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# The Baptist Ministers' Journal

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reflect those of the Editorial Board"

# Editorial

Those who have invested their lives in the service of the Church are understandably sensitive to the charge that the institution in which they work is “irrelevant” to the needs of the worshippers. Sensitive, perhaps, because they suspect there is more than a grain of truth in it. And recently, from various quarters, this charge has been reiterated.

It is a charge, however, that needs unpacking. Because, for some critics, it means that the Church is not equipping and resourcing its members directly for their work in secular society as a computer programmer, merchant banker, or plumber et al. Such people, it is claimed, leave the Church as they came, having been provided with little or no insight into how faith might inform their individual professions. But is it reasonable to expect the average pastor to fulfil this kind of expectation? It may well be better met by finding a slot in over-crowded church programmes for informal “workplace” sessions, in which the pastor is just one resource, and where those deep in the situation learn from and support one another. As pastors we may be out of our depth in this area, but we can make the setting in which insight and understanding may grow.

A much more serious aspect of the “irrelevancy” charge is that which accuses the Church of making little or no difference to the self-understanding of people and their ability to translate faith into life. In other words, Church is a diversion from life’s realities. Such a charge surely haunts the pastor: if only he or she could experience Church as they experience it and sense their deep, unarticulated needs and desperate conflicts. It begs the question, just what is a “good service” or even a “good church”? What criteria should be used? And how should it all be evaluated? In the slow and painful business of forming the people of God, the pastor must surely be a model of self-criticism and honest appraisal, even when he or she, in their vulnerability, is hard pressed to provide any other kind of model.

So what is it like to pastor in the American scene and in the context of a church of some 2,000 members? The average British pastor finds such a scale of things awesome. Brian Harbour shares with us his priorities. The international perspective continues with a report of the E.B.F. Lillehammer Conference, which clearly made a major impact upon Michael Bochenski. Following this, Nigel Wright addresses one of the foundation issues which makes us, as Baptists, what we are: religious liberty. In a paper first presented to the BUGB Council, he wrestles with the tensions.

Books by U.K. Baptist authors are on the increase. This supports Fred Stainthorpe’s conviction that the writing ministry should be developed and exploited more than it is. He provides some helpful guidance. Mark Rudall’s *angst* about the state of much worship today is reflected in our next article. He pleads for a greater wholeness, drawing on the strength and riches of the past. Lastly, we are brought up-to-date with the consultation on Ministerial Stress and Settlement, which the BMF has initiated on your behalf. If you have not, so far, contributed to the great debate, please write in.

# Priorities of an American Pastor

There is a gap between the common perception of the pastor's work and what it actually entails. A friend of mine often teases me with the comment, "It must be nice being a pastor and only having to work one day a week!" That is the perception. The reality is far different. Our work as pastors actually requires not just one day a week but seven days a week. Even then, we have to leave tasks undone and some people's needs un-met.

Our task is similar to the task of packing a suitcase for a long journey. Invariably everything will not fit into the suitcase. Something always seems to be hanging out. Trying to fulfil all our responsibilities as pastors is an equally impossible task. No matter how hard we try, something always seems to be left out.

Choices have to be made and priorities have to be set. Every pastor has to make those choices for himself. Let me share my choices as a pastor of a Baptist church in America.

## Proclamation

Top priority is the *Preaching Role*. The biblical question, "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14) reminds us of the importance of preaching. The fact that on Sunday morning pastors have the opportunity to touch more lives through the sermon than in any other way adds practical support to the biblical motivation.

How much time do we spend in preparation for our sermons? The correct answer is, "All of our time". Every conversation, every relationship, every responsibility is in a sense a part of our preparation for preaching. Pastors are always thinking about a sermon idea or looking for the right illustration. We are preparing for our preaching ministry all the time.

This general preparation, which is going on all the time, feeds into specific times of preparation when we prepare for a specific message to preach at a specific time. In my specific preparation, I usually go through nine steps.

The first step is to select the text. At times a certain verse or paragraph from Scripture captures my mind in my devotional reading and I set aside a time to preach on that passage. Normally, I preach through a book of the Bible. This provides direction and helps me avoid the agonizing decision each week of deciding on a text. I spend time on a book of the Bible, outline a series of messages from that book and then preach them.

Once I have selected my text, I'm ready to do the Bible research. I begin by looking at the words of the text to make sure I understand them. Word study books are helpful at this point. Then I go to the commentaries. Commentaries give me a broader idea of how to deal with the passage. Once I have done the initial Bible research, the meaning and movement of the passage will begin to reveal itself.

The third step is to produce a rough outline. I let the text determine the number of points in my outline. At this point, I write down the key points at the top of several sheets of paper. These pages become my work sheets.

I set aside a special time for prayer at this stage of my preparation. Prayer should saturate the entire process. However, special prayer at this stage is important because I can now pray more specifically about my message and what I want to

accomplish through the message.

At this point, I am ready to begin writing the sermon. I type every sermon out in manuscript on the computer. Even though this takes extra time, I have discovered that putting my message in manuscript form enables me to be more exact in what I want to say. I can more accurately proclaim from the pulpit what the Lord has revealed to me in my time of prayer and study. In addition, the manuscript is available for future use.

While writing the sermon, I try to visualize the congregation to whom I will be preaching this message. At times I've even gone into the sanctuary and thought about different ones who will be sitting in their regular places on Sunday morning. I think of what they are going through and what they need to make it through the next week. This helps me to make concrete and relevant the message from God's Word.

The eighth step is revision. I go through the manuscript with the purpose of cutting, revising and rephrasing it. A famous lawyer once said he reveals in the courtroom only about 20 per cent of the careful study he has done in preparation for the trial. Any more than that, he said, would turn both the judge and jury against him. Preachers need to hear that word. We need to learn to revise and simplify.

The final step is to prepare for delivery. Different suggestions are given at this point. Some suggest it is best to memorize the message. Others declare that we should not memorize the message. My suggestion is for each pastor to find out what works best for him. Whichever procedure of preparation we use, the end result must be what Herschel Hobbs suggested: "After you get hold of the sermon, you need to let the sermon get hold of you." When the sermon has got a hold of us, then we are ready to move to the pulpit and deliver it.

Good preaching demands hard work and continuous commitment. However, seeing lives changed and Christians developed through preaching, makes all the effort worthwhile. Of the many roles pastors are called to fill, none is more important than the preaching role.

## **Leadership**

Another priority is the *Leadership Role*. The biblical challenge of "the equipping of the saints for the work of service" (Eph 4:12) defines the role of the pastor. Pastors are not to do the work of the church as much as to equip the laity to do the work of the church. This equipping ministry includes projecting the vision of the church, providing the congregation which will implement that vision, and preparing the members of the congregation to become involved in the process.

In American churches today, determining a vision for the church and expressing that vision in a mission statement is a vital concern. Researcher George Barna polled several thousand Christian leaders through a survey. He asked about what subject they most wanted to receive information. Barna reports that the topic of greatest interest among these Christian leaders was how they could capture God's vision for their ministry.

The church I pastor in Richardson, Texas, has couched the vision for our church in our mission statement: "Reaching people for Christ, Maturing people in Christ, Mobilizing people through Christ." After we decided on the mission statement, I explained it in a Sunday morning message. Then, for the next three weeks, I reinforced each dimension of the mission statement with specific sermons on

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We will continue to project this vision in a number of ways. The mission statement will be explained to each monthly class of new members. Periodically, the deacons will discuss the mission statement. Weekly staff meetings and quarterly staff planning sessions will provide further opportunities to understand and affirm the mission statement. Part of the pastor's leadership role is to articulate the vision of the church.

Vision has to be channelled through a specific organisational structure in order for that vision to become a reality. Providing the organisation which will make possible the implementation of that vision is also a part of the leadership role of the pastor.

Our organisational structure includes a teamwork of ministers and laity. As a pastor, I give a significant amount of my time and energy to the task of developing and encouraging the staff. We meet every week for planning and relationship building. I assign six books a year for the staff to read and review, which will provide instruction and motivation for leading the ministries of the church. I also spend time with key lay leaders to support them in their leadership roles on committees and within the diaconate. In addition, the lay leadership of the church reads and reviews a book each year that relates to the purpose of the church.

As a pastor, I give leadership to this process. Part of the pastor's leadership role is to provide the organisation that will make it possible for the church to implement the vision.

In addition to projecting the vision and providing the organisation which will make it possible to implement that vision, the pastor must also prompt the members of the congregation to become involved in the process. This is a continuous responsibility which can be carried out through sermons, Bible studies, group meetings, and personal conferences.

The pastor is not to be a dictator. There is only one head of the church and that is Christ. nevertheless, the pastor has a God-given responsibility to provide leadership for the people of God through his vision, his administration and his ministry.

## **Pastoring**

A third priority is the *Pastoral Role*. The pastor is not excluded from Jesus' call to minister "to one of the least of these" (Matt 25:45). Ministering to the people validates a pastor's leadership and it produces in the congregation a greater willingness to listen to the pastor when he preaches.

In a large church, it is impossible to develop a personal relationship with every church member. Likewise, ministering to every need is an insurmountable challenge. nevertheless, it is important for a pastor to minister to the people. I use several strategies.

I carry out a ministry of encouragement and affirmation by writing cards to church members. Every day I write at least one note to a member of the church, assuring him of my prayer, affirming him for something he has done, or encouraging him.

The telephone is an excellent pastoral tool as well. Every day I make a list of church members to call. These contacts by phone are the next best thing to a

personal contact.

I plan lunches and breakfast meetings with groups of church members. The purpose of these meetings around the table may vary. I might put forth an idea about which I want their opinion. I might seek their evaluation on the health of the church. I might simply listen to them as they share something on their heart. Whatever the specific purpose for the gathering, these meetings provide an excellent opportunity for ministry.

On Sunday morning, instead of secluding myself in my study, I go to the sanctuary twenty minutes before the worship service begins. This may be the only chance I have all week to touch the lives of these members in a personal way. I don't want to miss the opportunity.

These strategies do not replace the need for the regular pastoral work at the crises times of death or difficulty, nor do they replace the pastor's responsibility to be available for personal counselling. However, they do supplement these crises ministries and enable the pastor to become more than just a figure or the leader at the front of the congregation.

The preaching role, the leadership role, and the pastoral role are all important to the work of the pastor. Consequently, I have chosen to make them the priorities of my ministry. I regularly evaluate my work to make sure I am keeping the priorities in focus and am maintaining a balance between these sometimes all consuming responsibilities. All in all, there has never been a more exciting and challenging time to be a pastor than in this crucial period when we move toward the end of the twentieth century.

**Brian Harbour**

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# Together We Will Serve the Lord: E.B.F. Conference, Lillehammer 26-31 July, 1994

It is perhaps the sheer scale of Norway that first strikes the visitor. The fjords; the lakes; the mountains and hills; the evergreens; the sky and sea views. Lillehammer, best known as the venue for the 1994 Winter Olympics, is a 2½ hour coach or rail journey from the capital Oslo. Even having arrived you are still only in the 'Midlands' of Norway so to speak. Some 4,000 of us did - arrive that is. Representatives from over 40 different Unions, 46 different countries and, by implication, from over 10,000 Baptist churches. We were there to attend the Congress of the now 45 years old European Baptist Federation (EBF). We were there as representatives from all over the Baptist World Alliance's European Region. Some names will set the scene: Albania; Belarus; Croatia; Serbia; Romania; Czech Republic; Slovak Republic; France; Italy; Lebanon; Israel; England; Scotland; Wales; Kazakhstan. The parade of delegates for the Opening Ceremony, each speaking the Conference theme in their own language, was impressive indeed. Impressive too was the Norwegian organisation, hospitality and the thoughtful programme that made up this Congress, which was based in the buildings so very recently made world famous by the 1994 Winter Olympics. 'We are a renewed Community after the Olympics' said the Mayor in his greeting to us all. I'm not sure he quite meant it in the sense we Baptists would prefer, mind.

## Memorable Highlights

Again and again the theme of the Congress was our Mission in the New Europe. Not surprising really, is it? We were among people quite used to venturing out on missions! Supremely, Vikings, of course, with their quite remarkable seafaring skills a millennium or so ago. How the history of European Christianity, in the plans and purposes of God, was in part forged by those sea journeys is, in itself, a fascinating tale. Then there are the world travelling Trolls, Peer Gynt and all, who have reached into literature and nightmares the world over. This, too, is the country of the Polar Explorer Amundsen and of Thor Heyerdahl of the famous Kon Tiki and Ra reed boat journeys. The Norwegian expedition to the 1994 Football World Cup was less successful, of course, but they saw England out on the way, it pains me to recall.

Pastor Per Midteide, until recently the Norwegian BU General Secretary, reminded us all too vividly of our contemporary Mission. We are but a very small denomination in Europe for all our ubiquitousness: perhaps as little as 0.2 per cent of its total population, we were reminded. 'Our task is enormous', he said, 'as the Christian Faith seems to lose ground in Europe. One of the tests of our identity as Baptists is whether we understand that Christ brings the whole family of Europe together.' He continued: 'God is calling us to serve as bridge-builders between Christians all over Europe.' Denton Lotz, General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, similarly developed the theme of Mission. 'If you are not concerned with Mission overseas you are not concerned with Mission at home' he challenged us. At a time when hundreds of new churches were springing up all over Europe,

alongside hundreds of para-church organisations, Baptists 'have to go where Jesus says', he pleaded. Around 70 people responded to a missionary call after his address.

The Worship at the Congress was a sheer delight. To those of us who have watched David Coffey's worship-leading and leadership skills emerge through Mainstream and Spring Harvest, to the Union, and thus to recent BUGB Assemblies, it was a real joy to see those same skills being honed on a still larger European scale. The Baptist Orchestra. The Music 'Band'. The creative partnership with David Peacock, Paul Lavender, Geoff Twigg and others. The skilful use of CCTV. The live telephone link to Africa. The use of mime artistes and drama. The Black Swedish Choir. The International Children's Choir. The Croatian Choir. The Candle Ceremony. The Ukrainian Choir. The Euro Market with its reminders of the impressive variety of EBF work. The Offerings for Rwanda, for the Scholarship Fund and for the Karen Christians in Thailand. The multi-lingual songbook with translations, inter alia, into Norse and German. The radio receivers linked to linguists in six or seven languages. The patient build-up to the key-note evening address. All were planned and seen through by many people from many countries, of course. Make no mistake, however, the British Baptists were prominent among them and creatively so. God be praised. We remain, of course, the largest Baptist Union in Europe, and it is clear that David is taking this responsibility very seriously indeed. That is so good to see. Let us continue to pray for him.

Two British Baptist Ministers probably deserve a longer mention here. One is John Weaver from Regent's Park College, Oxford, who was the speaker at the EBF equivalent of our own Assembly Ministers' Meeting. His theme was 'Working out Theology in a Pastoral Setting'. He emphasised in particular the growing gulf between our Baptist Churches and unchurched Europeans, drawing on statistics from the world of industry and business and from the breakdown of family life to illustrate his case. It was clear from the comments afterwards that John had hit on the right subject for this gathering of Baptist Pastors. The questions and responses flowed freely, accordingly. It was interesting to realise, incidentally, how unique is the In-Pastorate Training method in Europe.

The other Baptist Minister to be singled out is Ian Coffey of Mutley, Plymouth, who spoke at the Saturday Evening rally. Ian injected some humour into proceedings that had otherwise been sadly lacking in it over the week. Ask him to tell you the one about Elizabeth Taylor's passion sometime! His simple evangelistic address clearly touched a number of hearts as the response afterwards (sensitively encouraged by our 1994-5 BUGB President, Stephen Gaukroger) demonstrated. David, John and Ian, it was good to see you there...and so creatively involved. At which point I now apologise to all the other British Pastors I have not mentioned.

What else can I helpfully share to give a flavour of this quite splendid Congress? The Bible Studies. The Seminars. The Network Groups. The very full restaurant and cafeteria. The T-Shirts and Congress bags (made in Thailand and providing economic security to a whole community for a year as a result!). The exhibitions and the souvenirs. All were important. So, as always at such events, were the countless conversations, great and small, that take place between (and often during) the events and rallies, the studies and seminars. In this way some lasting friendships and partnerships are made. Mine, with the Polish Baptists, began at Budapest in 1989, for example. In closing this report, however, it is perhaps helpful to itemize several issues which occur to me as we continue with the call to be

Baptists serving our One Lord **together** in Europe.

### **Pressing Issues**

(i) Youth: Our Baptist children and young people are very special. Through them the Christian Church in the Europe of the next millennium is being formed NOW.

(ii) Problems: Not all in the garden is rosy after the collapse of Communism. We know that, of course. One Bulgarian pastor told me that he was recently asked the same questions by the police in the 1990's that he was asked by the Communists in the 1980's. Polish Baptists similarly speak of the problems of 'black censorship' replacing the red kind. Think of the clerical shirts if you don't yet understand that.

(iii) Worship: The controversies and tensions, the joys and opportunities of our varied Baptist worship styles are prevalent all over Europe. There is perhaps a little comfort for those of us struggling with this each month in our local British context.

(iv) Media: We Baptists need to learn still more from the professionalism of the communications, the media and of the visual arts that were conspicuously successful at this Congress.

(v) Evangelization: The challenge of evangelism and mission in an increasingly secular Europe is one facing us all as the C21st dawns. New ways of being church remain a desperate need.

(vi) Influence: For all our numerical insignificance, we are the most widespread Protestant denomination in Europe and possibly the world. That fact gives us both unique opportunities as well as responsibilities, not least as bridge-builders.

(vii) Serve Britannia! As explained above, our sheer numerical size in the EBF as British Baptists means that we can continue to be key players for Christ in the EBF of now and the next century. I very much hope that we will rise to this.

(viii) Language: English is likely to remain a key language in Europe for a long while yet, not least because of its usefulness in the worlds of business and popular music, film and culture. English (or American!) is increasingly *the* second language all over Europe. The Empire may have died but the language lives on. Again, this has considerable Mission implications for us all.

(ix) All Europeans now: In a Europe increasingly characterised by, for example, Euro News, Euro Sport, and by a growing sense of a new continent in the forging, we must, as British Baptists, culture much more of a sense of being European. Wherever you minister, British sister or brother Pastor, you too are (probably) in Europe! The broader perspective this can bring us can be enormously liberating.

(x) 1999: The next Congress will be in 1999, probably in Eastern Europe. Start saving now to be there. It will be worth it.

**Michael I. Bochenski**

# The Theology of Religious Liberty

On 7 December 1965, the Roman Catholic Church, acting through the Second Vatican Council, declared that “the human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that all **persons** should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and every human power so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in associations with others”. This freedom is “based on the very dignity of the human person as known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself....Religious freedom must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of society as will make it a civil right”.<sup>1</sup> With this declaration the Roman Church departed, against some opposition, from its ancient policies which asserted both that “error has no rights”<sup>2</sup> and that it is the duty of governments to uphold and support the true church and its teachings against alternatives. It is unfortunately the case that the Christian Church was “the first teacher of the totalitarian State at nearly every point”<sup>3</sup>. But a position which once was a heresy, and then a civil disability, has now become the standard orthodoxy.

Welcome though the Vatican II’s decision was, it could hardly be described as a prophetic action: Article 18 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights had long since anticipated it.<sup>4</sup> That prophetic honour must rather be given to those of our own forebears who, beginning with Balthasar Hübmaier<sup>5</sup> in the 1520’s and continuing with Thomas Helwys, Leonard Busher and John Murton<sup>6</sup> in the following century, came to a series of truly revolutionary conclusions:

- (1) That faith is not true faith unless it is free faith.
- (2) That faith is a gift from God which is given by grace through election.
- (3) That the divine election implies a composite society in which not all believe, since there are those whom God has called into the church and those he has not, or not yet, called.
- (4) That it is blasphemy when rulers attempt to do what God refuses to do, namely to coerce faith and to compel conformity.
- (5) That the assignment of earthly governments, therefore, does not include the sacral sphere but is limited to the secular, to maintenance of peace and of good order.
- (6) That earthly governments, because they are fallen, cannot make alliances with religion without exceeding their own mandate on the one hand and corrupting true religion for political purposes on the other.
- (7) That a clear distinction between the orders of church and state therefore becomes necessary, the disestablishment of religion.
- (8) That consequently, and crucially, the task of government includes both the maintenance of liberty for the gospel and, necessarily because of the nature of that gospel, liberty without penalty for its opponents and dissenters.<sup>7</sup> Everybody agrees there should be liberty for their version of the truth. The real revolution comes with the freedom “for everyone to go to hell in their own way”.

This is our tradition and conviction. But in its light I wish to raise some contemporary issues which have the effect of updating it.

## Versions of Tolerance

The word “tolerance” is not unambiguous. I want to suggest that tolerance has at least two versions, distinguished by Jürgen Moltmann as “sceptical tolerance” and “productive tolerance”.<sup>8</sup> The first is rooted in scepticism concerning ultimate truth: nobody is right so everybody must be tolerated. The second is founded upon a confidence concerning truth: the truth is strong enough to look after itself in free debate and so does not need to be imposed. But sceptical tolerance disguises an intolerant absolutism in its fundamental premise, namely that nobody is right. On this basis religious claims to truth are marginalised and those who question the fundamental premise labelled as fundamentalist. It also contains the seeds of its own contradiction since the claim that nobody is right cannot, by its own logic, be right.

## The Challenge of Secularism

The real religion of our society is secularism, consequently the transcendent is excluded from the public realm. This is where the phrase “the separation of church and state”, beloved of our tradition, runs into some difficulties and why it may be preferable to use the term “the disestablishment of religion”.<sup>9</sup> Separation of church and state can be used to imply, and has so been used in the USA, that religious values should be excluded from public discourse, reserved entirely for the private realm as personal opinions. The public square is, supposedly, left naked. Yet the public square never can be naked.<sup>10</sup> It is always determined by some value system. And to exclude religious conviction from the public arena is itself to intrude a private conviction into that arena. It should not surprise us if the Christian Church comes into conflict with state religion and ideology, which is unofficially, but increasingly officially, secularism, and arguably could be called paganism.

## The Need for a Narrative

What the Christian Church contributes above all else is not an ideology to be imposed but a story to be told within which human beings and their communities are invited to make sense of their existence. The Church makes sense of its own life by means of that story and offers it to the world as a better story than any other story precisely because it is true.<sup>11</sup> It cannot be proven to be true until the end and so cannot be prematurely imposed on any; but where received it will make sense. The crisis of our culture is (a) that the stories by which it is attempting to live are inadequate to provide the context of meaning which moral behaviour requires and (b) that the multiplicity of those stories makes it increasingly difficult to arrive at the consensus of values that society requires to avoid falling apart.<sup>12</sup> Politics is in danger of becoming civil war carried on by other means.

## The Role of the “Neutral” State

The way in which in our tradition we remember and tell the Christian narrative leads us to a secular state. Here I am using the word “secular” in a good sense as distinct from “sacral” or “sacred”. It is part of this world and of this age and nothing more nor less. I wish to argue that the state should be neutral not in the sense of value-neutral, which is impossible, but imbued with the value of **impartiality**. A referee in a sporting match is properly neutral towards the contestants but not neutral concerning the rules. This is of primary concern to the issue of religious liberty: the impartial and just administration of justice and of social welfare without fear or favour towards any.

## The Areas of Clarity and those of Uncertainty

Religious liberty is not something we have or don't have. It is a fragile and delicate civil order that has to be guarded and nurtured and is not without ambiguities. In what sense ought a David Koresh or a Jim Jones be granted religious liberty? Beyond what boundaries might a society need to protect itself from religious deviants or enthusiasts? At what point might religious convictions concerning, for instance, the responsibility of parents, the role of women or the acceptability or otherwise of homosexual behaviour, begin to conflict with the secularist assumptions and possibly legislation of a society? And would it really matter? The answers are not clear but need to be kept under constant review. Perhaps we need a more permanent commission on religious liberty than we currently possess in our denominational structures. But we can declare that certain rights are more absolute than others: freedom of conscience, freedom of religious expression and freedom for religious action being paramount.

## Conclusion: Why the Issue is as Important as Ever

We are living in a day when the countries of Eastern Europe are experiencing a resurgence of religious nationalism which is placing the liberties of minorities under threat. The religious factor in political and international conflicts, previously easily overlooked by those trained in the schools of secular analysis, is being newly recognised.<sup>13</sup> Now, as before, religious liberty remains the foundation of all other liberties.<sup>14</sup> And those who struggle for it serve humanity well.

Nigel Wright

Footnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> "Declaration on Religious Liberty" (*Dignitatis Humanae*) in A. Flannery (Ed) **Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents** (Dublin; Dominican Publications, 1975) p.800
- <sup>2</sup> M. Novak **The Open Council: Vatican II Act II** (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964) pp 256-258, pp 275-282.
- <sup>3</sup> E. Brunner **Justice and the Social Order** (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945), p57
- <sup>4</sup> "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes a freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance".
- <sup>5</sup> "On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them" in H.W. Pipkin and J.H. Yoder (Eds) **Balthasar Hübmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism** (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1989) pp58-66
- <sup>6</sup> Authors respectively of **The Mystery of Iniquity** (1612), **Religion's Peace** (1614) and **Persecution for Religion, Judg'd and Condemn'd** (1615): H.L. McBeth (Ed) **A Sourcebook For Baptist Heritage** (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990) pp70-76
- <sup>7</sup> Hübmaier: "To burn heretics appears to be confessing Christ (Titus 1:6), but indeed it is to deny him and is to be more abominable than Jehoiakim, the king of Judah (Jer 36)": Pipkin & Yoder (Eds) op cit p. 64. Helwys: "Let them be heretikes, Turks, Jewes, or whatsoever, it apperteynes not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure": McBeth (Ed) op cit p72. Murton: "But all men must let God alone with his right, which is to be lord and law-giver to the soul, and not command obedience for God where he commandeth none...": McBeth op cit p76
- <sup>8</sup> **The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology** (London: SCM Press, 1977) pp156-159
- <sup>9</sup> J.P. Wogaman **Christian Perspectives on Politics** (London, SCM Press, 1988) p195
- <sup>10</sup> Cf R.J. Neuhaus **The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America** (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1984 and 1988)

- <sup>11</sup> J. Milbank **Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason** (Oxford, Blackwell, 1990) p330
- <sup>12</sup> Cf A. MacIntyre **After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory** (London: Duckworth, 1981 and 1985)
- <sup>13</sup> S.P. Harrington "Im Kampf der Kulturen" **Die Zeit** Nr 33 13 August 1993 p 3; P. Marshall **Thine is the Kingdom: A Biblical Perspective on the Nature of Government and Politics Today** (Basingstoke; Marshalls, 1984) pp116-118
- <sup>14</sup> E. Brunner, op cit, p57

see also:

- E.W. Gaustad: "Religious Liberty: Baptists and Some Fine Distinctions" **American Baptist Quarterly** Vol 6 no 4 (December, 1987) pp215-225
- C.G. Goen "Remembering Who We Are: Some Baptist Perspectives on Church-State Issues". **American Baptist Quarterly** Vol 10 No 4 (December, 1991) pp280-287
- W.K. Jordan **The Development of Religious Toleration in England** (London; Allen and Unwin, 1936)
- I.M. Randall "Early English Baptists and Religious Liberty: Freedom to Deviate from Prevailing Orthodoxy" **Anabaptism Today** Issue 4 (October 1993) pp10-16

## Holidays 1995

### **Seacot, 31 Preston Parade, Seasalter, Whitstable, Kent**

Fully-furnished, well-equipped detached bungalow, facing sea, available as it has been for 13 years, for holidays for Ministers and Missionaries and their families, and accompanying friends, by arrangement. It is offered on advantageous terms as a ministry - that is, £52 a week for families, inclusive of central heating, hot water, and lighting. There are no extras. No meters.

Lounge, dining area, modern kitchen, bathroom, south-facing conservatory, large secluded rear garden. Can sleep up to six. Plenty of parking. Five miles from Canterbury, and good centre for the whole of Kent.

Bookings are from Thursday to Thursday, and the following dates are still available for 1995: 20-27 April; 4-11 May; 18-25 May; 1-15 June; 29 June - 13 July; 31 August-14 September; 28 September-26 October. Details from or applications to, Sydney Clark, High Meadows, Fernfield Lane, Hawkinge, Folkestone, Kent CT18 7AW. SAE please. Tel: Folkestone (01303) 892580

### **Mid-Wales Cottage**

R.S. Thomas country. "Inglenook" village cottage, south of Dolgellau, near Snowdonia. By babbling brook, not far from sand and sea. TV. Sleeps 6/7. Tuesday to Tuesday bookings. £99 per week for those in ministry. Mrs D.F. Abraham-Williams, 13 Millbrook Road, Dinas Powys, South Glamorgan, CF64 4BZ. Tel 01222 - 515884

# The Minister's Pen: Mightier Than His Word?

Surely not. Did not Jesus condemn the scribes? For some of us the pen has little importance. We breathe a sigh of relief when we have finished the monthly editorial for our church magazine. After all, preachers are ordained to the ministry of the word and the sacrament. We should look people in the face. The spoken word makes an immediate impression on a congregation. It instructs them, rouses their imagination and feelings, may prick their conscience and lead them to commitment. What else do we need? Jesus never wrote a book.

## Reasons to Write

The pen may seem to compensate for our personal deficiencies. A long time ago people were saying about Paul, "His letters are weighty and powerful but when he appears he has no presence and as a speaker he is beneath contempt. (2 Cor 10:10) The person who fails in the pulpit may shine at the desk, where he can polish his words and where no one can come back at him.

Yet all ministers need to learn how to write clearly. Many of us still have to produce a monthly article for the church magazine. We must write official and personal letters in the course of our duties. The impression which strangers gain of a church may depend on the clarity with which its representatives write. So a course in these matters might not come amiss in the pastoral section of ministerial training.

The discipline of writing essays and then sermons, helps people to order their thoughts clearly. "Writing maketh an exact man", said Francis Bacon, and many preachers could say "Amen" to this. We should aspire to present the Gospel decently and in order and writing helps us to do this. The sermons recorded in Acts all show pattern and progression. So should ours. Here the pen, typewriter or word-processor can be our ally.

These considerations apply to all ministers. Some of us, however, are called on to go the second mile. The pen can become an extension of our ministry into the wider church circle or society in general.

It would be interesting to do some research into the writing ministry. How and why did people begin it? For some it may have been an inner impulse, akin perhaps to what we call "inspiration". For others it may have come through a friend's suggestion. "Why don't you write this down?" has sometimes been a mustard seed in a person's life. For others it may have been, like greatness, thrust upon them. They were obliged to write something and in the process they discovered a gift waiting to be developed. We may observe an incident or pass through a certain experience and they become the trigger. God is not stereotyped in His approach.

## Ways and Means

Budding writers have a number of openings. The religious press is always looking for "copy". So, too, in many ways, are the local and national secular papers. One soon learns the technique of sending off neatly typed, double-spaced manuscripts complete with stamped, addressed envelopes for return.

Satisfaction comes in stages. The first lies in seeing the completed manuscript



and posting it off. Hope runs high. We then need to supplement it with patience when the response does not come immediately. Sometimes recipients take months, sometimes years, to print accepted material. Sadly, some of them do not always acknowledge its receipt. This increases the writer's anxiety. Has it been lost in the post? If he rings them up will this make them more or less likely to accept it?

Eventually one receives a reply. The thickness of the envelope gives the game away. Every rejected manuscript deals a body blow and casts a gloom over the day. Every acceptance raises one's spirits unaccountably high. Dancing and merriment begin! One then enters the "arrabon" stage (Eph 1:4), waiting for the fulfilment of the pledge when the printed article arrives. If it is accompanied by a cheque, this helps to pay the bills. If it is not one can always say, "Well, I am doing it for the Lord!"

Either way there comes the satisfaction of knowing that one's personal ministry has expanded. God has enabled some words of instruction, testimony or challenge to reach other people. Who can tell what their ultimate effect may be? Occasionally, one receives a letter of thanks and this is encouraging. If not, one has still cast one's bread upon the waters. Sometimes people write to express their disagreement. This is also good. It helps to sharpen one's mind and remain humble. It may even alter one's own opinion. none of us is infallible.

At first we probably feel more at home with the religious press. They are looking for the type of material we can offer them. The secular press is somewhat different. Our writing must gain acceptance on their terms, not ours. It must be relevant to everyday life, topical, written in plain English and of reasonable length. We must be ruthless in trimming superfluous words. However, most local newspapers, including the free ones, are generally ready to accept suitable material even if, at first, it is only an account of some interesting event at our church. They are usually glad to make one's acquaintance and personal contact makes it easier to submit further material.

A few select souls reach the level of the national press where their influence can be more widespread. One can but admire them from afar and pray for their success.

At first it may be difficult to find subjects to write about, but this becomes easier. My wife, who is an artist, used to point out to me interesting shapes, buildings etc, from which she could make pictures. After a while I began to notice them too, although I could never translate them on to canvas. In the same way we can "sensitise" our minds and ideas come more readily and at any time. It was while I was doing the washing-up that I thought up this title!

Writing can never replace the spoken word: speaking is intensive, writing extensive. Preaching may reach a few people but writing can touch the lives of many more. The Apostles' letters have gone where their words never reached. We cannot ask the preacher to repeat himself but we can always refer again to the printed page and in this way it can have an enduring effect. So we should encourage budding authors. Each generation needs its own apologists, song-writers and journalists. The pen may not be mightier than the word but it can become a useful arrow for our quiver.

**Fred Stainthorpe**

**THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY PLC  
1 MERCHANT STREET  
LONDON E3 4LY  
Telephone No. 081-980-9411**

**To the Readers of the Baptist Ministers' Journal**

As I mentioned in my first article, I have been dealing with all an ever increasing pace. Also it is a year when Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) was introduced by the Chancellor, a tax, currently at a rate of 2.5%, on all General Insurance premiums to be paid by Policyholders. Effectively this has increased your insurance costs by the amount of the tax.

1994 is also the year in which Baptist Insurance Company PLC became a member of the Insurance Ombudsman Bureau (IOB). The IOB was founded in 1981 and provides an independent and impartial method of resolving disputes between insurers and individual Policyholders.

As part of our overall commitment to good customer relations I decided we should join this Bureau and make its facilities available for the benefit of our individual Policyholders. There is no charge to you for the Ombudsman's services, or for any experts he consults.

While preparing this article, a Church Secretary telephoned to discuss damage to a Church caused by thieves which had proved to be very expensive, particularly for the Church as the appropriate insurance cover had not been arranged. Our Church Combined Policy does make provision for insurance against damage to the building caused by thieves at a very competitive premium but it is necessary for this cover to be selected. Whatever insurances you have with us it would be worth checking to see whether this cover is included and if not, asking whoever is responsible at your Church for insurances to contact us immediately with instructions to arrange the cover. This could save your Church having to meet an expensive loss out of its own funds.

Yours in His Service

T. E. Mattholie

# Worship, History and the Whole Measure of Christ

This piece of writing set out to be the crisply reasoned and finely measured distillation of months of careful research into the history of Baptist worship. I felt a need to regain my roots having decided, on entering the critical fifth decade, that I'm in danger of becoming a Victor Meldrew-like curmudgeon, a miserable prematurely-old buffer who only rarely finds worship particularly uplifting. I want to ask why that should be the case in these vibrant days of Willow Creek seeker-friendly services and Toronto blessings.

Of course the reality is that what I have finally committed to paper is probably neither particularly well reasoned or finely measured. But it is a cry from the heart, and not just my own -for my current itinerant ministry for an evangelical aid and relief agency takes me right across the evangelical denominations and New Church streams, and has shown me that my feelings may well be shared by others.

## The Roots of Unease

The fact that I do not particularly enjoy worship is more than simply a matter of personal taste and "what I grew up with". Music is the sticking point for many people, and is indeed a central part of worship. I should admit at the outset that I enjoy it in many forms if it is well presented, but like many people I rapidly get bored with one style or one narrow set of musical idioms, be they traditional or modern. A child of my generation, I love to play double-bass or guitar in a church music group whenever I get the chance - which is surely sufficient proof that I have no objection to contemporary hymnody be it from 'Songs and Hymns of Fellowship' or 'Baptist Praise and Worship', provided it is well-conceived.

There has, therefore, to be much more to any analysis of the shortcomings of contemporary worship than merely *angst* about music and the ever narrowing traditional hymn repertoires of the average Baptist congregation. Having said that, the narrowing of the repertoire is a reality we need to acknowledge as Torquay musician David Peacock has in the production of his innovative 'Hymns for the People'. For me, the reality is marked to the extent that I now very rarely venture to choose hymns for churches I visit. I may suggest one, maybe two, but any more than that usually results in an intake of breath at the end of the phone. "Ah!..I don't think many of our people will know that one".

The main reason for feeling that I often endure worship and come out wondering if the whole exercise was worth the trouble, is probably centred on the issue of whether or not the worship I have experienced conveys any sense of the continuum of history and the structures of worship that have developed through the ministry of thoughtful people over 2000 years of church history.

Perhaps my feelings came to a head when a church at which I was due to be the morning preacher contacted me to ask if I'd like to lead the whole service... "*or our guitarist has said he'd be happy to throw something together*"

The questions I ask myself after sitting through much contemporary worship raises questions like the following:

\*When the breathless worship leader is delivering an agonising plea to the Almighty laden with 'justs' and 'just reallys' at the beginning of the service, is he

aware that he is making an intercession? Does he realise it might be more appropriate to be expressing the praise of the people at this point in the service?

\*Would this leader of worship know a prayer of invocation if one popped up and pecked him on the cheek?

\*Where was the sense of confession - or the space for making one - before this jocular Communion?

\*If there are (hollow laugh) structured intercessions at some point in the service, do they veriture outside the church walls beyond Mr Adams's broken pelvis and David's grandma's hysterectomy?

\*Is God's world being remembered so that we can identify with Christians elsewhere whose lives are more difficult than ours, and does the vision of the suffering Church in some distant place take us back vividly to Christ suffering on the cross - but before His triumph on Easter Day?

### **A Cry for Historical Touchstones**

The trend in some quarters of the Church towards populism and accessibility to our present non-book culture is one I would espouse myself - but with the caveat that we don't ignore the rich history of Christian worship - for this same trend which we hope will open up the Kingdom to our generation also threatens to impoverish worship for future generations.

Seeking some kind of secular parable I thought of the newly furbished Crown Jewels Exhibition in the Tower of London which shows, as far as possible, something of the breadth of the whole royal treasure as it has come together from way back in history. However, if the Tower were to advertise their Crown Jewels Exhibition but only show visitors a selection of contemporary tiaras worn by the Princess of Wales and the Duchess York, alongside the flat cap worn by Prince Charles while fly-fishing in the Highlands, it would not be the whole picture of the rich jewelled heritage of the House of Windsor. It would be a grossly inadequate portrayal devoid of roots and ancient grace.

I believe there is a real danger that it is precisely this kind of aspect of the Cchurch that many Baptist and other Christian churches are presenting to a public hungry for the fuller picture of the grace of God in Christ.

I sat recently beside the gaunt rain-soaked ruins of Llantony Abbey in the Welsh Marches, reflecting on the haunting plainsong that must have once resounded down its echoing cloisters. I thought too of the monks with their rhythmic life of prayer and meditation, broken for a few hours here and there by work on illuminated manuscripts or a little therapeutic woodwork. Theirs was a form of Christianity which was not mine, but there are elements in it to inform my experience of Christ and my worship of him.

On top of a hill near Wotton-under-Edge is a tower I once climbed as a child. It commemorates the Bible translation work of William Tyndale. How he paid for it! But what a legacy he left from his discipline as a translator and his vibrant belief in the effectiveness of the Bible in the lives of ordinary people.

In Broad Street, Oxford, there is a granite cross set in the road to mark the place where Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer were burnt at the stake for their Protestant beliefs. I look at it and thank God for the stunningly beautiful prayer book heritage from those days that no bonfire can ever take away.

I recall too that it was a postcard from Bedford's Bunyan Meeting House,

portraying this early Baptist in prison for his faith, that enlivened the Beirut hostage, Terry Waite, during his years of captivity. Bunyan's highly visual and picturesque English is increasingly alien for the average reader today, but his colourful images continue to inspire our theologians as recent pages in this journal have shown.

Christians of the calibre of these are rarities, but of course it is not epic Christianity that I seek: simply an honest continuum of history with the kinds of Christian faith that shaped some of the great traditions and Christians of the past.

Most significantly, I would stress that while leading others in worship, those at the front have a duty to inspire their fellow worshippers to look upwards and outwards towards God who is Almighty and who often calls his people to big visions.

However, to do that demands an active theology of worship. It demands an awareness of the broader Kingdom of God; it demands a lot of preparation, much of it on the minister's knees.

I would hate to think that the great believers of the past who agonised through difficult ministries, and sometimes even more difficult deaths in the name of Christ, did it all in vain. But to see, so often, in our churches the hamfisted reinvention of the worship wheel without any real theology to undergird it, is very painful indeed.

The testimonies of the great cloud of witnesses are there to guide us. What they experienced, learned, wrote and recorded for us could, I believe, help today's Church move off the shifting sands of contemporaneity, lift it up and restore to many individuals, me among them, the regular joy of being in the Lord's presence.

**Mark Rudall**

## **Secretary of the BMF**

Nominations are invited for the post of Secretary to the B.M.F., having a proposer, seconder and the signed permission of the one being nominated. Nominations need to be sent to the present Secretary, Vic Sumner, to arrive no later than Saturday 25th February 1995. The final selection is made by the Committee by ballot. A job description is available on receiving a SAE.

# Ministerial Stress and Settlement: Update

The Baptist Ministers' Fellowship Committee have asked us to write an update for the Fellowship on what has happened since the publication in the April issue of *The Journal* of our consultation paper on Ministerial Stress and Settlement. The short answer is a good deal!

Over twenty people, usually Ministers, wrote to us, sometimes with very detailed replies. In addition, others spoke to us privately or, as you will know, wrote in the pages of the *Baptist Times*. Each letter or reply received was acknowledged together with the request that, where appropriate, names might be used. A summary document of the many views expressed was then compiled and shared first with the Committee and then with the Senior Management Team (SMT) of BUGB. A helpful, and at times frank, exchange of views took place at a meeting held in Didcot on 29th September. Representing the BMFC were: Alison Fuller, Vic Sumner, Jim Clarke, Stuart Jenkins, Philip Clements-Jewery, Michael Bochenski, Hazel Sherman, Pat Took, Jack Ramsbottom and Ian Furlong. Representing the SMT were: David Coffey, Keith Jones, Malcolm Goodspeed, Derek Tidball, David Nixon and Philip Putnam.

David Coffey suggested that this should become an annual event in future - something we were very pleased about. We were also encouraged by the SMT to take soundings as to the kind of body our membership wish us to be, recognizing the changing role of the Committee over recent years. Do we want to become a Professional Association? Or an informal but increasingly pro-active pressure group? Or should we limit our activities to, for example, organising the Assembly Pastoral Session, Benevolent Fund, sharing pastoral care and information and publishing *The Journal*? We will be addressing exactly these issues in Committee over 1995, and will again be inviting responses on this from our membership.

What else can we helpfully share in this update? We also received the following 'official' replies together with the assurance that the matters raised in the yellow paper would receive attention, where appropriate, in the various committees or organisations concerned: Peter Manson for the Superintendents' Board and for the Joint Colleges' Consultative Committee; Douglas Sparkes for the Superintendency Review Group; Malcolm Goodspeed for the Ministry Executive who assured us that 'all the matters in the numbered paragraphs in the yellow insert are before the Management Team and Senior Management Team of the Union in some form or other' and continued: 'we are beavering away quietly, perhaps too slowly for some, on these issues in the hope that we can bring some good from our action'. In addition, Phillip Cooke had met with us at our March Committee Meeting to hear our concerns about greater flexibility in retirement packages. As many will know, he has since instituted a survey to explore the feasibility of this among Pension Scheme members.

In addition to these replies and responses the *Baptist Times* in its issue of 26th May reproduced in full our consultation document. The resulting correspondence has continued almost ever since. These writings have been in the public domain, of course, so we only list them here. We should record also, here, that in our meeting with the SMT, Malcolm Goodspeed pointed out to us that there were

sometimes other sides to some of these stories.

- \* Editorial (26/5/94) 'Misery in the Manse' 'But if the initiative by the BMFC does nothing more than alert local churches to the need to pay more attention to the needs of their minister (and it is to be hoped that it achieves much more than that), it will have been worth it'.
- \* Dan Weller's sad story of poverty and non-provision. Stephen Henwood's sorrow and anger at this and Phillip Cooke's reply. More recently (10/94) George Hand and David Rose have also had a letter published in the BT speaking of a 'disgrace that we seem to be prepared to see men and women who have served the denomination with devotion having to rely on very inadequate state benefits in order to stay alive'.
- \* Colin Johnson's experiences of 'waiting by the phone for the call that never came' as he sought to settle.
- \* Peter Lorkin on Walter Bottoms's effective strategy advocating Ministers in their 50's and Walter's own reminiscences!
- \* Jim Pollard on making ends meet on the Pension, or trying to, and Eddie Pilling assuring us that in his case it was so far so good!
- \* 'On the scrap heap by 50?' - by name and address supplied.
- \* Donald Clarke similarly told something of his story through the BT Letters page. Dr David Woodbridge replied saying that similar things are happening to other professions too in our society.
- \* Stuart Jenkins joined the fray with a letter contrasting, inter alia, the professionalism of school appointments, and their objectivity, with the way our settlement system operates in practice.
- \* The story of another Minister, name and address supplied, who is both over 50 and divorced, and who has been contacted by a prospective church only once in two years.
- \* Richard Hearn advocating NOT a centralised system for the payment of stipends but a central bureau service to help those churches who struggle with such matters.
- \* Also in August three anonymous letters were - unusually - published together in the BT. Two of them shared more frustration and pain, this time about the inadequate financial support that many Ministers experience and the concomitant stress. The third put a contrary view reminding us that many other Church families struggle to make ends meet as well.

In addition, the BT, to whom we owe a considerable debt of gratitude, have also continued the debate we initiated with several articles: Bryan Gilbert on 'Stress - what causes it, how to cope with it and how to avoid it'; Michael Bray and Tony Noles on the varied use of the BU Scheme for Pastoral Care and Counselling of Ministers and their spouses (this article was also reproduced in the October '94 *Journal*) and Mike Sheppard's fine tongue-in-cheek article on 'Putting a price on Ministry'.

## Summary

It is almost impossible, in a short article like this, to do justice to so wide a range of responses. The numbers used refer to the sections of the consultation paper. This brief response was agreed at a special meeting of the BMFC held in November 1994.

1. Retirement age flexibility. This is under active consideration as we write.

2. Ministers in their 50's. There is general agreement that this is an area where more education is needed in our churches but we note that some Ministers can no longer cope as well in their 50's (for example with Team Ministry) and that others are too 'choosy'.
3. Ministerial Support and Appraisal. Malcolm Goodspeed's insights into this issue and his informed response to our 'lobby' is most encouraging for the future, we felt. We look forward very much to the publication of these proposals in due time.
4. The Settlement System. This has become the province of the Superintendency Review Group.
5. The Colleges. This is felt to be the least satisfactory section of the paper, whilst containing issues that do need to be addressed as we move towards 2000.
6. Settlement of women who are Ministers. Many feel there is now a need for 'token' gestures such as the one we proposed. Few of us expect significant changes to result from it, however. An apologia for the role of women in Ministry is overdue in our Union. The last such debate, we understand, was back in 1926!
7. Education. Agreed by almost all of us to be a neglected area, not least at local church level where Ministry is concerned.
8. The Baptist Ministers' Fellowship Committee. The need for more mutual listening and sharing of views with the SMT is recognized, and the suggestion of an annual meeting offers us one helpful way forward here. We are grateful for it.

Finally, we pledge to keep these ongoing issues on our agendas and those of others, and to continue to monitor progress and action on them where we can.

**Michael Bochenski and Alison Fuller**

**For, and on behalf of, the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship Committee.**

## **Does your number one supporter need a refresher?**

The next bi-annual BMMWF conference is to be held at Swanwick conference centre, Derbyshire, from Monday afternoon September 18 to Wednesday lunchtime September 20 1995.

Targeting wives of Baptist ministers and missionaries, these conferences regularly prove to be a source of refreshment and challenge providing an opportunity to meet others in ministry.

The main sessions will be led by Tony and Jennifer Rees-Larcombe on the theme of 'Freedom and Freshness'. Also taking part will be Roy and Shirley Searle of the Northumbria Community.

The varied programme will include focus groups looking at topics such as leading a small group, the practice of intercession, HIV/AIDS awareness, and the pre-school years. There will also be time for relaxation and recreation with groups offering keep fit, art work, music-making and other activities.

The conference fee is £55. Further details and booking forms are available from Marian Rudall, 20 Glyn Avenue, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 7AH



# Book Reviews

## ***Promise or Pretence? - A Christian's Guide to Sexual Morals* by A.E. Harvey (SCM, 1994, 144pp, £7.95)**

Anthony Harvey's book on "*relationships in which sex is an important component*" (preface) left me with feelings of frustration and appreciation! Frustration - because the book is inappropriately sub-titled. This book is not primarily aimed at a general "Christian" readership, but targeted at *Church of England Priests*. Harvey is preoccupied with a battle for reform in his own denomination. Accordingly the discussion is at times unhelpfully restricted. Two-thirds of the book is given over to marshalling arguments from Biblical exposition, the history of Christian doctrine, and one or two schools of philosophical thought, to support Harvey's chosen stance on questions relating to sex and his proposals for revised praxis in the Church of England. Given Harvey's "liberal/progressive" views, there are no surprises in this book, and in spite of 13 pages of scholarly exposition of the most relevant teaching of Jesus and Paul, I cannot see this book persuading anyone to adopt a different attitude. Nonetheless, this book is simple, easy to read English, and in only 144 pages, considers questions which time and again are raised in Baptist and ecumenical ministers' meetings, and offers a wealth of supportive evidence for positive attitudes and honest action on the part of Christians towards people involved in divorce, re-marriage, living together and/or having sexual intercourse outside of marriage, family life and homosexuality. Harvey says in his Preface, "*My object has not been to cover the ground exhaustively*", and suggests readers might feel the need to turn to his 1990 *Strenuous Commands - The Ethic of Jesus*. I certainly sensed throughout this book that I was reading a short-hand account of Harvey's thinking. For me this was less than satisfying; but it could be extremely useful for busy ministers and short ministers' meetings.

**Ted Hale**

## ***Enjoying The Gospel of John* by R.E.O. White (The Bible Reading Fellowship, 1993, 159pp, £4.99)**

This is an excellent study. It has the depth of thought, perceptive insight and clarity of expression I always associate with White's work. This study of John includes six chapters of Introduction and six on exegesis and exposition, with suggestions for group discussions at the end of the last six chapters, which makes it a useful tool for the busy pastor. The minister who has this book, plus the author's earlier *Matthew Lays it on the Line*, *St Luke's case for Christianity*, and *Meet St Paul*, will be well equipped for years of Sundays and Bible Studies. But, be prepared, he makes you think deeply, and will set you many a challenge.

He brings to this study what he brings to all his work - balanced scholarship, intellectual strenuousness and a mature spiritual insight. In addition, we all benefit from six decades of accumulated knowledge and vision for, as his Introduction states: "The following pages attempt to glean only what is positive, clear, illuminating and rewarding from years of pondering possible interpretations, weighing varied arguments, and comparing rival theories."

Such an approach to John is essential. It is clearly so different from the other Gospels and the difference from the intellectual level, if not from the spiritual, needs

responding to if one is to be honest with one's faith and concerned to maintain a rational integrity.

Although the numbers of chapters given to Introduction and exposition are the same, the numbers of pages are not. Only a quarter is devoted to Introduction and the rest to examining the contents of the Gospel, and this is the right balance. Familiar ground is covered; but each time some fresh and mature insight is offered.

For those who love St John's Gospel, here is a feast and, at £4.99, a real bargain! I have only one caveat and that hesitancy is due to the fact that White does not seem able to escape completely from his earlier strong conservative evangelical background. He clearly accepts much that modern historical criticism says about John and the problems the Gospel presents, but then backtracks and takes a more conservative stance. But this is a minuscule criticism that most Baptists will dismiss as a personal bias. Certainly the last thing I want to do is to detract from anyone reading this first class study of John. My appreciation of the author's intellectual and expositional gifts is unlimited and this book amply justifies and confirms that conclusion.

**George Neal**

***He Won Them for Christ* by Eric Hayden**

**(Christian Focus Publications, 1993, 128pp, £3.99)**

***The Spurgeon Family* by Eric Hayden**

**(Pilgrim Publications, 1993, 64pp, £1.25)**

In an age when friendship evangelism is so much commended in our culture, it is good that the art of soul winning might be stressed. Eric Hayden's book *He Won Them For Christ, 30 Conversions under Spurgeon's Ministry*, is therefore not only a heart warming historic study of people converted under the ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon during his two years at Waterbeach in Cambridgeshire and his 38 years at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, but also represents a relevant exhortation to effective evangelism today.

Hayden was brought up in a Spurgeonic home. His parents and grandparents has close connections with Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle and the Stockwell Orphanage. He, himself, had served, during one of his seven pastorates, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and Hayden's life-long interest in Spurgeon has resulted in many lectures and a number of books. This one is easy reading and will profit every ordinary Christian, as well as stimulate ministers in the area of evangelistic preaching and personal evangelism.

One of Spurgeon's biographers, W.Y. Fullerton, commented, "He was ever seeking such pearls", referring to something which Spurgeon himself said on any occasion when he was told that God had saved a soul through his ministry: "I feel like a diver who had been brought down to the depths of the sea and brought up a rare pearl". In his preaching Spurgeon regularly gave testimony to his own conversion in 1850. He preached a sermon from Proverbs 11:30 on the subject of soul winning. He commended the theme to pastoral students at Spurgeon's College in his *Lectures to my Students*. Like General William Booth of the Salvation Army whose watchword was "go for souls", and the American evangelist, D.L. Moody, who used to pray daily that he might win souls, Spurgeon wanted to have a converting ministry.

Each of the stories is told in a heart-warming way, having been gleaned from various Spurgeon literature. The chapters begin with a scripture reference and end with a prayer, so the book can be used devotionally. There is an indication that people were converted, not only through hearing Spurgeon preach, but through personal conversation with him and through reading his literature. His influence was world-wide. Men and women, able and disabled, young and old, respectable and down at heel are all represented here. The book covers 128 pages and is original both in its content and presentation. Spurgeon was primarily a pastor evangelist and the book, therefore, represents what was the highpoint of his ministry.

The companion volume, *The Spurgeon Family*, is altogether a different publication, 64 larger pages displayed on poorer quality paper, but yet containing another original compilation of data. Details are given of those parents and grandparents who influenced Spurgeon in his early years since he spent a great deal of time at his grandparents' home where the Calvinistic conversation and Puritan books did so much to shape his own religious life and theological position. Also the influential ministry of his wife Susie, who was a member of the Park Street Chapel congregation when Spurgeon became the minister and whom she married two years later. She was dogged by ill health for most of their married life but played an immensely important part through the gift of hospitality and through the provision of a book fund which was an early form of in-service training for ministers. Their twin boys were baptised together in 1874 by Charles Brock, the minister of Bloomsbury Baptist Church, and both followed their father into the pastoral ministry. The influential associate ministry of his brother and those who have continued the Spurgeonic legacy as direct descendant members of the family, give an indication over a period of many centuries of how this family tree has developed.

These combined works not only make us grateful for the influence of Christian families and point us in an important direction as far as priority in ministry is concerned, but they help us to appreciate again that becoming a follower of Jesus is not simply a question of feeling, which is so often how it is expressed in our modern day, but it has a definite content. Although the language of Spurgeon's historic works is now necessarily archaic, the content reminds us of great reformed truths.

We owe Eric Hayden a debt for books that are devotionally, strategically and spiritually helpful, easy to read and original in their content.

**Mike Nicholls**

***The English Baptists of the 19th Century* by J.H.Y. Briggs (Baptist Historical Society, 1994, 432pp, paperback £15.00, hardback £20.00)**

This is the third volume in a series of four on the history of the English Baptists, originally planned by Dr E.A. Payne, and brought to fruition under the editorship of Dr Barrie White and now Dr Roger Hayden. Each volume covers a specific century, though obviously there can be no clear-cut divisions - this volume picking up themes and issues from the previous centuries and in some matters running into the 20th century.

We owe Dr Briggs a great debt for the meticulous scholarship, which, indeed, we would expect of him, the wealth of information imparted, and the conclusions so often drawn. Besides the introduction and postscript and full index, Dr Briggs offers

us ten chapters dealing thematically with the century. Whilst this is extremely helpful, it does of necessity result in a certain amount of repetition. The chapters cover Congregational Life & Worship; Baptism & Communion; Ministry & Ministerial Training: General & Particular; Faith & Thought; Associations, Alliances & the Wider Church; Numbers, Class & Gender; Mission & Evangelism; Baptists & Education; and Society & Politics. With such a wide range of subjects, clearly each reader will be attracted to particular chapters.

The present reviewer found the chapter on Ministry of particular interest, with many current issues shown to be not unique to our generation. More statistics would have been helpful here, as elsewhere, but I found of great relevance a comparison of ministerial stipends: thus, while we are told that the 1873 Baptist Handbook quotes £75 p.a. as the average English stipend, William Brock of Bloomsbury in 1861 was receiving £700 p.a. and Stowell Brown of Liverpool £900 p.a. - twice the stipend on which the reviewer began his ministry!

Another issue especially relevant today dealt with here, is that of Evangelicalism: it is sometimes suggested that the Denomination is today moving towards a more evangelical stance, as if it were alien to our Baptist position. It is, therefore, interesting to read on p219 that when, in 1872, the B.U. revised its Constitution and omitted references to the "Evangelical Sentiment" the reason was "not because it was under challenge, but because it was so widely and comprehensively accepted by the body that its statement seemed unnecessary".

We are grateful to the first three authors in this series: we eagerly anticipate Dr Morris West's judgement on our Baptist life this century!

**Jim Clarke**

(Copies are available from The Treasurer, The Baptist Historical Society, 28 Dowthorpe Hill, Earls Barton, Northampton NN6 0PB)

### **Radical Church Planting by Roger Ellis and Roger Mitchell (Crossway, 1992, 224pp, £6.50)**

This book is about radical church as well as about the how and why of planting churches. It provides a challenging insight into the values of two of the newer streams in the British church (Ichthus and Revelation), before discussing various models of church planting, and then moving on to the nuts and bolts of getting the job done.

There is much excellent material on "Kingdom priorities" in the lives of individual Christians and the church. Disciples need to be developed, trained and mobilised - in the expectation that God's activity will be encountered often: "...the Kingdom is God's Holy Spirit activity" (p15). It comes as no surprise to find a chapter on Spiritual Warfare early on and, while some of the approach is contentious, there is a healthy recognition of the need to resist the enemy on all fronts. Also debatable is the rather overstated insistence in the chapter entitled "Practical Theology" on the rest of Scripture being interpreted in the light of the Gospels.

The practical material is earthed in experience (though it is a little confusing at times not to know which Roger is writing, as illustrations jump from South London to the South coast!). There is excellent stuff on team building, training potential leaders and releasing resources for church planting. The chapter "Nine Steps to Planting a Church" is invaluable.

To my disappointment, the additional chapter by Roger Forster turned out to be

a reprint of his pamphlet "Models of Church Planting". Sandy Millar contributes an appendix based on his experiences at Holy Trinity Brompton which seeks to relate the theme to the Anglican church.

As someone closely involved in church-planting, I am delighted to have come across this readable and lively book which nicely complements others in the field.

Derek Allan

***Britain on the Brink ed Martyn Eden (Crossway, 1993, 160pp, £4.99)***

This is a book which scratches where the church itches; or at least where it ought to be itching!

It aims to explore and examine trends in society over the past decade, to consider how these trends will further shape society, and how the Church might respond to the changes we will encounter.

This is a book that informs. Sir Fred Catherwood's article on Britain in Europe is clearly written by someone who knows what he is talking about. Contributions from Joel Edwards and Pradip Sudra are written by members from within their respective communities, rather than simply about them.

It is a book that disturbs. The chapters on Religious Liberty and Youth Culture might prove somewhat unsettling.

It is a book that challenges. As one who wrestles with the tensions of engaging in both pastoral ministry and political activism, I found the chapter by the editor on Domestic Politics to be both stimulating and inspiring.

As with any collection of essays, produced by various writers, the book has a variety of styles, some of which will not be to everyone's taste, but all of which are clear, concise and easy to read.

It is possible to become quite despondent whilst reading the book. The demise of many values Christians would consider important, and the rise of many influences we would consider unhelpful, are clearly stated. However, underneath this mire, the authors find and lead us towards firm ground of hope.

It is a hope that is based on a challenge to become aware, and to use that awareness to become active in a world that desperately needs positive influences from God's people. The book calls not for encouragement from the touch-line, but for an involvement on the pitch.

This is a book that exhorts. The introduction informs us that "The aim of this collection of short essays is to stimulate thought, prayer, discussion, and, sooner or later, appropriate action." It deserves to succeed.

**Philip Igoe**

***Jesus Christ for Today's World by Jürgen Moltmann***  
**(SCM, 1994, 160pp, £6.95)**

Having often found books translated from German difficult to read and having only ever dipped into Moltmann, I wondered how I would cope with this latest work of his. I need not have worried: I read it eagerly and with profit. It tackles many questions to do with God's love as shown in Jesus, and opens up ways for us to find our own answers, as we are given examples of how to bring a true imagination to the Gospel story.

It begins with a personal reminiscence which indicates how Moltmann's emphasis on hope arises from his own experience. Given that reading the details of Christ's life can be so redemptive; he wonders why the Creeds leave us to read them only between their lines.

Looking at the parables of Jesus, Moltmann can define the Kingdom of God as "the wide space in which we can unfold and develop". His insights enable him to put the life of the individual Christian and the ministry of the Church into proper perspective. He gives the Kingdom priority.

There is here a rigorous concern to show the relevance of Jesus of Nazareth for the modern world. Moltmann operates a "See, Judge, Act" policy. He offers an explanation of how it must be that God suffers; he faces the anxiety of Jesus as expressed in the Cry of Dereliction as that which can help us overcome our anxieties; he deals with the continuing issue of torture; he treats imaginatively of the risen Christ and the cosmic Christ; he is able to place the Jewish rejection of Jesus in a positive context.

Moltmann declares that our task is not the dissemination of Christianity as it now is but the participation with others in the new creation of all things that God has made possible through Jesus Christ. This book is a disturbing and enriching experience.

**Michael Sheen**

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