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# The Baptist Ministers' Journal

editor: GETHIN ABRAHAM-WILLIAMS

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'The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board'

# EDITORIAL

## Much for their comfort

It was four years ago that I went to SOWETO - named after the initial two letters of the words: SOuth WESt TOWnships, some twenty miles outside Johannesburg.

It came into existence when the thriving black community of Sophiatown was broken up and bulldozed by the minority South African government to make way for the new white suburb of *Triumpf*, which Trevor Huddleston called 'that disgusting expression of satisfaction at having destroyed the homes of African people'. The story formed the background to Huddleston's moving book, *Naught For Your Comfort* (1956), which had such a profound impact world wide. 'If there was one person in the world who pricked the world's conscience about apartheid,' Desmond Tutu, former Archbishop of Cape Town, recalls, 'it was Trevor Huddleston'.

With Huddleston's death in April, at the ripe age of 84. the whole Church has lost a leader of immense moral authority and Christian dynamism. I recall a visit he made, bare feet in sandals and simple habit, to a Local Ecumenical Parish with Baptist involvement in Milton Keynes in the 80s, and the remarkable sermon he preached on that occasion. I tried to get a copy of it afterwards for publication. A little note from Mirfield a few days later apologised, 'I don't use a script, I preach from notes'.

Trevor Huddleston was one of those bishops who, though an Anglican, belongs to us all. He had a truly ecumenical spirit in its widest possible meaning. For him mission really was to do with the *oikoumene* - the whole inhabited earth.

Dr George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, described him as 'a man of simple lifestyle and a tireless compassionate advocate for the poor and marginalised.' It is perhaps appropriate, therefore, that the first article in this issue after his death should be one that explores and develops the same monastic background that shaped and moulded Huddleston but which is a gift and a resource for every part of the Body of Christ.

**G.A.W.**

*A biography of Huddleston by Robin Denniston is to be published in the autumn.*

# BAPTISTS IN THE MONASTIC TRADITION

**MARGARET JARMAN CPP, President of the Baptist Union, 1987, and onetime, organising secretary, Deaconess Department.**

Soon after Easter 1997 a Baptist religious community came to birth. Never heard of that before? Neither had we, but we believe God is asking us as Baptists to live that sort of life. The idea had been around for some time, especially among the Baptist Union Retreat Group (BURG). Evelyn Pritty, who was secretary at Lindsay Park, Harrow, first had a call in the autumn of 1989, at which time it was made clear that this was for a future date when her elderly parents were no longer dependent on her. That same year her mother died followed by her father in May 1996, eleven months before the Community came into being. I had been supporting her sense that it was time to go ahead. Then in the summer of 1996 I started getting nudges that I should not just encourage but join in founding such a community. Since I had already retired, was physically limited by ME and had a mother of 93, it seemed unlikely. However, I eventually got the message that God meant it. Then all sorts of things started coming together for us without human initiative or planning, confirming that it was God's time to launch out.

The Anglican Benedictine community at Burford Priory are providing oversight, so we found a place in Carterton four miles away where we can spend a couple of years or so receiving formation and discerning how God wants the project worked out. The house has room for a chapel, library, office and the usual domestic arrangements. In the chapel we have five prayer times ("offices") a day, using "Celebrating Common Prayer" for four of them, and an informal style for the fifth. We find that this provides the framework for each day and gives a sense of stability, holding together all the questions, discussion and new experiences. For communion, as well as receiving it at Burford Baptist and at the Priory, we hold our own service at the supper table, usually on a Thursday evening. Personal prayer time is a priority in the timetable too, aiming for two hours a day. Then there is studying, household chores, gardening, administration, etc. This makes up a rhythm of prayer and work which has become basic to our life.

To help our focusing on God in all things, silence is kept from Night Prayer until after breakfast, and then there is a lesser silence when we talk only as necessary until lunch time. Meals are in silence too.

## **Need for a larger Property**

The oversight given by Brother Stuart, Prior of Burford Priory, is invaluable. Most weeks there is a session with him to discuss various aspects of this way of life. The link with the Priory is reinforced by attending a Eucharist and a Vespers each week, and joining the community for occasional lectures and other events.

Our sort of community usually has an official "Visitor", someone involved in the wider life of the denomination, and we are pleased that Keith Jones, has taken on that role. He acts as a reference point, to be consulted and to ensure that there is a proper interplay between the "religious" tradition and that of our Baptist inheritance.

Our particular contribution to the denomination is twofold: firstly a ministry of prayer, with intercession forming part of our daily pattern; and secondly providing resources for individuals in their walk with God. At present this latter part is restricted by the demands of our formation and by the limited facilities of the house. A few people come for spiritual direction or for Quiet Days, but this side is something which we shall be developing as soon as it becomes possible. There seems to be a pressing need for communities of prayer within our own tradition, into whose life guests can slot for a few days of quiet reflection, rest or retreat.

As Baptists the local church is important for us and we appreciate the fellowship at Burford into which we have been warmly welcomed as members. A new lay pastor started soon after our arrival and we are appreciating his ministry, while for their part the fellowship appreciate our prayer ministry and presence among them.

As for our links with other communities, as well as Burford Priory, at regular intervals I continue to visit St. Mary's Community in Wantage and Evelyn goes to the Anglican Franciscans at Freeland for spiritual direction. We have been welcomed into the network of religious communities and have attended a Prayer Day, two Novices Conferences and various Novices Study Days. We have joined the National Association of Christian Communities and Networks (NACCAN) and Evelyn has been to their Conference.

Our hope is that there may be both further members joining us and a larger building available to accommodate this group and to provide facilities for guests. It's a case of the chicken and the egg. We should like more members to expand the community life into which guests can be welcomed and to provide the personnel to care for them. But we shall also need a larger building in a suitable setting to allow for this development. Whether God will send the members and the property at the same time we cannot tell. Finance comes into it too, for we need more income to support more members, and taking guests would help with this, but for that we need a larger property and we do not know how that will be funded.

### **Evangelical and Catholic**

It will not be a retreat house whose residential staff live as a community, but a community committed to a certain way of life centred on prayer, open to welcome others as guests. The religious life is a way of living out the Christian vocation in God's family, a way of life which is valid in itself, but which overflows into service of others, - in our case, the receiving of guests. That is why it is important that we spend time as "novices", preparing ourselves, coming to terms with what community living means, exploring our own journeys, and at the same time discerning just what sort of community God wants us to be.

The area we are constantly exploring and for which, as far as we know, there is no precedent, is the interface between the Baptist tradition and the religious life. We do not intend becoming carbon-copies of Anglican or Roman Catholic nuns and yet we do find great resources in that inheritance. It is one that goes back long before the Reformation to the early centuries of the Church. When Christianity was becoming effete some Christians went into the desert to seek a return to a more radical Gospel. Centuries later, in England, Henry VIII suppressed the monasteries for not altogether altruistic reasons. The rediscovery of the religious/monastic tradition in this country by Roman Catholics, and then 150 years ago by the Church of England means that the

only images we have of this way of life are RC and C of E. But we do not see why this should necessarily be so. Indeed, those early monks were behaving as the “non-conformists” of their time.

Pre-Reformation Church History is part of OUR inheritance too. We are free to draw on whatever strands of it are helpful, so there is no reason why the religious life should be the exclusive possession of the catholic wing of the church. This more radical strand can be brought back into the non-conformist churches too.

In fact A.M. Allchin, in “The Silent Rebellion”, has shown that the revival of the Anglican religious communities was the outcome of the Evangelical and Catholic Movements taken together. The Evangelical Movement gave the spirit and the Catholic Movement the form for that revival.

In the last decade many of the “soul care” practices retained in use in other traditions have been rediscovered by evangelicals in general and by Baptists in particular. Old wells are being reopened. Retreats, spiritual direction, anointing, fasting, offices, meditation on Scripture and various ways of praying have all been transposed into settings where Baptists are at home. Similarly we see this Baptist religious community as giving Baptist expression to the religious life.

### **Blue Denim Garments with Cowls**

Many of the details are not yet clear to us. We believe the best way to discern the pattern is to listen together to what God says as we live the life, as we wrestle with the details of community living, as we engage in community and personal prayer, as we listen to the Scriptures, as we discuss with our brothers and sisters in other communities and relate their experience to our own situation.

One of the questions that is always with us is when to adopt the nomenclature of traditional religious life and when to look for alternatives. The very word “religious” has a different connotation in our neck of the woods, as in “he is religious but not really Christian”! Yet “the religious life” is a long-standing description understood by the majority of the Church. How about “monastic” and “monks and nuns”? Probably these convey the meaning better in common parlance, hence the use of “monastic” in the title of this article, yet among “religious” communities the word “monastic” refers to those who are rather more enclosed than we are. But there is no non-conformist alternative, so we use either, depending on circumstances and to whom we are talking.

We have taken on the title of “Sister” since that has good Baptist associations from the days of deaconesses. In fact I have come full circle from Sister Margaret (deaconess) to Sister Margaret (nun). (It is quite possible that there will be brothers too.) However, we usually use simply Christian names. We have chosen to call ourselves the Community of the Prince of Peace, so when we need to define which community we belong to we follow the religious custom and add CPP to our names.

Our Version of a habit is a blue denim hip length garment with cowl, worn over ordinary clothes. This makes a statement about our place in the religious tradition but also about our flexible approach to it. One of the first things we decided was that we would not wear veils! Our habits were given to us in a Clothing Service in June 1997, at the point when we became novices. It was a Baptist service including communion, held in Burford Priory Chapel, and led by Keith Jones with Stuart preaching. Others taking part represented the Association, the BU Retreat Group, and our home churches.

## Steep Learning Curve

The service also marked the launching of what is, as far as we know, the first non-conformist religious community in this country, though there have been - and are - other types of community. As Keith Jones wrote in the BU Retreat Group Bulletin (Autumn 1997) "The Anabaptists experimented with intentional Christian communities. Some of these developments persisted in part of the Anabaptist movement and we see them today in our cousins, the Hutterites, and Amish and in parts of the Mennonite family". On the continent, especially in Germany, Baptist deaconesses form communities wearing habit-like uniforms, and being mainly involved in nursing. There are also a number of Baptists who have felt a vocation to the religious life and, finding no such Baptist community, have journeyed to other traditions and joined their communities; other Baptists are to be found in ecumenical communities.

Community life has good authority in "holding all things in common", but it is no soft option. Too often it is seen idealistically as all peace and beautiful Christian fellowship. It is indeed a supportive environment, but it is a school for spiritual growth, and as such there is much turning over, raking out, and pruning involved. Living at close quarters with those you have not chosen highlights one's prejudices, foibles and self-centredness. This is a blessed part of the journey, since it is all material through which God can deal with us, reducing our ego, moulding us a little more to the likeness of Christ and preparing us for that union with him on which our hearts are set. But mutual hurts are inevitable and mutual forgiveness a daily task. In our case there are two women who have each lived on their own and run their own homes for 37 and 24 years respectively, so in the early days the learning curve was very steep!

What will the future hold? We do not know. We can only respond to the call of God as we believe it to be. But the first steps seem to be confirmed by circumstances and by the supportive response others are making to the venture.

We trust that those of our tradition who sense a possible drawing to this way of life will hear that there is an opening to be Baptists in the monastic tradition. Please join us in praying for wise discernment of the way ahead and for faith to follow where God leads.

*For further information contact Margaret or Evelyn at 1 Magdalen Place Carterton, Oxon OX18 3EP. Tel 01993 846699.*

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## PASSING THOUGHTS

'Nobody said on their deathbed that they'd wished they'd spent more time at the office.'

- passed on to Dr Phil Hammond and quoted in the *Radio Times*, March 1998.



'By the year 2010 there will be more step families than birth families in Britain.'

- from the flyleaf of *Other People's Children* by Joanna Trollope.

# WHOM SHALL WE SEND?

**ALASTAIR CAMPBELL**, Missions and New Testament Tutor, Spurgeon's College, London.

When the Council of the Baptist Union agreed to provide national recognition to those whose primary vocational calling is to evangelism or church planting within a Baptist context; the reasons put forward were:

- Some churches are already appointing evangelists to their staff.
- Such evangelists need to be recognised, trained, commended for settlement and given the same security as ministers.
- The present accreditation process does not always serve them well since it tends to focus on teaching and pastoral gifts to the disadvantage of evangelists.
- As a result individuals are prevented from finding fulfilment in the exercise of the gift they have been given, and the church loses the benefit of a gift that God has given and of which it stands in great need at the present time.

The problem with this apparently compelling argument is that such a recognition process will lead to and perpetuate exactly the kind of stereotyping we are all keen to avoid. I have sat on enough selection panels to know that there is a widespread stereotype of the evangelist as a rather brash character, better at getting things going than in caring for people, better at starting things than finishing them, a ready talker rather than a deep thinker, in a word, a pastor without manners. By contrast, the pastor is seen as sensitive, diplomatic and thoughtful, but perhaps rather lacking in sparkle, incurably locked into maintenance rather than mission. That this is grossly unfair both to most evangelists and most pastors is beside the point. The stereotypes persist and exercise a baleful influence both in the minds of selection committees who, confronted with a cheerful but not very bright candidate will avail themselves of the new category of evangelist to save themselves the painful duty of saying 'No' to someone they do not think up to the job of being a 'real' minister, and also in the minds of the sort of candidate, who mistakes impatience with the local church and a disinclination to study, for a call to be an evangelist! This is disastrous both for evangelism and for the life and growth of the church. We cannot afford to encourage evangelism that is not sensitive to people and committed to the congregation; nor can we afford pastors who are not committed to making Christ known and leading their people (as Jo Grimmond once said of the Liberal Party) 'towards the sound of gunfire'.

## **Scapegoat**

What is an evangelist? A document issued by the Mission Department of the Baptist Union offers this definition. 'Evangelists are those whose primary gift and calling is to make Christ known on the frontiers between church and society.' The goal is magnificent, but the picture it conjures up is misleading for a number of reasons.

In the first place, the task of 'making Christ known on the frontiers' is many tasks, in fact as many tasks as there are churches and frontiers. Since different kinds of people will be required in each of these different situations, this doesn't tell us much about what an evangelist is. Secondly, the task of making Christ known in any one



situation requires not one gift but a wide-range of gifts, in fact any or all of those, which the same document goes on to mention: preaching, personal evangelism, apologetics, and music. No one will have all of these, of course, but equally no one (at least no one who is thinking of being a full-time paid Christian worker) will be able to get away with using just one of them. Thirdly, if we take the Great Commission seriously, we might well conclude that making Christ known on the frontiers of church and society is the calling of all ministers, ultimately of all Christians.

Do we want ministers who do not see this as their calling? Can we afford to define pastoring the flock so narrowly that it consists only of caring for those we already have and maintaining the life of the institution? Yet in fact this sort of thinking about evangelists may actually encourage ministers to hold back from evangelism on the grounds that it is a specialist calling, a gift they happen not to have been given. Many of us feel frustrated and guilty at our failure to 'make Christ known on the frontiers', and the evangelist may provide us with just the scapegoat we need. Either the absent evangelist will provide the perfect excuse for our failure, or, if we are lucky enough to find an evangelist, the blame for our continued lack of success will be heaped gratefully on his or her head (as sometimes on the minister now).

Rather than asking, What is an evangelist? we should ask instead, Whom shall we send and who will go for us? We should then expect to answer as the church at Antioch were led to answer (Acts 13:1-3) by sending the best men and women we have. Different situations and tasks will call for different talents and personalities, of course, but anyone who is to make Christ known on the frontiers, who can credibly represent Christ and His church in a new area, and who is to plant and nurture a church from scratch will surely need everything an accredited minister will need, and probably more beside.

## Professional

In the terms in which we at Spurgeon's College have come to appraise potential ministers he/she will need to score highly in the three areas: 'character', 'knowledge'

### **BAPTIST MINISTERS' FELLOWSHIP**

#### MISSION STATEMENT

The BMF exists to express pastoral care and to exhibit proactive concern. The BMF is independent of the Baptist Union, the BMS or Association structures. The BMF seeks to express pastoral care:

- by encouraging prayer for each other
- by being alert to pastoral needs
- by giving financial gifts from its benevolent fund
- by maintaining links through correspondence with e.g. retired ministers and those active overseas
- by helping to inform and encourage members through *The Journal* and the Ministers' Session

The BMF seeks to exhibit proactive concern:

- by raising, considering and organising appropriate responses to current issues as they apply to members and ministry
- by representing the views and concerns of members to the officers of the Baptist Union and other bodies as appropriate

The BMF is open to those in pastoral charge of Baptist Churches whether or not they are accredited; to retired Ministers; to Baptist Ministers serving overseas; to all BMS personnel and to Baptist Ministers in other forms of work. Those in training for the Baptist Ministry are welcomed as student members.

and 'skills'. There is no room in this work for people with unstable characters or low interpersonal skills. There is no skill that a minister needs that an evangelist would not also need, whether we think of the ability to communicate, to organise, or to listen, comfort or confront. The evangelist must not only know the whole counsel of God, she/he may need to translate it into the idiom and thought patterns of a different culture or sub-culture, and how can we trust them to do that unless they have a sound grasp of Christian theology in the first place? It may be good to have evangelists who can gain an audience for the gospel by using the skills of an entertainer, but if we are to make any serious impact we shall need them also to think, and indeed to out-think the children of this generation. It is my impression that the missionary societies have known all this for years. They know that a missionary is not a special kind of person but a person sent to do a particular job in a tough place, and they would not dream of sending overseas someone who is not thought to be up to the job at home. We are fond of saying that the work of mission is one, whether at home or overseas, yet we persist in using distinct vocabulary for those who evangelise at home and those who do so abroad. Perhaps this is something that the missionary societies can teach the home churches?

We may all agree that evangelists exist and that evangelists are needed, but the question before the denomination is, *Should we accredit evangelists as ministers?* For that is what accreditation means in this context. The church exists as an institution within society, and by setting aside and paying its leaders it creates, whether we like to think of it in this way or not, a professional body. Every such institution and professional body needs to be able to say whom it commends on the basis of appropriate training and selection and who is entitled to speak for it, or practise with its blessing. Such accreditation is a matter of convenience and good practice rather than anything directly sanctioned by Scripture. It is a human requirement, but such human requirements are not necessarily oppressive (though they can become so)

### **Straight Jacket**

So we accredit certain people and not others. What do we accredit them as? Historically we have called them 'ministers', and this is still the best general word for an accredited Christian leader. Some may object to it on the ground that every Christian is supposed to be a minister, but this I think is to confuse the issue and rob us of a good word that we need for a specific purpose. Every Christian may have a ministry, but not every Christian can be called a minister without creating needless confusion in the minds (not least) of the watching world. Otherwise we shall simply have to find another word for our leaders. In recent years many of our ministers have preferred to be known as 'Pastor', but this too is unhelpful. 'Pastor' cannot be substituted for 'minister' without inevitably giving the impression that pastoring is of the essence of the minister's work whereas evangelist is not. Yet on the contrary, ministers may sometimes need to be told to do the work of a pastor, as they need to be told to do the work of an evangelist.

So we accredit certain people as ministers. Which people exactly? Those who have been tested (1 Tim 3:13) in respect of their character, skills and knowledge, and who are thus worthy to be entrusted with this ministry by the churches. It is no part of the argument of this article that evangelism should be restricted to those in pastoral charge of churches, nor that evangelism may only be channelled through the existing churches. Plainly we may need to find ways to break out of the straitjacket of local church life, and develop imaginative ways of spreading the gospel in places and to

groups that churches cannot at present reach. All I wish to contend is that those, who lead such work, will need to be able and well-equipped ministers of the Word and of the churches, and that to assign this task to those who are not trained at least up to the standard of an accredited minister and who might not be accepted as such if they applied is no way to go about it. There is no basis for requiring a lower standard of character, skill or knowledge in those who are going to do the hardest tasks.

Those who are going to plant churches need to be at least as good pastors as those who carry them forward. Those who are to explain the gospel to the unchurched need to be at least as well-read and well-taught as those who preach to believers. The medical analogy may serve us well here: as an obstetrician is a doctor who has specialised in obstetrics, so an evangelist might be seen as a minister who has gone on to specialise in evangelism. If then the denomination wants to create a list of evangelists, it should not be a parallel list to the list of ministers, since that, as we have said, will simply lead to its being seen as a list of the less able, when the opposite is what is needed. Rather we should have a list within a list, showing those ministers who have by exceptional ability and additional training qualified as evangelists. The conclusion to which this study leads is that *we should not so much accredit evangelists as ministers, as that we should accredit some ministers, more ministers, the best ministers - as evangelists.*

Note:- I would like to acknowledge the help of my colleague, Dr. Stuart Murray, who read this article in various drafts and made many helpful comments, although he is in no way responsible for the opinions expressed in it or its defects.

# CORRYMEELA

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# DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

## A MINISTER WRITES

I had been getting steadily worse for some months. The fatigue was increasing, the anxiety was rising rapidly. The simplest jobs were taking longer and longer to complete, I felt my tolerance level decreasing by the day. And why was I so angry with everyone? I couldn't sleep, except for a few fitful hours each night. I burst into tears at the slightest thing. I couldn't think straight. I grew increasingly frustrated. I was in a new pastorate so I wanted to make an impression but however hard I worked, however much I put into each day, the work just piled up until it threatened to overwhelm me. My whole world was on the verge of imminent collapse.

I was eventually persuaded to meet with a counsellor. He lived nearly one hundred miles away so we met at a Motorway service station one lunch time. We talked for an hour or so as I tried to explain what I was going through. At the end of the meeting the counsellor said by way of summary that he had rarely seen a case like mine! I was obviously under great stress and if I didn't take action and do something about my condition he couldn't see me lasting more than a year in my job. I was bowled over by this diagnosis. I thought I was just "tired". Or it was a "mid-life crisis" I was passing through. I told myself that all I needed was a Sabbatical. A few weeks away from the routine would see me well and truly back to my old self. But first I promised to visit my G.P. It was an eye opener. I told him all I had told the counsellor. Fortunately my G.P. is a doctor who listens to his patients and is a committed Christian. Having heard what I had to say he put one stark question to me, "Had I ever thought of committing suicide?" I think it was at that point I realised that my illness, for that's what it was, was more serious than I had thought. Clinical depression was diagnosed. I had not thought of ending it all but the origin of the black thoughts, the overwhelming feeling of melancholy and the bleakness of my life, all of which had steadily grown worse over the previous year, were obviously rooted in the depression. The doctor reassured me that I wasn't going mad and that there was a cure.

### Disappointing

So I set off to find a cure. After a short course of sleeping tablets to help restore my sleeping pattern I was put on anti-depressants. Over the next few months the medication seemed to hold the depression at bay. But as time went by, I found myself slipping into the abyss again. The medication was changed. I even tried Prozac! But progress was slow. After a year or so it became obvious to all concerned, including the church, that I was not getting any better. The Deacons offered me four months sick leave on full pay, which I greatly appreciated and readily accepted.

Once again I thought this would do the trick. I decided to learn as much as I could about depression and seek help wherever it was on offer. I was religious in taking the tablets - by this time I was on Lofepamine. I attended workshops and seminars on the affliction. I spent a week on a Dealing with Depression residential course in which several parts of my psyche were looked at, and I enjoyed the acting and miming. I was even introduced to art therapy. I was relieved when the end of the week came but I felt I had benefited from the course. My wife and I got "away from it all" by enjoying a week in Guernsey and a fortnight walking the Lakeland Fells. Sympathetic friends sent me

books to read. People offered to pray for me on a regular basis and to pray with me if I thought it would help. I went away on retreat to a beautiful centre on the Scottish Borders. I agreed to see a psychiatrist on a regular basis. I left no stone unturned in my search for healing but the result was disappointing. As the end of the sick leave drew near it became apparent that I was not fit enough to return to work. In fact, the doctor would not countenance it and signed me off for another two months. And another two month spell was to follow. As I write I am working out my nine months notice from the church but have no idea what I shall be doing when that has run its course.

### **Struggle**

What have been the effects on me as an individual and a minister? What have I learnt? The depression is very deep rooted. Its effects are felt with varying degrees of severity - there are good days and there are bad days - and I would like to think that some progress is being made towards recovery but I don't think I am out of the woods yet. We are talking in terms of years rather than months. I have not lost my faith. I have lost count of the number of times I have been asked this question! My faith has been stripped of some of its non-essential features, and I have felt that I have been tested and tried, but the essential core has remained unchanged and unthreatened I can still say "Jesus is Lord" and mean it. In some strange way I think my faith has been strengthened as I have had to cling to God in moments of extreme darkness and to my delight found that He has held me close and provided me with strength to carry on. And I could not have persevered without the help of an understanding family and sensitive and supportive members of the church. It has been a wonderful surprise to

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Every Thursday

receive letters and calls from people across the country expressing their concern and promising to pray. Often I have been reduced to tears reading a message from someone who has been helped in the past as a result of my ministry. So perhaps some good things have emerged out of the depths of my despair.

Why have I written this? Because I am sure I am not alone in my struggle. At a conservative estimate, one person in ten will suffer from depression during their lifetime. That means one minister in ten. I simply want to pass on my experience so that if there are others undergoing the same thing something I've written may help. So what advice can I give?

### **Treatment**

*Look out for the danger signs*- extreme debilitating fatigue; rising anxiety; increasing inability to cope with work; sleepless nights; emotional upheavals; anger of a serious kind. If these signs have become serious then *seek help early*. Don't put it off or attribute it to other causes. Turn to a trusted friend. Ask the advice of someone who knows you. Remember that this is an illness so see a doctor at once. Seek counselling help and don't feel embarrassed if you are asked to visit a psychiatrist. *Be patient*- the treatment takes time to work. It may have been building up over a number of years and it may take some time before you feel well again. If you don't already have one, *start an exercise programme*. Find a sympathetic friend and go on long walks. Use the local swimming pool on a regular basis. My wife and I are in our fifties but we have joined a circuit training group at our local gym! Physical exercise is a great antidote to depression. Finally, *Cling on to God*. Stay close to Him. Look for ways of nurturing your faith. I have taken to reading the New Testament as a whole allowing the words to speak, as it were, directly from their author. It hasn't been easy but diligence has its reward. Remember God's grace and as far as you can, rejoice in God's love. You will pull through.

### **Recommended reading:**

*A Soul Under Siege*, C. Welton Gaddy - Westminster/John Knox Press

*Depression, The Way Out of your Prison*, Dorothy Rowe - Routledge

*A Practical Workbook for the Depressed Christian*, Dr John Lockley -Word Books

*Spiritual Depression, its Causes and Cures*, D. Martyn Lloyd Jones - Pickering and Inglis

Ed. Only rarely will articles be published anonymously. We feel this to have been a case in point.

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## **A DOCTOR WRITES**

Depression can be part of the normal variation in human mood. Its appropriateness must be judged in the context of the circumstances in which it is found. Where the severity of depression is inappropriate or prolonged and where biological features are present we talk of depressive illness. Symptoms of depression occur in up to 20% of men and 30% of women at sometime in their lives. The incidents of depressive illness is lower but appears to be increasing in both sexes. Depressive illness presents particular difficulties for Christians, particularly Christian Ministers. After all our faith should protect us, shouldn't it? We would not expect our faith to prevent us having a coronary thrombosis or a broken leg, so why should we expect it to protect us from depressive illness? The biochemical basis of depressive illness is now well established,

and we have a range of therapies to treat it. The diagnosis of depressive illness rests on the following criteria.

- A) Depressed mood or inability to experience pleasure, to be prominent and fairly persistent.
- B) To have at least three of the following seven symptoms, everyday for the last two weeks:
  - 1) Poor or increased appetite/weight loss or gain
  - 2) Insomnia or Hypersomnia (Too much sleep)
  - 3) Agitation or retardation
  - 4) Loss of energy or fatigue
  - 5) Feelings of worthlessness, guilt or self reproach
  - 6) Poor concentration/slowed thinking/indecisiveness
  - 7) Morbid thoughts - thoughts of death or suicide.

Some of the symptoms listed above may make Christians feel wicked or sinful, because of the apparent lack of logic for feeling that way, because our circumstances do not justify it. We may feel that we are letting God down or that we are abandoned by God or beyond redemption. For this reason we may avoid seeking spiritual comfort. The important message is that this is an illness and a treatable illness not just a state of mind.

- Dr FRED GRIFFITHS, Honorary Director, Churches' Counselling Service in Wales

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**BMM**

# EVIDENCE FROM THE PAST

**MIKE SMITH, Golcar Baptist Church, Huddersfield.**

I always used to reckon that you could tell when and where a minister was trained, just by a blind-testing of their sermons, because it is only a few that radically revise what they were taught at college or university, and many old ideas are perpetuated long after they should have been laid to rest,

For many older ministers, critical consensus on the Old Testament might go something like this:- "It is highly dubious as to whether there was an invasion of Canaan as told in the book of Joshua. King David may well be a composite character based on several early Israelite heroes. The Temple and its cult are largely a back-projection of post-exilic practice. And most of the Pentateuch was written after the great Exile in Babylon." All of this has now got to be revised, in the light of archaeological research.

In 1982, the Israel archaeologist Adam Zertal started to investigate a pile of the rocks on the summit of Mount Ebal. The rectangular structure had a dividing wall in the middle. The whole structure was infilled with stones and bones of animals. It could be dated to the late iron age and a scarab of the period of Ramses II to Ramses III gave it a more precise date of just before 1200 B.C.

Zertal was puzzled as to what it was. There were no occupation layers, as might be expected in the remains of a house. The dividing wall extended out across a paved courtyard, and on closer inspection seemed to be some kind of ramp. Below the main structure was a circle of stones, which had been the first sign of use of the site.

Zertal himself is not a religious Jew. It was one of his assistants who pointed out to him that the remains were just what one would expect from an ancient Israelite altar, with the dividing wall as the ramp up which the priests would go. (It expressly says that the priests should not climb steps to God's altar-Exodus 20: 26). What Zertal had actually found was an altar erected on Mount Ebal in the late 13th century B.C., just as is recorded in Joshua 8: 30-31. Joshua's Altar! If there had been a notice saying, "Joshua woz 'ere" it could not be clearer.

## **Inscription.**

There have been many scholarly speculations as to the derivation of the name, "David". And until recently it was only attested in the Old Testament. However, we now have our first reference to David outside the Bible.

In 1993 archaeologists at Dan, in northern Israel, uncovered a broken inscription. It had been carved by the Syrians, to commemorate a victory over the northern kingdom of Israel in the early 9th century BC. (Possibly Ben-hadad's attack on Dan mentioned in 1 Kings 15: 20.). But Dan was fought over many times, and changed hands. When the victorious Israelites retook the city, they broke up the inscription of their enemies, and used it to repair a wall. Fortunately they put it in face-down. The surviving inscription consists of fragments of 13 lines, but in one of the clearest undamaged portions it refers to, "the house of David." The Syrian King boasts that he has killed the king of that dynasty. Now, we need not accept utter precision from ancient records. The Northern Kingdom's royal family was not actually of the house



of David. But a similar "Error " occurs in the famous black obelisk of Shalmaneser, where Jehu is called, "son of Omri", although he had actually presided over the extermination of Omri's family (including Ahab's sons.) The prestige of David was obviously such that even those not technically descended from him were thought of as members of "the house of David."

As many people know, the writing of Hebrew changed over the years. Our present Hebrew characters date from after the great Exile in Babylon. Before that, a very different script (the Palaeo-Hebraic) was used. The little calendar from Gezer, discovered in 1908, is a well-known example. So, any artifact with palaeo Hebraic lettering attracts more than a little interest.

### **Pomegranate**

In 1979 a French archaeologist's enquiries in Jerusalem antique shops resulted in him being shown a tiny piece of ivory. Measuring less than two inches long, and about an inch in diameter, this seemed to be the knob from the top of a ceremonial staff. It was shaped like a pomegranate. Around the body of the fruit, in palaeo - Hebraic characters, was the inscription "for the house of Yahweh, Holy to the priests" . It probably dates from the mid-eighth century BC., and was almost certainly found in Jerusalem, where the French archaeologist saw it. After a somewhat chequered career, this little artefact was acquired by the Jerusalem authorities, and it is known as the "Jerusalem pomegranate".

The "Jerusalem pomegranate" is the only surviving artefact we have at present that was being used while Solomon's Temple was standing. And its discovery should make everyone less willing to doubt that our accounts of the cultus of Solomon's Temple are late imaginings dating from the time of Ezra. Here we have solid evidence of Yahweh's Temple, and an elaborate cultus, from the time of the Kings.

When I did Old Testament at Oxford in the '60s, it was confidently stated that most of the Pentateuch dated from after the Exile. I remember causing my tutors considerable annoyance by questioning that theory. I would have loved to have been able to show them this last exhibit. Around 1975, an Israeli archaeologist called Gabriel Barkay started excavations near Ketef Hinnom, outside Jerusalem. Four years later, in 1979, they found some burial caves dating from the First Temple period. Although many had been robbed, some had been left untouched. And from these came a magnificent collection of artefacts. Among the discoveries was a small role of corroded silver. At first it was mistaken for a cigarette end, but Barkay correctly saw that it was some kind of amulet. But unrolling was very difficult. It took three years for it to be successfully unrolled, and another four years before the writing on it (in the palaeo-Hebraic letters) was deciphered. It was the famous Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24-6, "The Lord bless you and keep you..."

### **Revolt.**

The Ketef Hinnom amulet dates from the late 7th century B.C.,- just about the time when king Josiah is said to have rediscovered the book of the law while renovating the Temple. And what we have here is the earliest known piece of the Old Testament, dating from around four centuries before the earliest fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The fact that it is an amulet will actually push the date of writing back further. This must have been already a treasured text, if it was inscribed as a lucky charm. It was no recent composition, but a treasured heirloom buried with its owner.



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Naturally, this puts a huge question-mark against all theories both ancient (Noth) and modern (Van Seters) who would see the Pentateuch as written in the period after the great Exile. And along with this there is other evidence as well. Some of the early fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls are written in the palaeo-Hebraic script. Now while we do know that there was conscious archaizing by Jewish nationalists during the great Jewish revolt of AD 66-70, would this necessarily have been the case in the second century BC? While the existing fragments from Qumran only date from that century, is it not quite feasible that they were copies of ancient manuscripts written in a similar script, part of a line of transmission that stretches back long before the Exile? The Qumran scribes were quite capable of copying the "modern" Hebrew script. It seems quite natural to suggest that they also still used the old script, deriving it from more ancient copies now lost.

It will be interesting to see how soon these modern discoveries get into the textbooks, and get really adequate cover in Old Testament lecturing. Perhaps it will take a generation before "the accepted results of scholarship" bend to take account of them. We await the outcome with interest.....

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### Sources

*Joshua's altar*, Reader's Digest Sept. 1992 pp 132-6

*Dan inscription*, Israel Exploration Journal (1993) vol.43 pt.2-3, pp.81-98

*Jerusalem Pomegranate*, Biblical Archaeology Review Jan/Feb 1984 pp.24-29

*Ketef Hinnom Amulet* Reader's Digest March 1988 pp.117-121.



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# TRENDS IN MINISTRY

**BILL ALLEN**, tutor in Pastoral Studies at Spurgeon's College, London, reflects on replies to the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship Ministerial Questionnaire *Trends in Ministry as the 21st Century approaches*, published in the July 1997 issue of the Journal.

Why are you in ministry today? Four out of five respondents said they held firmly to a belief in the call of God which had first brought them into ministry. Serving the needs of other people ranked highly among the rest. This was also the second most popular indicator for being in ministry.

Asked what *kept* people in ministry, the picture was somewhat different. Two out of three indicated that it was still the call of God, even in difficult times. Enjoyment of the work, a sense of personal fulfilment, support and friendship in and outside the church also scored highly. Though only a small number asked, 'What else could I do?', this reply from those in their mid forties may be indicative of a wider feeling among ministers as they approach middle age. Other similar comments (e.g. 'it will get better! I'll find another church', 'too young to retire', and 'pension needs') may ring a warning bell about job dissatisfaction among ministers in the 45 to 60 age bracket.

Regarding qualifications and training, almost every respondent possessed a recognised theological qualification from BU exam up to PhD, and regarded biblical studies and theology as the most important elements in their training. The importance of placements was mentioned by some, and for the over 50s community life and the support of tutors was rated highly.

Some older respondents, however, complained of a lack of practical pastoral training, e.g. for conducting rites of passage, and supplying advice concerning the practicalities of day to day ministry. In the 25 to 45 age bracket many identified a major lack of practical training in the fields of leadership and management. What all this appears to indicate is that while the colleges still excel in providing theological education in certain disciplines, they fall down on practical training. Given that interpersonal skills and leadership are vital factors in ministry, clearly more needs to be done in addressing these in the training offered to those entering ministry today.

## Spotting the gaps

After college, a small part of the sample had studied for further degrees. Many had undertaken further professional development courses (for hospice and chaplaincy work, missionary orientation, etc), or para-church courses (e.g. Masterlife, Evangelism Explosion, Church Growth), with a quarter of the sample opting for counselling courses of various sorts. Some had sought to enhance their personal development in ways which may or may not have been influenced by being in ministry (e.g. learning a foreign language, first aid etc.).

This section of the questionnaire creates the impression of men and women, who have a strong sense of the call of God. It suggests too that as age increases so do the uncertainties about the future, and so some of the fears and questions begin to emerge. The omissions in training show that it is possible for colleges to ignore or miss vital areas of practical training which can leave people ill equipped for the tasks which they must undertake in ministry. Some clearly seek to make up the omissions

in their own ways, but there is a question for the colleges here about how these gaps are spotted and filled within the curriculum of training.

Looking to the future, there were two trends as far as ministry and the Church are concerned, which appeared with some frequency and which give rise to some concern. One was a perceived lack of spirituality and of commitment to the local church and its ministry. The other was of an increasing sense of introspection among the churches.

One in five of the replies also expressed concern for the struggle of a small local church to sustain paid ministry because of increasing financial constraints, which is something that needs to be registered.

In general, the challenges for ministry and the church to have emerged from this survey are fourfold. First, working with young people, particularly those who are disaffected and find it difficult to relate to the church. Second, countering the influence of secular culture upon the church and upon discipleship in the world. Third, the desire and need for the church to be relevant in a multi-cultural, multi-faith society, and to keep abreast of developments taking place within it. And fourth, communicating the Christian message simply and effectively in the modern world.

### **Changing World**

As far as ministry in society is concerned, the two areas in which respondents found the most significant opportunities for ministry are within the schools, and when taking funeral services. People sense that in both these situations there is an openness to engage in conversation about spiritual issues and an opportunity to engage in social care.

A high degree of unease came through over the breakdown of family life and marriage; the materialistic nature of society; and the changing patterns and pressures of the work place. Other causes of concern were increasing secularisation; changing ethical standards; the marginalisation of the church; sexual trends; and increasing individualism in society.

From this section of the survey we can, therefore, deduce a relentlessly changing world in which men and women are seeking to minister the gospel in word and action. Some of them find change to be a challenge, others see it as a difficulty or a threat. The range of feelings expressed by respondents as they considered these questions ranged from: excited, positive and good; through feelings of tiredness, discouragement and glumness; to more negative feelings of: frustration, sadness, and unhappiness.

Understanding the culture in which we live must be an increasing part of the curriculum for those training for ministry today and in the future, but it is also salutary to be reminded that in the traditional social rites of passage (births, marriages and deaths) there are still significant opportunities to minister to people who are often on the fringe or outside the church.

Looking to the future, more support for the ministry was called for, from a form of curacy on leaving college, through a scheme for gaining credits towards recognised ministerial standards, to in-service training days and conferences. One suggestion looked for an independent advocacy scheme for ministers in difficulty in a church. One or two mentioned provision for early retirement, and for pre-retirement seminars.

Most identified a need for on-going training beyond the probationary period, from understanding and using new technology and practical training, to keeping abreast of

theological studies. One suggestion was for a pattern of on-going training that would reaffirm accreditation periodically. There was also a call for ministerial training to include training alongside other professionals in their training.

### **Wealth of Material**

Opinion is clearly divided about the value of appraisal and mentoring. Those who were enthusiastic see it as a means of gaining objective assessment of their work, their strengths and weaknesses, which would help improve their ministry through effective feedback.

Baptist Ministers Fellowship publications were highly regarded, although some people commented that the *Journal* could contain more practical articles. All BMF publications needed to be good quality. For some, there was a need for the BMF to act as a kind of trade union for ministers - a voice to the BUGB's Department of Ministry, safeguarding welfare, housing and pensions.

The main thing expected from local and regional ministers' meetings, which seemed to have lost their way somewhat, was a recovery of the concept of fraternity, expressed in terms of openness, honesty and shared spirituality. One raised the possibility of ministers' meetings becoming appraisal centres - though no details were offered of how this might work.

Closer fellowship was called for between different groups within the Associations. The Associations needed to provide more vision, counsel and the provision of resources for ministers and churches.

As far as the Superintendency was concerned, more frequent visits was a recurring theme. Some also asked for Superintendents to be freed from some of their tasks in order to be able to give more time pastorally for visiting ministers.

The colleges were asked to provide more in-service training, from half day sessions to short and medium term courses. Reflection and study days were also suggested, along with distance learning.

Most of those who commented on the BUGB's Department of Ministry, looked to it for more information, advice and support than they had previously experienced. Creative thinking and the co-ordination of appraisals and mentoring were also called for, as well as some exploration for ministers who burn out, leave or want to retire early. Acknowledging the wealth of material already available, one respondent admitted: 'It seems to me that the real question is whether or not we choose to take advantage of it!'

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*Ed. The Revd Michael Bochenski, Chair of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship and current Vice-President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, reminds readers that the questionnaire was launched with the help of the Revd Dr Michael Quick, Principal of Spurgeon's College, at the BMF's Pastoral Session at the 1997 Baptist Assembly. Bill Allen's analysis was based on a sample of 73 replies.*

# j-mail

## A CENTRAL STIPEND FUND

From Jim Pollard, Wirral

Dear Journal, I am deeply saddened that what I wrote about a Central Stipend Fund has hurt Graham Wilde so much (*Journal*, April, 1998) and, in particular, that the differential percentage between a Probationer and an Accredited Minister has 'angered him greatly.' I apologise unreservedly.

- (i) I know all about the things he wrote concerning costs. When I was taking the old BU Exam I received no BU aid whatsoever. Whereas the Standard BU Stipend now is just about the same as Anglican Stipends, in my Pastoral days there was something like £400 difference. So, please, Brother Graham, do not think I don't know what a differential can mean in a Manse.
- (ii) I am the more sad because the 25% I quoted was used partly to make a point and partly was based on figures I now know to be out-of-date. In the Church of England a newly ordained Deacon gets less than a Priest by 10% and this is then decreased by annual increments for 5 years.
- (iii) Please may I whisper to Graham very quietly that I still know something about financial pressure. My BU Pension, in spite of the many millions in their Investments, is a mere £243 net per month.

Although by the time the next *Journal* appears I hope Graham will have heard this letter read to him, I would be grateful, Mr Editor, if you would print this letter from an old, retired Minister, so that the other readers of the *Journal* may know of my complete apology not only to Graham Wilde but also to any others hurt by this percentage differential I used.

## MINISTERS OUT-OF-POST OR UNDER NOTICE

From Terence Cooper, 26 Birchwood Drive, Rushmere, Ipswich, IPS IEB. Fax: 01473 729652.

E-mail: trcooper@compuserve.com

Dear Journal - Avid readers of the *Baptist Times* will be aware that in my capacity as Moderator of the Baptist Union General Purposes and Finance Executive Committee, I am convening an ad hoc group looking at the issues associated with the plight of ministers out-of-post or under-notice. I have a particular concern that the denomination may not in all instances be dealing with such sisters and brothers in a manner which is consistent with biblical justice. This concern is shared by my colleague the Revd John Maile, who is the Moderator of the Baptist Union Ministry Executive Committee and a member of the ad hoc group.

The many inputs which we have received, both directly and through the *Baptist Times*, indicate that it is timely to consider such issues. Our aim is to move forward and improve on the treatment, which ministers feel they are receiving despite the best efforts of those who are already involved. The Five Core Values for a Gospel People, endorsed by the Baptist Union Council in March, are relevant not only to the way in which we interact with the world but also to the manner in which we operate internally.

It has become evident to us that there are many considerations which need to be addressed. A large number of these have been suggested by those folk who have written to us. A frequently mentioned concern is that of stipends, and it has been suggested to us that there is probably more support for a centralised stipend fund, and perhaps even for the equalisation of stipends, than might generally be supposed. At the moment,

though, we have no hard data on which to base a judgement - the inputs are wholly anecdotal.

A large-scale survey would be potentially expensive and time consuming. My purpose in writing to the (Journal), therefore, is to attempt, in a cost effective manner, to get an initial appreciation of the views of ministers by inviting readers to write to me with their answers to two specific questions:

- 1) Would you be in favour of the creation of a Central Stipend Fund to which all churches with ministers would contribute, and from which all ministers of churches would be paid on the basis of nationally agreed figures?
- 2) Would you be in favour of the equalisation of stipends such that to all intents and purposes all ministers of churches in the denomination would be paid the same amount irrespective of the size of membership?

If you feel unable to answer either of these questions without qualification then do let me have whatever additional comments you wish to make.

I do hope that you will be able to devote a few moments to letting me have your views (anonymously if you wish) by no later than the end of July 1998. I also hope the Editor will be prepared to publish the results in due course.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN CONDITION**

*From Geoffrey Whitfield, Brighton*

Dear Journal, As ministers we need more than devotion and Christian principles, we need to be aware of some of the deeper and unconscious processes that run through institutions. This especially concerns organisations which are to do with benevolence and goodness and healing. As a practising psychotherapist, I need to be fully conscious of some of

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the subterranean issues which will prevail when we gather together for business as professionals. We may be dedicated to healing and insight and well being but what about the concept of what we call Negative Counter Transference? These are the feelings and emotions of our own which are raised when working professionally with clients. While consciously we may wish to be all things good, there is the side which Jung called the "shadow". i.e. the opposite of what we intend. And so when we gather together, I warn my trainee counsellors, "Do be aware that there will be Negative Counter Transference issues of a destructive nature from your "Shadow" which will emerge". Nor will it merely be personal, it will be within the group and within the organisation and the institution. This is not to say that anyone is necessarily bad. It is simply the fact that it is normal for humans to behave in this way. We all have hidden agendas and the trouble comes when we deny them or are blind to their existence.

If this is the normal case for the therapeutic professions, how can we in the church learn from this? I held the view that the biggest problem within our church is not the absence of goodwill but a lack of awareness and understanding of the normal human condition, whether you call it the "Shadow", Counter Transference or anything else. This is what unacknowledged or unknown or unconscious human processes are about. Look at the Gospels, look at the history of the Church, look at Shakespeare, look at the behaviour sometimes of church committees or church meetings. Instead of appearing to behave in a Christian way of integrity, it would appear that something really destructive takes place, not only in what is done but the nature of the behaviour and decision making.

How is this to be confronted? To be brief, there needs to be a heightened



sensitivity and awareness that we can anticipate that there could be such phenomena present. Moreover, there needs to be a way of looking, not at the presenting problem, but at what are the underlying forces or dynamics and acknowledging that when such things are present, it is normal and not evil. The consequence could provide the blessedness of breathing space and a freedom from guilt as long as it is acknowledged sufficiently to move back and review the process. It is not enough to "Walk by faith and not by sight": if this means we neglect "Insight"

Then maybe we could set up processes whereby Church officials, whether they are BU officers or deacons or ministers, could have their grievances heard. If they were properly conducted, by properly trained people, errors could be corrected and hurts understood and healed. But the process would need to be benign, acknowledging that we can all fall into the trap of the Negative Counter Transference or Shadow. The crucial issue is whether those involved in a situation of difference or conflict can discuss things in an environment which will be seen to be contained and safe. That environment must seek to be one of enlightenment and creativity and not punitive. If this cannot be organised then the phenomena of the NGT and "Shadow" will continue to operate to the detriment of all concerned.

## **ON BEING CONFUSED**

*From John Balchin, Above Bar Church, Southampton*

Dear Journal, Glyn Prosser's confusion with the other Glyn (*Journal, April, 1998*) somewhat parallels my own experience when, some years back, I discovered that there was another Rev. John Balchin on the planet. True, he was John A. while I was John F, but it led to some interesting

mix-ups. It was all accentuated by the facts - he was lecturing at the BTI in Glasgow, I at the LBC in London; he was writing things, I was writing things; he was preaching around, so was I. I remember being quoted from a pulpit (with approval I might add) from my excellent work on Ecclesiastes - which work had nothing to do with me at all. People would tell me - as they did Glyn - that I had changed somewhat with the years, and I well remember the day when my wife was accused by a complete stranger of not being Audrey. It may have been the fact that I was being credited with all his successes and he with all my gaffs, that eventually he upped sticks and moved as far away as he could - to New Zealand - and there became a Presbyterian. We still continue to cross tracks when I go out to lecture or preach in Australia, and it was there I heard the best joke of all (unless it was just Aussie humour). That was, that when he applied for the job in NZ, they wrote to John Laird, for many years Mr. Scripture Union in the UK, to ask for a reference for 'John Balchin'. John had known me since I was a teenager, and gladly complied - all of which means that the other John must have got the job on my credentials!

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*Letters may be abbreviated.*

# Book Reviews

*edited by John Houseago*

***Moral Leadership in a Post-modern Age* by Robin Gill, T. and T. Clark,  
Edinburgh, 1997 ISBN 0-567-08550-3**

Professor Robin Gill, Michael Ramsey Professor of Modern Theology in the University of Kent at Canterbury, is undoubtedly a 'good thing' and a significant voice in the contemporary church's interaction with society. This present book is compiled from varied sources including reviews of Church of England reports, papal encyclicals and briefing papers for church leaders on issues of medical ethics such as euthanasia, gene therapies and religious education. Content apart, the book allows insights into some of the processes which enable church leaders to speak intelligently to today's complexities. The varied documents which lie behind the book are set within its overall concern, which is to clarify what exactly church leaders are doing when they attempt to offer moral leadership in the kind of society of which we are all now a part.

Robin Gill is a clear, readable and helpful critic and guide. By a 'post-modern age' he means that state of affairs in which there is no longer one agreed method or set of criteria for resolving moral issues. He acknowledges his debt to Alastair MacIntyre's seminal *After Virtue* in this. He is clearly drawn to communitarian responses to the present situation, according to which moral judgements are held to arise out of participation in communities which are shaped in their character by particular stories and traditions. Christian moral leaders speak out of their participation in the Christian community and tradition and this is where their legitimisation comes from. At the same time, Gill is aware of the complexities of doing this once we recognise that even Christian communities are not totally or even faithfully shaped by their own Scriptures and come to diverse judgements anyway.

One of the particular contributions Christian moral leaders have is to criticise from within their own tradition the 'secular' ethics derived from the principles of moral relativism and autonomy. Gill does this most effectively, not by dismissing the partial truth or value of these principles but by showing how inconsistently they are followed or that they need to be balanced by other principles. So, while claiming that all moral judgements are relative he shows how contemporary society abounds with judgements (about child abuse, infanticide, the Holocaust and the like) which are far from relativist. Autonomy on its own leads to self-regarding interest and needs to be balanced by justice and faithfulness. Gill is a fair-minded but incisive advocate of the Christian faith in this debate with secularism.

Not all Baptist ministers will be called to address society at the level Gill is used to. But we are all doing it at some level. This book helps us to know what we might be doing.

**Nigel G Wright**

***The Sky is Red* by, Kenneth Leech, London,  
Darton Longman & Todd, 1997, pp279, £13.95.**

I expected this book to irritate. Any attempt to read the signs of the times is hardly likely to be original as the millennium bug threatens to strike. But with a track-record like that of Kenneth Leech it is wise not to be too hasty in judgment; author of *Soul Friend* and authority on community theology, tested through long experience in *East Baptist Ministers' Journal July 1998*

London, this writer deserves to be given a hearing, and overall I am glad that I did.

But the experience was not without irritation. At times he fails to avoid the nostalgia trap of a millennial retrospective, and even a cursory glance at the menu suggests an attempt to cover an excessively wide range of themes in so small a compass. Here, it seems, is a writer, drawing on an immense wealth of experience, struggling to be selective for the millennium exhibition. For my money, the exhibition tries to carry too much under too many headings, at times almost becoming a shopping list; and I was irritated by the weaker exhibits, too narrowly and too predictably focused.

But gems there are too; and if the price is irritation, so be it. In religion and politics alike, Leech is both traditionalist and prophet at one and the same time. Here is a passionate cry from an unreformed socialist; but his word is utterly contemporary, clearly spoken into the context of present need. Whatever pleasure he has taken in the demise of prolonged Tory rule, it is not enough to make him complacent about the responsibility of Christians to bring under close scrutiny any government of the day, and New Labour is an easy target. There is also the cry of a priest whose ministry has been nourished by the traditional resources of Anglican Catholicism; but he is not at all reluctant to bring it also under critical judgment and lives it out in a thoroughly contemporary style.

I enjoyed his consistent claims for society (community) over against the dominant streams of individualism. I enjoyed his challenges to the easy jargonising of liberalism and the many voices of radicalism, so-called. His political analysis of poverty, the experience of an underclass in modern Britain, is as sharp as ever; and his theological critique of fashions in spirituality is clear and to the point.

Baptists might be a little irritated that he hardly seems to recognise our existence in the ecclesiological market place. He is unsparing in his criticism of establishment and hierarchy in the church, Catholic and Anglican, and he refers warmly to grass roots movements such as base communities; but seemingly he fails even to notice that there have been free church movements which have owned this centrally - and not just eccentrically, as he calls it. It is also a shame that his clear appreciation of the power in the ancient liturgical drama of baptism does not push him far enough to consider a proper re-think of modern liturgical practice.

Perhaps, however, it is the final chapter on ministry and marginality which speaks to us all, Anglican Catholics and Baptists most clearly and powerfully. He rejects the false professionalism and the weak managerial model which has infected the practice of ministry almost everywhere. His own model re-affirms the cruciality of marginality, and of courage to run counter to the tide of professional security. Quoting one Urban Holmes, he reminds us all that the roots of priesthood lie squarely within the wilderness of the antistruature. Yes, this work is worth a little irritation!

**Richard Kidd**

***Mysterious Messengers: A course on Hebrew prophecy from Amos onwards***  
**by John Eaton, SCM Press Ltd, 1997, 213 pp, £12-95.**

This book on the Hebrew prophets sets out, in the author's own words, to 'bring out again the attractive and wonderful qualities of the prophets, still taking account of what good scholarship over many years has established'. Enlarging on a course originally produced for the Open Learning Centre, the text is in short, clearly headed sections, and includes boxes giving background information, and suggestions for simple research, discussion and creative writing. With adaptation, it would be suitable for use

in a church bible study, as well as for schools.

The first four chapters discuss the nature of Hebrew prophecy, its historical setting and language structure. Comparison and contrast is made between the Hebrew prophets of God, and the intermediaries of other Near Eastern religions of the time. In a world which believed the earth was under the rule of heaven, it was considered prudent to be as aware as possible of what the powers of heaven had in store. This was done through a wide range of link persons, the Hebrew prophets fulfilling a similar role as an intermediary between God and humankind. Drawing on older teaching, they urged a return to ancient truth. Eaton challenges the common view of scholars that prophets were 'original thinkers, milestones in the upward progress of religious sensitivity and understanding' (p9).

He then examines the messages of the individual prophets. Eaton sets the prophecies within the context of the festival periods of Israel, during which they were probably originally delivered. This gives the words and visions a new meaning and significance often overlooked. The final chapter, intended to summarise the previous chapters, is wordy, unfocussed and uses language reminiscent of early twentieth century sermons. It is difficult to believe it is written by the same author of an otherwise interesting and informative book.

**Kath Lawson.**

***Beginnings: Keys that Open the Gospels* by Morna Hooker,  
SCM Press Ltd., 1997, 97pp, £7.95.**

The book comprises four lectures given as the John Albert Hall Lectures in Victoria, BC, in 1996. They are published in the form in which they were delivered, but with additional references, notes and suggestions for further reading. The theme of the lectures is the importance of the beginnings of the four gospels, and how they help the reader make sense of what follows. In the ancient world, the information today conveyed via book cover, title, publisher's blurb and contents page was provided in the opening paragraphs of a document.

Hooker devotes a chapter to each gospel. By reference to the main body of the text, she demonstrates how the evangelists provide vital clues in their introductions that guide the reader in how to understand their gospel, and hints as to how the story works out. She points out that the gospels were originally written to be read aloud and that the original recipients would not have had the opportunity we have to examine the text in detail. Without the beginnings, they would have been in the same position of ignorance about Jesus' identity etc. as the characters in the gospels.

Some of the clues provided in the gospel beginnings are easy to miss. Because they come from a different culture the impact they had on the original readers may be lost on a modern reader. Hooker therefore brings insights to which over-familiarity may have blinded us.

The style of presentation reflects the fact that the material was first a series of lectures. The material is both readable and accessible. The limitations of time meant the lectures had to be tightly focused. Thus, there is no attempt to explore all the issues raised by the gospel text. I enjoyed reading the book myself, and would have no hesitation in recommending it to members of my congregation. It would also provide valuable source material for either a series of sermons or bible studies.

**Kath Lawson**

***Practising Faith in a Pagan World* by Roy Clements, IVP, 1997, pp224 £5.99.**

This book by Roy (not Ron) Clements is a real "curate's egg". It is a study of parts of Ezekiel and Daniel showing the relevance of their message to the present day. The stance is strongly conservative and this affects both exegesis and application. The first half of the book deals with some of the earlier chapters of Ezekiel, which threaten judgement. The present world stands under similar judgement. Not even the Church is exempt; neither are its ministers, especially those with a liberal theology who are the "false prophets". It is all rather gloomy.

The third quarter of the book is more positive since it deals with the stories in Daniel 1 -6 and the possibility of living and witnessing in such a world. The final part looks to the eschatological hope based on Daniel and to revival based on Ezekiel 34 - 37.

There is a good deal in the book which leaves me uneasy, even allowing for the conservative stance. Yet at the same time there are many good things. "The message of judgement ... must not be drowned out by our triumphalist choruses" but "No-one can preach judgement without praying for mercy". In the end "Christian people are people of hope ... hope marks us out more dramatically, perhaps, than anything else". Revival is not in our power; it is "something God must do". Our part is to preach and pray.

Even if you disagree with much in this book it is still worth reading for such helpful reminders. Used with care, it may help preachers to preach from these two difficult books.

**Harry Mowley**

***The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts Then and Now* by Max Turner.**

**Paternoster Press. 374 pp £14.99.**

For those who have a high regard for the Alpha Course but are not convinced that glossolalia has replaced Romans 10:9 as the litmus test of salvation, this is the book to read and keep for reference. Intended for busy pastors and church leaders, it has abundant integrated footnotes, 53 theological magazines consulted and eight double columned pages of scriptural references.

Part One on the "Development of New Testament Pneumatology" gives a careful study of Luke, John and Paul, which comprised half the book. His style is compelling, highly resourced and thesauric as he gives whole chapters to "tongues speech", prophecy and healing.

"Paul valued glossolalia (when interpreted) on a par with prophecy as the self-revealing manifestation of the redeeming God confronting, challenging, comforting and instructing the people he redeems and loves. (page 239).

Max Turner is a pastor at heart, as can be seen in his footnote answer to a quote from David Pawson on page 254. Not all books on the Holy Spirit understand the reality of pastor's experience.

**Vic Sumner.**