

Fulness

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The role of the shepherd: *Martin Weir*

Decisions, decisions, decisions: *John Noble*

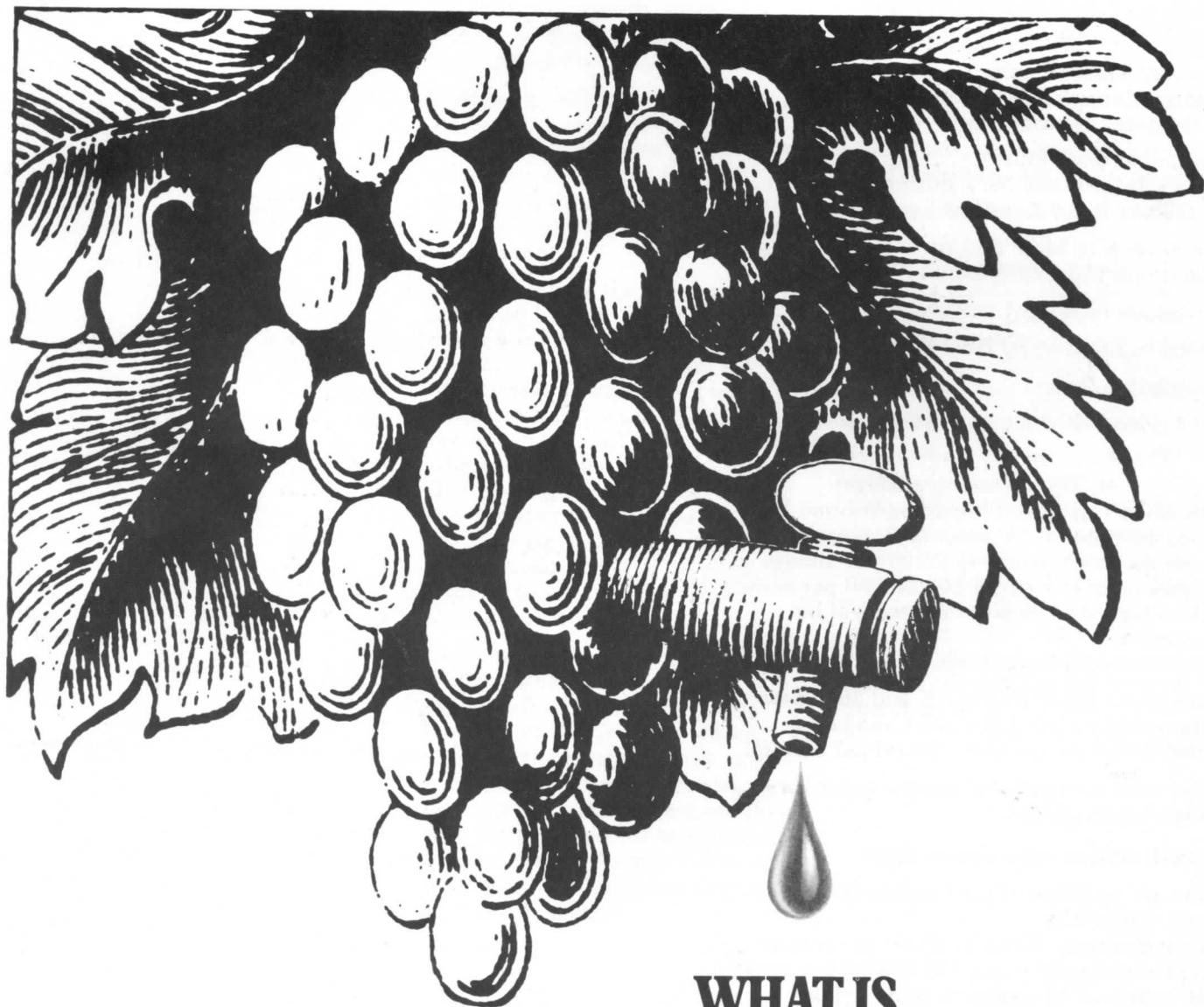
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**WHAT IS
THE NEW
WINESKIN?**

Fulness Volume 28

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Editorial

Stand up and be counted

So it's time for a National Census again. This week a leaflet announcing the event reminded me of the passing of ten years. It made me feel a little uneasy. Ten years seems a sizeable chunk of my life. I'm 35. Can it be half time already? And so the objective of the census became to me a personal exhortation which I, in turn, want to present to the church: it's time to stand up and be counted.

Perhaps another familiar saying will serve to sharpen my exhortation: Time *gentlemen* please. . . It is specifically the male of the species I want to encourage, or perhaps 'put a bomb under' is more to the point.

One area where the masculine failure to take the bull by the horns is presently manifest, is in the shift of emphasis from one-man to corporate leadership. The tendency has been to substitute the one man band with a committee, where no one has the right, or for that matter, the gumption to take the initiative. Those who aspire to lead and are willing to bear responsibility need to be given the right to function according to their gift and burden.

But I must ask, before going any further, where are those who aspire to lead? Where are those whose love for God and whose vision of the establishment of his Kingdom will draw them into taking a few risks? Where are those who are prepared for some sacrifice for God's sake? I mean a little more than missing a European Cup match on meeting night.

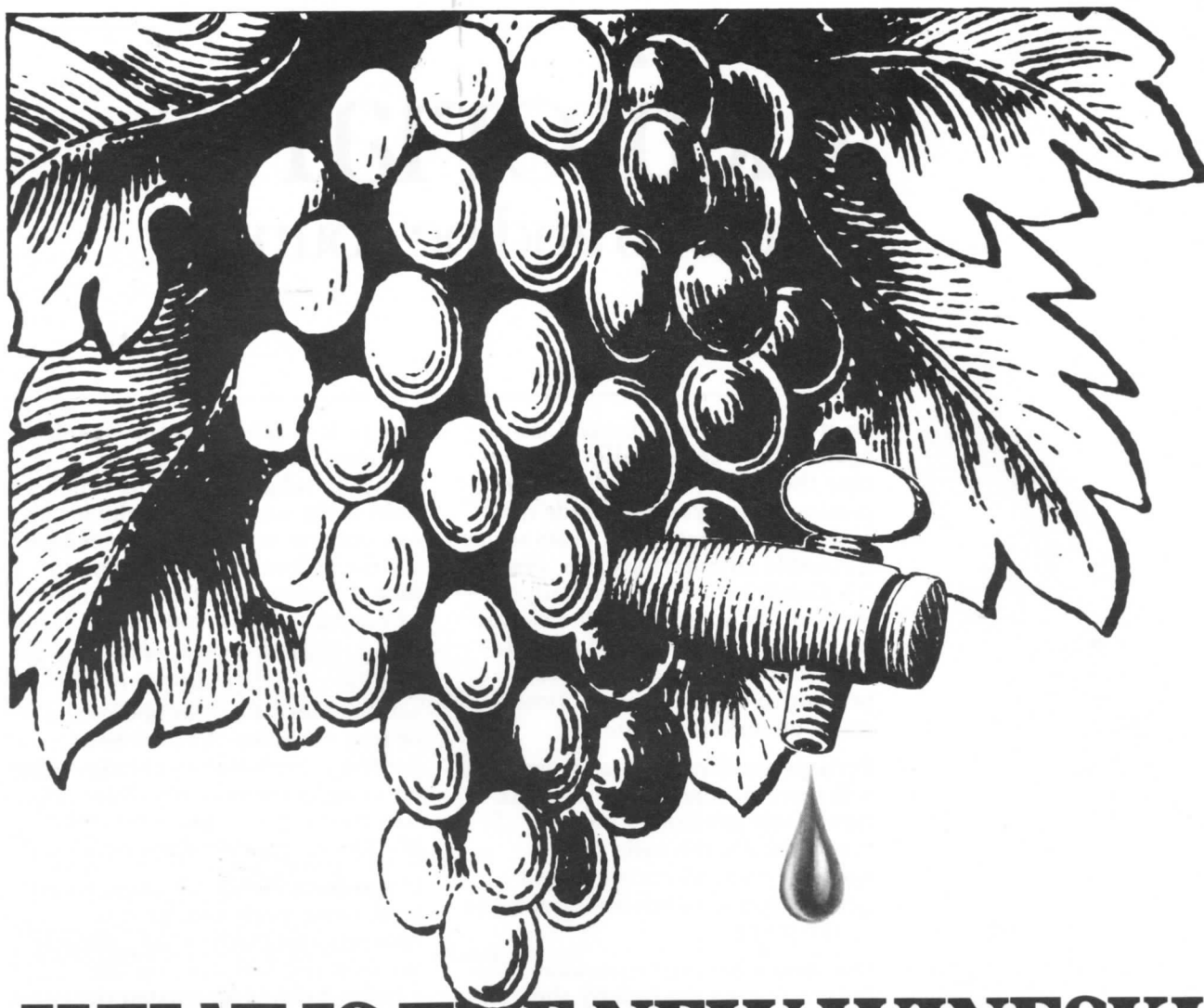
The lack of this adventurous spirit has resulted in people taking refuge in religious systems which hold them securely and which they can operate smoothly. No need for the awful insecurity of having to face the unknown, the unfamiliar. . . of having to trust God.

In this issue of *Fulness* there are a number of articles which tackle various aspects of this abdication of responsibility. And we have invited John Noble to enlarge upon his excellent article in volume 27, 'Decisions, decisions'. This time it's 'Decisions, decisions, decisions'.

It was John Noble who told me of how, some years ago, he was remonstrating with a lady missionary over the fact that, on the mission field, it is so often the weaker sex who are shouldering heavy and inappropriate burdens. With disarming candour she looked at him and said, 'Where are the men?'

Well, where are we? I can only speak for myself, and that old census leaflet has done its trick. Even though my wife presented me with the second addition to our family last week, I'm not prepared to pin all my hopes on the next generation. Not yet. Why, I'm only 35. So step aside Amanda Jane. Your dad's gotta do what a man's gotta do. . .

Nick Butterworth



WHAT IS THE NEW WINESKIN?

'New wine' is all too often going flat inside inflexible organisation. Here are three observations from Tom Marshall on how to keep the wine fizzing.

The parable that Jesus told about new wine and old wineskins is often referred to in discussing the relationship between church structures and the present move of the Holy Spirit. The problem of new life caught in rigid and unyielding structures is too well known to require elaboration.

What does need clarification, however, is the shape of the structures that are able to contain new life. In other words, what is the nature of the new wineskin? At this point we usually lapse into vague generalities. We know in broad terms what is needed — organisational forms that are flexible, structures that will mould them-

selves to the shape of the life rather than cram it into existing moulds. But unless we know more about it than that we are really no further on. We are likely to opt either for no structure at all, with the wine spilled on the ground, or for a particular form that appeals to us and that we make as rigid as the structures we have just left.

This question became an urgent one for us a few years ago, when the little house group we were in, began to grow rapidly. In our searches at that time we discovered that although Scripture does not lay down a precise format for church life, it is quite clear as to the basic principles that must be incorporated

if structure is to remain responsive to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Specifically we discovered three important principles involved in the scriptural concept of the new wineskin and we have built our endeavours on making room for these principles. The first principle is plurality of leadership. The government of the local church in New Testament times was always vested in a body of elders; there was plurality of leadership and plurality of responsibility.

There are many gains from this principle. The church is not locked into one man's vision or one man's ministry. With the greater breadth of vision and shared responsibility it becomes much easier to adjust to

new insights or to change direction if the Lord so directs. Furthermore the church is not restricted to one man's capacity. By and large individual churches today do very few different things. They have a very restricted concept of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life. At least one reason for this paucity of activities is the limitation imposed by the leader's interests and capacity. But with plural leadership the local church can tackle a vastly increased range of tasks and ministries.

There is also safety in shared leadership. Today is no day, if indeed there ever was one, to go it alone. Thus there is security and protection for the church when guidance, direction, revelation and doctrine are hammered out amongst a group of elders committed to one another and submitted to one another under the headship of

With plural leadership the church can tackle a vastly increased range of tasks.

Jesus. Again it becomes very difficult to teach and implant the principles of fellowship and inter-relatedness in the Body if at the top there is one pastor, or one minister who is not himself living in such a relationship with others. But where there is a group of elders seriously seeking to live in such relatedness there is a demonstration for the church to see and something on which the church can model.

One final point needs to be made because it is often overlooked. The principle of plurality of leadership and responsibility applies at all levels of church life. For example, we have repeated this model in the leadership of house groups and other ministries within the church. More often you find plural leadership at the top but a series of one-man kingdoms further down — with all the attendant problems.

The second principle of the new wineskin is that in the church the basic unit is the cell of two or three. 'Where two or three have gathered together in my name,' said Jesus, 'there am I in their midst.' The acknowledgement of this second principle has some very important implications. It means that any two or three people with a like burden or a like vision are enough to get

Any two or three people with a like burden are enough to get a new ministry under way.

a new ministry under way. The result is that the church will find itself undertaking very many different functions or ministries. As we have already pointed out, the church today is doing too few different things and offering too few options in which people can find their function or ministry. For example, from time to time we lay the demand of evangelism on the whole church. All Christians are called to be witnesses; not all are evangelists. The non-evangelists make tentative half-hearted attempts to function outside their gift, usually fail, and give it all away, feeling condemned in the process. We do the same with intercession, or spiritual warfare, or social concern, with similar results.

However, once we make room for the cell principle and encourage people to function in the area of their gift, we find that their gift works for them and produces results. There can be a great flowering of creative effort. In a little over four years, for example, we have seen ministries develop such as child foster care, creative dance, telephone evangelism, a bible correspondence course, children's theatre, a pooling of equipment and services, a coffee lounge outreach, an intercessory group, the publication of a street paper, a children's play group and others. Obviously such a variety of activities lays an impossible burden on a one-man leader. Even with plural leadership there are problems in adequate oversight.

The third principle of the new wineskin is that in the church every member can help to discover the mind of the Lord for the church. Even churches and fellowships that understand and adapt plural leadership often unknowingly accept a very worldly principle of church government. You could call it 'the bosses and the workers'. Only the manager understands policy and can make decisions — the workers just do as they are told. Only the elders can discern and know the mind of the Lord for the church — the members just follow their lead.

In Mark 10:42 Jesus demolished the application of this principle to

the church in one sweeping blow: 'You know that those who are recognised as rulers of the gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you. . .'

Is the alternative, then, a form of spiritual democracy — government in the church, of the people, by the people, and for the people? The answer is no. There is no biblical warrant for supposing that the majority vote is an indication of the will of God. But what it does mean is this — every member of the church has a share in discovering the will of God for the fellowship. Therefore we must establish structures that enable this to operate. You will find a clear example in Acts chapter 15, and it seems to have been a marked feature of the life of the church at Antioch from the very beginning.

In our own case we have a meeting from time to time that we call a Family Council. It is open to everybody and anybody can raise any issue, put forward any suggestion or make any criticism as to what is being done or what ought to be done. We make no decisions at Family Council. The elders carry the responsibility of making decisions. But we do strive to listen to what God is saying to and through his people. Often truth is spoken through channels we may think inappropriate; sometimes it can be spoken in the wrong way, even from a wrong attitude. It may still be truth we need to hear. It is true

Most of the best things we are now doing were born from discussions in Family Council.

to say that most of the best things we are now doing as a church were born, not in elders' meeting but from discussions in Family Council. And on the whole it is remarkable how responsible the average member is with what they say when they know that it is being given serious attention.

The actual structure of church life may vary widely from place to place, and in the same place from time to time. Life as it is expressed will seek to take its own form and if we are to have structures that enable that to happen we must build into them the principles outlined above.

The role of the shepherd

by Martin Weir

In the heart and mind of God, Israel is not firstly a nation in a geographical context, but the manifestation, in the world, of a people who are in essence and character the people of God. They are princes with God, for that is what the Hebrew word, Israel, means; no more and certainly no less.

This is not a basically Jewish thing. It is, instead, the involuntary going public, all over the world, of a radical people whose life style belongs to the character of the living God, and whose origins began in simple and yet total acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord and Messiah.

The manifestation of this compelling people is what the Church is all about, and its ultimate realisation is an exciting prospect. It is the pinnacle of God's heart and purpose for the world — the eruption of a people who will bring the King back.

Yet the question is, how. How is this people of compelling character to actually become manifested? This hope excites us, and the knowledge that Father wants us to be such a people amazes us, but the reality of our sometimes faltering attempts confuses us.

In the old testament God was regarded as the shepherd of his people, and as such he would provide for and lead his people through to his purpose. This dynamic picture plucked out of the pastoral background in which the old testament people lived, provides us with the answer to our

question. God has chosen not only to father a people for himself, but also to shepherd them into his purpose.

However, God has not chosen to achieve this by pressing buttons, or pulling strings from his throne. He has instead set out to do it down here, by delegating his authority.

He has opted to raise up shepherds who will lead his people through to his purpose. The prophetic words from Jeremiah 23 about the coming messiah, go on to say, 'I shall also raise up shepherds over my flock, and they will tend them, and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified; nor will any be missing.

When Jesus came as the final word in his Father's redemptive purpose, he came clearly and unself-consciously announcing himself as the good shepherd. It is true that Jesus as Son of God was unique in his life and his death, yet it is also true that it is after the pattern of Jesus the good shepherd, that Father delegates his authority to men to shepherd a people to himself. Those who would be shepherds in the Church of God can therefore have no other basis or pattern for their life, authority, or ministry than Jesus himself.

It seems to me significant that the whole subject of shepherding has become a battleground during the past few years. Not that we should be too bothered about that, for controversy has always dogged the footsteps of the truth of God.

It is, of course, true that there are

some who, calling themselves shepherds, have mutilated the sheep.

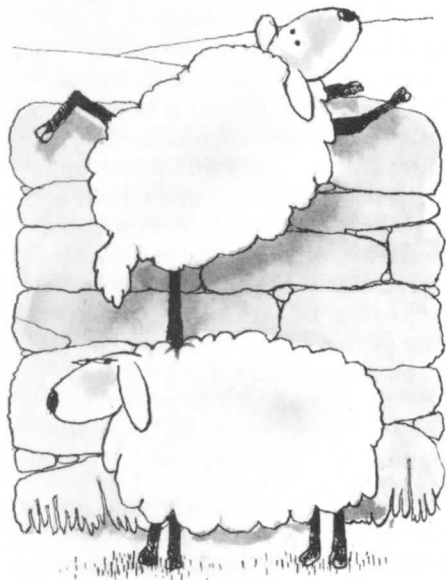


It is equally true that some, calling themselves sheep, have a satanic phobia about submission, and will have no authority over their lives, thank you very much! Father's heart is blessed by neither of these extremes. They are an affront to his purpose, and even though such things do happen, misuse has never justified disuse. The truth of God stands, and refuses to be invalidated. Father has, is, and will go on to choose to delegate his authority to shepherds who, after the pattern of Jesus, will lead a people through to his purpose.

When Jesus announced himself as the good shepherd, he said some significant things about himself which also have an important bearing on the kind of shepherds God wants in the Church.

He said rather cryptically, for example, 'I am the door of the

sheep; if anyone enters through me he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture.' It is foundational to our salvation that Jesus is, for all of us, the only way into the Kingdom of God. But there is also here a clear message for leaders in the Church. A shepherd often, quite literally, made himself the door of the sheepfold. He would lie across the entrance and no sheep could get in or out except the shepherd



allowed it. Within the church it is absolutely essential that there is a clear line of relationship and response to the shepherd. Those who are continually seeking to bypass their leaders are not only demonstrating an unsubmitive spirit, but will never be fulfilled in the purposes of God in their own lives or in the church.

It is strange how truth understood in the mind for years, is never really learned until the rough and tumble of experience drives it home—often painfully.

Recently in our own fellowship, one young fellow came onto the fringe of things, and I was happy for him to feel his way into friendship and commitment. It soon became clear, however, that although he started developing friendships, they were all on his own terms. It was easy to see that his independent attitude gave no room for a line of relationship or real trust with the leadership. He was defensive of his own independence.

The shepherd was not to be regarded as the door through whom he entered into the life of the fellowship, and through whom he was to be led on into the life of the Kingdom, but rather an obstacle to be bypassed. When in the end he confessed that he didn't think our

fellowship was the place for him, sadly he was right.

But that attitude, which has been so common in the Church, must be dealt with if we are to see a radical people shepherded into visible reality. We cannot come in or out of the fellowship of God's people on our own terms; there is one way in and the door is the shepherd.

Jesus also made another significant statement about himself. He said, 'I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.' This was not only a reference to his redemptive death, but also to the actual way in which he lived for his people. He laid down his life by actually dying for his sheep, but he also laid down his life by really living for them. Many must have been the times when Jesus laid his life and reputation on the line for his disciples. They were scarcely a bunch of Stars on Sunday, but they gladly submitted their lives to Jesus, and he in turn, laid down his life and reputation for them. A clear pattern emerges for us.

One of the most grotesque misrepresentations recently, has been the over-emphasis on the cost of the sheep submitting to the shepherd. Jesus however emphasises the cost to the shepherd; he lays down his life for the sheep. There is no easy way to be a shepherd in the fellowship of God's people. It is costly. If there is no cost there can be no shepherding after the pattern of the good shepherd. Sheep who really belong, are not just there to be told what to do, they are to be lived and died for, and to live for anyone is, as someone has colourfully said, a matter of dying by instalments.

Last year a young man who had problems in his marriage, joined our fellowship. The situation was a mess, but his spirit was clear, and he gladly submitted his life to me. He wanted to be changed in his life and character. He wanted to lead and win his wife. So I gladly chose to stand with him in the mess of his own marital problems, and I continued to stand with him when things were not immediately resolved, and misinterpretation and rumours began to abound. It was not very pleasant for him, me, or the fellowship, but I learned a little more about laying my life and reputation on the line for someone who had willingly and continually submitted his life to me.

Jesus made another important statement. He said, 'I am the good shepherd, and I know my own and my own know me.' Good eastern shepherds knew their sheep, and their sheep knew, trusted and responded to their voice. There was no chance of a mistake.



Sometimes shepherds in the church of God have not worked out the same clarity. They have accumulated sheep who do not belong to them, and so confusion arises and will not go away. It is not possible to win through with someone who does not belong in the first place. Such folk will not know, or respond to that shepherd.

I believe there is a real need for clarity in this area. Leaders within the Church need to learn before God, to identify who really does belong to them, and to shepherd only those who are really theirs.

There is something good about the relationship of a shepherd with his very own people. There is mutual love and trust. Such trust does not demand explanations for every step the shepherd takes, nor does it insist on understanding everything the shepherd says before agreement is given. These people know their shepherd and they trust him. The shepherd, for his part, knows his people. He sees what is needed, but he also knows what they are ready for. He is a man called by Father to shepherd a people and to shepherd them after the pattern of Jesus. In his heart he sees a people who are radical in life, pure in character, and whole in personality: a people who are normal but powerful, ordinary but extraordinary: a people who will be manifested in this world in such a way that the whole earth will be filled with God's glory.

THE BERNARD COPE FILE

May I quote you on that?

Malcolm Muggeridge has been in the public eye and, more to the point, in the public ear, for longer than most people can remember. It seems as if he's always been there. The stock-in-trade victim of every impersonator from the greatest professional to the spur-of-the-moment amateur, he will forever be in demand; as a writer or speaker, for his opinion and his expertise, or just for being himself.

Regularly quoted, sometimes misunderstood, too seldom appreciated, invariably worth listening to, Muggeridge has made his mark on society, and is undoubtedly a personality of our time.

So what on earth was I thinking of when I said, 'Yes I'd love to,' upon being asked if I'd like to interview him? At the time, wild horses would have experienced an uphill struggle holding me back, but once I'd had a chance to consider the prospect, it could possibly have been a less even contest.

Quite simply I had a sneaking feeling that there might not be anything worthy of note left to say or ask of him. And even if there were I would probably miss it. Of course, now I've been I'd love to go again. There's so much I could have asked, to which he would gladly have responded, if only I could have thought of it at the time.

He was born in 1903, went to grammar school and then to Selwyn College, Cambridge, and was a

university leader in Egypt, before he took up journalism. That occupation took him all over the place. He was editor of *Punch* for four years, and worked on a number of distinguished newspapers including the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph*, the *Evening Standard* — and the *Calcutta Statesman*. During the second world war he was a major with MI6 in Mozambique (Kim Philby was one of his bosses) and he was awarded the *Legion d'Honneur* and the *Croix de Guerre*.

That much you can read on any appropriate dust cover. And if you want more meat on the bone, an autobiography, diaries and a lengthy television series are readily available.

For my part, I steered clear of reading any of his books (he assured me I'd missed very little), the TV series clashed with meeting night, and I avoided listening to other people's opinions of him, so that I could go in just about complete ignorance and form my own from scratch.



Malcolm and Kitty live in the heart of Sussex, just outside Robertsbridge. The situation is not far short of idyllic, surrounded on all sides by a countryside panorama with nothing much more than a farmhouse or two between home and horizon. Their house is not particularly big and not particularly imposing, but it is very attractive, and certainly it has plenty of character. In fact it is probably best described as a large cottage, four hundred years old and solid enough to last at least as long again.

A good size garden stretches down to the lane, and when my two friends and I arrived, there they were at work just inside the gate; Malcolm attacking logs with a hefty axe and Kitty gathering them up ready for the fireplace. A warm smile spread over his face as soon as Malcolm saw us, and beckoning us with an expansive wave to drive up to the house, he laid into the woodpile once more before dismissing it from his mind for the day. Kitty meanwhile escorted the three of us into the living room and went off to put the kettle on.

I had a chance to take in my surroundings: the unostentatious furnishing, chests of drawers that looked like family heirlooms, an ageing radiogram, armchairs that my mum would call 'comfy', the favourite photographs on one windowsill, the crackle of logs in the huge fireplace, the gentle light bathing the room and, most of all the pervading peace. Somehow, it was all just as I had expected it would be.

Malcolm came in with his warm smile and Kitty soon followed with the tea. As Malcolm settled back into an armchair of the sort that are not easy to get out of once you are in, the rest of us distributed ourselves on the other seating arranged around the impressive fireplace. And whilst Kitty passed out the plates and the cake, conversation began.

We started off with a prolonged session of small talk, except that 'small' must surely be the wrong word, embracing as it did a range of topics from the bugbears of Swiss citizenship to the benefits of double glazing.

On some subjects I felt we were not in complete agreement, and certainly there would have been room for me to put in a different opinion, although I very much doubt that Malcolm's position would have budged an inch. But when you bear in mind he's had a good few years more than three score and ten to think through his side of the argument — and try it out in practice — you hesitate. For example we discussed prayer for a while and he opined, 'I don't think prayer is a means of getting what you want. Often you get the impression that for evangelicals prayer is a kind of shopping list.' After we had added our comments on that, he went on, 'I think really that God will receive all kinds of prayer from all kinds of people. But to me, asking for this, that or the other thing doesn't appeal, because I feel that if God wants us to have things, they'll be available. You don't have to coax God to provide us with the means to serve him. On the other hand I think that prayer in the sense of relating oneself to God, so that everything one does and is has that dimension, is the most important thing of all. . .

it's being in harmonious relationship with our creator.'

I could say a loud 'Amen' to most of that, but I felt there was more to be said. It wasn't until I got home, of course, that I had a chance to recognise what I could have added, and in the process I saw one of the benefits of meeting someone like Malcolm Muggeridge. His clear thinking (which, incidentally, often seemed to bear the marks of Anglican influence) provokes you — not necessarily to change your stance, but to be sure you know what you believe.

Airing your views with Malcolm Muggeridge, you would expect, means getting your come-uppance, especially if you've not given them adequate forethought. In the event, Malcolm was so gracious that I almost, but not quite, wished that he would challenge me more directly.

Comparing democracy and totalitarianism, he said, 'The expectation that man is capable of creating a perfect society is the most disastrous error. As it becomes more and more clear that this can't be done, it's necessary to establish authority (authoritarian government) in order to frighten people into pretending that it is being done. It involves ever bigger bribes to keep people quiet, so bankruptcy is its almost inevitable outcome. . . As a person who enjoys

reading, making jokes, being offensive — things like that, I like democracy, because it provides a certain margin in which you can indulge in those things. But I wouldn't go further than that!'

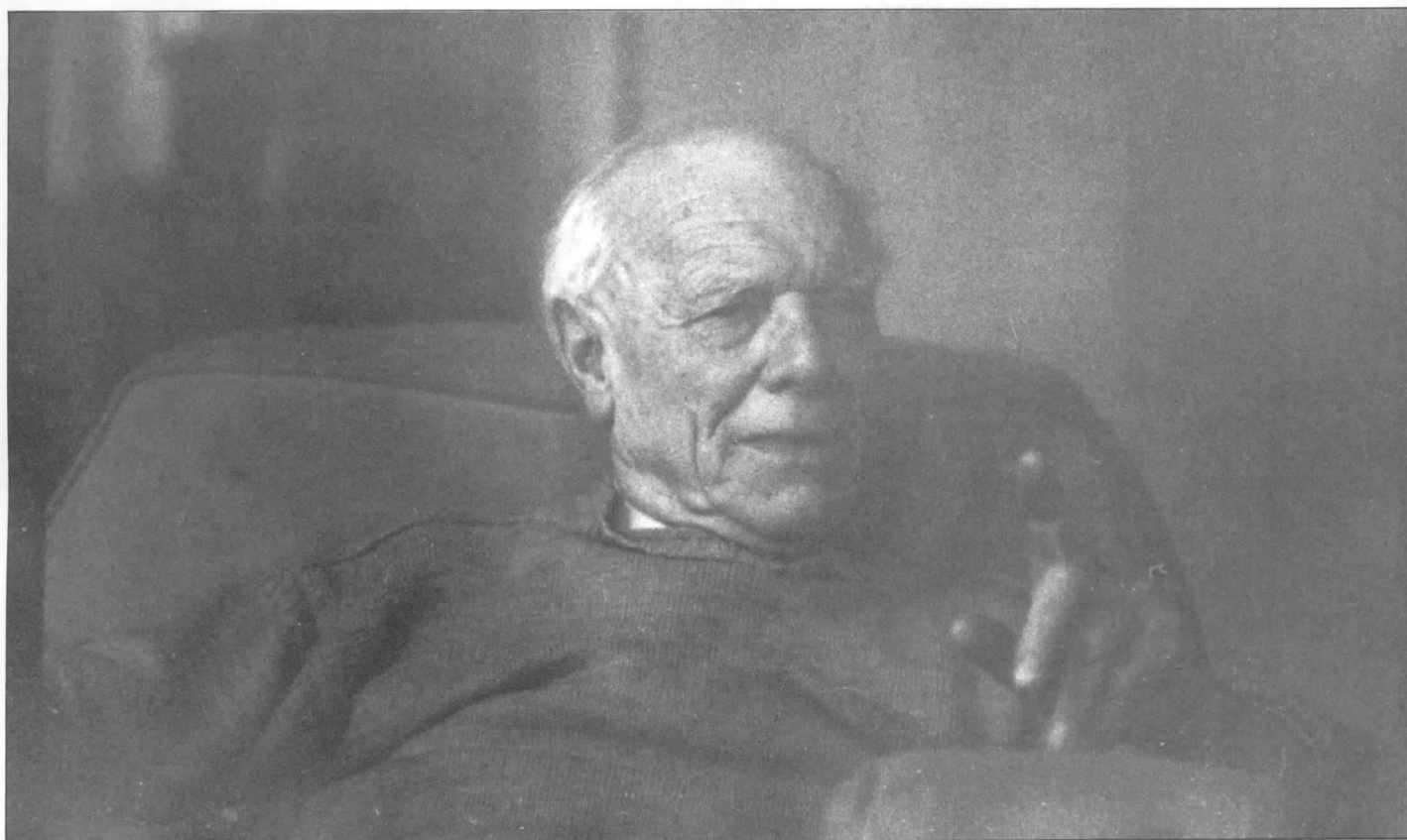
Talking of students in Canada, where he taught for a while, Malcolm told us that what struck him most was their idea of a 'contemporary statement of truth', as if truth changes with time and tide. If you deviated from it, you were deviating not from a point of view but from truth itself. That, he remarked, is a very dangerous attitude; and I could suddenly see the similar trend in our own culture.

'The humanists have tried to argue that we don't need Christian morals because we've got a very fine set of morals of our own,' he said, 'but in practice this just isn't so; all they have is a vacuum.'

I know that the life God has given me is all that I could ever want; nevertheless it was enjoyable to have that fact confirmed by listening to a man of Malcolm's experience and understanding pointing out just how and where much modern thought falls down. And he is quite clear about his own alternative:

'Questions about whether western civilisation will survive and that

Continued on page 23



From a doctor's casebook

Sally looked well enough wandering around the hospital ward in her dressing gown. We had drawn a complete blank in spite of extensive tests of her internal organs. The severe abdominal pains and blackouts were as much a mystery now as on the day she had been transferred to us for further investigation. These attacks had been recurring frequently over four years. The psychiatrists had been called in. However, they felt that Sally's problems were physical, not tied in with her mild depression.

'Why don't you take her home for a few days,' my christian consultant suggested to me. 'She would enjoy the fellowship with you and your wife. It would encourage her faith. Maybe away from hospital things will become clearer.'

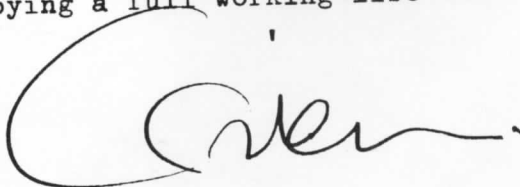
So we agreed to this. Sally had been home with us a few days when my wife collared me on arriving home one evening.

'I have been asking the Lord about Sally, and he told me to ask her if she hears voices. I questioned her just before you arrived. She blurted out, "Yes, but they have been telling me not to let you know."'

Later that evening, we took the situation further. Out of the blue, while in a school class at about the age of fourteen the voices had begun inside her head. They had become more and more insistent, frequently urging Sally to commit suicide. She developed the knack of blacking out to silence them. The attacks became more frequent as the voices became more persistent.

On explaining to Sally the demonic nature of what was happening she was naturally rather frightened. The voices crowded in, saying that they would now force her to commit suicide. As we shared how the devil came to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus came to give us life, she realized that she could be free.

A simple prayer - no outward manifestation, some teaching over the next few days on how to remain filled with the Holy Spirit - and Sally has been free ever since. Now, two years later, she is still enjoying a full working life because of what Jesus has done.



March 1981

DECISIONS DECISIONS DECISIONS

Fulness

Decisions made in the Spirit
Decisions made in the flesh
Seeing the unseen, the eternal
The Christian's journey
Decisions made in the Spirit
Take up your cross and follow
Decisions made in the Spirit

How to become
a decisive person
Becoming
The Decisive Christian!
Decisions made in the Spirit
Decisions made in the flesh
Decisions made in the Spirit

John Noble gave us his very practical approach to decision making in our last issue. His second article continues the same theme and is equally down to earth.

I was tempted to call my article by the straight-forward title 'The Art of Successful Decision Making'. However, I have learned that the matter is not that simple. And I find my first word to families who long for God's will in their lives is similar to that of the prophet Haggai. 'Thus says the Lord, "I am with you!"'

I am utterly convinced that if husbands and wives seek Jesus together for direction in the family, he will not let you down. He will meet you in your successes and in your failures, in your strengths and in your weaknesses. No experience will be wasted when you involve the Lord in it. I speak from experience — and plenty of mistakes.

The Peace of God

The heart is the seat of our emotions. Tears, hopes and frustrations abound there. It is usually ruled from the outside through our senses, that is, what we see or hear or feel. But Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians, 'Let the peace of God rule your heart.' And peace, we learn, is essentially a fruit of the spirit. Now the spirit is inside, deeper even than the heart itself. It is here that the Lord sets his throne and establishes the peace that Paul is referring to.

We may experience fear as a result of what we know in our minds, or what we see with our eyes. We may be attacked by evil forces, speaking lies and temptations, but we must learn to allow God's peace to dominate from within. By this means the storms will subside and our restless emotions will be calmed. We will be free to take clear action, secure in the overall knowledge that even if we fail, underneath us still are God's everlasting arms.

I well remember when our children were growing up I would never allow them to go to the park to play on their own. Christine and the kids were patient with me, but one day I became angry and blurted out the reason. 'I know the sort of things they'll get up to over there!' I shouted. Remembering my own misdemeanours, I judged my children on the same basis. I expected them to do what I did and gave them no opportunity to prove themselves. Christine, on the other hand, had had no such murky past and was perhaps even a little naive. Hence the difference of opinion. After we had shared the matter, I opened myself up to hear what the peace of God was saying in my spirit. Underneath all my fears I found positive desire to give the children more freedom. I was

then able to apologise and explain to the family my doubts, and the park has seldom been an issue since then.

On this occasion we were agreed, but what about the times when we disagree? What about the times when dad's peace seems to be saying one thing, mum's another and the kids' something else again? Well, that's where authority comes in.

The Authority of God

God's authority comes in different ways, but it is always based on service. Those who are given spiritual authority are empowered not only in order to serve but because they serve.

There is the authority of office, the authority of natural abilities and the authority of spiritual gifts. These are all distributed throughout the church and should also be active in the christian family. Each of us needs to learn the extent and the limitations of our authority if we are to know security in the decisions we make. We also need to recognise God's authority in others. The family should certainly not be a democracy and neither should the church. Rather we are to operate in harmony with the variety of gifts which God has bestowed. The bible clearly teaches that the

authority of leadership within the family is with the husband. He is responsible to God. However, the wife may have the greater natural or spiritual gifts. So it is the husband's duty to make way for her and also to draw on others from outside the family circle. Single folk, trusted friends and gifted non-Christians may fill in our deficiencies, blending together to make our home efficient and secure.

The husband is not given authority to be dictatorial or to satisfy his ego, simply to take the final responsibility at times of disagreement. He should be firm and loving, readily admitting his own fallibility. I cannot say I've always succeeded, but I did find real strength in a most recent family trauma.

My mother had just died and we were hardly over the event, which had stretched our emotional reserves seemingly beyond their limit. Mum had lived with us and had been as fine an example in death as in life. We were missing her terribly, when out of the blue, our eldest daughter decided to make a sudden bid for identity and independence.

It was done in entirely the wrong way and with disastrous consequences. But in my heart I knew we had to let her go and I fought the issue out with the Lord through pain and tears. My wife Christine, on the other hand, kept her feelings in; she turned silent. I detected a note of bitterness and confusion, even embarrassment. I was aware that permanent damage could occur between my wife and our beloved daughter.

'Chris, you've got to forgive her! You must face them both (for there was someone else involved) with real love, even though you believe it's all a big mistake. No emotional blackmail, O.K.?' 'But how could she do it? She's ruining her life and causing us so much grief'. 'Yes,' I replied, 'but we're only here ourselves by God's grace. Now do keep open and clear; the rest is up to God.'

For once I spoke with authority and Chris knew it. She received my instruction and left the consequences with our heavenly father. Our structure in God had carried us through a disagreement. I won't go into all the details of the story; suffice it to say that our number one daughter is typing this manuscript.

The Faith of God

Christians have strange ideas about faith. I think most of us secretly believe that unless we have a happy ending to every story (like the one I have just recounted) then we have not had faith. We associate faith with getting our prayers answered in a particular way. That kind of faith is a special gift which God really does want us to experience, but if we measure the success of our walk by the 'gift of faith' we may often find ourselves depressed and God seemingly distant. No, faith is much more fundamental. It is based on our knowledge of God's nature, which is not dependent on his response to our present difficulties. God is good even though he doesn't seem to be answering at this moment. I have faith that he is not waiting for me to make a mistake: he's not like that. So I can make my decisions prayerfully and with confidence, knowing that if I do wrong he's with me in that as well. When our hearts are towards God all things do work together for good. How I praise him for that!

There have been many occasions when I've 'muffed it', but I have usually done what I've done before the Lord with faith, and according to my understanding at the time. So when things have proved to be wrong I don't feel condemned and I do feel Jesus is still with me. We are not walking a tight rope which he has set up to test us; he is with us and he is in us.

I suppose one of my main areas of failure has been in the realm of finance. I can seldom believe when the chips are down that we'll make it. So in the past I've had a track record of meanness with my wife in times of difficulty. On the other hand, when things were going well, I could believe for almost anything and stretch myself at times beyond reason.

Against that background, some thirteen years ago, my business collapsed and my ministry took off. Christine and I were faced with making one of the biggest decisions of our lives. Should I look for secular employment again or should I sell up my home, pay my debts and face the ministry challenge?

God did not write the answer in letters of gold across the sky as we prayed, but we did trust him. Our faith was not in making a right decision. It was certainly not in my great ability to handle money; quite the opposite, as I've said. Our faith was in God who was with us. Well, you've guessed what we did, and I can't say there haven't been times when we questioned our decision.

However, I am glad to say that the Lord has always been right there, upholding us and leading us on into new areas of blessing and service. He will never leave any of us. We are all safe to trust him, without forever worrying about making exactly the right decisions in life.

A King for Israel

1 Samuel 16: 11-13

I came running,
wiping the sheep's dung from my feet
and leaning my staff against the doorpost.

I came,
running my fingers through tangled hair,
smoothing down my tunic,
and bursting into the presence of my elders.

In momentary confusion
I saw an old man's eyes brighten
my brothers' darken.

As oil ran from my beardless chin,
tears spilled from the creases in the old one's face,
and stillness filled up the room.

by Brenda Smith

SCOTTISH SUPPLEMENT



EDITORIAL

Build on the Rock

It was a sparkling summer day and Venice, the jewel of the Adriatic, shone in its full Renaissance glory. Irene and I sailed down the Grand Canal like two idyllic travellers in a wonderland of beauty, drinking in the fabulous scenery all around.

'You know,' said our guide, bringing us back to reality with a bump. 'all this, the Doges Palace, St Mark's Square, the lot, is slowly sinking into the water, and only a massive international rescue operation mounted now will save Venice from disappearing under the waves in our lifetime.' We viewed our surroundings through new eyes, for we learned that this beautiful city was built on a foundation of timber, sunk into mud, and now the wood was in a waterlogged and rotten condition.

At Caesarea Philippi Jesus, in response to Peter's confession of Him as being the Christ, the Son of the Living God, declared that upon this rock He would soon build his church. Peter's words were not his own assessment of Jesus, they were the outward expression of a revelation which God had given him. The article by Brian Hayes in this issue needs to be read and digested until we can

honestly say along with Peter that we know Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. We sing with enthusiasm 'We are being built into a temple, fit for God's own dwelling place.' Our fellowships and congregations can look pretty impressive with commitment to one another, covenant relationships, super teachers and Spirit-filled leaders, house groups, dance and drama, tongues, prophecies and, praise the Lord, even the occasional miracle. Yes, pretty fantastic, but what are your foundations like? Will your fellowship still be growing and sparkling in ten years' time?

In the present move of the Spirit there has rightly been an emphasis on discipleship, submission and relationships, as the Lord has called us out of our small corners into corporeity and community. However, it is just in this area that we are apt to make a fatal mistake. In the midst of the thrill and excitement of restoration and renewal we are easily side-tracked into neglecting our foundation in Jesus Christ.

Extremes like believing that our shepherd has all the gifts and graces necessary to bring us into maturity as believers. The danger is obvious — we begin to behave as though we have no need for the Holy Spirit for we have a brother given to 'cover' us; in our relationship with him we have all we need. Is it really true that a man will become spiritually mature through a process of helping him see his faults and failings? Surely not, for in pastoring and counselling the leader can only co-operate with the Holy Spirit and must tread carefully to avoid becoming a substitute for Christ.

Jesus said the wise man built his house upon the rock. We build on the rock when individually and corporately we give ourselves unreservedly to the lordship of Jesus Christ and faithfully follow Him.

My pen will cease its scribbling after a final illustration from Scottish history. In 1650, the English, under Oliver Cromwell, marched north to Berwick to put down a rebellion amongst the Scots. Arriving in the vicinity he was dismayed to find the Scots army strongly positioned on the summit of a high rock called Berwick Law.

Sizing up his position as hopeless he commanded his Ironsides to retreat. The Scots, fired with traditional zeal and urged on by the priests who were with them, threw caution to the wind and charged off their secure position in hot pursuit of the retreating 'sassenachs'. It is believed that when Cromwell saw the Scottish army moving off the rock he exclaimed in triumph, 'This day the Lord has delivered the Scots into our hands,' and, wheeling his army round, delivered a crushing and humiliating defeat upon our Scottish forefathers. When we are secure upon the rock Christ Jesus, Satan and his legions are powerless against us, but when we move from that position, for whatever reason, we find ourselves vulnerable to crushing and humiliating defeats from the enemy.

Brethren, build your fellowships, shepherd your flocks, develop your relationships, glory in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and invest your gifts in the Kingdom of God — but stay on the Rock!

Alex

SING UNTO THE LORD!

by Brian Quay

'I hope you have been going on your way singing some more notes of the 'new song', tuning your hearts for the Hallelujah Chorus at the coming of the Lord with all his saints. It is a small matter to make heaven ring with song, the glorious honour given to us is to make this very wilderness, this Valley of Baca, this earth under the curse, ring and ring again with our joyful burst of praise to our unseen but much-loved Lord, the King of Kings.'

Andrew Bonar (1864)

The Lord wants his people to sing. Take even a quick glance through the pages of the Bible and there are multiplied references to God's people singing. At creation even the stars got in on the act. '... the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy.' Job 38:7.

And what a celebration the Israelites had after coming through the Red Sea and seeing the destruction of their enemies. Moses and the brothers began to sing while Miriam with her tambourine led the sisters in singing and dancing. It made Greenbelt look like a tame affair.

At the end of the age in the Book of Revelation you would expect an absence of singing — what with Armageddon and the Anti-Christ filling the pages and one horror after another destroying the nations of the world there seems no hope of finding anything except a dirge or a lament. But how wrong can we be! There is a choir of twenty-four elders in chapter 5 who even provide their own musical accompaniment and compose their own songs. At the same time the angels provide massive backing that made heaven resound with praise. But the singing doesn't even stop there in chapter 5 — the climax with every creature in heaven, on earth, and — would you believe it — under the earth —

singing praises to the Lamb. Chapter 14 is a gem with a male-voice choir of 144,000 singing a new song to Jesus — there is no need for hymn books in heaven!

So at the beginning and at the end of the age there is great praise and singing, and in between the people of God just cannot be suppressed in their glad outbursts of song. They can even sing going into battle against a vastly superior enemy, like King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20, and the Lord gave Israel a great victory. They sang right through the night in David's tabernacle and at the dedication of Solomon's Temple the praises of Israel probably surpassed any praise ever heard in Israel. The singers and musicians had key roles in the temple worship and the Book of Psalms was their music book.

Paul and Silas sang in prison, their backs wounded and bleeding from the flogging and their limbs in chains. Hardly the luxury hotel accommodation many latter day 'apostles' demand before they feel ready to sing! Jesus too loved to sing and did so, with his disciples on the very night he was betrayed.

So much for singing in the Bible — the Word of God is full of praise and joy. Let us zero in on what is happening today. The fellowship I belong to is exuberant to the point of being mobile in its praise! How different from the old days when we just sang hymns. In the present move of the Spirit, we are witnessing two beautiful aspects of praise. First, the Lord is causing new songs to be written and sung which makes a change from the old days when I thought a hymn had to mature for at least one hundred years before it could be sung! The other aspect is singing in the spirit or singing in tongues which I had never even heard of until a short time ago, but

what an incredible joy it is to sing in the spirit and to sense so vividly the presence of Jesus. Whether we are singing a new song, old song, or singing in the spirit, it should always be for the building up of the church and not just to show off our talent as composers or musicians. 'So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the Church.'

At this point I am appealing to you to appreciate the value of singing and enter into praise with your whole heart. Lots of you have received a new song from the Lord but most of these new songs have never seen the light of day because the one who was originally inspired to write it has failed to realise that this gift is for the benefit of everyone and not just for a select few or for his own personal benefit. The main excuse for not sharing a new song is lack of confidence.

I am just about finished, but a word of testimony might encourage the more timid souls to get actively involved in praise and worship. It was quite an ordeal when I first shared a song from the Lord in the fellowship. It was a case of the spirit being willing and the flesh being decidedly weak! By that I mean I was profoundly self-conscious and scared! It was hard to stop shaking at the knees and when you consider that I played all of the song in the one chord, with the band right next to me, probably wondering if I knew any other chords, then you get some idea of how I felt. Well, praise the Lord, his love was sufficient and he helped me at my point of need. What blessed me most was when the Fellowship joined in singing the chorus of the song — it really gave me a boost. The Lord is always there when we turn to him — Praise the Lord! Now that's a good place to stop.

TIGHT SECURITY

John Heywood

I was idly leafing through a magazine left by another passenger during the course of a recent flight. Sometimes there isn't much else to do — and in any case aircraft engineers need something to occupy them when they travel by air!

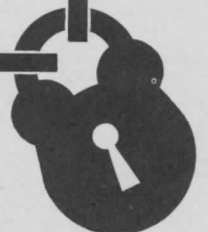
But back to the magazine. To my amazement I read words to the effect that tights were an essential to the women's liberation movement because they brought a feeling of security to those who wore them. My wife is more prosaic and gave me two quick, practical reasons for wearing tights other than the one above! But whether you wear tights or not it is reasonable to ask where your security lies. Presumably not in your tights, but maybe it is not squarely in God either.

Often the actual location of our security is not revealed until something happens to knock away the props and disturb our normal way of living. God may well do this and cause chaos in your life in order to help you identify for yourself whether your trust is actually in God or in someone or something else. It is only when we enter a situation that tests us that we are able to recognise for ourselves the facts relating to our security, or otherwise, in God.

Job was tested more than most people. He was a man who was wealthy beyond most of our dreams with agricultural enterprises galore and a large family — and in a single day it all went. Oxen and asses, sheep and camels, sons and daughters, employees — everything in one day. Job was angry and called God all sorts of names — no he didn't! 'He fell to the ground in worship.' 'May

the name of the Lord be praised.' 'In all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.' (Job 1:20-22). Let's update that a little. In one day I lose my job, my car is stolen and my daughters are killed on their way to school. How would I react? In praise and worship? It all depends where my security is.

If my security is in the friends I have and the things I possess, in my job, my insurance policies and my credit standing then it can easily be lost if these things crumble. But God doesn't crumble. God is not devalued with inflation. If my security is in God who does not change, who does not need improvement or modification in the light of experience, who never has to learn anything because there is nothing he does not know, who can look from both ends of history and tell you every detail, then I am secure indeed whatever may happen to my external circumstances. You see you can trust a friend and be secure in your relationship with them when you know them. The same is absolutely true of your relationship with God. You can trust him and be secure in that relationship when you know him. Study the Scripture to see what they teach about the nature and character of God and accept what you read. As God puts you in a situation in which you are tested take him at his word — trust him. Start with God rather than the shattering events around you. When you have trusted him once and found him true, that should build faith in you that will enable you to tackle a harder situation, which in turn increases your faith, your dependence on God and your security. So let's have some 'tight security' round here!



Loving

by Brian Hayes

It is going to be the wedding of the decade when Lady Diana Spencer walks down the aisle of St. Paul's cathedral to marry Prince Charles. In the euphoria of the engagement one broadcaster reckoned that when the Prince becomes King the royal couple would be known as 'the King and Di'! In one of the many interviews they gave for TV, Lady Diana was asked if she was marrying the Prince for love. With an abashed and rightly surprised look she answered, 'Of course'. Now admit it — you were glued to your TV too!

In the scriptures one of the major illustrations of the church is that of the Bride with Christ being the Bridegroom. Such an illustration is deliberately used by the Holy Spirit so that we can better understand what God is seeking to do in our lives. We need to ask ourselves whether our relationship with Christ exists because we love him or because of what we can get out of it.

If Lady Diana had answered, 'Well, I'm not too sure if I love Charles, but I thought that I really couldn't miss this wonderful opportunity of marrying into the Royal Family. Now I am under the protection of the Palace all my needs are met and I have real security,' the country would be in an uproar! However, there is hardly an eyebrow raised when the preacher makes an appeal for folks to come to Christ by announcing that if they do Christ will give them security, happiness and peace. Little wonder their commitment to Christ so easily breaks down.

The illustration of the Bride of Christ has at its heart the concept of a love relationship which grows and deepens through engagement and marriage, and then throughout our life-time our love being worked at and perfected. For the concept of 'knowing God' (which we discussed in the first article) is a progressive one. Unfortunately evangelical christianity has emphasised the 'saving of souls' and the 'hell and heaven' aspects of the gospel, but sadly neglected to emphasise the necessity of an ongoing, life-time commitment to Jesus.

This failure has produced generations of christians who are lured into the christian faith with promises of much blessing from God, but after a honeymoon period any relationship with the Lord becomes static. Hence there is much talk about being saved,

but little about knowing and loving God. Christ's question to Philip has meaning for us all. 'Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know me?' (John 14:9). The challenge, not from pressure but from desire, is that the quality of our christian life is directly related to the quality of our relationship with Jesus.

The illustration of the Church as the Bride of Christ comes into its own in helping us to understand the development and growth of our relationship with Jesus that God is looking for. Ezekiel 16 (NASB) gives us a lovely picture of such a developing relationship. Now lack of space on this page means we cannot quote each verse, so why not read verses 1 through 18 for yourself?

In this chapter God is talking about his people as represented by the city of Jerusalem. He speaks of the different stages of their development, from birth (verses 4 and 5), through growing up (verses 6 and 7), of entering into a contract of love (verse 8) and then courtship or beautifying period (verse 9 onwards). Verse 8 is particularly poignant as it depicts engagement, betrothal, contract. The phrase 'spreads my skirt over you' was the way at this time in history they would say, 'Let's get married' (remember Ruth 3:9). So the second part of verse 8 says: 'I entered into a covenant with you so that you became mine.'

All this is a picture of the Lord's dealings with us! He has come to us who were 'born in iniquity and conceived in sin', and has given us life and identity and has betrothed us to himself. Just as Israel was married to God, so we who are the church are the Bride of Christ. We have responded to his love and proposal of marriage and he has entered into a covenant with us — to love us. Thus as verse 8 states — 'you were at a time (age) for love'. That's God constantly pouring his love upon us and we responding to that love!

Now judicially, once we are 'born again' we are the Bride of Christ. But in experience we need to realise and appreciate this for ourselves. In the natural realm it is not until after birth and our growing up period, that courtship and marriage mean anything to us. We have to come to that 'age for love'. Likewise when we appreciate how God views us, how much he loves us, and we begin to respond to that love, so our faith is a developing of a love relationship with him, then he is free to

Jesus

begin to bestow upon us the gifts and benefits of such a relationship.

These are portrayed in verses 9 through 14. These are the beautifying gifts which are given during this period of courtship. The parallel for us is that the Lord would pour into our lives not only his love but the wholeness, healing and completeness that comes from himself. He would build into our lives the silver and gold of his life and character, and adorn us with his beauty as we become like him — kings and queens to our God.

Verse 13 states, 'you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty', and as far as we his Bride are concerned he'll spare no effort or expense to bring this about! Kings can be lavish in their gifts to their bride. Prince Charles spent almost thirty thousand pounds on Lady Diana's engagement ring and that doesn't begin to compare with what the Lord is lavishing upon us of 'his splendour' (verse 14), or to use a New Testament expression, 'of the glory of his grace which he is freely bestowing upon us' (Eph 1:6). What a love relationship! What a Lover!

*Grace it seems is all he has,
and one big open heart,
And it's so good being loved by you my Lord!*

Remember that God's purpose in all this is to deepen our relationship with him in order that we may become the Bride of his love. I cannot over-emphasise the point that God has a purpose in saving and redeeming us. That purpose is that we might know him intimately, and that as his Bride we might be wooed and loved by the 'Lover of our souls'. That purpose is that we might be totally unashamed of his love for us and our love for him. That purpose is a progressively deepening union with him so that eternity will be the continuation of a love relationship which is already flourishing here and now.

In view of all this, what happens at verse 15 onwards is very sad and requires our attention, for notice how that verse turns. The betrothed bride begins to turn away from her lover from whom she has received everything and to whom she owes everything and begins to use the benefits of that relationship in other ways (verses 15 through 18). Time and time again in the Old Testament the Lord accuses his People of playing the harlot, and of committing spiritual fornication. Fornication is,

'the delights and pleasures of love without the responsibilities and pains of love', and God's end-time people, the Bride of Christ, those he is calling into an intimate relationship with himself, have often committed spiritual fornication! Please don't miss the point here by equating spiritual fornication with things we've wrongly in the past called worldly! Its nearer to home than that! When I take the delights and blessings of the cross and my relationship with Father, without the responsibilities they bring, it becomes spiritual fornication. When I take the benefits of the cross, with its forgiveness, healing and deliverance, and yet do not give to God what he is looking for — that fellowship, that development of an on-going love relationship, that responding to his courtship and love, then this becomes spiritual fornication because we've taken the blessings and shun the responsibilities of the relationship we've been called into. It's when we take what God has given us in forgiveness and cleansing, yet don't really know him (that's why many testimonies are statements of the past).

It's when we enter into the 'taking syndrome' of God supplying our needs, but shirk our responsibility to love him. In fact we need to repent of taking benefits and not building a relationship; of using God as a prescription for our ills; of going through the rituals of christianity without really loving him; of becoming active as a cover up for a lack of relationship.

Perhaps our love for Jesus needs to be stirred or awakened. Are you a christian yet have no love for Jesus? You have a religion, even an evangelical one, but no love for Jesus. Like Philip you've been with the Lord for a long time, yet don't really know him. To you God is still a total stranger.

The scale needs to fall from our eyes to see Jesus. The hardness needs to be taken from our hearts to feel Jesus. The embarrassment needs to be removed from our life to love Jesus, and then we need to get on with the all important task of knowing him, loving him, responding to him, becoming constantly more and more his own, his Bride, the Bride of his love.

*The greatest thing in all my life is loving You,
The greatest thing in all my life is loving You.
I want to love you more, I want to love you more.
The greatest thing in all my life is loving You.*

For twenty years W J Baxter served as a pastor of one of Canada's largest evangelical churches, The Evangelist Tabernacle of Vancouver, British Columbia. For five years he was president of the Greater Vancouver Evangelistic Ministerial Association. In addition to his church and community responsibilities, he travelled extensively, speaking in conventions, church

meetings and teaching seminars. He also served as editor of 'New Covenant' Times. Through the years he was engaged in considerable inter-denominational activity, and he continues to minister extensively across the U.S and around the world. Ern and his wife, Ruth, reside in Mobile, Alabama.

THY KINGDOM COME

by Ern Baxter

Jesus appoints

When Jesus ascended on high, he undertook the government of the universe. The Bible says the government was placed on his shoulders. I ask you to turn, please, to Ephesians 4 and verse 8, and look at the order of God's government.

Now I submit, brothers, that what is stated here is this: when Christ rose and sat at the right hand of God, there was committed to him the absolute government of the earth and of the universe. It was for him to determine what should be done to bring about the purposes of God. In turn, he chose to do it by the sovereign appointment of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers who would bring into existence a community of men and women—each of whom would know his place of service. In addition, they would be reproductive and recreative until there came a body of men and women in the earth who could be compared to a corporate, mature man which would resemble Christ in its corporeity. What he was in his incarnate power and life, they would

become in their corporate power and life. He was going to do it by the use of chosen men. He was going to appoint them, anoint them, and equip them.

How does Christ choose these governmental authorities? Or, continuing with the figure of the Kingdom, whom does the Lord Jesus Christ appoint to bring about the reign that is designed in the purpose of God for men? I think we have one rather significant illustration that best represents Christ's sovereignty in his choice.

Early writings tell us that Saul of Tarsus was a 'bald-headed, bowlegged, strongly built man, small in size, with meeting eyebrows, with a rather large nose.' We see this little man 'breathing threats and murders against the disciples of the Lord' (Acts 9:1), getting letters from the High Priest to authorize him to stamp out the Christians at Damascus. I imagine as he hurried along the road, he was muttering, 'Those crazy Christians. They're upsetting all of Judaism. If I lay my hands on them. . . '—and he feels in his pocket to be sure that he's got

the letters from the High Priest. He's going to take those people back to Jerusalem, and they're going to feel the lash! 'And if they die, so much the better. Get rid of a Christian and advance the cause of Judaism. That's the thing to do— these crazy Christians.'

From his sovereign place on his throne the Lord Jesus looked down and said, 'I'll take him.' I wouldn't have taken him, and I doubt if you would have taken him. But the point I want to make is that we need a revival of the concept of Christ's sovereign right to govern his Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is not a democracy; it's a theocracy. It's not run from the bottom up; it's run from the top down! Jesus Christ makes appointments!

Jesus anoints

Jesus appoints and he anoints. On the day of Pentecost, after the Holy Spirit had come, there were all kinds of rumours going around about what was happening. You see, when you look at a divine happening, you have a problem. You're either going to put a sense evaluation on it, or you're going to find out what the divine evaluation is. Now I'm sure that all of you, had you been devout Jews on the day of Pentecost, would have gone to find the reason for the noise that was coming from the temple. For it says, 'When this sound occurred, the multitude came together.'

Now, these devout Jews made an evaluation of what was transpiring. And had you and I been looking at what was going on, I wonder if we'd have made the same evaluation. What they saw disturbed them. They said, 'We never saw such indecency in the temple. It's only nine o'clock in the morning. They must have got into the sacramental wine.' So they walked out of the temple, saying, 'They're drunk!'

Isn't it amazing how you and I can be so clever as to look at something God is doing and give it a sense evaluation? We can be so rigid in our religious crystallization that when God starts to shake us, we've got to find some kind of a rationale so

that we won't be disturbed. And so 'drunk' will serve our purpose.

Can you imagine people walking down the streets of Jerusalem pronouncing the visitation of the Holy Spirit on the historic day of Pentecost as 'drunkenness?' And yet there are men today who are looking at the things God is doing, and they're making the same kind of sense evaluation. But there were other men who had the good sense to stay and say, 'There's something here.'

There were those that heard a sound on the day of Pentecost, and they said, 'What is it?' So Peter stood up with the eleven. (In those days, the preachers stood together.) And Peter said 'These are not drunken, as ye suppose. . . But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; . . . in the last days. . . I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:15-17). Then Peter went on and preached a masterful address as he linked this event with history, and in turn, linked it with the contemporary fact of Christ's coming into a time-space world. And he closed by projecting into the future as he said, 'The promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' And they were pricked in their hearts and said, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'

Peter said, 'I wasn't expecting that. What'll I do now, Lord?' And the Lord replied, 'The keys. . . the keys. Remember I told you about the keys?' 'Keys, keys . . . Oh, the keys, yes. Repent! And be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the

gift of the Holy Ghost . . .' That same day there were added to the redeemed community about three thousand souls. Brother, he didn't ease them in; he didn't coax them in; he didn't coerce them in. He dynamited them in.

We are wondering why it is so hard to explain the charismatic renewal to many. May I say very simply and at the risk of losing my head, that if people were dynamited charismatically into a charismatic community, they'd have no problem understanding charismatic life. But when we attempt to ease people into 'Christianity' with 'invitations' which omit divine requirements for entering the Kingdom, we get a disappointing variety of 'converts.' But not Peter. He stood up, turned the keys, pulled the door open and in they came. Hallelujah!

The people of the anointing

The apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers of the Acts church then became — and still speaking in the context of Kingdom — the delegated governmental authorities under King Jesus for the bringing into being of his Kingdom. Apostles, prophets, and evangelists moved across the world and 'in every place' (1 Cor. 1:2) they planted churches. Basically, a church is nothing less than a manifestation of God's reign and government in a locality.

I've had two visions in my life. The last one was some twelve years ago in a convention in Canada. In that convention, for the times when I would be sitting waiting to speak, I had chosen a secluded spot behind a great pillar out in the sanctuary . . . a kind of little private

'office' arranged there where I could wait each night until it was time for me to come up and speak.

One night as I waited there, I felt I should get on my knees, and as I got on my knees I had a vision. In the vision I saw the earth as the astronauts pictured it from the moon. It was an orb out in space, and all over that orb were Quonset huts. Not many of you are too young to know what they are, but after the last world war, the army sold those aluminium warehouse-like structures called Quonset huts which had become army surplus. At any rate, I saw Quonset huts all over the globe, and they were all the same size. I said, 'God what is this?' And he replied, 'I am going to have, in every place, a people that are known for the anointing.' Now at that time I had a permanent pastoral charge, and I didn't know then that I would be involved in a travelling ministry; but he said next, 'And when you travel from place to place, you will not ask for my people by this name or that, but you will say 'Where are the people of the anointing?'

If God is restoring in this hour the principles and purposes enunciated in the New Testament, then it is my firm belief that as his Kingdom comes, we're going to see coming out of this renewal and restoration that thing that God has intended. In every communicable area there will be a community of men and women that are flowing in the anointing. And that anointing is the kingly authority of our Sovereign.

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Ern Baxter visits Scotland

Edinburgh	8th-13th August/For information telephone 031 339 5417
Glasgow	15th-17th August/For information telephone 023 67 28667 Renfield Church Centre, Bath Street (Charing Cross)
Dundee	19th-21st August/For information telephone 0382 644472

'A banana plant grows so fast, up to nine inches a day, that you can almost see it grow,' remarked a friend who had been in Brazil. I was suitably impressed and began to think of other 'bananas' which flourish like weeds in the fertile soil of our minds.

Unzipping a banana is simply the exposing and disposing of harmful attitudes. Some bananas are very difficult to remove, especially if they have been around for years. Indeed it is quite simply 'bananas' to assume that because something has been accepted for a long time it somehow has the right to remain.

Here is a bunch of typical 'bananas' — the gifts of the Spirit are not for today, because they do not operate in the Church of Scotland; we must have two services on a Sunday at 11 am. and 6.30 pm. — to suggest changing this venerable institution will incur incredible wrath from the faithful who probably seldom visit the evening service anyway!; The King James version of the bible is the only reliable English translation because it was the one I used when I was a boy; if you don't wear a dark suit and a black tie at communion you have no respect for the Lord's table; laughing in Church is a serious affront to the Holy Spirit; tithing is an Old Testament practice, the Lord is pleased with my 'mite' (He knows I have a huge mortgage and anyway we are in a world recession).

Thinking that we will not be missed from the Fellowship is a classical banana flourishing strongly in Charismatic jungles. Because of shyness I found it quite easy to feel unwanted and throughout my teenage years I never was able to shake off the feeling of not being needed. Even today I find it a battle to be more than a conqueror in this area.

A friend hinted to me that he was considering leaving his fellowship for he wasn't really needed, he wasn't involved in any important ministry, so he wouldn't be missed and anyway somebody would soon take his place. I put it to Ian that he would be missed for

nobody is unimportant in the body of Christ. Ian actually thought that the corporate life of his fellowship would improve if he left which might not have been untrue because he had become so negative and discouraged in his spirit. Over a period of time this brother responded to encouragement and is now coming forth in a ministry of encouragement himself.

For sheer subtlety and harmfulness it's hard to beat this next fat 'banana.' Fred and Anne were a typical Christian couple who came to our church and after some time requested to go

UNZIP A BANANA

Bobby Gillies

through foundation classes and join my house group, giving me pastoral oversight of their lives. While Fred was in need of help a good relationship seemed to develop between us and any encouragement or correction was received well. Through prayer and perseverance Fred's need was eventually met and lots of praise and thanks were given to God for his provision. But soon things changed for the worse and a strained atmosphere developed. They didn't phone or visit us quite so often. However, when I did speak with them they assured me that all was well but life was just so hectic.

If folks don't share openly and honestly it is very difficult to put things right. Little did I know that they were arranging a new 'shepherd' who would really understand them. Lo and behold they found one! There always seems to be a redundant

shepherd somewhere waiting in the wings who is ready to take up the challenge. Fred and Anne believed that I 'had it in for them' and rejected the truth that their welfare was my only concern.

It is another 'banana' to assume that the Holy Spirit can be chased out of an individual's life or the corporate life of a fellowship as easily as a sparrow is scared out of our gardens at the least disturbance. The Holy Spirit is not a timid dove and is not easily scared off! Jesus, who knew no sin became sin for us and has been touched by our every failing and short coming, yet nevertheless has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. He is not easily shocked by our attitudes and actions so we ought not to write off any group or individual.

Of course wrong deeds and attitudes need to be repented of and sorted out but it is plain arrogance to interpret problems and mistakes as a sign of spiritual death or decadence. It is just so easy for us in our happy and thriving groups to look with upturned noses at the parish churches or Brethren Assemblies and thank God that we are not as other groups are! There were plenty of Pharisees in Israel 2000 years ago, let's not reintroduce this group and swell their ranks with our elitist attitudes.

No doubt there is a glut of bananas in our lives for they always come in bunches and when these 'banana' thoughts are shared and prophesied and corporately digested, there are so many skins lying about that you can be sure that you and your friends are heading along spiritual 'skid row'.

Getting rid of our 'bananas' is not an impossible job if we are exposed regularly to the Word of God and hide it in our hearts as David did.

Get a firm hold of your bunch of bananas and in the light of scripture acknowledge that this is one fruit you don't want to flourish in your life. Repent of them one by one and firmly stuff them in the dust-bin and let them rot! The song I'd like my sheep to sing is 'Yes we have no bananas'!

Maurice Smith Dripping on



I burned my guidance. It took some doing, I can tell you. A nice fat wedge of revelations and 'words from God', treasured over the years and slowly getting crumpled at the edges. Most of them obtained through times of prayer and fasting and many of them having a remarkable sense of timeliness about them.

Like the occasion when two of us were closeted in a caravan in the New Forest within the grounds of a one hundred room mansion. Praying, fasting and reading the bible 'on retreat' and 'seeking God', as we termed it, we felt 'led' to look up all the scriptures concerning the forest, and as we read the scripture 'and it shall hail in the forest', so it did. Suddenly great hailstones were bouncing off the roof and the fields were covered white with them. In fact it turned into a snow-storm and we were cut off for a day or so.

The timing was so incredible that it seemed a complete confirmation that we were on the right track. God was leading us, we reasoned — as we sought to obtain possession of the huge mansion for his purposes — and the signs were confirming it.

On another occasion, when we were considering the production of the first issue of *Fulness* some years ago, the scripture was read out, 'and

great was the company of women that published it'. On the strength of this isolated scripture verse, some of us endeavoured to take the statement literally in our situation and apply it. Others were not so keen!

These are but two random incidents that spring to mind, taken from many, many more. As the guidance file got fatter and fatter I was forced to face the fact that fulfilment of these revelations was not forthcoming. Of course, the accuser was always at hand to say that to let go of these words was just a lack of faith, and then they would never come true. Many Christians agreed with him and told me so.

You might ask how some of us ever got off on such a trip. How did we ever become so super-spiritual? Well, there may be a dozen answers to that, but one reason was certainly an unwillingness to be ordinary and wait God's time for him to speak in the everyday situations of life. We lived in a pressure-cooker where everything had to go along at a fast pace. We expected more revelations in a week than Billy Graham would expect in a decade. Such a hot-house atmosphere was a good climate for counterfeit guidance.

Another thing that must be taken into consideration was that God the Holy Spirit had also met with us in a new way. He really was speaking now and there was a greatly increased sense of his presence. There were now several truly supernatural happenings such as complete healings or clearly God-inspired visions or dreams from time to time, and other manifestations of the presence of the Spirit. Delighted with this new dimension it was easy to go overboard and demand a continual flow of such activity.

I do want to stress the reality of these supernatural happenings and not make this a totally negative contribution. So many I have met, have read Jesse Penn-Lewis' book, *War on the Saints*, and then been so concerned about the counterfeit that they felt it safer to leave the supernatural alone altogether. That is a tragedy which has robbed the church of much needed power in recent years. But the fact that Peter was on the roof top in prayer and fell into a trance (and that would give some of us a problem today) does not mean that if we

imitate him and spend our time on the roof, we can insist that God produces a vision to our order. To make such a demand and to then interpret everything we see and hear or imagine, as a divine intervention, is to open ourselves up to deception.

Some of the things that have come to me by revelation have stood the test of time, and have stood the test of closely committed brothers with whom I have shared them.

These revelations have got hold of me and I am not desperately trying to hang on to them and make them come true. I am not afraid to have any of them questioned or to find that I have made some mistakes. God does still speak, and speak directly to us today, but he will not be dictated to or honour our imagination working overtime.

So the increasing file of past revelations that I was clinging to has gone to the fire, and I feel much better for that. But it really was humbling to strike the match. However, the bonfire has left me with an inward peace and taken away that sense of always looking backward under pressure.

If I've lost anything valuable then the Lord knows I wanted what was best for his kingdom, and I'm convinced he'll not be too harsh on me.



In a word (werd) prep./adj./n. (colloq.) Regular feature (not all Gk.) in printed publication, lucid, free of obscurity, radical (of the roots), concise, enlightened, particular, source of which can be traced from original Jn. (abbr.) MacLauchlan.

IN A WORD

The subject of reproof, in one or another shade or form, is practically ubiquitous in the Bible. I will resort (as once or twice in the past) to a note-form word study in order to present a reasonable coverage of the concept.

1. What is reproof?

The word *noutheteo* is made up of *nous* (mind) and *tithemi* (to place), and literally means 'to put in mind', hence, 'to admonish, warn, spur on, reprove'.

a. It implies a problem or obstacle to progress or need of change — something God wants changed. The person on the receiving end of the reproof may not be aware of the problem, but needs to be made aware of it. He must be 'put in mind' of something.

b. It implies speaking about that problem or obstacle to the person involved, and hence incorporates an inescapable element of confrontation. Eli's failure (1 Sam 3:13, which uses *noutheteo* in the LXX) was that he acted too late (1 Sam 2:22). The aim in speaking is to influence the will with a view to changing the behaviour and developing the personality. Passages like 1 Thes 5:14 and Titus 3:10 imply correction, not simply exhortation.

c. Reproof is different from teaching, or instruction in the art of living (Titus 2). It confronts someone with definite matters, in a context of life and action, and demands specific response. It is essential that we do not assume that because someone knows something he will necessarily do it.

2. What is the purpose of reproof?

a. To execute the judgments of God in our lives. Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is burning up the chaff *now* (Matt 3:11). To facilitate the work of God in dealing with subconscious as well as conscious sin.

b. To eliminate the gap between information and life.

c. To deliver from legalism and introspection. When we are confident in others' input and correction, we do not have to judge ourselves introspectively.

d. To safeguard from going astray (Prov 10:17).

e. To produce maturity (Prov 15:31, 32; Col 1:28). Note that the preaching of the gospel of grace, the communication of the kingdom of God, and reproof, all go together in Paul's ministry (Acts 20:24, 25, 31).

3. Who can reprove?

a. Those willing to receive reproof!

b. Those who face up to and deal with conscious wrong in themselves (Matt 7:3-5).

c. Leaders (1 Cor 4:14; because of Heb 13:17).

d. Parents (Eph 6:4).

e. Everyone in the church! (Col 3:16; Rom 15:14 — note the special commendation; Prov 27:5, 6).

4. How is reproof to be given?

a. With joy, in anticipation of its goal (Col 3:16).

b. In wisdom (Prov 25:12; 12:18), involving a secure context of love and appreciation, and in firmness, not tension.

c. Out of the riches of the indwelling word; out of knowledge of God's will and aims (Col 3:16).

d. Out of experience (Rom 15:14) — so don't bite off more than you can chew!

e. Out of goodness, ie as an expression of God's character worked into us (Rom 15:14).

f. Not to shame, but out of love (1 Cor 4:14).

g. In patience (Prov 28:23 — note 'afterwards').

Very practical aspects of giving reproof:—

a. Move within clear relationship if possible, as this provides a context of mutual trust and respect (Prov 26:17).

b. Don't question someone's basic integrity or sincerity without involvement of leaders who had best handle a major matter like that.

c. Think over what you're going to say; don't speak on the spur of the moment, especially if you're at all unsure.

d. Don't try to prove what you say to the nth degree but do try and tie it in to specific instances where possible, and so help the recipient to 'see' what you are saying.

e. Be quick to listen to someone's reply to what you say — and, conversely, slow to answer when you're on the receiving end.

5. How is reproof to be received?

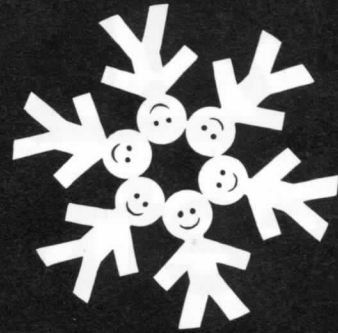
a. It is to be invited (Ps 141: 1-5).

b. It is to be loved (Prov 12:1).

c. In the knowledge that it brings respect, not shame, when rightly received (Prov 13:18).

d. With prayer and thought — and not with a quick 'answer'.

noutheteo



Like little children

by Wayne Drain

In the winter of 1978 we had just moved into our newly built home and had begun piling up the firewood to prepare for what was to be a 'hard winter'. When the first snow of the season came, I realised that my two year old son had never seen snow before.

I got out my camera and positioned myself by the door. 'Christopher, go and open the door and see what is falling down outside,' I said. He opened the door to a world of white, fluffy snow covering the ground and trees. A beautiful sparkle shone from his eyes and instantly his arms shot out to touch and experience this wonderful creation! 'I like this, Daddy! Let's go outside and see some more!'

As I watched Christopher, in my heart I became a little boy too and realised all over again how much fun it was to play in the snow. Suddenly the snow wasn't an every year occurrence that had gone on for centuries. It was real and exciting and new! Later in the day, I walked with a friend for about a mile down a snow-covered, country lane. Cars slipped and slid by, trying to get down the wintry road. The drivers' faces were grim and marked with agitation. I thought of how their experience in the new snow contrasted my own. To them, the snow

was a bother — cold and messy. To me the snow-draped trees and fence posts were a work of art painted by a master artist.

My son's uninhibited enjoyment taught me to be a little child in my amazement and appreciation for who and what the Father is and does. The wonder and excitement that comes with discovering new things need not be covered up by the 'harsh realities and responsibilities of life'. On the contrary, joy and fulfilment can be found in the realities of life and the responsibilities given us by Father.

'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' Jesus gave us insight here as to what our attitudes and responses should be like in our heart of hearts towards him and the life we live.

There is an epidemic of hardness of hearts and untrusting minds in the Body of Christ. It is so easy to feel you have 'heard that teaching before' or 'done all that in the early days'. Often we think maturity should take the place of all things becoming new. We must never

sacrifice the spirit's call, even if we are made to appear foolish or immature. Despite ridicule, King David stripped himself of respectability to dance unashamedly before the ark of the Lord. It is great in this present age to see middle-aged, and older, men and women neglecting to 'act their age' by lifting their hands, dancing before the Lord, and taking day to day, childlike risks to forge onward. This attitude is a testimony of Father's life finding a home in his children.

There is a marked contrast today between most new converts and older Christians. It is usually in the ability to appreciate and accept at face value what God is doing and saying. When I told Christopher that the snow was good, he was immediately ready to plunge in with all fours.

It is time for the children of God to cast off their old wineskins of reserve and embrace the new wine being poured out so freely. It is a characteristic of the young at heart to explore and push themselves to see what is beyond the next horizon. Wisdom fusing with youthful zeal is an attainable goal if we don't decide to sit in the security of our rocking chairs.

Signs of settling down

by Gerald Coates

'I've been bashed about so much,' he complained, 'I've done enough and I've had enough. It's time we settled down and consolidated.'

Just seven years ago he had met the Lord in a new way. He was transformed in praise, spoke in tongues and danced with complete abandon-ment to the Lord in his study, all on the same day! His preaching took on a new dimension. Members of his congregation were soon knocking on his door asking for prayer, eager to experience what he was obviously enjoying. His meetings and services moved from the hymn/prayer sandwich, to greater freedom in worship, with recently written songs punctuated by prophecies, visions and prayers from members of his congregation. Even the pulpit was demolished and the chairs moved into an oval, making times together more informal.

Yes, a few had left in disgust, but many more had joined. Not that he was sheep stealing, just growing good grass! Feeling the need for his fold to get to know one another, the church was split into home groups. Leaders were appointed, not because they had been in the church for a long time, but because of their character and gift. They were not elected democratically, but placed there by men who knew what they were building. A small orchestra took over from the organ. There were monthly 'All Saints Nights' for the folk from around the area. But enough was enough, and cramming that lot into seven years was more than enough! Settling down, it seemed, was inevitable. Within a few years the once flourishing fellowship would simply be another settled down group of believers. So near

and yet so far from what God is intending for his people throughout the world.

Is it inevitable, after years of change, to feel we've arrived, or had enough? Multitudes are conscious that, by holy living and the rebuilding of redeemed communities, we are actually hastening the coming of the Lord. There will at last be something for him to return to. Men across the world have had a vision of their own small part in bringing back the King. What if it all settles down? Will God have to raise up another generation in the years to come? Satan, we know, will do all he can to level off this fresh outpouring of God's Spirit. He's thrilled when fellowships cease to be a fresh creative expression of God. There are a number of signs that point to fellowships settling down. I've just listed five which I believe are common complaints Christ has against his church.

Exclusivism

'Oh, that's not us,' I can hear some say. Well, anyone who is a part of a fellowship where change is a key will be criticised. Criticism breeds defensiveness, defensiveness breeds insecurity, and insecurity breeds exclusivism. We become utterly convinced that other believers don't understand why we do things the way we do. We become secretive, ingrown, uncommunicative and make as little room for criticism as possible. Bridges between old friends and

folk in the locality become closed and break down. We cut off channels of life which in time could have rescued us from the quagmire we eventually find ourselves in. Thus it is that new denominations form, with people doing and believing the same things. Diversity is no longer the hallmark of what God is doing. People even look the same! They are no longer secure in knowing that they are responding to the word that God is bringing to his church. Rather they feel safe in the way things are done and in personalities. So the rot sets in as the years roll on. Many fellowships who started in openness, have settled into a charismatic ghetto. Simply a slightly better version of the group they were in before this one. It is worthy of note that many fellowships who preach and major on John 17, have precious few friendships with believers in their own locality.

Pseudo-spirituality

Among the failings of those in the charismatic movement, unreality must be high on the list. God is real, the ultimate reality. The only way to express the life of God is in individual and corporate reality. For years believers have been hindered from doing much in their local churches. It is not surprising therefore, with the emphasis on body ministry, that many saints are now like dogs off a leash. As a result folk have become embarrassed at the visions, prophecies and tongues that come like bunches

of grapes when meetings are arranged. We indiscriminately 'Amen' almost everything, whilst deep down we are feeling uncomfortable.

I went to a healing meeting on one occasion, where a woman stood for almost every illness and sickness the leader mentioned! If she had been healed for that lot she would have been bionic by now! On another occasion a man stood and said, 'Someone has a headache and the Lord wants to heal him.' There was no response. After an embarrassed silence and a few exhortations, he came to the conclusion it must have been himself. He had a headache, so he asked for prayer! In such situations people end up very intense and, most of the time, nicer than God himself. Instead of pressing on into reality we allow superficiality to reign and, abandoning our critical faculties, never allow ourselves to become disillusioned. Many settle for shallow relationships because they are undemanding. Into such an environment deception is bound to emerge and religious spirits have a heyday. Charismatic religion isn't reality. Jesus said, 'I am the truth.' He is the ultimate reality.

Democracy

We are not equal. We vary in gift, ability, understanding and capacity. We must let those who have got vision and the discipline to see it fulfilled lead the church. We must give men a mandate to lead. They will make mistakes, leaders are not perfect, but they must be given the right to lead. Elders are not equal, and need to submit to the gifts in one another. It's the same for house-group leaders and all groupings in leadership throughout the church.

If God has given you responsibilities, then fulfil them. If you don't someone else without your anointing and gift will take your place. Havoc will be the result. Give those with prophetic insight room to speak. The prophets must then allow those with more practical leadership responsibilities to work out that word. We need one another. Churches where everyone is equal never get anything done and settle down to continual discussions about

irrelevancies and personality difficulties. One church I know had nine committee meetings to discuss what colour the front doors would be repainted. We end up giving tenth rate attention to first rate issues and vice versa. Let's not settle for the unreal expectation of God's word on every detail, but rather give one another the right to lead, even to make mistakes. In this way we will be able to move on.

Meetingitis

Frankly I am pretty bored with many meetings I go to. Often those gathered have little idea what they are meeting for or why. Our meetings should have specific purposes. The round of singing/preaching/singing is enough to bore anybody after a while. We've limited our times together to singing and praying and preaching with a few gifts of the Spirit thrown in for good measure. We settle down, stifling our creative energies with stereotyped gatherings. On one dreary occasion, after an hour of mindless singing and irrelevant nice prayers, I stood up and asked the congregation, 'What's the difference between a knitting needle and this meeting?' The answer of course was that the knitting needle had a point to it.

If you've got a speaker, specially invited in for a time together, give him time and don't shove him on when the saints have sung themselves silly and are totally exhausted. An evening of prayer and praise with no teaching, or an evening of fellowship with a buffet meal will often accomplish more than the preaching syndrome. We've settled for mindless singing with no direction and this has become our settled way of doing things. We could all be much more creative when we meet, and go further in breaking down the barriers between sacred and secular. Recently we had a buffet meal, followed by some drama which was just a lot of fun, then stopped for drinks, before we had a fantastic time of worship and prayer together. We need to ask ourselves what is a meeting, what is it for, and what are the ones we're currently filling up with items doing? Our meetings must always be viewed in the light of our goal.

Insularity

Finally it seems that most fellowships fall into one of two categories. The first is the one that is accountable to nobody. This type of group listens with equal weight to every christian voice around and so it never builds anything. On the other hand there are those who have looked for what has become known as covering. Apostolic and prophetic ministry is foundational and therefore vital. Sadly though, some groups have got locked up to the emphasis of those who cover them. It is important at times, to allow those to whom we are accountable, to spend time moulding and directing us, to save us from being pulled here and there, by every religious voice. But a sure way of settling is to limit input from others to a certain tight-knit group. We need each other more than we think.

One fellowship I know, having muddled their way through for years, submitted their church to someone they felt could lead them on. Well, to a point he did, but he locked them up to himself and failed to encourage other ministries to enrich that community. When some of the leaders of that locality visited another fellowship some years later they were amazed. They had no idea that folk were enjoying friendships, building communities and recognising corporate leadership just like themselves. They had thought they were the only ones. What surprised them even more, was that this fellowship had advanced in certain areas where they had not even started! The shock lasted for months.

God's Spirit is a creative Spirit. He wants to take us over our self-made boundaries and lead us into unexplored territory. This is not a time to retire hurt, or relax back satisfied because of blessing or numbers. It's time to pioneer our way forward, taking areas of life still controlled by Satan; a time to extend God's Kingdom. Whatever else should be happening in the church at present, it is not a time for settling down. The church is called to be a pilgrim people, so let's not settle down, but press forward, building for the future.

Avoiding Institutionalism

by Peter Parris

The title 'Avoiding Institutionalism' begs three questions. Firstly, what is institutionalism? Secondly, why should we avoid it? Thirdly, how?

To institute something is to set up, found, or establish it. God instituted the Church and its foundation is laid, never to be replaced. An institution is merely the establishing of law, custom, or practice, and the Church has clearly defined foundational, immovable, uncompromising tradition as taught by Jesus and the Apostles.

So far so good, but it is at the point of 'institutionalism' that elements of a controversial nature emerge. Traditions can be of God, as previously stated, but they can also be instituted by men and nullify the commandments of God. Mark 7:13 reads, 'invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many such things like that.' Webster's dictionary gives a helpful insight when it defines institutionalism as 'exhibiting excessive conventionalism in religion.' Whilst we don't want to change the foundation, the building itself necessitates change. Institutionalism can be equated with the inability to change, the solidifying of the flexible and the making permanent of the transitional. Whatever analogy we use, whether it be the building of the temple or the maturing of the man, change is the key word.

Paul says that we are being changed; development is only unnecessary when either ultimate perfection has been achieved or the immediate state is totally acceptable. To institutionalise is to lock up into permanency what was only necessary temporarily. The serious side of

institutionalism is that it has an element of idolatry about it. It sets up for today and tomorrow what the Lord blessed yesterday. It betrays an insecurity, because it is threatened by change. That insecurity itself betrays a lack of

Institutionalism sets up for today what the Lord blessed yesterday.

vital relationship with God that can move us today differently from how he moved us yesterday. Let him that stands take heed lest he fall, because the blessed of today can become the institutionalised of tomorrow.

How do we avoid institutionalism? Institutionalism conveys the sense of being 'old fashioned,' and the propagating of the past as a rule for today. Therefore, one sure means of avoiding it is to have the purpose and goals of God clearly defined. It is only as we see what is to happen in relation to where we are that we have an incentive to change. Without the vision of where God is going, the danger is that we look in the direction he has been. A 'has been' describes well what was once vital but which today has the faded glory of yesterday. The necessity of truly prophetic ministry is highlighted by the short-lived glory of so many movements and men. The contribution of prophetic ministry is with us *until* we all come to the unity of the faith. It is that which

continually stirs us up from complacency and settling down with expediency and opens our eyes to ground not yet covered.

Our theology can be a cause of institutionalism. For instance, pre-millennialism promotes a pessimistic fatalism of the Church until Jesus comes, that has brought our sights down to where change is unnecessary until Jesus comes to change it all. This undermines the effect that God's kingdom can have here on earth before Jesus comes and reinforces institutionalism. The ultimate goals of God must be appreciated and preached to incite the Church to change, press on, lay hold, reach forth, grow up, until ultimate transformation is achieved.

The serious side of institutionalism is that it has an element of idolatry about it.

The serpent that God commanded Moses to lift up before Israel as a means of healing them was later to become a snare. That is a typical example of institutionalising. Instead of moving on from that source of blessing, they carried it forward into situations to which it was totally irrelevant and idolized it.

David's life has helpful hints on how to avoid institutionalism. When he was confronted with the problem of the Philistines, he sought the

Lord and was instructed to go out and fight them. David obeyed and put them down, but they appeared again later. David didn't presume he already had the answer, nor did he apply as strategy the former principle, but he again sought the Lord. This time the instructions were different; he had a new strategy to employ. He lived in a relationship with the Principal rather than the principle. This is an unfailing deterrent against institutionalism: to be open to the teaching of the Spirit; to be in a place where communication with the Lord is clear and where his voice can be heard, giving you the word for the moment.

To bring it even closer to home, are we incorporating harmful traditions in our life-style? What are we practising today that is blessed by God, but which we are already beginning to institutionalise? For instance, there were many very good reasons why in some churches a 'commitment class' was instituted. They were being blessed, but what soon happened was the spread of these classes as an essential means of entry into the local church. An

expedient practice thus becomes common practice, without any Biblical precedent. That is institutionalism. That which goes beyond Biblical requirement for being added to the church by saving faith in the Lord Jesus, can become a tradition.

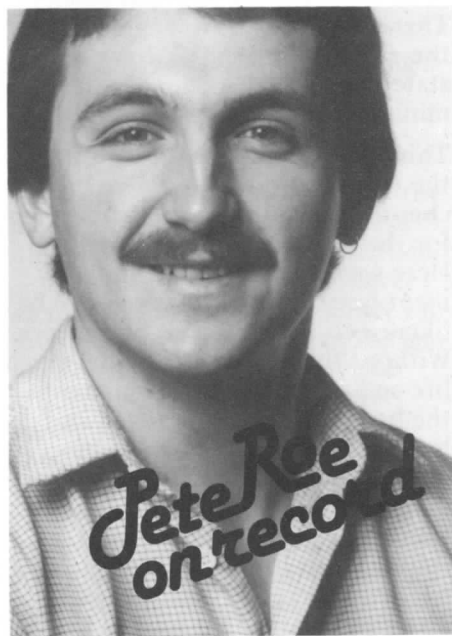
What are we practising today, that is blessed by God, but which we are already beginning to institutionalise?

The exclusive, or denominational mentality, is a small-minded one, and is another cause of institutionalism. The inability to appreciate the largeness of God's work, the variety of operations, and the broad front on which the Spirit is moving in our day can cause a defensiveness that justifies one's own position by demanding that everyone else conforms. That betrays another insidious side of institutionalism: spiritual pride. The refusal to accept another's leading or practice on the basis that it is different from yours

when it can be biblically substantiated. Therefore, another means of avoiding institutionalism is to have an open, humble heart that is willing to receive from any member of Christ's body. When we demand more (or less) than God does, and hold fast to such traditions, that is institutionalism.

The antidotes to institutionalism will consist of a walking with God so that you keep up with him. We need a vision of the ultimate goals of God to keep us going on in the right direction, with the accompanying holy dissatisfaction with where we are presently in relation to where we will be, and an appreciation and an acceptance of the valid contribution that the whole body of Christ makes.

Finally, we must examine ourselves to determine whether or not we are progressive and progressing. We cannot institute a new foundation, but do we know him and his working in us in a new way? Can we show out of our treasury things new and old? If we are not being changed from one degree of glory to another, the chances are that we have institutionalised.



Giantkiller: The alternative

I first heard of *Giantkiller* on the Greenbelt film, and although I saw them at Greenbelt last year, I've never given them any serious listening.

By secular standards this album is almost up to date, but by Christian standards it goes into the 'very modern' category. Most of the music is fast and gutsy with all

instruments being played in the now acceptable punk manner. Many of the songs are very similar although one or two slow tracks break up what would otherwise be a somewhat monotonous album.

The punk style also comes through the lyrics and most songs have a protesting nature with some spiritual sting in the tail. While I find it a bit 'samey', I can see non-Christians raving about it and finding themselves hearing the Gospel. I'll be keen to hear Kingsway's re-recording of this album and hope that *Giantkiller*, like so many modern bands, will succeed, as they pursue what is unique about them and sell it.

Dave Bilbrough: Lift me up

Will the new bionic Mr. Bilbrough please stand up. I know Dave's been keen to record again for ages and, although he may feel it's been a long time, I'd say the wait was worth it. In common with many Christian artistes, Dave's second album is a much bigger sound, and while some 'purists' often complain, I think it's an obvious, and in this case, an excellent development.

The music varies from simple acoustic guitar tracks sensitively

backed with oboes and sitars, to very funky numbers with electric guitar and saxophone breaks. Vocally, Dave's lost his prominent warble and sings more smoothly and confidently. He is eloquently backed by various girlie choruses, ranging from contemporary through negro-spiritual to, on occasions, classical.

John Menlove's and Max Reinch's arrangements have complemented each other surprisingly well and without further treatment I could see Cliff, Garth and Jessy Dixon pinching some of the faster tracks for their own concerts (which would improve the concerts!)

I'm encouraged by *Lift me up*, as I think we need more home grown men like Dave doing their best and gaining an ear. Well done, bionics!



Does structure equal deadness? Is spontaneity another name for chaos?

STRUCTURE *and Spontaneity*

In the current move of the Holy Spirit there is much discussion of the two apparently contradictory ideas of spontaneity and ordered structure. Some groups veer towards the former, whilst others feel the latter is more important.

Yet in reality and in biblical thinking, both are equally necessary. From these apparent antitheses, a truly New Testament synthesis of church life can be worked out. To ask which is more important, spontaneity or structure, is like asking which blade of a pair of scissors is more essential.

Spontaneity is biblical

In periods of spiritual decline 'cold and orthodox men', to use Wesley's phrase, come into leadership and they have a horror of anything savouring of spontaneity. They want every detail planned and organized. In that way there is no danger of anyone doing anything destructive or, more important to them, embarrassing. Everything must run smoothly and successfully, especially in the eyes of men. Some churches have become so well organized that the Holy Spirit could completely withdraw his presence and never be missed.

Those who fear spontaneity usually have a fear of intense feeling or emotion in the church. Jesus, however, was not embarrassed at all by the brokenness and the emotion of the penitent woman in the house of Simon. Her spontaneous feelings were accepted by Jesus, and the Holy Spirit recorded the incident at some length for our edification. Jesus and his disciples invariably acted spontaneously. He promised

Roger Davin

his followers that the Spirit would inspire them with the right words when prior study was impossible. When Peter met the lame man at the Temple he responded to the Holy Spirit and ministered healing. He didn't suggest that the man should come to a special 'healing service'. They witnessed spontaneously and were often guided supernaturally in their ministry.

When the whole church met together there was an amazing fluidity and spontaneity. In worship the whole body of Christ was free to contribute for the edification of all. The oft-quoted verses, 'Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner,' was inserted to avoid confusion, fanaticism and, above all, unedifying contributions. It was for the suppression of licence, not life.

Orderliness, considered historically has often been synonymous with death; for what is more decent and orderly than a well kept cemetery? It was this that caused poor Spurgeon to cry, 'O God, send us a season of glorious disorder!' Structure without spontaneity is like a body without breath.

Structure is biblical too

Some Christians on the other hand have a deep suspicion of any order or structure. They feel that any forward planning will banish spontaneity and grieve the Spirit. Some have even gone so far as to consider it unspiritual to meditate or study before ministering.

In the early days of the present move of the Spirit we heard much about body ministry and the need to escape the shackles of the one-man band. At the time this emphasis was very necessary, yet often it led to strange results. We saw many little fingers striving to do the work of a leg or an arm! Some with little or no gift strove manfully to nourish the body. The end was boredom and embarrassment.

There was a pertinent saying among the early Brethren: 'We have a stated but not an exclusive ministry.'

This can be illustrated if we turn to the epistle to the Ephesians. In chapter 4: 11-16, we see God's plan for the structure of the church. Here we see the five-fold ministry mentioned. These ministries can be likened to a skeleton or framework. Without them, no matter how much life and spontaneity are apparent, the body will never be fitted and held together. It will be an amorphous lump of living tissue open to the attack of any predator. The five-fold ministry is there to guide the spontaneous life of the church, to oversee it, to gently encourage it into those paths that lead to its being ultimately the pure and perfect bride of Christ.

The five ministries are the 'stated' ministries mentioned above. But that does not preclude body ministry. There are times when a brother with no apparent spoken ministry can be quickened to contribute something really edifying to the body.

Another feature of structure is its flexibility. It always takes into

account the needs of the individual believer or the local situation. That is why it is dangerous to imitate the structure of one particular group. Most successful structures have grown organically in response to local needs and conditions. Structure is made for people, not people for structure.

Also structure is essentially temporary and dynamic. The structure of the church is like scaffolding. It will disappear when the perfect comes. It is there to encourage every saint to reach perfection and

to realise to the full the gift within.

As the church grows in grace and in knowledge structures change, just as a child's clothes change as he grows to maturity.

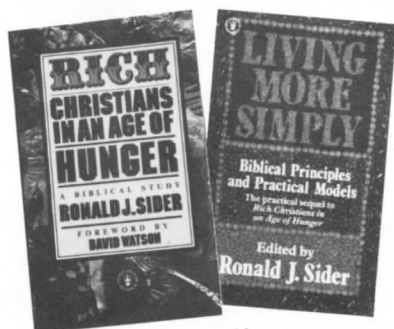
Those who were constantly being 'propped' become props to others. The leader or father of a group finds himself being led and supported, even by the group he has brought into being. The Spirit is constantly renewing the forms of local and general structure. It is the prerogative and responsibility of those in leadership to see, listen

and respond to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

One of the greatest and saddest tragedies in the church is the clinging to outworn structures. Men cling to methods that the Spirit formerly used. But the life has gone from them. Such clinging only brings defeat and frustration.

Thus it is by giving ourselves to a spontaneity that is both ordered and structured, and by developing a structure that is humane and responsive, that we shall move on to all that God has in store for us.

Book Review



Ronald Sider:
Rich Christians in an age of hunger
Living more simply
 Hodder and Stoughton
 £1.25, £1.50

There can be no doubt that for the majority of people on Planet Earth, life is daily becoming more difficult — just staying alive is an achievement. Millions live precariously on the very edge of starvation; the gap between the rich nations of the affluent West and those of the barely subsisting Rest widens continually, as the world's food and fuel resources are unevenly divided, callously and unjustly manipulated by greed and economic self-interest. Even in our own country there are many glaring anomalies in the distribution of material wealth and consumption, although nothing that can be compared even remotely with those prevailing in most parts of South America, Africa and Asia. Is this a situation which Christians, particularly those sharing the consumption-orientated lifestyles of Europe and the United States, should care about? What, if anything, can they do about it?

In *Rich Christians In An Age Of Hunger* Ronald Sider (an American) makes a passionate attempt to

answer these questions. His book is intended to develop a Christian response to what he believes to be the most pressing problem of our time. He does this in three parts: first, a statement of the situation (with an abundance of statistics and some horrifying stories); second, an outline of biblical teaching on 'The Poor and Possessions'; and third, some 'concrete suggestions for the individual, the church, and society'. How well does he do it?

Frankly, not very well! It must be appreciated, though, that he is trying to tackle one of the most chronically intractable problems of humanity — we recall that Jesus said, 'You have the poor with you always' — and it is a brave man who makes the attempt. We must applaud his courage. In general, however, his book is spoilt by far too many statistical tables of doubtful value, and the style of presentation, whilst not exactly turgid, lacks that lightness of touch which makes for easy, stimulating, and thus convincing reading. It could present its case more effectively by being a good deal shorter.

Whether or not Ronald Sider does present a biblical perspective on 'The Poor and Possessions' must be judged by those better qualified than myself, although it seems to me that by far the larger part of his argument is drawn from the Old Covenant, and needs some re-evaluation in terms of the New! As for his 'concrete suggestions,' he firmly (and to my mind quite rightly) advocates repentance as the primary Christian response — 'the kind of deep inner anguish that leads to a new way of living'. He asks what this kind of repentance might mean for the Christians of the affluent West, and his answers are: for individuals, a very much simpler lifestyle; for the Church, a change 'so that its common life presents a

new model for a divided world'. And it is here that he just begins to bring in a prophetic note: 'the Church is supposed to be a living model now of what the final kingdom of perfect justice and peace will be like'. But this note quickly dies away as he goes on to conclude, 'Christians, therefore, should exercise political influence to implement change in society at large.' This is essentially the substance of his suggestions for society, and in this area he is far too hopeful for us to follow him. In consequence, the book ends in an atmosphere of some unreality.

The second volume *Living More Simply* is an up-to-date (1980) symposium of individual and corporate experience in exactly what its title suggests. It has its moments of interest, and contains a good measure of practical wisdom, although, as with the former book, allowance must be made for its setting in North America. It tends, however, to be repetitious, and is therefore neither easy nor stimulating to read; this is a pity.

It remains to ask, should we have a serious concern with these questions? Yes, we certainly should. One day we may well experience at first hand, in our own country, what millions are already going through elsewhere, and undoubtedly we need to be prepared. But if we are to have a care now for the plight of these millions, we can only really do so as we have a God-given compassion, and a prophetic vision which enables us to see the problem from his perspective. Whilst I would not wish for a moment to minimise Ronald Sider's passionate concern, and his personal commitment to its outworking, I would have liked to have had a more readable statement of it, and one more readily evocative of the required compassion and prophetic insight.

Ken Rose

If life in the Kingdom of God presents you with practical problems that you feel could be aired on this page, please write to Gerald Coates and John Noble at 47 Copse Road, Cobham, Surrey.

John Noble and Gerald Coates

Q. We've had almost ten years of christian leaders majoring on John 17, and a call for unity in the body of Christ. The charismatic movement has emphasised almost beyond anything else the need of unity. However, we have to face the fact that the church seems more divided now with charismatic groups and different emphases than ever before. Did God speak to the church concerning his desire for unity or have we been misguided? Frankly I am disappointed at the vast sections of the charismatic movement that will have nothing to do with one another.

A. Without question God has placed a real burden for unity on the hearts of many christians in these days, including ourselves. Some have longed and prayed without feeling that there is any real hope. Nevertheless the harmony of God's people is at the very centre of our spiritual life. Jesus died to unite us, first to the Father, and then to the family. In the heavenly realm that is done, finished and completed. Our task is to bring that finished work into our daily living here on earth — and that's both the answer and the problem.

The difficulty is that if we are to press on in the christian life that often means division. You cannot move on and stay in the same place. We christians have a complex about division. You see there is division and division! Paul made it clear we are not to be divided and yet he divided himself from those who refused to go on with God. Jesus was the same. He clearly said that he even came to bring division. The

question is, what did Jesus mean? Well, our understanding is that Jesus and Paul separated themselves from wrong attitudes rather than from the people themselves. They would have nothing to do with the sins but constantly sought out the sinner. Jesus ate with harlots and tax collectors and he also ate with religious people. He wept over their blindness and bitterness but he never condoned it. Our trouble is that we allow our disagreements to drive us into exclusivism. We seek to protect our revelation. From distance we view one another with suspicion. But if we feel other christians are wrong we must keep our hearts clear and endeavour to speak the truth in love at the same time as listening to what they have to say about us — that's what the bible calls maintaining the unity of the Spirit.

It is wrong to think that unity means the surrendering of our doctrinal understanding, our personal burdens and freedom. We may have to change our priorities, or learn to be patient, or come to understand another's concern, but that which God has given to us will remain and find its place in the whole. On its own it will be a caricature of reality. So we must, in quietness and confidence, pursue unity with all God's people, not by compromise but by faith and love. It is more important to deal with bitterness than with doctrinal misunderstanding. It is better to remove suspicion than to change a mode of worship. It is more important to have a relationship than it is to belong to the same group or denomination.

Our feeling is that, at present, there is a greater openness and goodwill amongst Christians of different groups than for a long, long time. We say that in spite of seeing greater differences. Perhaps the diversity is because in this free society we have had the opportunity of doing things our own way, and maybe the results have not been all that we hoped for. We need to be increasingly aware of our need of one another. In this way we will be able to present to the world, not a load of one-man bands, all bashing out their own tunes, but a great orchestra conducted by the Lord himself.

Q. Many housechurches started off with clear vision and an eagerness to be an alternative to denominational church structures but seem to have ended up much the same. The purchasing of old church premises, headed paper, and forms of identifications have created uniformity across the country. What do you feel about groups and fellowships that are beginning to be formed now? Will they end up just a slightly better quality of the denominational grouping they may have left in disillusionment? Can we learn from history? How can we administer a large grouping without being separate from others?

A. Someone has said, 'The only thing history teaches us is that history teaches us nothing.' The sad thing is that this is often true. We must always remember that however much vision or enthusiasm we have, we will only build what is in our hearts. We must understand that the spiritual realm has prin-

ciples just the same as the natural. In nature, like produces like; in other words, 'what you sow you also reap'. In the same way we reproduce what we are in the spiritual realm. You cannot quickly recognise a plant by its leaves but the fruit is always recognisable. So a new movement or work often looks promising but it is its fruit that shall be judged at the end of the day. Much of what showed promise in the so called 'house churches' has proved to be disappointing and we have learned that seeing something is not the same as doing it. Dave Matthews from Belfast has said, 'Only doing it is doing it!'

As a child I remember being thrilled by a particularly clever cartoon. I determined to copy it. I got a pencil and a clean sheet of paper. With the first stroke of the pencil there was a sinking feeling, which grew and grew with each successive line, until I gazed with bitter disappointment at the final result. The best I

could do was to trace a copy which was a poor substitute.

Many Christians know this feeling. Having failed to produce a successful church themselves, many turned to copying the methods of others. The result may look quite good but they are not originals. They may meet a need, as do many denominational churches, but God wants more, much more for us than this. However, some are persisting with God and will find their way through to a new place. So the work of the Holy Spirit progresses and we move on another step.

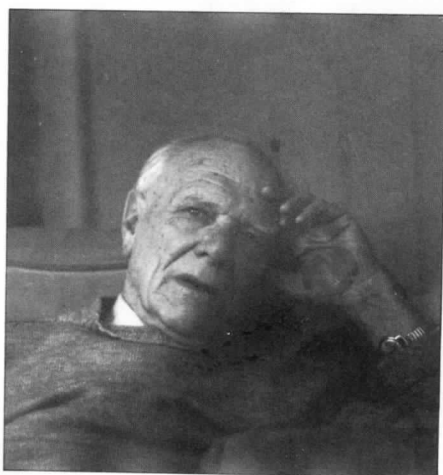
One step, of course does not make a staircase. One act of coming out from traditionalism, institutionalism or sectarianism does not bring us into the fulness of God's kingdom. We must continue to turn aside from all such things. The two of us are often searching our hearts concerning what we are a part of and what we are building. Is God's presence still with us? Have we become self satisfied? Are we

becoming apathetic or institutional? If so, then we must be prepared to 'come out' again and again and again.

Finally, administering a group, using letter headings and buying buildings does not necessarily need to cut us off. That will depend on our heart attitude. You may call yourselves 'The First Church of the Truly Open-Hearted Saints of the Whole Body of Christ Everywhere' but if there's a touch of exclusiveness it will not work. Or you may put on your notice board 'The Strict Brothers of the Inner Light', but if you really care you'll keep stretching the rules to include others in and love will win. It really is a matter of heart. You can do it right and be wrong; you can do it wrong and be right, but there's coming a time when we'll do it right and be right. The one thing that is sure is that our God is going to have his way — the world will see a triumphant church in every place!

THE BERNARD COPE FILE

Continued from page 9



sort of thing all seem to be pure gibberish. We live in order to walk with God, and to the degree that we do, our life has fulfilled itself. And that has no implications of a worldly kind at all. Success or failure has no bearing on it. . .'

'To talk of sin and repentance is regarded now as a sort of psychologically sick state. But actually of course it's the only possible way mankind has had any sanity at all.' There's the way that takes you to reality. And that's God's way. And there's the way that takes you

to the fantasy of life, which is the devil's way. The fantasy is extremely alluringly presented — for hours every day on a screen in the living room. We can fix our gaze on, and live with reality. Reality is there to be found, and it's called God.'

His attitude to television is well versed, so I wasn't surprised that it found a way into our afternoon's conversation: 'The people who produce this muck on the television screen think that they're doing a wonderful job — entertaining, informing and enlightening people — thinking that it's freedom. Real freedom is to know God; there's no other. There is a libertinism that ultimately becomes a servitude. It must. A servitude to your appetites, to earning money. And that is what Solzhenitsyn has maddened the Americans by saying.'

I asked Malcolm what were the milestones in his life. Well of course he would have put it quite differently at earlier stages, he said, but quite simply they have been the degrees of attaining to a harmonious relationship with God, and through that relationship realising what the incarnation signifies.

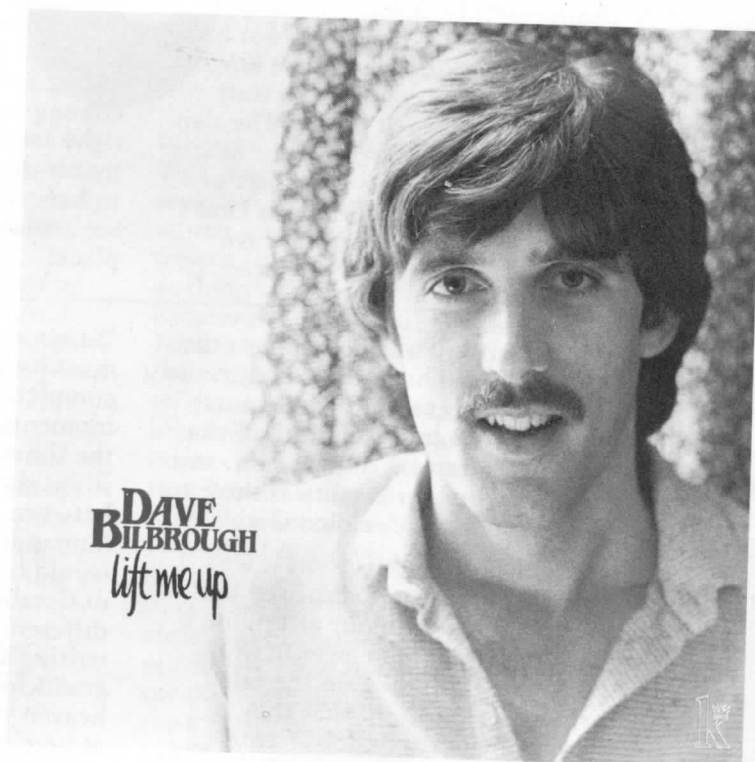
And interspersed between his more meaty answers to my questions came throw-away casual remarks that I was inclined, nevertheless, to catch:

'Saints are the people who are most insistent that they are a complete washout. . . Looking back, moments of failure have often been the times when I have really understood something. . . The difference between the most marvellous human being and the meanest would be infinitesimal, scarcely noticeable, in eternity. . . the difference between Shakespeare writing a play and one of my grandchildren writing a letter, in heaven will seem very slight, whereas here it's rather dramatic.'

As we chatted on, time seemed of little importance. Nothing disturbed our conversation apart from the occasional crackle from the fire and pauses to refill our cups. The world was presumably rushing on, somewhere beyond the backdrop of fields and trees outside, but I got the impression that whether the world — or 'Vanity Fair', as Malcolm described it — was out there or not, it didn't really matter to him, because he's seen through it anyway.

When the time finally came to start for home, I realised that he had given me a feast of food for thought. And leaving him was rather like the correct way to get up from a meal table — I could actually have eaten a little more.

Old brown eyes is back.



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