

BUCKINGHAM

REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE & EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS

ANALYSIS: REPORT FROM GREAT BRITAIN

Why should anyone, especially an American, feel he could make a spiritual contribution to a nation that has produced the world's greatest Bible scholars and pulpитеers?

This was the question I asked myself scores of times during my two-week stay in England, Scotland and Ireland last month. Yet a number of Americans are going to the United Kingdom to minister as new spiritual life begins to bloom.

I was there, as I was last September, as a guest of John Noble and Allen Pavey, leaders of Team Spirit, one of the major "streams" in the House Church movement. This time I returned to speak at their annual spring festival where 2,000 had gathered on a camping site for four days of ministry. I stayed over to travel with three of the team leaders—Noble, Pavey and David Matthews—to Belfast and Aberdeen. I then returned to London for the second weekend, speaking in Westminster's Central Hall with R.T. Kendall, who succeeded Martyn Lloyd-Jones and G. Campbell Morgan at Buckingham Gate. Final meetings were with the Collier Row Church in Romford, Essex.

In all I spoke 11 times in nine days—three of those sessions to leadership. The only "off" time was an evening in London as guests of Allen and Rosemary Pavey, who took us to the Haymarket Royal Theatre to see Vanessa Redgrave in "Anthony and Cleopatra." (Jackie, also a Shakespeare buff, drove up to Stratford-upon-Avon to see the Royal Shakespeare Company perform "Romeo and Juliet" while I was in Ireland and Scotland.)

England

I find little doctrinal difference between the mainstream charismatics in the United States and the majority of the House Church streams in England. The most noticeable difference is the major emphasis in America on buildings, while the British place the emphasis on relationships, preferring to meet in rented ("hired") halls. Worship is much the same although the British

are much livelier. Everyone, it seems, dances—with great abandon.

A number of the British believers live in community and most of the house churches are under some kind of apostolic authority. Team Spirit, under Noble and his fellow leaders, is the most relaxed as far as authority is concerned.

The second night of the festival God gave me a word that Britannia would once again rule the waves—only it would be the wave of the Holy Spirit...that the British believers would once again go forth as Livingstone, Carey and Asbury centuries ago...not just preaching and establishing churches, but demonstrating the power of the Holy Spirit with signs and wonders.

As this is happening a growing number of foreign preachers are coming to the United Kingdom. Billy Graham and Luis Palau have both made an impact on the nation. Derek Prince was in London while I was there. Charles Simpson, John Wimber and Reinhard Bonnke were coming. Who was I, I questioned, to add another voice?

In answer God said to spend my time, not preaching, but building a mood, creating an atmosphere, in which His Holy Spirit could move. That could best be done as I told a few stories then stepped out of the way and let the Spirit move. In each case He did—with powerful demonstrations.

The second Saturday I was there I met with leaders in Westminster's Central Hall. R.T. Kendall, a warm-hearted Southern Baptist pastor now at Westminster's Chapel, joined me to speak to about 200 House Church leaders that afternoon. That night we both spoke to about 1,000 who came to an open meeting.

As the service got under way I whispered to Kendall, "Have you ever seen Christians dancing?"

"No," he answered excitedly, "but I've heard much about it."

He was not disappointed in what he saw as the folks danced all across the front of the historic church.

Kendall is an outstanding biblical expositor who has gone through deep waters at the chapel since he brought in Arthur Blessitt for a month of meetings. Some of his leadership objected to the heavy evangelistic emphasis, but he has weathered the storm and the historic church is now one of London's only active soul-winning stations.

Ireland

Prior to the evening service in Belfast I spent the afternoon driving around the city with my host, Hugh Jervis, pastor with Peter Yarr at the Christian Fellowship Church. It was my first public visit to Belfast and I was eager to get the feel of this troubled city.

In some areas the city was peaceful. Other sections resembled a war zone, showing the results of the bitter hatred which exists between Catholics and Protestants.

Hugh drove us down Falls Road, on the Catholic side, where we saw the police station looking every bit like an armed fortress with high walls and concertina wire. Armored cars manned by police or the hated (by the IRA) English soldiers patrolled the streets. The long, high wall separating Falls Road from Shankhill Road on the Protestant side reminded me of the Berlin Wall. This was Ian Paisley's territory and we drove by his Free Presbyterian Church where so much political activity takes place. It was a time for weeping to be where men kill each other in the name of Jesus.

The latest cause for concern is the Anglo-Irish agreement which gives Southern Ireland, an independent nation with a Catholic majority, a voice in the government of Northern Ireland—a British subject and primarily Protestant. Additional problems have been caused because the United States (so far) has refused to let England extradite Irish terrorists who flee to America to escape prosecution. President Reagan is now putting pressure on Congress to force the Irish sympathizers to allow extradition of Irish terrorists to stand trial. The issues are so complex it is impossible to sort them out. Yet in the midst of this there is evidence of spiritual revival.

Pastor James McConnell at the Belfast Church of God is calling Ulster to prayer. McConnell was planning a huge city-wide evangelistic campaign and his posters were everywhere around the city—calling Belfast to Jesus. Hundreds of people are gathering each morning for early prayer at his church.

That evening I met at the beautiful Christian Fellowship Church at Strandtown in Belfast. The 900-seat auditorium was packed with overflow crowds in the vestibules and sitting all over the platform. Most of those present had read my

books, distributed by Kingsway in the United Kingdom. Moments before I spoke I felt God telling me to change my message and speak on forgiveness, using Mark 11:25 as my base. There is so much to forgive in Belfast—and God cannot use people until they are clear channels.

At the invitation several hundred responded, asking for ministry of inner healing. Many held "aught" against Catholics, against Paisley, against the British, against Americans, against family members who had taken sides. Many were slain in the Spirit as they were set free of bitterness, hate, anger and deep wounds from the past.

Peter Yarr has, in the past, been involved with Charles Simpson in the discipleship movement. He remains friends with Charles (who was to speak in his church last week) but has essentially broken the old discipleship relationship. David Matthews, of Team Spirit, is moving back to Belfast from London and will be a link in the relationship chain between Yarr and his British cousins. It is an exciting time.

Scotland

From Belfast we flew across the Irish Channel to Aberdeen, the third largest city in Scotland. Located on the North Sea, it is the hub of the British oil industry.

It was John Knox who cried, "Give me Scotland or I die." Scotland became his, and the Church of Scotland still dominates the religious scene. Like Knox, however, his church is dead. Its stranglehold on Scotland has almost destroyed the move of the Spirit.

Speaking to 200 ministers of Aberdeen and surrounding areas who came together for a three-hour afternoon meeting at a downtown hotel, God gave me a word from Zechariah 4. I reminded them of Zerubbabel who faced the impossible task of rebuilding the temple. The foundations were solid, even as Scotland's theology is solid, but the rubble of centuries of dead tradition looms as an impossible mountain.

As I looked out over that room full of pastors and wives, many of them leaders of small charismatic fellowships struggling against unbelievable odds, I broke and wept. My gracious hosts, Jim and Val Kincaid, were there. They are typical of what is happening in Scotland. Kincaid, a native of Aberdeen, is a seminary-trained Church of Scotland pastor. After pastoring in local churches he spent eight years in Transvaal, South Africa, as a missionary. But when they returned to Aberdeen to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, they were forced out of the Church of Scotland—losing everything. For more than a year they and their children slept on the floors of people's

houses until a friend provided a home for them. The church had not objected to their charismatic theology, only to the application, as many young people began responding to the signs and wonders and came into the church off the streets. Jim now leads a group of about 100 called Abbey Fellowship which meets at a downtown Catholic church.

Can this mountain of tradition be removed? I asked. As God said to Zerubbabel, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit."

We ministered that afternoon to the pastors and wives, faithful men and women standing against incredible odds. Many came forward asking for prayer, including a number of Americans who have moved to Aberdeen to help their brothers in the task.

From there we went directly to the beautiful downtown Music Hall in Aberdeen. More than 1,000 came. I had been warned the Scots were dour, reserved and stingy. Some, maybe, but once they are touched by the Holy Spirit all that changes. That night we sang a song that is sweeping the Isles—a strong, militant song: "Be bold! Be strong! For the Lord thy God is with you!" The people shouted, danced and worshipped with exuberance.

I spoke on the God of the supernatural—using Mark 4 as my text: "Who is this man?" I built on Knox's emphasis of the dominion of God, but took it a step further: God has given us dominion also.

At the close I gave an invitation, asking any who had never stood and declared the Lordship of Jesus to do so. For more than 30 minutes people stood, some singly, some in pairs, some several at a time, to shout—"JESUS CHRIST IS MY LORD!" More than 200 responded.

I extended the invitation to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Hundreds came forward, clogging the aisles. Those of us on the platform came down and ministered to them personally. The same phenomenon that we saw the night before in Belfast accompanied the ministry in Aberdeen. Many of the people collapsed to the floor—some in groups of four or five—as the Spirit fell on them. They were laughing, crying, shaking and nearly all speaking in tongues.

We could not get the people to leave. Spontaneous dancing and praise broke out as the musicians began to play again. Finally, at 11 p.m., we slipped out leaving them there. Many had driven hundreds of miles from Glasgow and Edinburgh, but no one seemed to want to leave. It was not, as Allen Pavey commented, the typical Scottish meeting.

"Despise not," Zechariah told Zerubbabel, "the day of small things."

My Assessment

Although there is still great division among Christians in the British Isles—even among charismatics—there is a powerful move of God in all camps. The overall spirit in England is anti-God. The media, the world of entertainment and even the government are opposed to God. Outspoken Christians are hard to find in places of leadership. The nation is an economic disaster, brought about by its involvement with the EEC (European Economic Community) and the problems in Northern Ireland. Socialized medicine is a farce and many of the state hospitals are in sad repair. Welfarism is rampant. The churches are sad relics of a former age of spiritual prosperity—sad reminders of a nation which has slipped its spiritual moorings and drifted into the morass of humanism, liberalism and welfarism.

Yet in the midst of this, revival is sparking. At this point it is limited to the House Churches, Pentecostals and a few (very few) evangelicals. However, the Acts '86 festival in Birmingham this summer, keyed by Michael Harper, is helping breathe life back into the Anglican Church. The huge spring festival in April, which draws up to 40,000 young people and family groups, has taken on a strong charismatic flavor and is spreading seeds into the evangelical churches. There is talk of a private TV channel which may go on the air (the four present channels are all state-controlled) allowing Christian programming. Christians are buying books in England as they were in the United States 10 years ago. These are all good signs.

I hope Americans who feel called to the United Kingdom will not come as independents, but will cooperate with the works already established. The situation in Aberdeen is an example of a number of small groups, many started by Americans working independently, where one or two large groups would make a far bigger impact on the city. There is enough division without Americans making further contribution. Now is the time for cooperation between us—and prayer.

CAUTION TO CHURCHES: POLITICAL ENDORSEMENTS DANGEROUS

Now that Pat Robertson looks to be a certain presidential candidate, there is going to be a strong tendency for a number of pastors to endorse (or denounce) him publicly. Use extreme caution. Such statements could bring the IRS into your church.

In May a federal judge in New York fined the Catholic bishops of the United States \$100,000 A DAY until they complied with a court order to hand over internal church

documents to a pro-abortion group which is suing them. The issue: whether the Catholic bishops crossed the boundary between church and state by politicking against abortion and endorsing anti-abortion candidates.

The judge granted that churches have a right to discuss issues, but felt that Catholics had gone too far by supporting or attacking political candidates. Appeals have been filed, but this is just another instance of the determination of the federal agencies to clamp down on church involvement in politics.

This is not new. In 1964 the IRS removed tax-exemption from **Christian Century** magazine for three years because it endorsed Lyndon Johnson for president. While a pastor has the right to endorse personally a candidate for public office, he must not do so from the pulpit, on church stationery or in the church bulletin. The IRS is going to be watching every Christian organization in the nation as we head into the presidential race. Anti-God, they welcome this opportunity to sock it to unsuspecting church leaders. Use your influence, but be wise as serpents when you do.

CHURCH OFFICE COMPUTER SOFTWARE

Ask a computer user about his software and you're liable to wind up listening to hours of computerese lingo that to us normal-talking people is pure gobbledygook. New systems appear every day, it seems. Therefore I have been hesitant even to talk about it—much less recommend anything.

Recently, however, I ran across what seems to be the best system available for ministries today. It is called Alpha Base Church Management System (ABCMS). Over 400 ABCMS systems have been installed nationwide to date—in churches ranging from 500 to 10,000 in size. Evangel Cathedral, in Spartanburg, South Carolina, is using it, and Houston Miles, pastor, says it is the finest thing he's seen.

What will it do? Membership, attendance, contributions, (weekly, quarterly and annual statements), church calendar, visitation, music and book library, all accounting needs, counseling records and a huge Bible verse management system on topic and sub-topic. It can create professional bulletins, newsletters and visitors' letters, and has a great mail merge information system. It is also ideal to use with the church's school program.

I picked up my information from the Southeast representative, a Spirit-filled Christian, by

the way, who is also marketing on a national basis. For full information contact Larry Nordlinger, Box 781, Hendersonville, NC 28739-0781. Telephone: (704) 693-1005.

HELP ON TAX AND LEGAL MATTERS

Looking for a tax and legal consulting service for your non-profit institution? Harvey Watson is a gold mine of information. His Consulting Development Service is located at 3120 Wamath Drive, Charlotte, NC 28210. Telephone: (704) 563-1370. Query him for such things as drawing up charters and constitutions, developing accounting concepts and techniques, filing with the IRS, as well as unscrambling legal and tax questions. Is your non-profit organization properly filed with your state, with the IRS? Are you enjoying the maximum financial benefits you are entitled to as a minister of the gospel? Are you covered adequately by hospital and medical insurance? Do you need help with your will? A letter to Consulting Development Service will provide you with a wealth of information.

MEET ZIONSONG

ZionSong is a division of the International Worship Symposium headed by master worship leader Barry Griffing. They distribute music, tapes and books on praise and worship to local churches. One of their functions is to distribute new worship choruses to churches free of the typical copyright entanglement. Most churches are copying illegally, and publishers charge up to \$25 per chorus for the privilege of making an overhead transparency or slide. Because of a unique contract with composers, ZionSong cuts through that red tape. Music purchased from ZionSong can be copied as much as a church wants as long as it is not for commercial use.

For example: several churches have set words to the music from "Chariots of Fire." While the composer (Vangelis) doesn't mind, the publisher is threatening to sue those who have. Publishers such as Zondervan and Word either do not allow photocopying of their music, or they charge unreasonable fees—most of which goes into the publisher's pocket, not the composer's.

Write Bob Johnson, Box 2388, Melbourne, FL 32902, for a free catalog and information on their worship symposiums. The big one will be held August 5-8 at the Sheraton in Washington, D.C., with several thousand attending.

