sound.

Powers: Testing the Psychic and the Supernatural, Dan Korem, Hodder & Stoughton, £2.95. A fascinating and informative book which exposes the sham of most 'paranormal' activity. This needs to be read by gullible Christians. A magician himself, now turned investigative journalist, he shows how many psychic and occultic phenomena are the product of clever deception. This in itself is enough to mark such phenomena as Satanic because the devil is the father of lies. He does not deny the reality of the supernatural in the evil realm, but has found that there are few cases of genuine occultic powers among those reported to him by Christians.

Does God Speak Today? David Pytches, Hodder & Stoughton, £1.95. "...we.. seek a wider recognition among all biblically orthodox Christians... concerning the kind of supernatural revelations we describe in the following pages.." (p.13). Part one is a selection of short testimonies of God speaking to individuals in order to guide and bless. Such specific incidents have occurred with the likes of Spurgeon, see on P.45, (and Dr. Lloyd-Jones, and the Editor of this Newsletter, for that matter). Part Two gives illustrations of counterfeit revelation, providing integrity for the book at the expense of a little discouragement. The Postscript majors on the whole area of discernment and guidance in a helpful and practical way. Good booklist. An encouraging short read for those who believe that God still speaks today. (SJP).

The Marriage Builder, (NavPress) £2.50.

Understanding People, (Marshalls) £4.95.

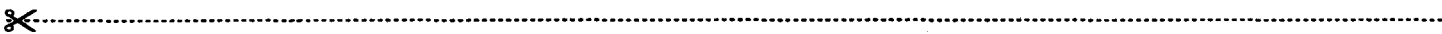
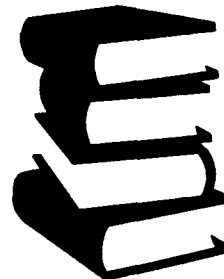
Inside Out, (NavPress) £4.95 all by Lawrence Crabb.

There are many books on Christian counselling today but none so central of helpful as those by Lawrence Crabb. His earlier books, "Basic Principles of Biblical Counselling" and "Effective Biblical Counselling" (now both published in paperback by Marshalls) were reviewed some years ago.

The Marriage Builder is an outstanding book and ought to be read by every minister and every Christian counsellor. It may well transform our own marriage as well as the guidance we give to others in marriage preparation. If I could have only 20 books from the hundreds on my shelves, this would certainly be one of them.

Understanding People spends its first section defending Scripture as the basis for Christian counselling. The rest of the book describes people's basic nature and needs but is stronger on insights than answers.

Inside Out looks deeply at human sin and can make us look too much at ourselves with rather depressing effects. It needs an extra chapter on the miracle of the grace of Christ in the midst of a world like this, the wonder and freedom of forgiveness and redeeming love and the joy of being a child of the King. (L.R.M.).



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