

A WORD AND SPIRIT
MAIN) TREAM
NETWORK

Magazine Issue 64. June 1999

Issue Theme:
LEADERSHIP: Building in Faith?

LEADERSHIP - Building in Faith?

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The Mainstream Executive currently are

Adrian Argile (<i>Secretary</i>)	(01706) 831195
Ian Frith	(0121) 323 2839
Stephen Ibbotson	(0113) 267 8480
John Lewis	(01989) 720312
Craig Millward	(01493) 731009
Peter Nodding	(01483) 572745
Roger Standing	(0181) 681 8651
Rob Warner	(0181) 543 0160
Rob White	(01625) 859036
Derek Wick	(0121) 355 5088

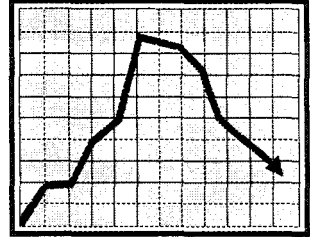
We are considering making January's magazine an issue on "Prayer" and would be grateful for any contributions describing prayer methods, strategies, concerts or other initiatives

Please email them to Craig Millward at craig.millward@mainstream.org.uk or at 42 First Avenue, Ormesby St. Margaret, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR29 3BT

Introduction

Welcome to Issue 64. We have to begin with a humble and abject apology. We have not kept to our side of the bargain and, yes, you have missed out on a Magazine. There are reasons for the delay – not yet having a replacement Editor being the main one – but all we can do is simply ask your forgiveness. However, the good news is that you will still get your 3 issues this year and the January magazine has been rescheduled to appear in September. Sorry.

These are not good times for Church as a National institution. We are still talking of numerical decline and have a great struggle to be heard in this increasingly secular society. Yet the story for many of our churches is different. Yes, there is still the background of secularism to contend with, and yes, we feel like the reputation of the institutional church is an unfair millstone to have tied around our necks; but there are real signs that God is breaking through into our communities through our witness.



Hopefully we've reached the end of the era in which our frustration has made us turn against ourselves ("The Church isn't... enough" "The Church needs to do more..."). And I pray that we are again into an era of building in faith upon the foundation laid for us by Christ and his early Apostles.

There was a time not so long ago when I looked at growing churches and asked why they were seeing the Kingdom growth that we long for everywhere. Part of the answer was openness to the Holy Spirit. Part was that they were relevant to the community in which they existed. Then there was the fact that they had effective programmes, loving members, and prayerful saints.

But the main thing that distinguished them from churches that didn't seem so alive and weren't growing was that they were being led effectively. Wise leadership has a role in producing all the above and in galvanising a church membership in faith around purpose.

Now this observation gave me problems. And at times I felt like throwing up my hands and despairing: "So this business of growing a church is no different to growing a business". Where's the spiritual dynamic in all this? Does 'success' just depend on being a personality I'm not?

Then God opened my eyes. Leadership is a gift – or rather Leadership is about exercising gifts (there are several types). God gives gifts to people then gives those people to the Church. All who have been given these gifts are then called to submit them to God, learn to use the gifts wisely, and allow Him to fashion a character that will be an effective conduit for His blessing to the church and world. It was this discovery that set me on the road to commissioning this issue.

It begins with Tony Peck recording the progress of a debate that has been rumbling through Baptist Union Council for some years. The progress of this debate has sometimes made me wonder whether we've become so afraid of leadership within our

denomination that all we've got left is consultations and committees who need consensus before anything can be done. David Pytches and Terry Virgo then pick up the baton and develop the idea of gifting, and into the regions of the dreaded "A" word that no good Baptist dare use (apparently). But, of course, we had our own version in the good old days, and I continue with an article that builds on a much earlier work by John Nicholson and looks at the role of the Baptist Messenger. Tim Foley then reminds us that good leaders cannot lead where there is no culture of trust and accountability. We close with an article from Wolfgang Simson which I picked off the Web and thought was well worth a read. I hope you enjoy this collection of dishes and that they provide good food for thought.

Craig Millward – Guest Editor.

A National Pastoral Team

National leadership has been a key issue at the heart of all the current debates about denominational reform. And not surprisingly it has aroused passions on all sides. There are those who dislike the term 'leadership' in relation to any Baptist way of being the church, especially at 'national' level. Others have called for some kind of 'national eldership' at the heart of our denominational life.

The debate exposes continuing uncertainty about leadership among Baptists at every 'level' of our life together. It is beyond the scope of this short article to set out the lines of the debate. But for the present purposes I want to highlight a question with which Baptists have been wrestling in recent years without coming to any real conclusions. How far can the model of leadership of a local church be reproduced in any form of 'translocal' leadership whether it be regional or national? Is the 'leadership' of churches in an association, or 29 Associations and 2000 churches in Union, essentially the same as the leadership of 200 individuals – or do we need to find a completely different model?

Two key Reports which became part of the Consultation process each proposed some kind of national group which would take an strategic overview of the life of the churches, Associations and Colleges which make up the Baptist Union. *Transforming Superintendency* proposed a **Mission and Ministry Forum** as an enlarged Superintendents' Board. 'It would have no executive power but would be a think-tank' reporting to the BU Council.

The *Relating and Resourcing* Report suggested that the Union general Secretaries, Heads of Departments and the 'Senior' Regional Ministers should form a **National Leadership Team** 'for the oversight of mission, pastoral care, and the encouragement of associating'.



In the light of the gathering debate about the nature of ‘translocal leadership’, a Task Group was formed under the Convenorship of Revd Dr Ernest Lucas and produced its reflections, which reviewed the debate so far and from it produced the following affirmations (*Report, 5:5*):

- The Church is the local company of believers living under the authority of Christ and seeking his mind and will through the Church Meeting.
- Covenant, fellowship and being the Body of Christ are essential concepts for understanding the nature of the church.
- Trans-local covenanting is essential for a true expression of being Church.
- Where there is fellowship there is need for pastoral oversight. Hence translocal fellowship entails translocal pastoral oversight.
- Translocal pastoral oversight of local ministers is crucial for the effectiveness of the church in mission.
- Oversight flows back and forth between community and individual leaders
- Christian leadership must grow out of a relationship of trust based on service offered in imitation of the self-giving of Christ.
- The concept of a national pastoral team is in accord with the Baptist understanding of being Church, not something alien to it.

The Report was presented to the Baptist Union Council which unfortunately because of lack of time and the pressure to come to some kind of ‘resolution’ about translocal leadership, perhaps did not do justice to what was a very helpful and carefully considered report. However it was agreed that it would act as a basis for future discussion of the issue.

Meanwhile it was becoming clear that the leadership and accountability of the proposed Regional Ministers was probably to be based in the new Regional associations, rather than in the Union as is the case with the present Superintendents. For some this raised the question of the cohesion of the Union itself, and the question of some kind of national ‘leadership’ group again came to the fore. Taking into account the insights of the three Reports mentioned above, the Denominational Consultation Reference Group proposed a *National Mission Forum*. This started from the premise that the primary oversight of Regional Ministers will be located in the churches of a Regional Association. It did not seem appropriate to designate such regional leaders collectively as a ‘national leadership team’, a term which if used at all more properly applies to those called to *national* responsibilities among us such as the BU Heads of Departments and the General Secretaries.

The BU Council preferred the term *National Pastoral Team* but accepted that the functions of such a group might include:

- to take a strategic overview of mission (including ministry) among us
- to note trends in mission and church life across the country and to be pro-active in acting upon them

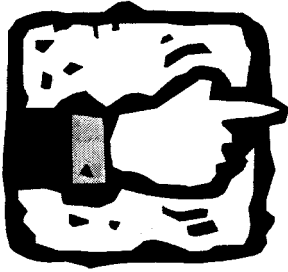
- to monitor reactions and responses of the churches to Union-generated Reports etc.
- to share good practice and experience
- to achieve good communication between the different member bodies of the Union and to encourage the overall cohesion of the Union
- to highlight areas of need and co-ordinate the sharing of the Union's resources
- to model 'the way of trust' in relationships between leaders
- to assist those called to national ministries in the Union in articulating a Baptist voice to issues of our time
- to act as a national 'think tank' for the work of the Union
- to act as a bridge between regional and national ecumenical life

The NPT would consist initially of one Regional Minister from each Regional Association, the BU General Secretaries and Heads of Department as well as some representation from the Colleges and the BMS. Some co-option might be necessary to avoid an (almost) male, Caucasian ministerial group.

In conclusion, I believe that a National Pastoral Team offers an excellent model of translocal leadership. Apart from the Didcot-based staff, none of those attending is in a management relationship with the BU (unlike the present Superintendents) and this should make for more open and honest debate. For the first time a group representing the whole of the Union's geographical area will meet to take a strategic overview and exercise leadership in the sense of being influencers for change, representing the grassroots of local churches in together sensing where God is leading us. It is intended that the NPT will report directly to the BU Council. The Settlement of ministers might be handled by a separate National Settlement Team.

I have no doubt that this model of 'translocal' leadership will fail to satisfy some, and as always cynics will not be hard to find to pour cold water on it. In any case, this proposal has yet to be finally agreed and may be modified. But I believe that as a model it offers the best opportunity for a national team to be directly accountable to Associations and local churches, as well as the BU Council, and could reduce the 'them and us' culture in relation to the Didcot-based staff. Thus it remains true to our Baptist roots and our understanding of the church which recognises that groupings beyond the local church can nevertheless display some of the marks of the church including the necessity for oversight (*episcopo*) where there is fellowship (*Koinonia*). As the Task Group on Leadership reminded us, such oversight "must grow out of a relationship of trust based on service offered in imitation of the self-giving of Christ". It is in that spirit that the proposal for a National Pastoral Team has been offered and I hope we will welcome it.

Tony Peck is a Tutor at Bristol Baptist College and has served us as Convenor of the Denominational Consultation Reference Group.



The Gift of Leadership

There is clearly a leadership crisis in the church today. If leaders of industry produced such statistics for decline similar to those in our traditional churches they would have been sacked years ago. Since even the very idea seems out of the question this itself seems a horrifying endorsement that something is seriously wrong. The King has no clothes on and nobody wants to talk about it.

Of course this is all slightly overstating the case. Fruit in things of the Spirit cannot possibly be measured numerically, and there are other values to promote alongside church growth. Besides, even in matters of evangelism and church growth, we can all think of churches effectively beavering away and increasing their church membership. Nevertheless the crisis remains. Many leaders have dreams but few have the energy, the courage and the practical vision to make it happen.

What kind of leadership predominates in the Church today?

A snap review of ministers operating within our church structures today throws up a variety of models. Most of these ministers will have some secondary giftings which are obviously a great help but we are thinking of the primary gifting which may not immediately be clearly identifiable until there has been some experience and maturity in the life of leading a church. The most obvious are the following:

Pastors

Church selection committees usually look for servant-hearted pastors. The majority of those being ordained today are chosen because they seem to promise good pastoral gifting. Flocks certainly need pastoring but the limitation of pastoral gifting is driven home in a day when the total number of flocks is diminishing and we are failing to break new ground.

Pastors get wholesome results through their genuine care of the flock. But where pastoring is the minister's primary gifting the size of their flocks can rarely expand beyond what they can reasonably pastor - i.e. from 80 to 120 church members. Once those limits are reached new sheep may occasionally be won but others drift away because the pastor has no more energy to rescue them. His/her hands are full.

Pastors are greatly loved for their compassion and commitment to the flock. This is not to ignore some built in shortcomings and we clearly all have some obvious ones. Pastors often tend to place inadequate people into their local church structures, appointing them, not so much because it would be good for the flock but because the pastor thinks the particular individual would so love the status. The folly of this is often not fully appreciated by the pastor because his over-riding compassion for the individual overlooks the need for wisdom in the oversight of the church. Unwittingly these leaders are laying up long-term problems for the future. Especially for when the

pastor leaves. Such appointed people can often be more concerned about their status in the church than the state of the church.

Pastors also tend to get preoccupied with counselling. Dr. Eddie Gibbs once showed an attendance graph of a small church demonstrating its growth over the years and then a period of stagnation when the church had evidently 'plateaued' for some three or four years. He asked the congregation why this could be. Without hesitation they replied "Those were the years when our pastor was caught up in counselling". The pastors are people's people and their chief focus is normally with care and counselling. They love their people and are highly rewarded by the love of their flock.

Managers

The next largest section of those who are selected for ordination are people gifted with management skills. Managers thrive on efficiency, policies and detailed procedures. They may also have other giftings but management is foremost. For them the obvious answer to church inefficiency is more management. They follow traditional ways. Their appeal is to those whose major concern is maintenance. They are in great demand when the traditional church is finding it hard to cope with the real risk-taking dynamic measures which will truly bring the church out of decline - steps that would too often appear untidy, unpredictable and unacceptable. Good managers are quickly noticed by their superiors and get to the top by dint of hard work and efficiency. They then proceed to promote like-minded folk to senior positions. "All power co-opts and absolute power co-opts absolutely" (Alasdair MacIntyre). The church becomes more hidebound than ever. When management seems to be failing they want to appoint more managers. It's hard for managers to break out of their management paradigms.

Efficiency however is not to be confused with effectiveness. "Efficiency is doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right thing." (Peter Drucker). There can be a lot of activity in the church without productivity for the Kingdom of God. There is the story of the army general on active service who telegraphed his superior in the War Office: "Have lost sight of all our objectives but are redoubling our efforts!" Managers are usually very efficient and hardworking as they try to maintain the status quo in the church but are not usually very effective in sensing and promoting the new thing that God wants to do through the church - indeed they usually tend to resist it. Managers are not always people's people, with their main preoccupation being administration and efficiency. This all has its place and people feel secure under good management.

Teachers

Teachers can often attract large crowds through their preaching, and like the apostle, prophet, pastor and evangelist, their gifting is greatly needed in the church. Teaching however is not always synonymous with leading though some who teach will lead well. They may gather a good audience and may well resist church-planting. The teacher often lacks the ability to build up a good infrastructure within the local church because he knows his books better than his folks. Teachers are not always people's people and their preoccupation is with instructing, challenging and enlightening.

Controllers

Controllers may have managerial skills and apparent pastoral skills and their 'bossism' does not often manifest itself as a serious problem until the controller actually gets into the leading position in the church. The controller does very little real listening to others but operates by issuing directives and ultimatums; s/he operates through emotional tantrums and paralysing threats. "Blessed are the control freaks for they shall inhabit the earth" (Hans Finzel). The controllers' appeal is to those who are confused with the moral maze confronting them and the deadly destruction they sense is going on in the dark world around them - such insecure folk who are fearful about making up their own minds are only too willing to kow-tow to an authority figure who will assume such responsibilities on their behalf. Shades of Jonestown, Waco, and The Nine O Clock Service! Controllers are not usually people's people and their preoccupation is with manipulation, appearance, precision and order.

Prophets

Whilst keeping our options open about any precise definition of the prophetic, two kinds of prophet come readily to mind - the *righteous* prophet and the *revelation* prophet.

The righteous prophet sees areas of injustice in society and properly encourages the church to minister urgently and practically to such ills. This is excellent but too often such leadership lacks the gifting to cope with the necessary evangelising and pastoring. When people (reached through these caring ministries) come into the church they often avoid being brought to a place of personal commitment to the Lord because the good news is limited to ministry to the needy and not redemption of the soul. These leaders get by because such time-consuming and compassionate ministry is clearly so very near to the heart of God. Like Mother Teresa they challenge the church to minister sacrificially to suffering people around them. Important though this ministry is there is more to being an effective church leader than being a compassionate minister to the needy. A prophet of righteousness is used to inspire and activate others to become involved in whatever is revealed to be the will of God; his ministry will be outward looking to where church people might helpfully be involved in the local community and beyond.

Such leaders are principally 'seers' who see the issues of social injustice very clearly and can focus the attention of the church upon them very effectively but yet they may not understand the other normal dynamics of a healthy and growing local church. This compassionate ministry must come from the congregation and a faithful leader will equip the saints for the work of the ministry and encourage the people of God to be involved in such caring. Whilst fully 'owning it' he must not give all his energy to it. The righteous prophet may or may not be a people's person but his concern is mainly focused on social justice.

The revelation prophet, whose main gifting is in the area of the prophetic, may get by for a while with inspirationalism, visions and prophecies, because many followers sense a feel-good factor about his/her spiritual language and style. They seem so godly and they usually are. They may have an anointing on them but that is not

necessarily the anointing for leadership. Their ministry is usually church focused - they see into people's lives. In the long term there has to be more to leadership than the revelation prophet can provide. There has to be the right sort of charisma and character for leadership. Some prophetically gifted people can be given great insight but are often ill-equipped to cope with the ordinary practical issues which constantly arise in real life situations. It is possible to be very heavenly minded but little earthly use as leaders. They may relate to God in a mystical way but find it hard to relate to God's people in a practical way. They hesitate when it comes to grasping nettles in the church and tend to counter problems by 'spiritualising' and calling for more prayer meetings. They may inherit a good congregation but will struggle to keep it, let alone increase it. There can be a real danger where such a leader is up-front prophesying because there is often very little means for testing any revelatory prophecy coming from them, and it can seem very confrontational and manipulating. The charismatic prophet is not usually a people's person but is preoccupied with dreams, visions and otherworld realities.

Summarising what we have and suggesting what more we need

It would be quite wrong to under-value the types of leadership caricatured above. Clearly good sacrificial work is being done in many churches. But it is also clear that today we need to highlight an alternative leadership model; a kind of leadership which can help the church to break out of its traditional mode to reach new people and plant new churches.

Apostolically anointed leaders

There is another biblical model of leadership that has been sadly overlooked or even deliberately blocked in the church. These are apostolically anointed leaders; leaders for over-seeing the building up of the local church by delegation and likewise engaging in evangelism and social outreach by delegation for church planting. Such a person will usually be reasonably gifted in many other areas of leadership but from the start the apostolic leader will be seeking to build up strong relationships in the local church and to gather a gifted support team around him/herself to whom he will readily delegate (not abdicate). This kind of leader knows s/he cannot lead relying simply upon the formality of the leader's office but much more from the informality of good relationships in the church and their growing trust of the leadership.

Plenty of time will be needed in the early days after the leader's formal instalment for blending together the leadership team and gathering new leaders with complementary giftings - for the pastoral, evangelistic (alpha courses?), managerial, teaching and prophetic ministry. Time, care and prayer are necessary for finding the right people whom the congregation can also trust. Unsatisfactory staff appointments can have long term counter-productive consequences for the church and reduce the confidence level of the congregation towards the 'apostolic' leader. Such leaders are people's people and have the vision, energy, courage and faith for growth and know in their guts that outreach through soul winning and serving the poor, leadership training, and church planting are all vital and possible. They can see how to grow a church that can 'birth' new churches. They can 'spot' the right people to engage in this and will

encourage them at the right time to step out and do it. Not only do they have the fire in their bellies, the faith in their hearts, the wisdom in their heads and the strength in their characters, but they also have the vision to see how it can be effected. Such leaders attract others with apostolic anointings on them.

Where do these apostles come from?

Most often, those with God's anointing for the apostolic ministry are stirred up by other apostolically anointed leaders - possibly having grown up in the church led by such a minister with an apostolic anointing, or being attached to a church with such leadership during their training for ordination or were perhaps even on the staff of such a church for a time where they have witnessed apostolic ministry in action. Just as the 'mantle' prophets of the Old Testament picked the prophetic ministry up from their leaders; so, as deep calls to deep, the apostolically anointed leaders observe it in its outworking from other leaders with an apostolic ministry much as Timothy picked up the mantle from Paul. Some apostolic leaders have learned from a parent and quite unconsciously this has given them a head start.

It was the late Archbishop Michael Ramsey who, upon reviewing the portraits of his predecessors at Canterbury, commented "The real leaders of English religious thought and revival were never archbishops but always simple priests, like a Wesley, or Keble or a Maurice" (Owen Chadwick). Of course there have been Archbishops with apostolic anointings, and I believe the present Archbishop of Canterbury to be one, but he admits to being frustrated by the restrictions of his office (Daily Telegraph Weekend March 29, 1997). Such leaders may be raised up from a variety of backgrounds. "One of the ironies of history", writes Samuel Bengel, "is the utter disregard of ranks and titles men pass on each other. The final estimate of men shows that history cares not an iota for the rank or title a man has borne, or the office he has held, but only the quality of his deeds and the character of his mind and heart'.

The New Apostolic Reformation

Prof. Peter Wagner, a long time student of world-wide mission and church growth has recently written a book entitled "The New Apostolic Churches" Regal (1998). It is based on his observations of what he terms a churchquake - his word to describe the impact of some 'new wineskin' leaders. All over the world God appears to be raising up humble leaders who clearly have an apostolic anointing on them - leaders of the African independent churches, the Asian house churches (especially China) and the Latin American grassroots churches which represent the fastest growing segments of church life in our times. He believes this new movement is as radical as the Protestant Reformation of nearly 500 years ago. Apostolic leadership is the main feature of this world movement which is seeing amazing church growth and is sending out more missionaries than are coming out of the Western world today.

Christians in Britain need to keep themselves aware of what is going on across the wider world. "The whole heritage of the church is the heritage of the whole church" (The Missionary Movement in Christian History by Andrew Walls. T&T Clark, 1996). We also need to identify and encourage signs of apostolic leadership in our

own churches take the risk releasing such leaders to do their apostolic work. This is no easy task – and I write as one coming from a very traditional church myself - possibly more traditional than the Baptists!

Humour too often gets the better of me but I'll take a calculated risk and pass on what one of these 'successful' apostolic leaders once shared: "I'm so glad" he said, "to be free at last from my old 'deacon possessed' church!" Ways must be found for breaking free, not of tradition per se because there are many good ones, but of traditional ways of "doing church" where they obviously inhibit us from doing what we clearly know to be the will of God. The Church was created to serve the Kingdom of God and we cannot allow traditional structures to frustrate us any longer. There's a crying need out there - we have got to begin church planting all over again to reach those godless millions still unreached for Christ. May God raise up the apostolic leaders for the hour.

David Pytches served as a missionary to the Church in Chile, Bolivia + Peru, before becoming Vicar of St. Andrew's Church in Chorleywood and beginning the New Wine Network. He is now retired and lives in Chorleywood.

David's book "Leadership for New Life" (Hodder) is highly recommended.

Apostles Today?

Ephesians 4 describes a Church built upon the foundation of four distinct ministries. The pastor/teacher nurtures God's people from the scripture. The evangelist trains the church to take the message into the community. The prophet insists on reminding us of our true identity and our calling to make disciples of all the nations. But what is an apostle?

Who are the Apostles?

The Greek word for apostle has its root in the verb 'to send', so apostle basically means 'a sent one'. We can distinguish three classes of apostle in the New Testament. First of all there is Jesus, 'the Apostle and High Priest of our confession' (Heb 3:1, NASB). Next there are 'the twelve'. Some feel that this is the end of the story, and that Paul was raised up by God to replace Judas since we never hear of the hastily appointed Matthias again. But we never hear of many of the twelve again either, and the Bible nowhere states that Paul was one of the twelve, and he clearly distinguishes himself from them in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8. The twelve were 'apostles of the Lamb' (Rev 21:14), called by Jesus during his earthly ministry, and the replacement for Judas had to be one who had accompanied them from the beginning.

It could almost be argued that Paul is in a category of his own as 'one untimely born' (1 Cor 15:8, NASB). He was certainly given an extraordinary amount of revelation to contribute to the Scriptures. He was, nevertheless, commissioned by the ascended Christ, and must therefore be regarded as generally belonging to the category referred



to in Ephesians 4:8-11, where we read that 'He ascended on high ... and He gave some as apostles'.

Special pleading might also be made for James, the brother of Jesus (Gal 1: 19), who emerged as a leading apostle even though he seems to have been an unbeliever during Jesus' earthly ministry. In the council at Jerusalem he seems to have obtained an even more influential place than Paul or even Peter (Acts 15:13-21). Barnabas is also called an apostle (Acts 14:14), and his apostleship was recognised by the church at the same time as Paul's. Paul also speaks of Andronicus and Junias as being 'outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was' (Rom 16:7).

The Task of the Apostle

After Jesus ascended, he gave apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers to equip the saints until the church is brought to full maturity (Eph 4:12-13). We must not miss the vital word 'until'. Few would argue that the church has reached its full stature, and if any of these grace gifts are missing we will not reach God's intended goal. And yet some still insist that Apostles aren't for today since we have the Bible. But without all the gifts God gives to the church we may be able to produce preaching centres with huge congregations, but they are in danger of disintegrating when the gifted preacher is removed from the scene.

That does not mean we should despise great Bible teachers. Far from it! But what is our goal in building the church? Surely it is that in the end we have a mature expression of the body of Christ. The saints are not only to know sound doctrine, but are also to be equipped for works of service. They have to find their particular gifts and contributions to church life and should be encouraged to function in them. All the gifts of the ascended Christ are needed to reach this maturity.

The apostles of the early church did not fulfil only the role of writing the inspired New Testament. (In fact, only a few of the apostles actually wrote - helped by others such as Luke, who claimed no apostolic calling.)? Just as in the Old Testament there were prophets who contributed nothing to Scripture, yet fulfilled a genuine prophetic ministry, so there were New Testament apostles who never gave us a line of Scripture, yet had a vital role to fulfil among the churches of their day.

One of the distinctive features of the apostle is that he is a master builder and foundation layer (1 Cor 3:10). Paul did not regard his apostleship as a position in the church hierarchy. He did not see himself at the top of a corporate pyramid; he was not a chief executive in a complicated church superstructure. He had a stewardship from God to proclaim the unfathomable riches of Christ and bring people to an assured understanding of what it is to be in Christ and have Christ in them. This was the burden of apostolic doctrine. Paul did not wonder what he would preach from town to town; he had a body of doctrine to deliver. He knew when the saints had grasped it, and he knew when they had drifted from it. He could see the creeping death of legalism moving over one congregation and warned another against the subtle dangers of mystic Gnosticism. Modern churches still need the authoritative word that will set them free from legalism, super-spirituality and other dangers.

Many an Evangelical has thought liberalism to be the great enemy, not recognising other, perhaps more subtle, foes. Legalism, for instance, can look like commendable zeal; but Paul had no hesitation in calling it another gospel, not to be received even from an angel. Apostolic doctrine handled with apostolic authority and insight is desperately needed because often we are blind to our own faults or shortcomings. Sometimes wrong emphases can enter in, hardly noticed by a local church focusing on itself. Spiritual coldness, doctrinal off-centredness, or incorrect practice can unobtrusively become part of a church's life.

One of God's great provisions to safeguard his church from going astray is a continuing apostolic ministry. The apostle, essentially a travelling man, is able to bring objectivity to his appraisal of a local church's condition. For instance, although the church in Thessalonica was in many ways exemplary, Paul wrote to the believers there that he longed to see them so he could supply what was lacking in their faith (1 Thess 3:10). Others, such as the saints in Corinth, Galatia and Colossae, had much for which to thank God in Paul's care of their churches.

Feeling the need

To illustrate further, if a local church, for instance, has not only received an attitude of legalism but has actually built some of its church structure around it, who has the authority to bring correction? The elders often feel trapped within the framework and long for an outside voice to proclaim the way forward authoritatively. Indeed, it is very often the elders who most feel the need for the apostolic ministry. Traditional churches are currently feeling the pressures of new life. Charismatic gifts are emerging; a desire for freer worship is being expressed. How are the leaders to proceed? Many are facing such issues and do not know which way to turn. Conferences for like-minded pastors will not provide the full answer, nor will charismatic organisations. God's way is to give apostles and prophets. He has simply appointed servants with different gifts to do different jobs.

Paul's authority was not derived from a special title or office. It was the fruit of two things: first, the grace of God in calling and equipping him with a particular gift as an apostle, and secondly, the working relationship he had with any particular church or individual. For example, Paul's fatherly relationship towards the churches in Corinth, Galatia and Thessalonica is plain to see. He wrote to the Corinthians, '... in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel' (1 Cor 4:15). He rejoiced in their lives and their love, and wept over their failures and shortcomings. As their father he lovingly and forthrightly claimed spiritual authority among them. When writing to the church at Rome, however, Paul's style was different. He felt free to communicate, but he did not adopt the same approach he had used with other churches. He had not yet seen the Roman church face to face; they were not his 'children in the Lord'.

Paul's fatherly care for the church was also demonstrated in his concern that they have local leaders. The appointment of elders was an important aspect of his church building programme. The Holy Spirit selected elders, but they received public recognition through the laying on of hands by the apostles or their delegates. Modern

churches have often resorted to electing their leaders, but those elected into office can similarly be voted out of office, so the temptation to be a man-pleaser is considerable. Appointed by the congregation, such leaders are accountable to the congregation. When there is no anointing, democracy is probably the safest form of church government. But when God begins to give anointed leadership, democracy must make room for him to have his way.

In the New Testament the whole matter was far more charismatic, in the word's truest sense. The Spirit-led appointment of elders was an important part of the apostles' foundation-laying ministry. Without the Holy Spirit's guidance, we resort to man-made structures with varying degrees of success, even leading to manifest disaster. In recent days some have even found it difficult to elect new leaders because differences of opinion in the congregation make the required majority hard to find. Where there is no acknowledgement of charismatic gifts of leadership we are bound to hit problems. The wise master builder will not select elders of his own choice in an arbitrary way. He will observe the way in which men have earned the respect and love of the people and are displaying the fact that God himself has appointed them. The laying on of hands then becomes an outward acknowledgement of what God has done by his Spirit. It is also a time of further impartation of spiritual grace for eldership.

Another major aspect of the work of an apostle is breaking new ground with the gospel. Paul was always looking for virgin territory where new churches could be built. As he set sail, he inspired existing churches with his outreaching vision. Paul planned to see the church at Rome on his way to Spain and he was helped on his way by them (Rom 15:24); so the Roman church was drawn into the apostle's missionary thrust into Spain. Members of Paul's team kept the churches informed of his movements, and kept him informed of the churches' progress. Young Timothy's were caught up in the world vision and were trained in the apostolic team. They learned in living situations. So, just as local pastors reproduce after their kind at home, apostles reproduce after their kind while on their apostolic journeys. Soon Timothy or Titus could be sent with Paul's full blessing to do the job he himself would have done. Thus the work was multiplied.

As a result of their travels the apostles not only opened up new areas but brought a sense of unity to the work of God at large. Because of this unity, Paul was able, through his contacts, to bring not only spiritual help but also material help to churches in need. The poor in Jerusalem, for example, were helped by the churches Paul visited elsewhere. It is clear from the New Testament that God never intended local churches to be isolated. Through their relationships, with the unifying work of an apostle, they are caught up in an international fellowship and in the world-wide spreading of the gospel. People in local churches who have no larger vision are often tempted to become inward-looking and negative; but where there is global vision and the stimulus of news from other growing churches, there is a strong desire for expansion.

What do you want to build?

Can we do without apostles? The answer very much depends on what we are aiming to build. If we want simply to preserve the status quo, certainly we can cope without them. If we want a nice, cosy, charismatic house group or a safe institutional church enjoying a little renewal now and then, we can find some of our hopes fulfilled. But if we want to see the church come to the fullness of the stature of Christ, it is essential for all the gifted people mentioned in Ephesians 4 to have their full place in our church life.

How do apostles emerge? Like evangelists and prophets, they are brought out by the sovereign choice and anointing of God. Thus there is no apostolic succession, nor is there any one training ground that produces all these leaders. Paul emerged from a background different from that of the other apostles, but needed the assurance that those he knew to be apostles before him recognised his calling and would extend the right hand of fellowship to him, which, in fact, they were happy to do (Gal 2:9).

The fact remains that if we are to see the tide turn in the nations, we need to plant a great number of new churches - churches that are healthy, powerful communities built firmly on God's word and relevant to modern society. Such new churches are being planted today, motivated and overseen by apostolic ministry. In addition, churches that have been in existence for many years often seek the aid of this ministry to help them through barriers they have found impossible to penetrate on their own.

One part of the contemporary apostle's role is to bring the measuring line to church life to see if it matches up with biblical standards. That is not to say he will arrive uninvited at any local church to declare his judgements. If the mighty apostle Paul was not automatically recognised by all as an apostle, and if his presence was regarded by some as unimpressive and contemptible, we can be sure that far lesser apostles would find it very difficult to impose their authority, or, indeed to be recognised at all!

The modern apostle will be regarded by some as simply a brother or a preacher, while to others he functions as an apostle. That presents no problem; it is not unlike the attitude Christians might have towards local pastor/teachers from other churches in their area. The uninvited apostle cannot impose his authority in other churches; nor should it be his desire to do so. He will, however, happily respond to requests from church elders who reach out for his help.

The modern apostle makes no claims to infallibility, and surely our understanding is that only God's word is infallible, not the actions of even New Testament apostles. Hence we see Paul having to correct Peter for his wrongful action in connection with the circumcision advocates (Gal 1:11-14). Surely no modern apostle would seek to put himself above the apostle Peter. We can rejoice that we now have the completed Scriptures, not to replace spiritual gifts or the Ephesians 4 ministries, but as a means by which we may test them to be assured that they are of God.

Like Paul, the modern apostle will find he cannot work alone. As the work multiplies he will draw colleagues to his side. We have coined the phrase 'apostolic team', but

we must be careful not to suggest something official by that title. There is no such thing as 'team status'. Paul's arrangement was purely functional and very fluid. In sending Timothy, Paul was confident that he would remind them of 'my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church' (1 Cor 4:17, NASB). The men who travelled with Paul, and who were sent to and from him, multiplied the ministry. Their relationship with Paul provided a setting in which they no doubt developed their own 'ways in Christ'; they would keep a strong dependence on Paul, but would also develop their own special contribution.

Some men travelling with an apostle will be like Barnabas - former local leaders who have proved their worth at a flourishing home church that is now sufficiently secure to release them. Others will be young men like Timothy, who not only commend themselves to the apostle, but also have excellent relationships with local elders, who sense the hand of God upon them and release them gladly to the larger work.

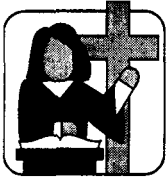
So we have a company of men who know that their prime calling is no longer to one particular local work - though their roots are there - but to the church at large. Whereas once they had the care of a local flock, they begin to develop a care for the churches plural (2 Cor 11:28). Within the so-called 'team' there will also be those with other gifts - prophets or evangelists, for instance - whose roles will differ, but who find a team relationship truly helpful in keeping them from being isolated and vulnerable.

It is important to see that prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers have different ministries and therefore will not try to bring to a local church what in the end only an apostle can bring. There is a danger, when a man moves into a different area of anointing, that he will be ineffective, resulting in frustration and insecurity. For instance, when trying to represent the apostle, the pastor who is not truly apostolic may tend to hold back where he should be decisive. Failing to recognise fundamental problems in a church he may continue to encourage and build up the people when really some 'tearing down' must take place first. His gifts of teaching and caring are best used when a good foundation is already laid in terms of doctrine, practice and eldership.

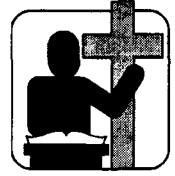
Alternatively a pastor may compensate for lack of apostolic anointing by undue legalism and 'going by the book' which promotes a system instead of life. The prophet will excite activity, but will tend to breed insecurity when he is not joined to an apostle. The evangelist will gather many people, but will not build them together. As a team bound with an apostle in love and mutual respect, they become a mighty force in the kingdom of God.

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*Terry Virgo leads New Frontiers International and is based in Hove, East Sussex.
New Frontiers serves over 200 churches world-wide.*



The Office of Messenger in Baptist Ecclesiology.



I have always believed that the four/five fold ministry described in Ephesians 4 as God's gift to His church was meant to be normative. But the big question in my mind has been "What is the nature of the ministries behind the labels".

Pastor + Teacher have never given me a problem because I had seen these functioning in my local Baptist Church right from day one of my Christian life. The ministry of the Evangelist was first seen close-to in a tent, and later, I realised there were some who worked within things called "para-church organisations" who were called in by churches and operated like stormtroopers. I eventually realised these people could also be effectively used within a local church setting, although they always seemed to cause ructions at Church Meetings. More recently still, I began to learn that prophetic activity was more than standing up for the poor and marginalised and is a distinct ministry that works much as described in the New Testament. Over the course of the last 5 years my life has been greatly enriched and encouraged by several words from prophetic people, and as a result I will never be the same again. The Ministry of an Apostle, however, has always been harder to pin down.

I suppose I was attracted to the idea of Apostolic ministry through years of suffering the results of its loss. But it was only after I moved to Norfolk and got hold of a book on the history of the Norfolk Association that I began to make the connections between Ephesians 4, our Baptist history, and people the New Churches are unafraid to call modern-day Apostles. The book talked about Thomas Grantham, a Messenger (Apostle and Messenger come from the same root = sent one) who seemed to have a similar job description to the Apostle Paul but without the miracles. I then began to recall my studies at college, and started to ask what these characters did and why we don't have them any more.

I've since been involved in debates on Associating and Leadership at my Association Executive, Association General Committee + at the Baptist Union Council. As I've listened and reflected it has seemed increasingly clear to me that the poor state of associating in Baptist life is a direct result of the demise of the Messenger – because his task was to facilitate meaningful relating and resourcing. We have also undergone a debate on the nature of leadership and discussions about a National Eldership, both of which have convinced me that we are hampered by a fear of anyone who attempts to exercise a leadership gift amongst us, and that many of the changes we are currently considering are focused upon removing the barriers we have put in the way of the gifted leaders amongst us. I fervently believe that the booklet "On the way of Trust" written by the College Principals several years ago, had a prophetic edge, and describes a current state that has arisen from out of our independency and competitive

isolation. It seems that now is the time to ask ourselves why God gifted His church with folk He has called as Apostles.

When I was asked to edit this edition of the magazine I knew it had to be on Leadership, and one of the first things I did was contact the Baptist Historical Society to ask for more information on the Messenger. They came up trumps with a fascinating article by John Nicholson from Volume 17 of the Baptist Quarterly (1957/8) entitled "The Office of Messenger amongst British Baptists in the 17th and 18th Centuries". The following is an attempt at a summary of a piece John wrote as part of his probationary studies and contains lengthy quotes.

The article begins with two lengthy quotes from older sources. W. T. Whitely in "A History of British Baptists" (1923) comments on those early days of the office (before 1660) when he writes:

"The first distinctive feature (of the Messenger) was the recognition of the duty of evangelization, and telling off special men for itinerant work. Seeing that the early churches commissioned men for special journeys, as with Judas, Silas, Barnabas, Tychicus, they formally commissioned men, and gave them the same title, messengers. As first there was a special commission for each journey; soon they selected men who had particular aptitude for evangelization, told them off for it as their main work, and undertook to support them and their families. Thus the title messenger came to have a technical meaning and since the cost of support was often more than a single church could sustain constantly, each messenger was linked with a group of churches. While evangelization was the main purpose, there followed from it the duty of organising new communities and counselling them in their early days. Men who had the double gift were of use also in the older churches which maintained and commissioned them, and thus came to be invoked whenever internal troubles arose."

And Adam Taylor in "The History of the English General Baptists" (1818) adds: "...ever attentive however to the precedent of scripture, it was not long before they supposed that they had discovered in the primitive churches an officer superior to an elder. They remarked that Barnabas, Luke, Timothy, Titus and several others were fellow labourers with the apostles in the preaching of the gospel and the planting and regulating of churches; and that in various passages they are called apostles, or in English, messengers of the churches. They thought it probable that the angels or messengers of the seven churches in Asia to whom the author of the Revelation addressed his epistles were also of the same order. They introduced an officer into their systems whom they styled a messenger. He was generally chosen by an association of the representatives of the churches in a certain district, and ordained by those of his own order with great solemnity, the various churches. keeping seasons of prayer and fasting. Sometimes a particular church chose a messenger; but in that case his business appears to have been confined to preaching the gospel where it was not known, and

regulating such churches as he might be made instrumental in planting. It is indeed probable that at the first this was the chief object of their appointments.”

Nicholson goes on to demonstrate how the office of Messenger was born in the 1650's, and makes it clear that right from the beginning it was instituted out of a desire to lay firm foundations for new churches. William Jeffery, a messenger from Kent, wrote in “The whole faith of man” (1659) “so the church are to choose messengers still for the gathering of the church, and establishing of the same, so that they are to go forth to preach the gospel. It is good and safe for a particular church in times of high concernment to call for, or desire help from sister churches, and so messengers, who are to take care of all churches in an especial manner, are to go in such cases.”

In the whole decade from 1650 to 1660 the term ‘messenger’ was used to describe anyone who was commissioned by one church to preach the Gospel and form new churches, or was sent to discuss matters of common concern.

In the next decade the figure of Thomas Grantham emerges amongst the General Baptists. Taylor says of him:

“He was ten times thrown into prison and was often confined for many successive months. In this interval we shall find him preaching the gospel, founding churches, nursing them up to maturity, and setting in order the things that were wanting in London, at Norwich, at Lynn Regis, at Warboys, at Warwick, and various other distant places; but it is with the baptized churches in Lincolnshire that he was most closely connected.”

Grantham says of himself (“Dispute with Connould.” 1691)

“I was elected by the consent of many congregations, and ordained to the office of a messenger by those who were in the same office before me. The place where I was ordained was in my own mansion or dwelling house, the place where the church usually met...I was chosen by the consent of many churches to take a larger trust: and ordained messenger to oversee the churches in divers places that had need of help.”

Nicholson describes 1660-70 as the period of consolidation. Churches had established a clear role for their Messengers, each of whom remained members of their own churches, and came under their discipline. However, it was also in this period that the ideas of the Particular Baptists began to diverge from the Generals. For the latter, the office was most definitely intended to facilitate evangelism and church planting – although in “An Orthodox Creed” written by the Messengers + Elders of Bucks., Herts., Bedford + Oxford (1679) Nicholson detects signs that the government of the churches seems to be gaining a pre-eminence. The Particulars had begun to back away from the idea of a third order of ordained ministers, preferring to apply the term merely to a church representative. Nicholson says: “This was largely due to a different conception of the Church. Particular Baptists held rigidly to the independency of the local church, whilst General Baptists, in theory though not always in practice, gave considerable powers to the Assembly.”

After 1700 the General Baptists put the initiative for nominating Messengers with the local Associations. The appointment was then made by the Assembly and the ordination carried out by another Messenger. This occasionally resulted in disagreements, with some churches not wanting to release their members for wider ministry, and paying for the Messengers was also a continual struggle. As the century proceeded Nicholson comments that the initiative in appointing Messengers passes from Association to Assembly. This, he comments, was an evidence of spiritual decline amongst the Generals, and also illustrates the altered priorities within Association life and the changing nature of the messenger's office. Nicholson describes James Richardson as the last Messenger to have a real zeal for evangelism and planting new churches:

“Throughout his life he was the foremost supporter of the mission to Virginia, but he himself did not do pioneering work. For many years he was the minute secretary of both the General Assembly and the Kent Association, and he toured the country and Ireland, ordaining officers and setting the churches in order.” Whitley describes Richardson's ministry as “a sign that the messenger was becoming more of a superintendent of existing churches than a founder of new”.

By the second half of the century the Messenger in General Baptist circles had become the one who presided at meetings of the Association, ordained Deacons and Elders, and made annual visits to the churches. This is illustrated by William Evershed's sermon on “The Messenger's Mission”, preached at the ordination of messengers at Canterbury in 1783. He says:

“Hence it appears that the apostles planted churches, and those messengers could do it also, yet it was not their peculiar work and business, for persons planted churches who were neither apostles nor messengers, e.g. Philip.”

He then lists the duties of messengers as threefold:

1. To set in order things that are wanting. They are to do this by visiting the churches even when they are not sent for, and the churches are not to resent this.
2. To remedy abuses in a spirit of gentleness and patience.
3. To ordain elders.

“Thus by the second half of the eighteenth century the messenger was no longer primarily an evangelist, more like a bishop in the Church of England, ordaining, visiting, remedying abuses, and presiding at associations and assemblies. This major change does not seem to have met with much opposition within the denomination, only outside it.”

Particular Baptists continued to oppose such an office. Daniel Turner (1758) wrote: “And as to an episcopal order or jurisdiction, superior to that of elders, I cannot find anything like it in the scripture account of the matter.” And Charles Whitfield (1775) describes apostles, prophets, and evangelists as extraordinary officers, who are

succeeded by ordinary officers, elders and deacons: “therefore we are not to look for nor expect any more in their office, but to reject them with disdain, who impiously assume any such characters.”

The New Connection of General Baptists took the same view, and it was disagreements between them and the General Baptists which scuppered attempts to arrange a reunion between the two bodies of General Baptists. Negotiations in 1777 and in 1784-5 fell through owing to the old Assembly insisting on the divine institution of the messenger’s office, and the laying on of hands, whilst the New Connection was prepared to tolerate a difference of opinion on both these subjects. Adam Taylor, writing as a member of the New Connection in 1818 says, “such an inquisitor general is totally incompatible with the independency of the churches, professed by these Christians.”

The old General Baptists declined further in the nineteenth century, and Whitley, writing in 1909, said: “Today although the Assembly is no longer aggressively evangelistic, the Messengers are regarded as peculiarly its officers, and three of them uphold the continuity of the order.” I add in passing that it is interesting that at the Baptist Leaders’ Day (March 1999) this was roughly the date cited by Douglas McBain for the beginning of the numerical decline of the Baptist denomination.

Nicholson concludes: “The messenger’s office originated in the passion of the early General Baptists for preaching the Gospel where it was not known in its purity, and for planting as a result new fellowships of baptized believers. It is a sad commentary on the weakness of human organisation that when this passion was lost, this same office became one of the chief stumbling blocks to union between the old General Baptists and the New Connection.

The extent of its concern for those outside is a good test of the spiritual vitality of any church or group of churches. The local church proved to be all-important in the success or failure of such a mission, for the General Baptist throughout believed that the final authority lay with the local church. Some freely gave up their gifted ministers for a wider mission, others jealously kept them and resented outside interference... Today the progress of extension work and the future of small causes depend upon the willingness of larger churches to sacrifice both in money and in manpower.

The initiative in appointing messengers lay chiefly with associations, and largely through the enterprise of James Richardson, the Kent Association was most active in the first two decades of the eighteenth century in sending forth messengers both at home and abroad. Later, however, Association life declined, and the Assembly minutes reveal repeated appeals on the national level for money and for men, which seem quite familiar to modern ears used to appeals for the Home Work Fund. This suggests that the key to the problem lies not at the national assembly level, but with the local county association.

The decline in the spiritual vitality of the General Baptists resulted in an organisation which in relation to messengers, reflected the practice of the Church of England in several ways. Whether this was deliberate or not cannot properly be ascertained.”

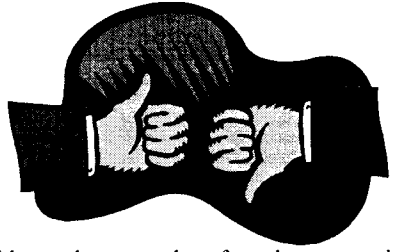
Nicholson is of the opinion that it is the decline of the office of the Messenger that took “episcopacy into our system” and resulted in a decline in spiritual vitality. He closes by saying “The history, however, of the role of messenger amongst both General and Particular Baptists shows the value of some form of bishop (neither group was afraid of the word), whose prime duty would be evangelism, and whose other duties such as visitation, administration and ordination would be subsidiary to that.

Thomas Grantham in his writings quoted 1 Corinthians 12 in his defence of the messenger’s office, and it is perhaps this passage with its stress on the work of the Holy Spirit before and above and through human organisation that provides the best closing comment on the history of the office of messenger: ‘All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.’”

Craig Millward is Pastor of Ormesby Baptist Church in Norfolk, and co-leads the Mainstream Anglia Group.

John Nicholson began his ministry in Harlow in 1954, and served the church in almost every way imaginable until his retirement in 1994. He now lives in Leeds.

Church-Craft



‘The Church assigned Max, a fourteen-year-old, to Joe, an unmarried twenty-four-year-old. Joe took his mentoring responsibilities seriously, inviting Max to consider him as “an older brother” and to stop by his apartment whenever he wanted to hang out. About three weeks after the mentoring began, the pastor received a call from Joe, who was extremely agitated. “You’ve got to give me a new person to mentor. Max and I aren’t working out.”

‘The pastor was surprised and asked why. At first, Joe was evasive. Then he said, “Well, it came to a head yesterday when Max dropped by unannounced. My girlfriend was visiting me and, well, Max put some things together, and it was obvious that we had been in bed together. Max then blurted out, ‘How did you two decide that this was right? I thought people were not supposed to have sex before they got married.’ Can you believe that? I told him it was none of his business. Then Max got smart-mouthed and said that he and his girlfriend had been talking about sleeping together, too. ‘If its right for you, it’s right for me,’ he said”.

“What did you say to him?” asked the pastor.

“I told him it was none of his business and that it was a lot different for me to do this at my age than for a fourteen-year-old to do it before he is ready.”

“And Max said?”

“And Max said, ‘I am just as ready as you are.’ Can you believe this kid?” he shouted.

Joe’s surprise at Max’s imprudence is understandable. After all, Joe had spent twenty-four years within a society that teaches us all to relate to one another as strangers. The church had refused to accept these social arrangements. When Joe accepted responsibility to be Max’s “older brother”, he probably thought that he would be influencing Max. Little did he know that Max would be holding him accountable. An essential pastoral gift is the ability of pastors to appreciate and appropriate those extraordinary people like Max who are in their congregations and who are able to be significant examples to the rest of us of what it means to be the church’ (*Resident Aliens, p108f*).

In this essay I will reflect on the relationship between leadership formation and church community formation using recent thinking from those close cousins of the Baptists, the Mennonites. Mennonite churches recognise the need for a clear theology of congregational leadership and are just beginning to formulate one. Most of the material on this comes from the United States (which is home to around half of the Mennonite Church) but there are, I believe, possibilities for mutual learning.

I joined the leadership team of Wood Green Mennonite church two years ago. The congregation was beginning to arrive at a good theology of leadership by this time, but not without much prayer, time, discussion and pain. It seemed to me that sheer exhaustion was a major factor in their recognition that gifts of leadership had been marginalised, and that this was a key reason why the church failed to grow. I do not doubt that the church could have taken easier options such as closing, or imposing outside leadership, but I'm glad that these did not happen.

In the 1960s leading Mennonite thinkers proposed that the leadership model of the Mennonite church had borrowed too much from outside sources (other denominations and traditions) and so was not true to the Anabaptist vision or the New Testament. There began to develop a vision of church which was bible-centred and where every member discovered and used their gifts but which marginalised leadership. It is no coincidence that the 'House Church' movement was flourishing at this time and that the sociological and political realities of that era also played their part.

Marlin Miller was a Mennonite leader who was trained by a leading Mennonite seminary which apparently had an anti-leadership, anti-authority mythology shaped in the 1960s and '70s. He was taught that ministry depended on the particular callings of particular people in particular contexts. It did not include notions of a pattern of pastoral ministry or of an office of pastoral ministry that are constant in a variety of congregational settings. In particular the role of the pastor was criticised by reference to the priesthood of all believers in what was purported to be its radical Anabaptist version. Later, when he became president of the same seminary, Miller had to struggle to regain a role for pastoral leadership although it is only recently that his rather novel perspectives have been re-introduced into the Mennonite conversation on leadership.

The 'priesthood of all believers' was used to characterise some aspect of an Anabaptist view of the church. For some it meant that every Christian is a minister, for others it signified a decision-making process for the church, for others the believer's direct access to God and for others it represented the rejection of a church/laity division. All of these are right, but in Mennonite circles the image was commonly used to make the point that since we are all priests, we do not need leaders. But when Miller was asked to write about this idea and went back to the sources, he could find no references to the image being used in this way. '...[A]pparently neither Menno nor other Anabaptists and Mennonites of that time related the question of Christian ministry or the appointment and ordination of ministers in the church to the priesthood of all believers'. (In the NT the idea is of the corporate nature of believing priesthood (1 Peter 2.9), an idea we will return to below in the thought of Stanley Hauerwas).

John Howard Yoder, an important theologian who was critical of the traditional theology of ministry, acknowledged that the Anabaptists could not be looked to for illumination on how to renew leadership models. The anti-clerical impulse which energised early Anabaptism was more of a protest against the obvious abuses which they saw amongst the clergy rather than an anti-leadership stance. For example the

Swiss Anabaptists had local 'shepherds' serving each congregation, called from its midst, and supported financially from gifts as needed. Many of the key Anabaptist confessions carry the concept of the office of ministry.

Miller learned from experience, by leading a church in Paris and relating to several others, that very much depended on the quality of congregational leadership. The notion that if everyone got together and exercised their particular gift, the Holy Spirit would automatically make things come out correctly became less credible. He was sure that consensus decision making was God's will for his church but that without clearly defined patterns of leadership, consensus was next to impossible. There were innumerable small groups and households that started with great vigour and broad vision, but completely folded within 4 to 6 months because they could not reach consensus on significant issues.

The Fullness of Christ

John Yoder was a key figure advocating the vision that Miller had found wanting, so it is to him that we shall now turn. The church as a faithful, disciplined community is a central theme of Yoder's writings. When the people of God faithfully practice what it means to be the church, including in its leadership structures, it is the pulpit of God. 'The Work of God is the calling of a people, whether in the Old Covenant or the New. The church is then not simply the bearer of the message of reconciliation, in the way a newspaper or a telephone company can bear any message with which it is entrusted. Nor is the church simply the result of a message, as an alumni association is the product of a school or the crowd in the theatre is the product of the reputation of the film. That men and women are called together to a new social wholeness is itself the work of God that gives meaning to history, from which both personal conversion (whereby individuals are called into this meaning) and missionary instrumentalities are derived'.

Decision-making through reconciling dialogue is the way for the church to define the ongoing meaning of this 'peoplehood', and the closest that Jesus came to projecting the shape of the church was the description in Matthew 18:15-20 and John 14-16. Yoder often uses Matthew 18 to describe the faithful church. Here the conflict resolution begins with only the two parties to the conflict being involved and is broadened only gradually, and only so far as is needed to achieve reconciliation. Believing men and women are empowered to act in God's name and what they do, God is doing, in and through human action. The procedure implies a church which is community -- divergent views are being lived out in such a way as to cause offence; there are others who can help mediate; the obedience of the offending person is 'my business' and there is a commitment both to the integrity of the community and the restoration of the offender. This process implies a strong church community where relationships have depth, where the truth is spoken, and where people are not afraid to disagree and confront each other. The intention of the process is reconciliation, not exclusion or even reprimand.

A key image in Yoder's writings is 'the fullness of Christ', from the Ephesians 4 vision in which every member of the body has 'a distinctly identifiable, divinely validated and empowered role'. The distribution of gifts is all part of the victory of Christ, and the use of our gifts is about 'making our calling sure', living up to the direction we have just been shown. Yet he is critical of a modern approach to gifts which individualises them. Rather, a member '... can possess and exercise its own dignity, its own life and role, only in its bondedness with the other members. It can be crippled for no fault of its own when some other part of the body suffers'. Yoder observes that this is distinctively Christian. 'This vision of church is not something that existed before, it is not a notion of teamwork but has had to be achieved by Christ and is part of his victory'. He is convinced that the NT has resources for Church critique and renewal which have not yet been tapped although he recognises that there is no one 'specific' right model of leadership reformation. 'Historically, in fact, there has been a striking degree of similarity in the renewal experiences represented by the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, the Friends and Baptists of the seventeenth century, the Wesleys of the eighteenth, and the Churches of Christ of the nineteenth. Still, though the notion of "restoring a biblical pattern" has an abiding appeal, it is too simple'.

He is fiercely critical of the normal way of 'doing church', where one person or a few have the special role of 'Minister'. He challenges the concentration of authority in the hands of office-bearers accredited on institutional grounds. This he calls professionalisation, which he feels betrays the vision of reciprocal accountability and interdependence of the fullness of Christ. However he does recognise (from 1 Cor.) that despite the intrinsic equal dignity of all gifts, there are some that take priority over others within the church including teaching, prophecy and the orderly arrangement of the communication process, including the duty to listen critically to one another. This means a functional priority for the elder-teacher and elder-moderator, although he notes the warning from James about the teaching role because of the special temptation of playing with words. His analysis of the NT shows that Eldership (leadership), then as now, should be plural, shared with a team of colleagues. Paul does not reject domination because of a commitment to the dignity of the individual, or belief in the market, or the inherent goodness of every person, or a countercultural suspicion of all authority. Rather, Paul proclaims that 'in the midst of a fallen world the grace of God has apportioned to every one, without merit, a renewed potential for dignity in complementarity'.

A ministry of character is only possible if we are a people of character.

The story about Max and Joe at the beginning of this essay serves as a good introduction to the thinking of Stanley Hauerwas, an important American Methodist theologian who cares deeply about the church. Hauerwas describes himself as a High-Church Mennonite and is indebted to thinkers of the Baptist vision such as John Howard Yoder and James McClendon, Jr. Hauerwas cares about the church and those who lead it although he denies that pastors possess some clerical trait not held by the rest of the baptised. '[A]ll Christians, by their baptism, are ordained to share in

Christ's work in the world'. Yet the church has always found it good to call some of its members to lead, 'to help the congregation nurture within itself those virtues needed for the life and work of the colony', and so a pastor's job description is about 'the survival of a colony within an alien society'. This is why any discussion about leadership must begin with the church and the church is called to be a 'colony, an alternative community, a sign, a signal to the world that Christ has made possible a way of life together unlike anything the world had seen'.

Hauerwas, like Yoder, believes that the first task of the church is to be the church, to be the people of God whose corporate life testifies to the reality of Jesus crucified. But the church is at war, it has forgotten that it has enemies and it has lost the practices that would name those enemies; 'One of the marks of the church's extraordinary accommodation in our time is that Christians now believe that we have no enemy....Nothing is more important than knowing our enemy.... The church must name the enemy as that manner of life that domesticates us by convincing us that the enemy is within'. The question is, how can the church be enculturated as a people capable of surviving in a culture that tempts us to forget that we ourselves, as the church, are a culture?'. So the enemy represents that way of life which is opposed to the way of life embodied by the faithful church. For example we resist the enemy when we learn through practice to acknowledge the authority of the gathered church, to listen to leadership and to resist the compartmentalisation of our lives which defines certain areas (such as money and sex) as private.

His vision of church is thoroughly Jesus-centred and focused on discipleship as imitation or apprenticeship. He illustrates this idea using the craft of bricklaying. To learn how to lay a brick it is not enough to be told how to do it; you must learn a multitude of skills that are co-ordinated into the activity of laying bricks. You must first learn to choose bricks, mix mortar, build scaffolding and make joints. Furthermore it is not enough to lay a few bricks; rather, in order to become a bricklayer you must, hour after hour, day after day, lay bricks. You also have to learn a new language that is intrinsic to the practice of bricklaying without which you cannot learn to lay bricks. Above all, to lay bricks you have to be initiated and apprenticed in the craft by a master craftsman. Such apprenticeship into a craft involves submission to authority based on a history of accomplishment (he contrasts this to modern democratic presuppositions which deny the necessity of a master and of authority). Furthermore, we can learn to enjoy it, 'But when craft and community are in good working order, discipline is quite literally a joy, as it provides one with power -- and in particular power for service -- that is otherwise missing'. It is crucial to note here the reciprocal relationship between church and church leadership -- a church can shape faithful, empowering leaders just as the church is shaped by the ministry of those leaders.

Hauerwas urges the church to recover the significance of everyday practices like gathering, praying, bible study, fasting, truth-telling, confession of sin and worshipping, which by the Spirit can shape believers to be a faithful church. These practices must not be assumed as 'natural', for we are not born with them. Rather we

have to learn, by example and imitation, and therefore 'under authority' from leadership. The skills of prayer, for example, teach us how to speak as Christians, for the primary language of the church is the language of prayer. 'So by becoming skilled speakers of that language called Christian, through prayer we discover the skills necessary for Christians not only to survive but also to resist the world that would destroy us'. He says that we cannot learn to name ourselves as sinners separate from concrete acts of confession, for it is one thing to confess our sin in general, but quite another to confess our sin to a fellow member of our church whom we have wronged.

If the Post-Evangelical critique of 'church culture' is directed against the meaningful practices of the church then it is directly opposed to what Hauerwas is saying. It is quite right that believers have to learn the languages of the cultures in which they find themselves in order that they might understand it, appreciate it and witness to it. But if Hauerwas is right the main problem is that believers participate in the culture of the world easily enough but are not able to locate it (or themselves) in God's story precisely because they are not schooled in the ways of those who follow Jesus. 'One of the reasons why we acquire habits and practices commensurate with being church is to be able to discern better the world in which we live. That is, to be able to discern that the world is at once God's but also still enemy territory. So we need to know how to describe the world appropriately'. Church practices are obviously not opposed to Mission, nor are they peripheral but vital to it.

One of the keys areas where Hauerwas thinks the world has infiltrated the church is that of authority, 'We think that nothing is more important than for the church to be a community capable of being obedient to authority. No issue more bedevils our lives today than the problem of the loss of authority'. The temptation for leaders is think that their authority depends on their ability to be perpetually pleasant; 'there is nothing in and of itself wrong with being perpetually pleasant, but often such people lack the courage necessary to act with authority in the church. Leaders are those who have the courage and humility to remind the church of those practices necessary for us to be in unity with God, with one another and with the church universal'. Leaders are so very important for the church because without them the church will lose its way, forgetting the story that makes it possible to be a disciplined body of people against the false stories of the world.

He objects to ideas of 'requirements for ministry' framed in terms of certain impermissible actions or adhering to a code. Rather, ministers should be certain kind of people, people with the character to sustain them in the ministry. In particular, the character of those serving in the ministry should be determined by the character of the office to which they have been ordained. He observes that ministers are expected to be proficient in so many different areas that they lack any centre in their work, which can easily destroy them. However since the central task of the church is simply to be the church, it is right that some are set apart to enable the whole church to remain faithful to the gospel. He is certainly at odds with Yoder here in his high view of ministry and yet Miller's observation stands; Leaders are essential for a healthy church.

While ministers are basically no different from other Christians, they have made themselves open to a call from others that may well make them different. As they practice the habits of Christianity and become models for others it is hoped that they will indeed develop characters which will sustain them for the journey. Hauerwas perceives that the key virtue in the minister's character is constancy; 'Without steadfastness to self and to one's task ministry cannot be sustained. Without constancy the minister is tempted to abandon the church to the ever-present temptation to unbelief and unbelief's most powerful ally, sentimentality'. Constancy is vital because ministers must remain faithful to their calling even if such faithfulness causes them to lose popularity. But this is also a requirement for the church. The church also must be composed of people who require their minister to do the unpopular thing. A ministry of character is only possible if we are a people of character.

The formation of Christian character is central for Hauerwas and this is precisely why he is of such importance in our reflection about congregational leadership. But the question is not only about the kind of character a leader needs but what kind of character the Christian needs to be faithful. Character is most fully displayed in the way the Christian responds to adversity; hence non-violence is central to the Christian life. The church is to reflect God's character as revealed in Jesus and so needs to train its members in faithfulness. What is striking here is that the habits are ones that have always sustained faithful Christians since the time of the first followers of Jesus. It is these habits which the church needs if it is to resist the temptation of assimilation into the world or despair at the long road ahead.

I hope that I have shown why Yoder and Hauerwas are invaluable sources of reflection on the relationship between church and leadership. Only Miller's essay in the Mennonite collection shows signs of wrestling with these significant theologians (*Understanding Ministerial Leadership*). Mennonite and Baptist reflection would do well to use both in developing a theology of leadership. In particular not enough attention is being paid to the reciprocal relationship between leadership formation and church community, or 'church-craft'. Yoder operates with historical and theological precision and exegetical rigour, and he reminds us that the faithful church will empower all its members, will make decisions together, will have non-authoritarian structures and so will demonstrate the fullness of Christ. Hauerwas is more aware of contemporary threats to the integrity of the faithful church and is convinced that the authority of 'Word' and 'Minister' need to be recovered if the church is to resist the powers and become a disciplined, shaping community where lives are transformed, including those of ministers whose lives become worthy of imitation. Yoder and Hauerwas give us the components of a 'church-craft' consisting of an empowered community where members submit their lives to the transforming power of the Spirit actualised in the practices of the church.

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*Tim Foley is a leader at Wood Green Mennonite Church in London.
The London Mennonite Centre provides training, conversation and books on
Church life including mediation, decision-making, discipleship and theology.*



Theses

towards a Re-Incarnation of Church

God is changing the Church, and that, in turn, will change the world. Millions of Christians around the world are aware of an imminent reformation of global proportions. They say, in effect: Church as we know it is preventing Church as God wants it. A growing number of them are surprisingly hearing God say the very same things. There is a collective new awareness of age-old revelations, a corporate spiritual echo. In the following 15 Theses I will summarize a part of this, and I am convinced that it reflects a part of what the Spirit of God is saying to the Church today. For some, it might be the proverbial fist-sized cloud on Elijah's sky. Others already feel the pouring rain.

1. Church is a Way of Life, not a series of religious meetings.

Before they were called Christians, followers of Christ have been called The Way. One of the reasons was that they have literally found the way to live. The nature of Church is not reflected in a constant series of religious meetings led by professional clergy in holy rooms specially reserved to experience Jesus, but in the prophetic way followers of Christ live their everyday life in spiritually extended families as a vivid answer to the questions society faces, at the place where it counts most: in their homes.

2. Time to change the system

In aligning itself to the religious patterns of the day, the historic Orthodox Church after Constantine in the 4th century AD adopted a religious system which was in essence Old Testament, complete with priests, altar, a Christian temple (cathedral), frankincense and a Jewish, synagogue-style worship pattern. The Roman Catholic Church went on to canonise the system. Luther did reform the content of the gospel,

but left the outer forms of church remarkably untouched; the Free-Churches freed the system from the State, the Baptists then baptised it, the Quakers dry-cleaned it, the Salvation Army put it into a uniform, the Pentecostals anointed it and the Charismatics renewed it, but until today nobody has really changed the superstructure. It is about time to do just that.

3. The Third Reformation.

In rediscovering the gospel of salvation by faith and grace alone, Luther started to reform the Church through a reformation of theology. In the 18th century through movements like the Moravians there was a recovery of a new intimacy with God, which led to a reformation of spirituality, the Second Reformation. Now God is touching the wineskins themselves, initiating a Third Reformation, a reformation of structure.

4. From Church-Houses to house-churches

Since New Testament times, there is no such thing as a house of God. At the cost of his life, Stephen reminded unequivocally: God does not live in temples made by human hands. The Church is the people of God. The Church, therefore, was and is at home where people are at home: in ordinary houses. There, the people of God: share their lives in the power of the Holy Spirit, have “meetings”, that is, they eat when they meet; they often do not even hesitate to sell private property and share material and spiritual blessings, teach each other in real-life situations how to obey God’s word-dialogue - and not professor-style, pray and prophesy with each other, baptise, lose their face and their ego by confessing their sins, regaining a new corporate identity by experiencing love, acceptance and forgiveness.

5. The church has to become small in order to grow big

Most churches of today are simply too big to provide real fellowship. They have too often become fellowships without fellowship. The New Testament Church was a mass of small groups, typically between 10 and 15 people. It grew not upward into big congregations between 20 and 300 people filling a cathedral and making real, mutual communication improbable. Instead, it multiplied sideways - like organic cells - once these groups reached around 15-20 people. Then, if possible, it drew all the Christians together into city-wide celebrations, as with Solomon’s Temple court in Jerusalem. The traditional congregational church as we know it is, statistically speaking, neither big nor beautiful, but rather a sad compromise, an overgrown house-church and an under-grown celebration, often missing the dynamics of both.

6. No church is led by a Pastor alone

The local church is not led by a Pastor, but fathered by an Elder, a local person of wisdom and reality. The local house-churches are then networked into a movement by the combination of elders and members of the so-called five-fold ministries (Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Evangelists and Teachers) circulating from house to house, whereby there is a special foundational role to play for the apostolic and prophetic ministries (Eph. 2:20, and 4:11.12). A Pastor (shepherd) is a very necessary part of the whole team, but he cannot fulfil more than a part of the whole task of equipping the saints for

the ministry, and has to be complemented synergistically by the other four ministries in order to function properly.

7. The right pieces fitted together in the wrong way

In doing a puzzle, we need to have the right original for the pieces, otherwise the final product, the whole picture, turns out wrong, and the individual pieces do not make much sense. This has happened to large parts of the Christian world: we have all the right pieces, but have fitted them together wrong, because of fear, tradition, religious jealousy and a power-and-control mentality. As water is found in three forms - ice, water and steam - the five ministries mentioned in Eph. 4:11-12, the Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers and Evangelists are also found today, but not always in the right forms and in the right places: they are often frozen to ice in the rigid system of institutionalised Christianity; they sometimes exist as clear water; or they have vanished like steam into the thin air of free-flying ministries and independent churches, accountable to no-one. As it is best to water flowers with the fluid version of water, these five equipping ministries will have to be transformed back into new and at the same time age-old forms, so that the whole spiritual organism can flourish and the individual ministers can find their proper role and place in the whole. That is one more reason why we need to return back to the Maker's original blueprint for the Church.

8. God does not leave the Church in the hands of bureaucratic clergy.

No expression of a New Testament church is ever led by just one professional holy man doing the business of communicating with God and then feeding some relatively passive religious consumers Moses-style. Christianity has adopted this method from pagan religions, or at best from the Old Testament. The heavy professionalisation of the church since Constantine has been a pervasive influence long enough, dividing the people of God artificially into laity and clergy. According to the New Testament (1 Tim. 2:5), there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. God simply does not bless religious professionals to force themselves in-between people and God forever. The veil is torn, and God allows people to access Himself directly through Jesus Christ, the only Way. To enable the priesthood of all believers, the present system will have to change completely. Bureaucracy is the most dubious of all administrative systems, because it basically asks only two questions: yes or no. There is no room for spontaneity and humanity, no room for real life. This may be OK for politics and companies, but not the Church. God seems to be in the business of delivering His Church from a Babylonian captivity of religious bureaucrats and controlling spirits into the public domain, the hands of ordinary people made extraordinary by God, who, like in the old days, may still smell of fish, perfume and revolution.

9. Return from organised to organic forms of Christianity

The Body of Christ is a vivid description of an organic, not an organised, being. Church consists on its local level of a multitude of spiritual families, which are organically related to each other as a network, where the way the pieces are functioning together is an integral part of the message of the whole. What has become

a maximum of organisation with a minimum of organism, has to be changed into a minimum of organisation to allow a maximum of organism. Too much organisation has, like a straightjacket, often choked the organism for fear that something might go wrong. Fear is the opposite of faith, and not exactly a Christian virtue. Fear wants to control, faith can trust. Control, therefore, may be good, but trust is better. The Body of Christ is entrusted by God into the hands of steward-minded people with a supernatural charismatic gift to believe God that He is still in control, even if they are not. A development of trust-related regional and national networks, not a new arrangement of political ecumenism is necessary for organic forms of Christianity to re-emerge.

10. From worshipping our worship to worshipping God

The image of much of contemporary Christianity can be summarised, a bit euphemistically, as holy people coming regularly to a holy place at a holy day at a holy hour to participate in a holy ritual lead by a holy man dressed in holy clothes against a holy fee. Since this regular performance-oriented enterprise called “worship service” requires a lot of organisational talent and administrative bureaucracy to keep going, formalised and institutionalised patterns developed quickly into rigid traditions. Statistically, a traditional 1-2 hour worship service is very resource-hungry but actually produces very little fruit in terms of discipling people, that is, in producing changed lives. Economically speaking, it might be a “high input and low output” structure. Traditionally, the desire to worship in the right way has led to much denominationalism, confessionalism and nominalism. This not only ignores the fact that Christians are called to worship in truth and in spirit, not in cathedrals holding songbooks, but also misses the fact that most of life is informal, and so is Christianity as the Way of Life. Do we need to change from being powerful actors to start acting powerfully?

11. Stop bringing people to church, and start bringing the church to the people

The church is changing back from being a Come-structure to being a Go-structure. So the Church needs to stop trying to bring people into the church, and start bringing the Church to the people. The mission of the Church will never be accomplished just by adding to the existing structure; it will take nothing less than a mushrooming of the church through spontaneous multiplication of itself into areas of the population of the world, where Christ is not yet known.

12. Rediscovering the Lord’s Supper to be a real supper with real food

Church tradition has managed to celebrate the Lord’s Supper in a homeopathic and deeply religious form, characteristically with a few drops of wine, a tasteless cookie and a sad face. However, the Lord’s Supper was actually more a substantial supper with a symbolic meaning, than a symbolic supper with a substantial meaning. God is restoring eating back into our meeting.

13. From Denominations to city-wide celebrations

Jesus called a universal movement, and what came was a series of religious companies with global chains marketing their special brands of Christianity and competing with

each other. Through this branding of Christianity most of Protestantism has, therefore, become politically insignificant and often more concerned with traditional specialities and religious infighting than with developing a collective testimony before the world. Jesus never asked people to organise themselves into denominations. In the early days of the Church, Christians had a dual identity: they were truly His church and vertically converted to God, and then organised themselves according to geography, that is, converting horizontally to each other on earth. This means not only Christian neighbours organising themselves into neighbourhood - or house-churches, where they share their lives locally, but Christians coming together as a collective identity as much as they can for city-wide or regional celebrations expressing the corporateness of the Church of the city or region. Authenticity in the neighbourhoods connected with a regional or city-wide corporate identity will make the Church not only politically significant and spiritually convincing, but will allow a return to the biblical model of the City-Church.

14. Developing a persecution-proof spirit

They crucified Jesus, the Boss of all the Christians. Today, his followers are often more into titles, medals and social respectability, or, worst of all, they remain silent and are not worth being noticed at all. Blessed are you when you are persecuted, says Jesus. Biblical Christianity is a healthy threat to pagan godlessness and sinfulness, a world overcome by greed, materialism, jealousy and any amount of demonic standards of ethics, sex, money and power. Contemporary Christianity in many countries is simply too harmless and polite to be worth persecuting. But as Christians again live out New Testament standards of life and, for example, name sin as sin, conversion or persecution has been, is and will be the natural reaction of the world. Instead of nesting comfortably in temporary zones of religious liberty, Christians will have to prepare to be again discovered as the main culprits against global humanism, the modern slavery of having to have fun and the outright worship of Self, the wrong centre of the universe. That is why Christians will and must feel the repressive tolerance of a world which has lost any absolutes and therefore refuses to recognise and obey its creator God with his absolute standards. Coupled with the growing ideologisation, privatisation and spiritualisation of politics and economics, Christians will sooner than most people think have their chance to stand happily accused in the company of Jesus. They need to prepare now for the future by developing a persecution-proof spirit and an even more persecution-proof structure.

15. The Church comes home

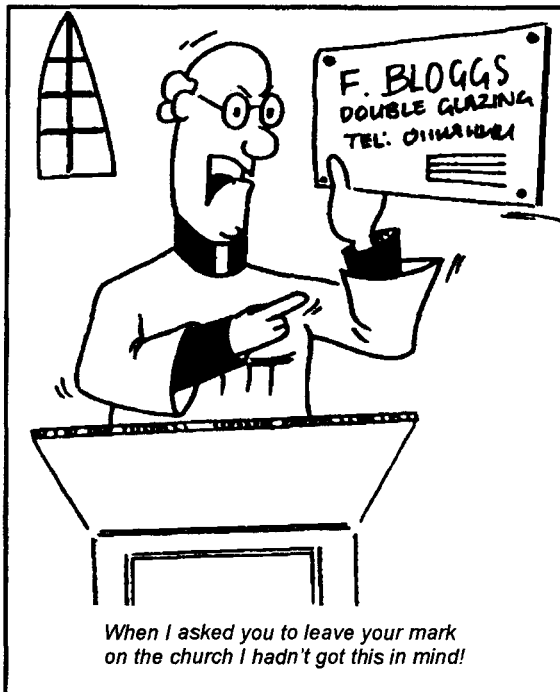
Where is the easiest place, say, for a man to be spiritual? Maybe again, is it hiding behind a big pulpit, dressed up in holy robes, preaching holy words to a faceless crowd and then disappearing into an office? And what is the most difficult and therefore most meaningful place for a man to be spiritual? At home, in the presence of his wife and children, where everything he does and says is automatically put through a spiritual litmus test against reality, where hypocrisy can be effectively weeded out and authenticity can grow. Much of Christianity has fled the family, often as a place of its own spiritual defeat, and then has organised artificial performances in sacred buildings

far from the atmosphere of real life. As God is in the business of recapturing the homes, the church turns back to its roots back to where it came from. It literally comes home, completing the circle of Church history at the end of world history.

As Christians of all walks of life, from all denominations and backgrounds, feel a clear echo in their spirit to what God's Spirit is saying to the Church, and start to hear globally in order to act locally, they begin to function again as one body. They organise themselves into neighbourhood house-churches and meet in regional or city-celebrations. You are invited to become part of this movement and make your own contribution. Maybe your home, too, will become a house that changes the world.

(From: Houses that change the world, Wolfgang Simson; Postfach 212, 8212 Neuhausen 2, Switzerland. Email: 100337.2106@compuserve.com. FAX +49-7745-919531)

Wolfgang Simson is a strategy consultant, researcher and journalist within the Dawn International Network. Whilst studying Theology and Missions in Switzerland, Belgium and the USA, he did extensive research of growing churches and churchplanting movements and is a board member of both the British and the German Church Growth Associations. Wolfgang Simson is of Hungarian, German and Jewish descent, and currently lives in Madras, South India.





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BlankWord and Spirit Network Contacts (*)

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Central Area:	Chris Densham	01992 462838
Hereford + Worcs.	John Lewis	01989 720312
		email: gorsleychapel@msn.com
North London:	Paul Jackson	0171 727 2238
South London:	Roger Standing	0181 681 865
		email: standing@breathemail.net
Surrey, Hants, Sussex:	Peter Nodding	01483 572745
		email: gbs.network@btinternet.com
Anglia:	Craig Millward	01493 731009
		craig.millward @ virgin.net

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(*) Please note that not all these groups describe themselves as Word and Spirit Networks but *all* share similar aims.

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