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Who is troubling Israel?

Trouble makers are never welcome, especially in the Church, but trouble makers come in two guises. There are those who are out for themselves, whether they know it or not, and there are those who love the Church too much to leave it in a sinful peace. As Paul said "some, indeed,.....from envy and rivalry, but others from good-will".

Prophets are trouble makers, renewal movements are trouble makers. The establishment, in the person of Ahab, said "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" but Elijah replied "I have not troubled Israel, but you have."

The charge is always the same - disloyalty. But loyalty is no true virtue. Honesty, compassion, love are pure gold. They never tarnish or deceive, but loyalty is like tolerance - it seems like a virtue but has no moral content of its own. Its value depends entirely on what is tolerated, what one is loyal to.

Then what should Baptists be loyal to? To Baptist tradition? We hear this everywhere suggested, but there are two problems. One is that organisations have a tendency to decline from the first glad vision of their beginnings, so that the tradition being adhered to is a comparatively recent thing - an accommodation of truth to expediency and fashion. The second follows from it - it is the nature of Baptists to question what is and always has been. In this sense, we were born in 'disloyalty'. Every charge thrown against those who want to reform the Church today, could have been, and was thrown against those who broke away to form the first Baptist Churches - house churches we would call them today. Like them, we can only be loyal to Christ and to His word in Scriptures as we understand it.

Disloyalty is not a sin - it is the adrenalin of the body of Christ. If Mainstream has a fault, it is that it is not troubling Israel enough.

The Editor.

NEWSLETTER No. 12.

January, 1983.

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DESPISE NOT PROPHESYINGS 1 Thess 5:20

As one who was filled with the Holy Spirit, or Baptized in the Holy Spirit - call it what you will - in the late 1920's and was graciously given the Gift of Prophecy shortly afterwards and later became a minister for 19 years in one of the historic Pentecostal groups before entering the Baptist Ministry and then following the Charismatic Movement almost from its inception, I was very interested in the articles and your comments in the current issue (No. 11) of Mainstream News Letter.

I found myself agreeing with much of what both articles had to say but disagreeing with them on certain issues.

I found myself in full accord with the opening parts of Peter Hetherington's article when he talks about prophecy in relation to the local church and to all the churches. I agree with him too in his reference to prophecy being couched in the first person singular but will come back to this later with reference to Clifford Fryer's article.

I disagree with him though in the latter part of his article where he seems to fall into the old Plymouth Brethren teaching regarding prophecy as being "forth-telling" of the Word and thus equating it with preaching. Those who knew and admired Peter's beloved predecessor, T. M. Bamber, could not but admit that he was a great preacher and that, no doubt, at times his ministry was "prophetic" - note the inverted commas - but preaching is not the exercise of the Gift of Prophecy of 1 Cor. 12:10.

Preaching differs from prophesying in that preaching is preceded by and is usually the outcome of study and preparation whereas prophecy is the sudden overwhelming urge coming upon a person by the Holy Spirit to proclaim an utterance without any previous thought or preparation. Again, one's preaching ability can be acquired, taught and guided but the Gift of Prophecy is given by the Holy Spirit regardless of training or human ability. (I had in one of my congregations a man who was rough, crude and untrained but who would in giving a prophecy use the most exalted and sublime language, far, far beyond the scope of his natural ability.) Finally, in preaching, the mind of the preacher is active and alert, framing his sentences, thinking ahead etc., but in the giving of a prophecy the person is quiescent, his mind is inactive and the ideas and words just flow from him as the Holy Spirit directs.

As for Clifford Fryer's article: again there is much with which I would agree but there are points with which I would disagree. For example, the illustration with which he commenced his article was not a prophecy! He rightly describes it when he says "Detailed 'words of knowledge' were given" It was an exercise of the Gift of a Word of Knowledge. I Cor. 12:8. Such too was the Biblical illustration that he gives of Jesus and the Samaritan woman John 4:29.

Prophecy is not meant for private individuals, Peter says "No prophecyis of any private interpretation" 2 Peter 1:20 (though undoubtedly some listeners may feel that God is speaking directly to them) and the whole tenor of the references to prophecy in I Cor. 14 is to "The Church" (whether local or national, no matter - though I think in this case Paul is thinking directly of the local church). Its message is for "Edification exhortation and comfort" I Cor. 14:3. Any 'revelation' such as Clifford refers to is referred to by St. Paul as the exercise of a separate gift, I Cor. 14:26.

As to the use of the "I" of the first person singular, I personally deplore it. I think it is claiming far more for ourselves than Scripture warrants. The prophets of the Old Testament did not see themselves as

direct vehicles through which God spoke but as persons to whom had been given a message from the Lord to declare to His people and "Thus saith the Lord....." rather than "I the Lord saith....." was the burden of their message. Paul says, "Let the prophets speak two or three and let the other judge" (discriminate) I Cor. 14:29, but how can we judge, how dare we judge if it is God speaking directly through His instrument? And what can we make of "The spirits of the prophet are subject to the prophets" I Cor. 14:32 if the prophet is the direct mouthpiece of God?

Finally, I would have entitled his article "Let the Gift of Prophecy be exercised" rather than "Let the prophets speak". In fact, Mr. Editor, I think you may have set us off on a wrong track when you asked your opening questions: "What is a prophet? Are you a prophet? Am I a prophet? etc." Whilst it is true, I suppose, that a person who regularly exercises the Gift of Prophecy can be called a prophet in the general sense, in the particular sense, I think it is wrong. In the New Testament there are only five people who are specifically designated as prophets; Agabus, Acts 11:28, 21:10 and the four daughters of Philip, Acts 21:9. I would suggest that there is a similar distinction in the New Testament between those who exercise the Gift of Prophecy and those whom God has given to His Church as prophets, Eph. 4: 11 as there is in the Old Testament between "the schools of the prophets"; the 70 elders and Eldad and Medad (Numb. 11:25,26) and even Saul (I Sam.10: 9,10) on the one hand and people such as Samuel and those whose prophetic ministry is recorded in the books that bear their names in the Old Testament.

To call a person who regularly exercises the Gift as a Prophet is, I think, to be in danger of falling into the error which one of the historic Pentecostal groups in this country fell into, namely that of having "Set-Prophets". And at all their big conventions and gatherings these so-call "Set-Prophets" would exercise their ministry, giving personal guidance to individuals, calling certain people to serve as missionaries to certain countries etc. (calls, which I might add, on occasions proved disastrous). Such prophecies being recorded and often given equal authority and use to that of the Bible itself. (And coming back to the use of the first person singular, is that not a logical development if the "I" is used?).

I am sure that neither you nor Clifford Fryer had these ideas in mind but I think that we need to be always on our guard and make sure that all our actions and thinking is in perfect accord with the full revelation of Scripture lest Satan, transformed into an angel of light, lead us into extravagancies and misuse of some of the experiences and practices that are amongst the most wonderful and glorious of our Christian faith!

Herbert E. Ward.

ELDERSHIP and the SHAPE OF THE CHURCH (The third of three articles)

We have tried to make out a case for Eldership based on the felt need of the Church today and on the evidence of the N.T. What would this mean for our Baptist Churches? What would happen to the present Ministry, Deacons or the Church Meeting? What are we really talking about? I do not believe that there is only one answer to that question, but I must boldly say what I think I see and let others do better in the light of our growing experience.

Elders and Ministers

The basic contention is that Elders are Ministers and Ministers are Elders. Elders are not to be thought of as a separate tier of leadership between the Minister and Deacons. They are Ministers with the Minister, who is an Elder with the Elders. Only so can the loneliness of the one-man

ministry be ended, and the unbiblical clergy/laity division be surmounted.

There will, of course, be an acknowledged leader of the leaders within the Church, but he need be, and must be, no more than 'primus inter pares'. He may well be an unusually gifted person (or he may not) but he should not be set apart from others to rule alone. The other Elders are his real colleagues in ministry and authority.

Some Elders will be full-time, as our Ministers now are. This is right, because in all but the smallest Churches, there is more work to be done than can be done by men and women in their spare time. Indeed, in most Churches right now there is more work than one full-time person per Church - about one to every 150 members would be about right. A tithing congregation would easily be able to afford this.

Other Elders will be part-time so far as their specific shepherding of the Church is concerned, although their involvement in ordinary employment will help to earth the ministry of the Church in the 'real' world. These men will not be less than the full-time, because it is the call and gift of God, the Holy Spirit, that are constitutive of the office of Elder/Minister, not stipened, hours, or college training.

Some full-time Elders will be college-trained, because we need such training. Others will arrive at full-time work in the Church through the recognised excellence of their part-time work. Far more of the full-time ministry of our Church should be homegrown, and a natural development of its ongoing life. Such people might also be sent away for brief periods to receive specific training, demanding a new approach to training by some of our colleges. Whichever route a would-be Elder follows, it should never be the case, as now, for a person to be accepted for training on the basis of gifts we hope he will develop, rather than gifts he had already proved to have.

Whether full-time or part-time, it should be the case that each of our Churches is ministered to, guided and shepherded by a team of Elder/Ministers set apart by the Church for that purpose. These men and women would exercise the gifts of Pastor and Teacher, and quite possibly those of Evangelist and Prophet, as well as enjoying the leadership gifts of Apostle, Prophet and Evangelist, who would not be confined to the local Church.

One result of adopting such a pattern would be that we would cease to speak of 'pastorless' Churches, or of Churches being 'without a Minister'. Such a thing should be seen to be an impossibility. Churches too small to have full-time ministry nevertheless have a responsibility to use the leadership gifts they have, and to develop a pattern of life and worship appropriate to those gifts, instead of, as at present, clinging to a pattern of life and worship that depends on itinerant preachers to sustain it. The answer to our village Churches lies first in the recognition that the gifts are already there to do the work God wants done (which may not include the maintenance of services in any way similar to the familiar pattern and second that if the required gifts are not there, and outside help is needed, that the price of interdependence is the surrender of independence. Care, as we have seen, implies authority. Impotent independence is a scandal that the larger Churches have no call to support.

What then of ordination? We need to reject the concept of a Minister being ordained in a sense that others are not. It is a 'catholic' heresy destructive of the Church. All Elders and Deacons are ordained, that is, set apart by the people of God for leadership. In the face of ecumenizing pressure to bring our Churches and ministry into line with the catholic tradition, we need to say clearly, if that is what we think, that so far from wanting them to recognise the validity of our orders, we reject the whole concept of orders and even of validity. Those are valid Ministers

whom God, through His people, calls and blesses in their work. All else is a clear case of beginning in the Spirit and ending with the flesh. With this we should reject all titles of reverence and everything that feeds the pride of man. It is high time for non-conformists to become once again non-conformists to the pattern of this world as it has infected the life and ministry of the Churches.

Elders and Deacons

There is not much to be said here. Elders as here described are not a threat to Deacons, except where worldly categories of superiority are allowed to control our thinking. The difference between Elders and Deacons is a difference of gift and function, not of status. It is the difference between leadership and management. Some are gifted to shepherd the Church, others to manage its administration, money and property. Elders and Deacons alike are servants. Both would be spiritual men and women after the pattern of I Timothy 3. It is likely that Elders will first have served as Deacons or in other ways have proved themselves to be good servants, and trustworthy men and women.

Elders and the Church Meeting

Very often Elders are objected to by Baptists as being a threat to the authority of the Church Meeting. Equally, Elders are seen by some advocates as doing away with the Church Meeting, but both points of view are founded on a confusion about authority.

There are different kinds of authority. There is the constitutional authority of the Church Meeting, and there is the spiritual authority of anointed leaders. These two are not contrary to one another, because it is the Church Meeting that recognises the spiritual authority of Elders and appoints them to lead it.

Like it or not, Elders have to be appointed by someone, and Baptist policy and commonsense suggest that it should be the Church Meeting. Elders have to be acceptable to the Church as a whole. It is this constitutional authority of the Church Meeting that validates the call and ministry of Elders and gives force to their decisions. At the same time, the Church Meeting appoints Elders to lead, to be over the Church, to rule. (All, as we have seen, scriptural terms). It does so in virtue of the gift and call of God discerned to be in those so called, and it thereafter expects to submit to the spiritual authority these men exercise.

What matters exactly the Elders bring to a meeting of the whole Church, and what they decide for themselves on behalf of the Church, is, as now with our Deacons, a matter of judgement. Elders and Church Meeting need each other, but no law can be laid down for the manner of their relating in any given situation. However, in appointing people to office, including the office of Elder, it is the Elders' duty to bring nominations to the Church Meeting arrived at after careful thought and prayer. Open elections as such are not appropriate for appointment to spiritual office, because the moral and spiritual criteria laid down in I Timothy 3 demand careful and confidential discussion of a candidate's private life, and this is not something a Church Meeting can do. It is the Elders' job to assess the suitability of a candidate in terms of his character, financial probity, family life and reputation. They should submit their considered judgement to the meeting of the Church. The Church, of course, is unlikely to reject the nomination, but it is legally open to it to do so, or for members to put up another candidate, and the very fact of having to give public account of their decision will ensure that the Elders take proper thought.

As far as other decisions are concerned, as I have said, it is a matter of judgement which should be by the whole Church, and which by the Elders.

It is frequently said that the Church Meeting rests on the conviction that God may choose to speak to the Church through the humblest member and that the Elders, like anyone else, may be wrong. (Sometimes even, by a flight of Actonian logic, that they are likely to be wrong!) There is truth in this, although the plurality of leadership is intended to protect the Church against the worst vagaries of one-man rule. But it is still open for God to speak through the humblest member under the pattern of Church life here proposed, but we must ask: how often does this beautiful thing happen? How often, compared with how often the Church Meeting is at the mercy of strong personalities playing politics and trying to get their own way in the name of democracy? The truth is that all forms of Church government are open to corruption by the flesh. In place of the authority of one man or the indiscipline of the average Church Meeting, God has given us the ministry of Elders, appointed by the Church, responsive to the Church, and respected by the Church in virtue of their God-given authority for ministry.

Alastair Campbell.

ELDERS TODAY - A reply

This article, originally published in the magazine of Moortown Baptist Church, Leeds, was prompted by the first article on Eldership in Mainstream No. 10, and is reproduced with permission.

Dear Alastair Campbell,

Right from the first sentence, I fear, you have got it wrong. It is not true that 'everybody is talking about Elders'. I am not. I begrudge even the time it takes to explain why I am not and why I don't want to.

You say we need Elders to escape one-man ministry. No, we don't. In the sixteen years I've been in Moortown, there has never been a one-man ministry, if you are talking about the service offered to God and done in the name of God and the Spirit of Christ, in and through the people gathered at Moortown in the name of Christ.

That ministry has been carried by many men and women, some with responsibilities defined by the Church Meeting, or the Church Rules, other with specific tasks and interests pursued 'unofficially' in the freedom of the friendly fellowship, not, one hopes, without the hidden oversight of the Spirit. Some of these ministries are more obvious to the eye of the stranger than others. But many have lived in the Church long enough to see and value many obscure ministries.

Of course, we have mostly had only one called, paid minister; actually we now have one and a bit. The one paid Minister can (as you suggest) easily think of himself as one man burdened by everything. In fact, he isn't; lots of other people are doing lots of other things. If the Minister unhappily gets to thinking he only is left, might the problem not be in the way he thinks about himself, and in the way in which people in the Church think about him, more perhaps than in how the Church is organised?

Having Elders in our Church would not ease any existing problems and would create new ones. We have Deacons, Housegroup leaders, and many others sharing responsibility. We still have a few chinks of openness in the Church Meeting whereby all members share in the pastoral direction and oversight of the Church. I suppose if we had Elders, they would be a select (and/or elected?) group from those who are now Deacons and other sorts of leaders. What would they then be able to do that they can't do now? Would being called an Elder make a Housegroup leader any the wiser? Would being called an Elder give an overworked Deacon or Scout group leader any more

time? Of course not. It is a fallacy of so much worldly management technique now being followed by Churches, that giving functionaries new titles in itself makes them function better.

What it will do is to give people who are Elders a different image. It will affect their status. There are some people who like the idea of being Elders and shepherds because having authority in the Church gives status. O worldly ambition! How you creep in everywhere. Why isn't the thoroughly biblical title of Minister or Deacon, which both mean 'servant' good enough for those who want to build up the Church of Christ, who came, as He said: 'not to be served, but to be a deacon by giving his life for many' (Mark 10: 45). There's a text that shows, incidentally, that we should never relegate Deacons' work to dealing with 'material' questions. Nothing could be more physical than Jesus' giving His life, but nothing could also be more spiritual.

This hankering after authority to build up the Church is too close to that reliance on law, which Paul warned the Galatians against as a fundamental mistake - a block to living in the freedom of the grace of Christ. Of course, it may well be that there are a lot of us young, immature, ignorant Christians in the Church who are far from being Christlike, and something needs to be done about us. You say Elders will do it when Ministers and Deacons and others apparently haven't. I wonder. Perhaps this is the kind of problem that can never be satisfactorily handled by people, whatever titles you give them; it has to be handled by God in the whole range of our living and dying if it is to be answered. Only His dealings can get to the crucial parts that even Elders cannot reach!

Elders, you say, are needed to give us the training we need. How will those who are to train others be themselves equipped? I would have less fear of Elders and their pretensions if I found amongst those I met (from other Churches) a less cocky sense of their own innate right to teach, even to command. If they made less of their authority, and of the duty of non-Elderly Church members to submit, I might be more able to believe they could be trusted with something so precious as my soul, my personality and my life in its entirety and intimacy.

As it is, it seems to be the claim to a new kind of authority that differentiates new Elders from old Deacons. People who dare to make that sort of claim show (to my inadequate judgement) how unspiritual and unready for ministry they are. Essential qualifications of a servant of God in the Church are:

- 1) To trust God for other people and to respect their, and the Church's, freedom by trusting God in them. (Romans 14:10-13).
- 2) To be, and to be seen to be, a learner.

Since being an Elder (as that is understood in many circles today) prevents a person being like this, I think Eldership is dangerous for the souls of Elders and not likely to help the Church. And so, gaily or grimly, I shall go on my rebellious way, fulfilling my calling in the Church, partly by being as unsheeplike as I can. It is an essential service Elders need from non-Elderly Christians, to have their pretensions queried so that they don't altogether lose touch with Christ.

Have you ever been critical enough of your own theory to ask whether this present enthusiasm for authoritative Eldership is the religious form of the conservative, security-seeking authoritarian current sweeping through British and North American cultures at the moment? It seems to me that we may well be letting the world squeeze us into its own mould at this point, under cover of making a Christian sectarian separation from society. Beware of the cult of human authority, especially when it has religious forms.

Once a wise old Diplomat returned from an international conference on the control of gas warfare, to report to Mussolini. 'Well, Ambassador, and what is the most dangerous gas?' asked the Duce. 'Incense', came the reply.

Forgive me if I am unmannerly, but these matters are too important for mystification. Baptist Churches, some very close to ours, are being destroyed or put through unnecessary and unproductive pain by people who press theories like these upon them. Would I be unfair to guess that you might reply that you are sorry for the distress it causes, but the cause is just and the pain necessary. It is necessary, you might say, because the theory is scriptural. I assume you don't mean it as a dogmatic, incontrovertible assertion; I hope you believe in the open Bible, so we can search and see whether it is scriptural. I would hope that, having read the Bible, as I have a little, you would agree that:-

- 1) There is no single coherent Church Order laid down as a model for all time in the New Testament;
- 2) The New Testament gives us evidence of a number of Churches with different ways of organising themselves;
- 3) Because Churches in the New Testament, however they were governed, were not perfectly wonderful Churches, in doctrine and practice, we cannot fulfil our Christian task today simply by making ourselves like them;
- 4) Because the Churches in the New Testament were made up of people so different from ourselves, and in such a different culture, forms that fitted them comfortably could well be like a strait-jacket for us. Remember how David refused Saul's armour.....
- 5) The New Testament would tell us in many ways that while we are obliged to organise our lives together to be as effective as possible in the service of the gospel, the focus of our attention and the DNA code controlling our development should be the Good News about Jesus Christ, and a model Church order is not an essential part of the Gospel. There are more urgent, interesting and scriptural matters to discuss and work at.
- 6) The New Testament does give an important clue to the way the Church should operate, in the words of Jesus: 'No longer do I call you servants.....but I have called you friends.' (John 15:15). Real pastoral care and spiritual growth can happen in a Church where friendships develop in freedom. Only a few can be Elders. All can be friends. If you really want to get away from one-man, or (which is even worse) little-clique ministry, start thinking from the whole people rather than from a few office holders. And if you think of them as friends you will have a profoundly Christian and very human concept in which to imagine them. Unhappily, I don't hear many people talking about the structure of the Church and its Christian-ness in terms of the friends of Jesus. But, if over the years, Moortown has done anything to help me as a Christian, it is because there are friends there. Friends don't claim authority, they come alongside to share as equals what they have; there is something Christ-like there.

Of course, Moortown, is far from perfect (I'm a member). I am not defending the status quo, though it has its merits too often despised. The question is, what will help this Church to get better. I think it will be more helpful if we recognise, respect and encourage the friendships or potential friendships that are already there as the basic form of ministry, rather than campaign to impose an authoritarian Eldership system upon it. And I think we should face more frankly than we do the strained, or never begun, or seemingly irreparably broken friendships that there are in the

Church, and we should look into the reasons for these limits of friendship. To explore the possibility of such serving friendship, I have written as plainly as I can.

Yours (possible/impossible!) friend, Haddon Willmer.

MISSION ENGLAND 1982-85

I hope by now that all of us will at least have heard of MISSION ENGLAND. I trust that this account will help us understand a little more and encourage us to involve ourselves and our churches in the exciting opportunities which it offers to us.

The Vision

Perhaps the message has already got through that between May and July in 1984 Billy Graham is coming to England. Perhaps also the news that this is going to be a different approach, because Billy is coming to five regions of England, has also begun to be grasped. But that is not the major difference. Those involved in Mission England can often be heard saying that if Billy Graham comes and has the most successful crusade tour ever AND THAT IS ALL, Mission England will have failed. For the vision which beckons Mission England is far greater and, I believe, more fully biblical. The vision is of a 3 year period of mission. Billy Graham's visit is both a motivating force BEFORE he comes and a launching platform for on going evangelism AFTERWARDS, but the main concern is to equip and mobilise the churches of England for their God given task of preaching the Good News and making disciples.

The Opportunities For Our Churches

Between now and Billy Graham's visit most of the effort is being directed towards helping the churches. Various courses are being offered and Trainers have been prepared to lead some of them. These trainers are drawn from organisations like Scripture Union and British Youth for Christ, as well as from the denominations. The main courses planned so far are:-

- 1) 'IS MY CHURCH WORTH JOINING?' - this consists of 5 x 80 minute sessions, led by a trainer, with a workbook and is an interesting and helpful way of encouraging churches to examine the quality of their life and of improving it. This course is mainly for ministers and leaders. (Cost £3.50 per person - includes workbook).
- 2) 'CARING FOR NEW CHRISTIANS': again this is 5 x 80 minute sessions. This course aims to equip 'Nurture Group Leaders', that is people who will be able to help new Christians in a group context, providing them with a good experience of Christian caring as well as building their knowledge of Christian basics. On the basis of the Sydney Billy Graham crusade experience, at least 75% of those responding at the crusade meetings will be enabled to survive the difficult first weeks of being Christians and also be integrated into the life of a local church through Nurture Groups, but their usefulness is not limited to a crusade context!
- 3) 'CARE TO SAY SOMETHING': Although this is a D.I.Y. course, it has been so sensitively and carefully prepared that I am sure it will be of enormous help in fulfilling its objective. It is the intention of this course to help people move from wanting to be able to share their faith to being able to share their faith effectively and without the risk of embarrassing others. I believe it should be a must for any church which wants to grow. (Available from Regional Head-

quarters).

In addition, especially as 1983 unfolds, various ideas and courses to help churches develop abilities to make worthwhile contacts with their neighbourhood will be available. These courses are the responsibility of the CHURCH LIFE TASK GROUP.

Prayer

Another vital dimension of Mission England is that of prayer. Below I will give a brief account of how Mission England is structured, but please do not let anyone think it is a self-satisfied bureaucracy; it knows that it is completely dependent on God. So, much thought is being given to help Christians pray. The main initial idea is that of prayer triplets.

Three people will get together, each with the names of three people who would not consider themselves Christians, so that the three Christians will be praying for a total of nine others. It is hoped that these triplets will be formed not only within the church fellowship, but where people are throughout the week - e.g. at work, a school, C.U. or for a housewife in the neighbourhood.

Each participating church will find it helpful to have a Prayer Secretary to co-ordinate the scheme.

Organisation

Quite properly, because Mission England has an important and demanding task, careful consideration has been given to a helpful organisational structure. Nationally it is headed by a team of four resource people, GAVIN REED, EDDIE GIBBS, CLIVE CALVER and BRIAN MILLS. These meet with representatives of the five regions to form the Federal Committee. Each of the five regions has an Executive Committee consisting of people who it is hoped can reflect the needs of the region. Each region is then subdivided in two distinct ways. First geographically into areas (most regions have about twelve areas) and then functionally into Task Groups - e.g. Prayer, Media and Publicity, Church Life, Inner City, Rural, etc.

What Now?

Because Mission England is far more than a visit of Billy Graham in the summer of 1984 it is vital that, if we have not already done so, we and our churches get involved with it. I would ask that we consider the following questions:

- 1) DO I KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT MISSION ENGLAND?
- 2) WHAT CAN MISSION ENGLAND OFFER MY CHURCH AND HOW CAN WE GO ABOUT GETTING THE HELP WE NEED?
- 3) WHAT CAN I AND MY CHURCH GIVE TO MISSION ENGLAND AND HOW CAN WE GIVE IT?

Below is a list of contact people and addresses and also the dates and venues for Billy Graham's visit, which I hope will help to get people started in answering the questions.

MISSION ENGLAND HEADQUARTERS, P.O. Box 161, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 5SX.
(Tel: 01 427 445).

REGIONAL CONTACTS

SOUTH WEST - Antony Bush, 15 Colston St., Bristol BS1 5AP (Tel: 0272 24616).

MIDLANDS - Phil South, P.O. Box 587, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B72 1NQ
(Tel: 021 354 9938).

NORTH WEST - Val Grieve, P.O. Box 1984, Liverpool L7 0NB (Tel: 051 263 4170).

NORTH EAST - Rev. Ray Skinner, St. Matthews Newbottle, Houghton-le-Spring,
Tyne & Wear DH4 4EP (Tel: 0783 843244).

EAST ANGLIA - Dr. Peter English, 452 Unthank Rd., Norwich NR4 7QJ
(Tel: 0603 51751).

DATES & VENUES: Bristol 12th-19th May; Sunderland 26th May-2nd June;
Norwich 9th-12th June; Break 13th-27th June;
Birmingham 30th June-7th July; Liverpool 14th-21st July;
Ipswich either 25th-28th July or 24th-27th July.
FINALE IN LONDON - DATE UNCERTAIN.

David Spriggs, Queens Road, Coventry.

MINISTER! WHAT YOUR SECRETARY CAN DO FOR YOU

"What do you do all day?". Seven years ago, as I sat at any empty desk and looked at an empty filing cabinet, a typewriter and another chair (which completely filled the tiny office) I could have asked myself that question. Today I sit at an overflowing desk, in a larger office, filled with laden shelves, a typing desk, full cupboards, a duplicator, four chairs and, as I write, a man rings to say the photo-copier will be delivered on Monday!

One of the first reactions in the church, to my appointment, was that it was so good to be able to ring the church number without disturbing the Pastor (or, incidentally, his wife, busy in the Manse). The church office soon became a "clearing house" - enquiries coming in and the relevant people being contacted to deal with the various matters. Although a job specification was prepared, it was agreed that whoever was appointed would not be tied to it or be able to cover every suggested item, and it would be well to recognise that gradually, according to the particular needs of the church, and the abilities of the person appointed, the work would evolve and, hopefully, meet the specific needs of the Fellowship as it progressed.

My own work has changed in some ways over the years, as the Fellowship has grown (over 400 members), the Pastoral Staff increased (four including myself), and as others in the church have taken over some of the responsibilities.

Perhaps I could best list some of my work as a guide:-

Secretary to Pastor, involving correspondence, making appointments, filing, (tea-lady for visitors), contacting Elders, Deacons, House Fellowship Leaders, Organist and other officers in the leadership on practical matters of administration.

Telephonist. This ranges from being a general "enquire within", to a ministry to those in need. (I had just returned from a Counselling Course on Psychiatric and Emotional Problems, when a would-be suicide lady rang).

Organisation of caring ministry for practical needs in the Fellowship. In our church this is now mainly dealt with by our House Fellowships, who practise a caring concern for those in their own localities of the seventeen groups.

Records. Keeping file copies of magazines and other material produced for use in Seminars and teaching ministry, and producing further copies to be sent out with cassette tapes. Typing and duplicating the Bulletin (over 550 copies produced for each Sunday). Producing change of address lists and lists of new members for the church magazine.

Use of Premises. Dealing with bookings and co-ordinating with those responsible for catering, heating, security, tape-recording and so on.

In my case, I am also a non-elected Deacon and Diaconate Minute Secretary and attend Pastoral Staff Meetings

Help! I need an Assistant!

One of the advantages in having a Church Office, is the availability of someone who answers the telephone and welcomes callers. On my day off, or holidays, there are several women in the Fellowship who come in to man the office and take messages. Most Pastors find themselves on call twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, and would no doubt appreciate an uninterrupted day off and lunch hours.

From all this, it will be seen that many things come into the office and a lot goes out from it. I am very much of a clearing house or go-between, and endeavour to keep the right people informed of things they ought to know. My own testimony would be to a wonderful seven years, not by any means as the perfect answer to the Pastor's needs, but as a very human, mistake-making Secretary, who is grateful to the Lord for the opportunity of service in a wonderful job.

As far as the Pastor is concerned, I hope it will be seen by him and by his Church Officers, that there are things that a Secretary can do for him (the title of this article was chosen for me!) and, incidentally, for the Church Fellowship as a whole. It would be good that our church buildings could be seen to be "alive" rather than places where the doors are only opened when there are specific services or meetings about to be held. Maybe this is one of the ways in which the "church" can be seen to be relevant in the neighbourhood.

One further word. When I began this work I spent a day with someone in a similar position, who shared her experience with me most helpfully. Since then, there have been one or two who have come to spend a day with us. Any help which can be given in this way is good, and we are glad to be of service. We don't know all the answers, and are conscious of mistakes as we learn, but we look to the Lord for His enabling and thank Him for all the way He has led us.

Pam Kerr, Gold Hill, Chalfont St. Peter.

and Pam's boss adds.....!

I am happy to write an addendum to this article since I have been in a "before" and "after" experience in this. For the first 18 years or so in the ministry I had no secretarial help at all, apart from a lady in the church here who came in one morning a week to type my letters, and while this was of quite immense value, and I did value it very greatly, it was in no way as significant in the life of the Fellowship as has just been described. It was a wonderful, personal aid, but it was individual rather than corporate.

There are three areas on which I would want to make comment, and the first of these is that what has been written in this article is simply the outworking of a cardinal Biblical principle, that each person in the Body of Christ has a ministry. It is an obvious statement to all of us to say that

the church has suffered tremendously from too many responsibilities being carried by too few people. Within our own Baptist Communion, the concept of the priesthood of all believers has tended to be worked out in terms of democratic practice rather than devotional piety, and we have paid lip service to the fact that the one man ministry is theologically unacceptable, but in fact we have acceded to it in practice. There are those amongst us who have secretarial and administrative skills and if we are prepared to take the Bible seriously these need to be given opportunity to be expressed for the enrichment of the whole body and the enlarging of the Kingdom of God.

The second area on which I would want to comment, is that you must never lose sight of the purpose of the skills outlined above. I am impressed in the Book of Acts, chapter 6 and verses 1 to 7, how there appeared to be a material and organisational problem which had such a profound spiritual impact. Unfortunately, we often divorce verses 1-6 from verse 7. All that has been written in this article must never be regarded as a luxury or an opportunity for self-indulgence, but rather a key factor in the outworking of the purposes of God. Much impoverishment has occurred, both materially and spiritually, because the church has not significantly utilised the people with these skills.

The third area of comment is very sensitive, but it would be dishonest and unwise not to put it into print. What has been written above is self-explanatory in terms of fellowship and effectiveness, but what the article does not mention is that it is absolutely crucial that the right person/people are given the opportunity to be involved in this ministry. To select the wrong person(s) will inevitably cause confusion and tension, which is self-defeating and inevitably cancels out the work of the Gospel. The person who needs to be looked to is the one who not only has administrative and secretarial skills, but also has an openness towards God, a deep awareness of the reality of fellowship, a very significant sense of personal loyalty, and an awareness of the appropriateness of action or lack of it that needs to be taken in any given situation. I thank God for providing such an effective ministry amongst us here at Gold Hill.

J. R. G. Graham.

USING YOUR HOME FOR EVANGELISM

Small group meetings in homes today are being used quite widely to enable Christians particularly in larger Churches, to know one another and to come closer to one another in fellowship, prayer, and in bible study.

But it is my intention in this paper to focus your attention on and encourage you to consider using your home and abilities, not for fellowship, prayer and bible study, but for evangelism.

I am a member of Queensberry Street Baptist Church at Nottingham and this concept of home group evangelism was introduced to our Church by a previous Minister: he and his wife having had quite a degree of success when they first tried this means of sharing the gospel in their earlier pastorate.

Our aims, then, are that through discussion, non-Christians can be introduced to Jesus Christ, and through the work of the Holy Spirit they come to repent of their sin, exercise saving faith in the Saviour, become born again of God's Spirit, and progress to be baptised, involved Christians of the local Church and community.

To that end, a Christian is encouraged to invite a non-Christian friend

or acquaintance to a series of weekly meetings to discuss the 'Christian faith and its relevance for today'. If the thought of a series of six or eight meetings appears daunting, then concentrate upon an invitation to the first one.

No bibles are in evidence and prayers are not invited in the meetings; at least, not in the beginning, but references to the scriptures and the request for prayer will naturally follow as the meetings proceed. Outside of the home groups, though, the project should be bathed in prayer, particularly by the Christians involved, by other sympathetic prayer partners and at the Church Prayer Meeting.

In the home group itself, there will be a topic for each night and through discussion (not preaching) we will aim to reach a common conclusion at the end of each evening. Incidentally, though we attempt to attain an equal balance of Christians and non-Christians in the group, the Christians are to keep quiet (a general observation may be permitted) but the main contributions and subsequent answers are to be sought from the non-Christians.

There should be an appointed leader whose job it is to direct the discussion. Complete liberty should be given for people to say what they will and with a promise not to be offended - don't be surprised when they test your sincerity on that statement.

We should inform our group that we expect them to be honest in their contributions and be willing to amend or release any pre-conceived ideas or prejudices as we examine them and find them wanting.

Our first topic is 'What is Wrong?' and by patient question and answer we seek common agreement on the answer of sin, in my nature, in me. Vietnam, El Salvador, Northern Ireland, immorality, muggings, rape, murder, pornography, thieving, indiscipline, lack of care, start where you will, the final answer is sin in people, in me. I practice sin - I am a sin-doer - I am a sinner.

Having established what is wrong or more clearly who is wrong, we now seek to define what is right. We reason together to find an absolute right, a universal right, a standard for all to measure ourselves by, a perfect standard, and we arrive at the Ten Commandments. Then, logically, if perfection cannot come from imperfection, behind the perfect standard is the perfect giver of the standard, a perfect Being, with a perfect nature; one who is absolutely, universally right.

It follows then, if there is wrong and right, is there a judgement? Again, through discussion, by comparing wrong and right, we establish they are opposites, and that where one is, the other cannot be. So then, where right (perfection) GOD is; we, who are wrong (imperfect even in the smallest degree) cannot be, and where the Holy, righteous God is, sinful man is not. Our need is now apparent, - how can we avoid judgement and separation from GOD.

Topic four - the way of escape! Not only did perfect GOD give the perfect standard, but HE, perfect GOD became perfect MAN, Christ Jesus, so HE not only proclaimed the standard, HE is the standard. It is here we share GOD revealed Himself to us in Jesus; and through the death of Jesus on the cross, and His resurrection, we can, through Jesus Christ, be reconciled to GOD. The same old gospel story, ever new!

Finally, for the next two weeks, having underlined that all we have heard in the previous weeks has been of GOD's doing; namely, our conviction of sin (1), and of righteousness (2) of judgement (3) and of GOD's infinite mercy and love (4), the remaining discussions are to do with our response; and we arrive at, repentance (5) - what it is, and faith (6) - how to receive and apply same.

Be prepared to adapt according to your abilities. In our home group, my friend, A.E., a Deacon in the Church, is recognised as the leader and does carry the main responsibility for the mechanics of the group, but he and I have found a bond with each other in a shared ministry.

For instance, to get us off the ground quickly after the first meeting, I am invited to 're-cap' a little on what has gone before, and this has the advantage of centring our thoughts on the work in hand, and refreshing our thoughts on our previous deliberations.

Also, we have found that a little friendly banter directed at ourselves, takes from our friends such thoughts they might have of being 'got at' - for it is amazing how, developing a point at one another's expense, strikes the chord in their own experience and is accepted without pressing the point personally.

I would like to share an experience from the home groups for your encouragement. Mrs. W., a young wife and mother, came into the group as a result of an invitation from her Christian friends who worship with us at Queensberry. The one thing about Mrs. W. that touched A.E. and myself was her unusually sad eyes; I mention this because the contrast was so vivid when she later met with the risen Saviour. Her immediate problem prior to accepting the Lord was her concern for her husband, and we assured her that when she became a Christian, someone, somewhere in the future would bless the day that she, as a Christian, would cross their path, and it could be her husband first of all. This challenge came immediately when she confessed Jesus to him. 'I suppose now you will be wanting to go to Church?' asked her husband. 'Yes', she replied. 'Then promise me you will not go' he said, 'I'm sorry, I cannot do that' was Mrs. W.'s reply.

Later Mr. W. accepted an invitation to a special Church service and was sufficiently impressed to accept a further invitation into a home group, where his quiet, complimentary contributions through the discussions eventually led him to make a simple prayer of his own, in our presence, to ask the Lord Jesus Christ to be his Saviour. On the following Sunday morning, when they both came to Church, Mrs. W.'s face was radiant, and her eyes danced with joy. At their baptism testimony, they shared that their marriage had been in danger of collapse, but Jesus had saved it. Thank you, Lord.

Cecil J. Hopkins.

HYMNS FOR TODAY

Mainstream's Chairman, Pat Goodland, was on the editorial committee. He writes of his experience and its result:-

The launching of a major interdenominational Hymn Book on the 10th November is an event which will stir conflicting reactions and emotions. The 'leak' of an alternative National Anthem, printed in the book alongside the traditional version, gave the media some emotive copy during the height of the 'silly season'. The furore at least made people aware that 'Hymns for Today's Church' was on the slip stream and about to be launched.

Working together for nearly a decade, nine word and eight music editors, with the Rev. Michael Baughen as Consultant Editor, have compiled a book of some 620 hymns and spiritual songs. We faced some major issues when setting out our overall objectives. Could we tackle the question of updating old hymns while keeping the doctrinal stance and style of the author? Could we change favourite 'golden oldies' without upsetting whole congregations? Was it possible to combine the best of the old with the best

of the new? Were we prepared to take a huge step and move from the 'thee', 'thine', 'thou', to the contemporary 'you' form? We've grasped these nettles and to our delight find that our gently updated versions make sense and sing well.

The process of revising is not new. Few of our favourite hymns are ever printed as originally written. Because they have been adapted they are included in many books today. We no longer sing in their original versions, for instance, 'O God our help in ages past', 'Praise my soul the King of heaven', 'When I survey the wonderous cross', etc. Language has undergone major changes in the last 30 years, so we have taken out 'bowels', breasts, worms, intercourse, ghost and goblins' in an effort to retain some majestic classics. Victorian imagery such as 'Angel harps for ever ringing' in heaven, becomes 'Angel music ever ringing', Zion and Jerusalem as synonyms for the Church, have generally been replaced. Hymns choked with metaphorical confectionary and quaint language, have been dealt with sensitively but firmly. Our overriding principle was I Cor. 14:15, 'to sing with the spirit and with the mind'. Repetitious hand clapping choruses, the 'concrete school' of compositions and mere sentimental emotionalism, have been avoided.

Our words group, chaired by Michael Seward met over 70 times for a full working day which went on well into the evenings, but also for residential conferences. Through the years large bundles of manuscripts and texts, revisions and drafts have arrived through the post. Homework included working through each hymn, commenting, revising and voting on each anonymous composition. In team sessions the O.H.P. was invaluable. We debated obscure lines, rhymes, stress and sexism. Humour, heated discussions and prolonged debate prolonged our days of fellowship. Wherever possible we have sought to retain similar sounds and kept changes to a minimum. The team have tried many of the revisions on their own congregations with appreciative results. Any hymns which did not sing well were taken back for yet more revision.

Gaps in traditional denominational hymn books, particularly on Baptism, healing, mission and the Holy Spirit, have been filled. Along with many traditional favourites, over one third of the 622 hymns were composed in the last 25 years. A song supplement of more informal items is included which will meet a growing demand, especially for the Family Service.

Selection of music has been a massive task as the group surveyed over 40 hymn books and over 3,000 tunes. Over 50 descants, reharmonisations or faux-bourbons, together with imaginative new material are included.

I believe this book will meet a long felt need. It is biblical yet contemporary, theologically strong, yet not employing outdated phraseology, fresh and stimulating, without being trendy.

The Congregationalist and enthusiast for Wesley's hymns, the late Bernard Manning, summed up the purpose of a hymn book when he said "Hymns are for Christians, not for poets, nor for antiquarians. A hymn's business is to strengthen the faith of today, not to present an historic record of the faith of the day before yesterday". My hope is that 'Hymns for Today's Church' will fulfil that criteria.

Pat Goodland.

BOOK REVIEWS

HYMNS FOR TODAY'S CHURCH - Michael Baughen and Others
Hodder and Stoughton - £6.95 Music Edition, £2.95 Word Edition.

This book amply justifies its title, with nearly 600 hymns - over a third of them by living authors, and other hymns revised into the language

of today. It is a very impressive achievement and a very courageous venture.

Baptists considering buying it will obviously want to compare it with the Baptist Hymn Book. This is no folk song supplement to the existing denominational books, but it is, by size, price and contents, a worthy rival and would-be replacement.

Two hundred and sixty hymns in 'Hymns for Today's Church' are also to be found in the Baptist Hymn Book, but this means that over half of the new book is not to be found in the Baptist Hymn Book, and that over 500 hymns in our book have not found a place. So what has been omitted? Not much of importance, I would judge. A vast number of the missing 500 are not sung by anybody today, as far as I know. Chief among these are:-

- (a) Hymns for yesterday's Church - yesterday's strivings for relevance seem unreal today.
- (b) Hymns for yesterday's children - did they ever like them?
- (c) 19th century missionary hymns - no more 'sultry forests where apes swing to and fro'.
- (d) The quaint, sugary and unreal of every age.

This is, in some ways, a collection with a strong Anglican flavour. Baptist hymn-singing is a more subjective activity than this book will really permit.

On the other hand, only about 20 of the songs from 'Praise for Today' find a place in it. This book has little sympathy with folk songs, protest songs or songs of radical theology/politics. None of this troubles your reviewer, but I was sad to see that no place was found for strong objective hymns like:-

'Awake, O Lord, as in the time of old'
'For all the love that from our earliest years'
'God is love, let Heaven adore Him'
'Lord of light, whose light outshineth'
'Praise we God the Father's name'
'Son of the Lord most high'
or 'Thou, Lord, hast given thyself for our healing'

Of course, everybody has their own favourites, and any new hymnbook leaves some out, but some of these hymns are very much hymns for today's church.

What then is in? In addition to 200 or so hymns that might be described as the common heritage of English-speaking Christians, nearly a quarter of the book is by members of the Editorial group. Michael Perry with 41, Chris Idle with 35, in the lead, and Michael Saward close behind with 27. In addition, there are 46 by Timothy Dudley-Smith. This is good strong writing, some of which we already know, but much of it quite new. Will it take? Only time will tell. Some of it struck me as worthy rather than exciting, but none of it is trivial. There are some good baptismal hymns we shall be glad to use. All the subjects I ever need hymns for seem to be well covered. In addition, there is a small section containing 30 spiritual songs, many of them familiar to us from 'Sounds of Living Waters' and similar sources. This seems a bit limited, but is welcome nevertheless.

An outstanding feature of the book is its commitment to modern language, and its revision of well-known hymns. Some of these revisions are very radical, but others almost unnoticeable, so much so as to make one think 'Why haven't we done this before?' Some, for example, 'There is a fountain

opened wide' (144) or 'Jesus comes with clouds descending' (196) will give us back some great hymns that have virtually become unsingable. Anyone who has sung and loved hymns for 20 years or more is likely to wince and groan occasionally, but the real test will be how the newly-converted take to the book. This may yet prove to be the hymnbook for tomorrow's Church.

Musically, the book is pretty conservative - and thank you for that. Nothing is more likely to consign new hymns to oblivion than a tune that no-one can sing. Most of the old tunes are here, and some fine tunes are rescued from words that we no longer sing, and given new duties. This is excellent. Sometimes new words are put to tunes with very strong associations e.g. 'Thaxted', 'Corde Natus', 'Eine Feste Burg', 'Dambusters March', 'Marching through Georgia' and 'Jerusalem' and this may be less successful. And, of course, there are a lot of new tunes as well.

Finally, the indices are excellent. Besides the usual ones, there is a very full index of biblical passages paraphrased or otherwise alluded to, and another index suggesting hymns for every Sunday of the new lectionary.

This is a fine book - I am afraid it will be slow in finding acceptance in our Baptist Churches, but the Churches whose courage and desire to share their faith with the young and unchurched matches that of the compilers will be very well rewarded for their effort and expense.

Alastair Campbell.

THE NONCONFORMIST CONSCIENCE: CHAPEL AND POLITICS 1870-1914,
D. W. Bebbington, 1982, George Allen and Unwin. Pp.x,193, £10.

This is a good book and a very interesting one. All those who plan to be of use in the leadership of our churches and who are involved with Mainstream ought to beg or borrow or buy it and read it. To understand our tradition, its theology and ecclesiology, you need to read in the 17th and 18th centuries. But to understand the remaking of our churches during the generation or so before the first World War you need this. It was a period of life and confidence and, until 1906, growth. But the book is concerned with much more than the rather limited picture conjured up in most people's minds by the phrase 'the Nonconformist Conscience'. It gives a good first picture for its period of what Dr. Ernest Payne once called 'the Free Church Tradition in the life of England'. More than that, because the author is David Bebbington, the Baptist part of the picture is given its full share. The reason I commend it to those who are potential evangelical leaders and who are linked with Mainstream is because this socio-political dimension not only opens our eyes to areas of Christian concern we might want to forget but also because it gives a fresh setting for thinking about the issues raised by the church growth movement.

David Bebbington (whose first book, Patterns in History, is published by IVP) here underlines some remarkable and consistent characteristics of the politics of Nonconformity in this period. During the earlier part there was not only an alliance with the Liberal party which continued down to 1914 but there was a remarkable personal commitment to Mr. Gladstone - the non-conformist conscience was largely chained to his conscience and some remarkable reverses of direction took place in his company. On the other hand, it is clear from this story that the nonconformist conscience could be far more easily mobilized for crusading protests than for creatively thought out reforming programmes. Given the adversary nature of politics, black and white, wrong and right, can be crudely drawn and crudely drawn they often were.

I have not come across many books which are more tightly packed with facts and argument and yet preserve a compelling interest to the reader. Of

course, the story of the clashes between the Anglicans and the Free Churchmen who were fighting for equal status is well known and so, especially, is that aspect of it enshrined in the great educational controversies of 1870 and 1902. But few are aware of the range of social concerns felt by the churches of the period and fewer still of the fascinating story of how the Free Churches moved from a semi-pacifist stance to an often (though not always) uncritical support of imperialist values and policies in the early years of this century. Amongst the reasons for this were a genuine conviction of the superiority of the British as a nation with a God given right to rule; the insistence of missionaries that their parts of the world needed the peace and order which Westminster could impose and the belief that empire for a number of our European competitors would mean rule in the interests of the Roman Catholic church and not of the Gospel.

At the close I was left with a sense of the naiveté of good Christian people who were so often surprised and dismayed to find that the closer one got to the seats of power in this world the more complicated (and sometimes the more wicked) the situation appeared. How could anyone place their loyalty unconditionally in the hands of any political party - even the Liberals?

How can anyone?

B. R. White, September 1982.

THERE'S A TIME AND A PLACE, Jamie Wallace, Collins £2.50

Any book of prayers reflects to some degree the person who has written them. In his introduction, the author of this collection refers to leading worship as 'one of the performing arts'. Hence it is no surprise to find the prayers poetic in style and vocabulary.

The 101 prayers follow the Christian Year, though there are those of a more general nature hidden among those specifically celebrating the festivals. A helpful index system is provided.

Continued over..

In one of the Christmas prayers entitled 'Silent Night' these lines occur:-

'Silently a seed begins to be a great tree;
Silently God and a few men ponder the
the transformation of the world's destiny.'

This quotation conveys a little of the poetic tone of the book, which overall leaves me with two impressions. The first is of occasional pictures or ideas which speak to my mind and inspire further thought, and then prayer. There is plenty to make the careful reader stop and explore new territory. But the second is of a lack of warmth and intimacy in the words. Nowhere am I given opportunity to simply tell the Lord that I love Him. The prayers never reach a childlike sympathy with the Holy Spirit's cry, 'Abba'.

In a prayer for Harvest, we ask our Father to forgive us for 'saying things to you which we would never dream of saying to one another.' I cannot help but feel that too many of the words in this book fall into that very category.

As a stimulus to personal thought; as a meditation in worship prior to prayer, I can be grateful for this book. But not as prayer.

Philip Campion.



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