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Riverside Evangelical Church. 100 years 1906-2006

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38 pp. (+62 photographs)

One telling set of statistics from Riverside Evangelical Church which demonstrates the recent transformation of Brethren identity is that in 1994 only a quarter of new members in the previous five years had a Brethren background while of the rest, one third had no church background at all and the others were from non-Brethren churches. Riverside is one of the largest congregations with Brethren roots in Britain at present and has been one of the most influential ones in Scotland during the last three decades. The latter has been due to it being an early mover in adopting the innovations which have reshaped British Brethrenism. As such, Riverside has often showcased these changes for other Scottish assemblies.

Riverside began as a schism from the original meeting in Ayr which had been founded in the 1860s. The new congregation stood for openness towards all Christians and developed a lively outreach and witness—proof that, painful though they may be, the long-term effects of schisms can be beneficial. The author of this centenary history is the pastor emeritus of Riverside who has been at the heart of the innovations and it reveals the vision necessary in today's leaders. It displays a clear concept of what the spiritual objectives of the church should be and how these might be advanced through its practices at different times. But the history also evinces a clear sense of how the historical process impacts on church life. Societal alterations have been constant throughout the last century and practices had to be adapted if the spiritual objectives were to be achieved. The central place given in the narrative to the interaction between spiritual aims and society throughout the life-span of the church makes this a model of congregational history writing.

The text is liberally illustrated and the photographs in themselves show the changes of 100 years. But every picture tells a story. More

men are represented in them than women, and this is particularly apparent in the recent leadership. Historical change is constant and its challenges unremitting.

Neil Dickson