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# The Baptist Ministers' Journal

JULY 1999

ISSN 0968 - 2406

Vol 267

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# EDITORIAL

## 'God's little joke'

In his book, *Building Missionary Congregations*, Robert Warren quotes the WCC report 'The Church for Others', which speaks of the church needing to break out of 'morphological fundamentalism'. 'This marvellous phrase,' says Warren, 'refers to the tendency in any organisation to consider the present way of doing things as the only, and necessarily the best, way of doing things. At any time this is a foolish posture. In a culture of rapid change, and in a period of profound transition, this could well prove fatal. Structures have little or no validity in and of themselves. They exist to achieve certain things. They are to be measured by how effective they are in achieving the particular purpose for which they are designed.'

Those words could easily have formed the basis of one of the speeches on *Relating and Resourcing* at the recent Baptist Assembly in Bournemouth! In fact they were the theme of a major consultation on mission in which another of our national traditions grappled with the challenge of how to get its congregations to look outwards. All our Churches are therefore addressing similar questions. To put it in its global context, 'the Western church at the end of the second millennium stands in need of comprehensive reformation, if it is once again to be true to its calling' (Michael Riddell).

I find this willingness to try to re-shape our denominational structures to make the most of the opportunities of the present time immensely heartening. Nevertheless, I think we also need to remember that restructured institutions of themselves are not enough. In *Preaching to the Nations (The Origins of Mission in the Early Church)* Alan Le Grys reminds us that fortunately it is not the mission of the church which is ultimately important, however much it is dressed up in scriptural quotation to make it look respectable. The church remains a deeply flawed institution, a sacramental reminder of the need for a gracious God. It is God's little joke. Far more important is the *missio dei*; the reaching out of God in loving service to humanity. It is this primary insight which leads the Johannine Christ to say "as the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20: 21). All mission is rooted in what God has already done for us, not in the absurd pretensions of the church. It is always a serious mistake to confuse the institutional church with the Kingdom of God.'

Somewhere, therefore, between the inescapable need to reshape ourselves for changing circumstances and the absolute necessity to remember always that our basic calling is to reflect and respond to 'the reaching out of God', lies the trick of getting it right. The fact that so many Churches and Denominations are aware of that danger and not put off by it, gives me considerable grounds for hope. **BMM**

G.A-W

# “Unseen Patterns of Grace”

**For Ronald Ham, formerly lecturer in Theology in New South Wales, and a minister in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, the preacher is someone who helps ‘people understand the content of their faith and its point of intersection with their everyday affairs’.**

I know a man who used to listen to sermons with a receptive spirit, but when he realised a sermon was failing (for him, at least), he sometimes turned to mental arithmetic using the numbers on the hymn board at the front of the church! With many worshippers, he had a certain ‘feel’ for preaching and he waited expectantly for God, through the sermon, to give insight and grace for his living. He had a ‘theology’ of preaching, a sense of what sermons are supposed to be and do. Fortunately, he did not give up on preaching in spite of the failed sermons he had endured.

Both inside and outside the church there are those who have given up on preaching and have come to regard it as a fruitless exercise. Some of them argue that oral communication in the form of sermons is out of date and irrelevant in this age of audio-visual communications, computers, talk-back radio, slick advertising, seminars, discussions and debates. They judge preaching an odd skill, like one which appeared a few years ago in an application for a language interpreter’s job with a Madrid translation agency. The CV faxed to the agency revealed that the applicant was fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, and proficient in quantum mechanics and cake decorating!<sup>1</sup> The listing of preaching on someone’s CV might seem to many to be in the same category as ‘cake-decorating’ - an unusual skill, not anywhere near as important as knowing a foreign language or understanding quantum mechanics.

We must base any protest about this dismissal of preaching on more than the argument that preaching has a long and impressive tradition. The question is whether preaching remains an effective means of communication in this present age. If we think it does, we need to explain what the preacher might be doing in preaching and, more importantly, how God might be working through that preaching.

## **A touch of excitement**

Walter Brueggemann has a helpful way of describing the role of the preacher. He gave to his book, based on his 1989 Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching, the intriguing title, *Finally Comes the Poet*, a title inspired by a line from a poem of Walt Whitman. Whitman had written about the contribution to our knowledge by engineers, inventors, and scientists, but he claims that after them, “Finally shall come the poet worthy of that name.” Brueggemann borrows this image which celebrates the poet and applies it to the preacher who, he believes, has a role similar to that of the poet (and the prophet).

The poet/prophet is a voice that shatters settled reality and evokes new possibility in the listening assembly. Preaching continues that dangerous, indispensable habit of speech. The poetic speech of text and sermon is a prophetic construct of a world

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<sup>1</sup> *The European*, 10 -16 February 1995

beyond the one we take for granted.<sup>2</sup>

A similar view of preaching comes from David Buttrick:

Preaching, or at least Christian preaching, must dare to name God in conjunction with the world of lived experience ... Pulpits will gain usefulness as preachers venture to name unseen patterns of grace in a fully human world.<sup>3</sup>

If these claims of Brueggemann and Buttrick are true of preaching, we who are ministers might feel a touch of excitement about the possibilities of preaching to people for whom life is so often bewildering. They face experiences of failure in meeting their expectations of themselves, difficulty in maintaining healthy relationships, confusion over the temptations which materialism places before them, and disillusionment with political leaders. Added to these pressures are their failed attempts to find meaning or to expect justice in communities and nations whose struggles are placed before them daily by the media. And lying behind all of this may be their feeling that God often seems to be absent! This is where Brueggemann thinks the "poetic speech of text and sermon (can give) a prophetic construct of a world beyond the one taken for granted", this is the "fully human world" of which Buttrick writes, and the world in which he says preachers should venture to name unseen patterns of grace".

### **Skill and tenderness**

To achieve these ends in their preaching, preachers must first be naming God and "unseen patterns of grace" in their own world of lived experience. The disciplines of prayer, silence and reflection on the Scriptures are essential for preachers while they are fully immersed in the same bewildering world as their listeners. That will make them fit to be what Merrill Abbey called the pastor/preacher - 'a theologian in residence', someone who helps "people understand the content of their faith and its point of intersection with their everyday affairs."<sup>4</sup> Preachers will also understand their task better if they themselves know what it is to hear sermons which point them to a world beyond the one they take for granted. We will not preach that kind of sermon ourselves if we have not sometimes experienced such sermons. We are, however, notoriously difficult to preach to! One of my most memorable experiences of preaching came from an unexpected source - not from a famous preacher but from a student who was preaching a sermon as part of the requirements in the final year of his Bachelor of Divinity degree. He was preaching in English, not his first language, in the final semester of the Ruschlikon Seminary before its move to Prague.

The student read the story of Cain and Abel and I felt certain that his text would be, "Am I my brother's keeper"? Acknowledging that the story is about the relationship between Cain and Abel, he set aside the relationship of the brothers and developed the idea that the story is also about the relationship between Cain and God. In his sermon the student preacher concentrated on Cain's anger that God had no regard for his offering. With skill and tenderness, the preacher suggested ways in which our 'offerings' fail to please God. In one example, he spoke of our pride in our technological advances (which

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet*, Fortress, 1989, p4

<sup>3</sup> David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*: SCM, 1987, pp11-19

<sup>4</sup> Merrill R. Abbey, *Communication in Pulpit and Parish*, Westminster Press, 1973, p111

often are good and beneficial for others) but pointed to the frequent failure of our relationships (which can be destructive of others). We cannot hope to please God with the one if we sadden him with the other. I remember a feeling of excitement at what now seems to me to have been 'poetic speech'. My excitement was partly a response to the freshness and unexpectedness of the student's approach, but it was even more a response to the way the preacher was 'daring to name God in conjunction with the world of lived experience' (not only in Cain's world but also in my world). This description of that sermon does not do it justice but it may demonstrate what we hope we are doing in preaching.

### Special Importance

My emphasis so far has been on what the preacher might be doing. Most of us realise that there is more to preaching than what the preacher is attempting. The student's sermon, no matter how well crafted, would not have had the effect it did, nor would any of our sermons 'succeed', if God is not also doing something through the sermon. Not just doing something in the inspiration God gives preachers in their preparation and delivery, but also doing something through the effect of preaching on those who hear - God actually communicates through preaching. This gives preaching a special importance, saving it from being the fruitless exercise which many consider it to be. The way in which this happens may be described variously by the images of encounter, event and sacrament.

As the poet/prophet gives us 'a poetic construct of an alternative world', and names 'unseen patterns of grace', God in Christ is encountering us. G.S. Hendry and H.H. Farmer used this **encounter** image: "Christ himself confronts people in the preached word and calls them to faith ... It is the risen and living Christ who is encountered in preaching."<sup>5</sup>; Preaching "is God's activity ... It is God encountering souls in what may at any moment prove to be the supreme crisis of their life."<sup>6</sup> Farmer admits that this claim of God's encounter may be a baffling thought, and so it may seem to us, especially because of some particularly bad preaching we have heard (or done!). We cannot ignore the misuse of preaching as happens when preachers have a seriously deficient theology of preaching: consciously or unconsciously using preaching as a kind of propaganda or as an opportunity to manipulate people, as a means of bolstering their own sense of importance, or as a display of their eloquence. In spite of these failings, the fact remains that God may encounter us in preaching and this is what gives preaching its special power.

### Audible Sacrament

In 1965, the idea of God encountering us was much on my mind. I was studying in New York and took a Course with the Jewish scholar, Abraham Heschel. He made an appointment to see each student privately at the beginning of the Course and he asked me whose theology helped me most. I nominated John Baillie whose writing was the subject of my thesis. Heschel asked me what aspect of Baillie's theology was particularly significant for me. I replied that it was the idea that God personally encounters each of us and that my interest was not merely that I had read this in Baillie, but that I believed God had sometimes sought me out, particularly in the preaching I had heard. We who preach find it humbling and liberating to think that our preaching can become a means of God encountering our hearers.

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<sup>5</sup> *Dictionary of Christian Theology*, SCM Press, 1969, article on Preaching by G.S. Hendry

<sup>6</sup> H.H. Farmer, *The Servant of the Word*, Nisbet, 1946 p31

This image of encounter is described by others as **event**.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, John Claypool writes that authentic preaching can rightly be called an event when "something ... happens so holistically that it leaves the kind of impact on one that accompanies participation in any sort of decisive happening." The response to Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost was such an event. Peter's hearers "were cut to the heart and said to (him) and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" They became part of a happening that knocked away their old supports and left them facing a different understanding of the reign of God. They did not know what was required of them but they knew that something had to change. The answer to the question which this event raised for them, if they acted on it, would lead to forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This image suggests the possibilities of preaching. Not all the sermons we hear may have the characteristics of event for us (although each sermon may become event for some others present), but the promise of this image may make us preach (and listen) more expectantly! At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the great Scottish preacher, Alexander Whyte of Free St. Georges, Edinburgh, had a profound effect on those who heard him. One who often heard him preach said, "You took your life in your hands when you went to hear him preach". Even today, when our language, style and content in preaching are necessarily different from his, Whyte's sermons on paper still give some idea of their event potential.

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<sup>7</sup> David H.C. Read, *Sent from God*, Abingdon, 1973, p31. John Claypool, *The Preaching Event*, Word Books, 1980, p28

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Another image of preaching is **sacrament**. Cranmer, whom Paul Hoon describes as the father of our English liturgies, "held that preaching (as well as prayer and meditation) is as 'fully effectual' a way of 'eating Christ's body spiritually' as participation in the Eucharist. 'The sacrament does not differ in essence from any other spiritual exercise. Just as preaching "putteth Christ into our ears" so the sacrament puts "Christ into our eyes, mouths, hands and all our senses."<sup>8</sup> Hoon adds that "Augustine defined preaching as an 'audible sacrament'". And a 1612-1614 Baptist Proposition says that "... the sacraments have the same use that the word has, that they are a visible word, and that they teach to the eyes of them that understand as the word teaches the ears of them (that hear)."

### Poetic Role

Some Protestants will not use the term sacrament even for Baptism or The Lord's Supper, and they would be surprised to see it applied to preaching. They think that 'sacrament' is a term corrupted by priestly misuse. But the important thing about a sacrament is what God does in and through it, not what priests, ministers, pastors and preachers believe they can do in and through it. Those who describe preaching as a sacrament believe that it has the potential for God to mediate his presence and power to those who hear. When Ruskin said, "Preaching is thirty minutes in which to raise the dead", he was, perhaps, signalling the sacramental potential of preaching!

For Christians who believe the Holy Spirit is active in the world and among people, this sacramental image of preaching falls easily into place. When a preacher presents her or his sermon in the gathered community, God by his Spirit may open the hearer's eyes to the preacher's "prophetic construct of a world beyond the one we take for granted", and may open the hearer's ears to the preacher's naming of "unseen patterns of grace." Where this happens, the sermon will have been a sacrament mediating the presence of God.

Even if our sermons have too often left our listeners thinking about the numbers on the hymn board, or surrendering to some other distraction, we should take heart. The image suggesting that preachers have a poetic role, and that their sermons may evoke new possibilities in the listening assembly, should encourage us to more diligent preparation. God will be the author of these new possibilities which is why we can describe them as encounter, event or sacrament. **BMD**

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<sup>8</sup> Paul W. Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship*, Abingdon, 1971, 107-107

### The Country Parson from Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*

Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,  
And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray...  
In arguing too, the parson own'd his skill,  
For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;  
While words of learned length and thund'ring sound  
Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd around  
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,  
That one small head could carry all he knew.



# Poor, Chaste, Obedient. As if!

**For Stuart Jenkins, minister of Grove Lane, Cheadle Hulme, to address the problem of what to do about ministers out of pastorate is to start from the wrong end.**

Hey! They can't tell me what to do! Isn't that neat? I'm not an employee, I'm the 'holder of an office.' I'm under no one's direction; the Church Meeting can't suddenly decide that I should take care of the buildings until a new caretaker can be found. I answer to God, not the church. My terms of settlement are not a contract of employment but an agreement that, for the time being, I will follow my calling in this place, with these people. I have extraordinary freedom to decide how to exercise my ministry.

On the other hand, the church has the right to give me nine months notice, not because I am incompetent or irresponsible or objectionable, but because they are tired of me, because they feel like a change, because, though I am hard-working and talented (suppose), I am not as young as I once was. They probably have the right to get rid of me if, for example, some of the congregation believe I have had an extramarital affair, even without proving this to be true. There will be no industrial tribunal. I am not an employee. There is no grievance procedure. I am not protected by laws about unfair dismissal.

Churches were specifically exempted from the legislation on sexual discrimination. They can probably get away with discriminating against people on the grounds of race, age, and disability too.

## **Stipend**

I don't get paid much. Of course, it depends who I compare myself with. I have far more money than many of the people I preach to, sit alongside, and pray with. It often feels right not to be too rich, and I'm not in it for the money. But at other times I compare in other directions. At budget time the television tells me what the average wage is and I start doing unhappy sums in my head. In the Baptist Times I read that, even after the large hikes of recent years, the Standard Stipend is still not comparable to other denominations. Anglicans, Methodists, URCS, Baptists - that's always been the order, hasn't it? I wonder why?

It's a funny thing, a stipend. It's not a salary. It's not payment for work done, it's more like a pension. It's income so that I don't have to work in an ordinary job. It's to set me free. The Church is good like that. At college they only asked for as much as I could afford (a bit less, actually). When the Community Charge came in, my stipend went up, not by an amount that reflected the church's saving on rates, but by enough to meet my family's new costs.

Mind you, we've only lived on just my stipend for brief (and testing) periods. Mostly we've been a two income family and it's in that context, as one of two wages, that my stipend can seem most inadequate. I am really glad that my wife earns an income, life is so much easier; but sometimes I feel that I'm not pulling my weight, that I'm being subsidised.

## **Manse**

I live in a manse. Some people call it a tied cottage. As soon as I left college I was in a pleasant home and never had to worry about roof timbers or replacement windows. I have no mortgage, and don't care much about Bank of England base rate decisions, don't fork out hundreds a month for bricks and mortar. And I know that, when I retire, the Retired Baptist Ministers Housing Society will do its best to find me a house to rent, very cheaply, where I want to live. Although, of course, they cannot guarantee this. And always assuming that I'm wanted in the Baptist ministry until I am sixty five.

We've often thought about buying a house, but it would always have meant moving somewhere smaller (hard when you have children), would never have been possible when we first arrived at a church but only after my wife had got a job, and so has been put off. I hope we don't live to regret the balance between cost and security that we've struck. I can't help noticing that, in these days of home-owning ministers and shared manse purchase, the advice to churches from Union and Association is always to do their utmost to stay in the property market, and to be, if possible, the majority partner in any shared purchase schemes. This is believed to be in the best interest of churches. I think I agree. And I don't like to think that my best interests might be in competition with the church's.

## **Flawed**

I've often thought about the peculiarities of my job, compared to the proper jobs other people have. I've thought about those strange words 'office holder,' 'stipend' and 'manse.' I've wondered why we do things the way we do in the Baptist churches, and whether we should do them differently.

In another setting the arrangements around ministry might include the words 'poverty, chastity and obedience.' This looks like one half of a covenant relationship. Those entering the church sacrifice something of their freedom, ambition, and family involvement. In return, there would be an expectation that the Church will offer secure support.

It's different for Baptists. Many of us are not only not chaste, but actually married, indeed, positively fecund. We smile at the idea of obedience. And yet, there are financial sacrifices made for the sake of ministry. Students and their partners leave jobs, even sell their homes in order to go through college. We accept the convenience of tied cottages and forego the security of home ownership. We understand the reasons why the stipend is relatively low, and accept it (we do believe in the mission of the Baptist churches).

These are modest sacrifices, but they are real ones, and made not only by ministers but by their families too. There is an answering commitment on the other side of the covenant relationship, too. There is the Retired Baptist Ministers Housing Society, with its stock of generously donated property. There is all the giving that goes on week by week in our churches, the bulk of which is applied to the welfare of ministers. There is the careful oversight of the Department of Ministry, its work and committees resourced by the time of staff and volunteers.

But when push comes to shove, the covenant relationship between Baptist ministers and the Church turns out to be flawed. Flawed by the same peculiarity that has given me problems throughout this article in deciding whether or not to give the word 'church' a

capital 'C.' There is no Baptist Church, only Baptist churches and a Union with limited structures and resources.

So when a minister reaches fifty five, say, has to terminate her appointment, and finds that she is no longer an attractive prospect for churches with pastoral vacancies, she has no grounds to complain to those local churches. They owe her nothing. And what can the Union do? It only has whatever resources the local churches give to it. Our hypothetical minister may feel let down, may feel that she has made sacrifices in the past and been encouraged to do so by the churches acting collectively to test and approve her call, train her, and recognise her ministry. Now she faces redundancy, and pension and housing problems. She may have a sense of grievance, but she has nowhere to take it. The other party to the covenant has vanished into thin air.

### Campaign

I suggest that Baptist ministry falls awkwardly between two different patterns of support, and that churches sometimes get the best of both worlds, and ministers the worst. On the one hand is the traditional model of a covenant relationship in which ministers make themselves dependent on the Church and the Church exercises a commitment towards them. It is an attractive model, and can offer real freedom to ministers, though it is under considerable strain from changing patterns of family life, especially the two income family. On the other hand, there is the free-market pattern, in which ministers have a series of arrangements with different churches but remain essentially independent. This pattern, though, can only be partially realised as long as ministers live in manses, effectively receiving much of their remuneration in kind, and being tied, for housing, to the

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continuation of their ministry.

Either pattern could work, but for the first to work with justice, the churches must find some way of fulfilling their responsibility to ministers out of pastorate and in retirement, to act collectively; as a 'Church', in fact. They should also take steps to ensure that their freedom from legal enforcement of good employment practice is not a licence to behave shabbily or ignore the reality of unwitting discrimination. For the second to work properly, the stipend needs to be increased to a level which enables ministers to buy their own homes and take responsibility for their own financial security. In this case, churches should probably allow ministers the protection of employee status, or enter into contracts with them.

At present we work neither system consistently, As long as ministers remain in pastorate, the problem is not acute. Their covenant with the church is expressed serially. But when they are out of pastorate, the commitment of the Church cannot easily be expressed. Out-of-pastorate grants are unable to meet the need. After two years the minister's situation will be reviewed, and the question seems to be 'has this person's calling come to an end?' The implication being that if it has, so has the churches' obligation. Unfortunately, the logic here is liable to be rather circular, the main evidence of the ending of the call being the lack of interest by the churches in this person. I hope the good will that exists in abundance within the Baptist family ensures that there are not too many severe casualties, but I fear there must be some and will surely be more.

I can only see things changing if ministers lead their churches in addressing these difficult issues. And there's the rub: who wants to embark on a contentious campaign which may appear to be mainly about ensuring their own future? Perhaps the best chance is if we begin, not from the problem of what to do about ministers out of pastorate, but from the nature of the relationships between minister and church, and between minister and churches. In short, what is the difference between an induction and an ordination? **B.M.J.**

### **The Revd. Rep.**

I suspect that the emphasis placed of late - and rightly placed - on the ministry of the whole people of God has had the side-effect of obscuring the role of the ordained ministry. We who exercise this ministry have been brought up with our own various models of how it should be exercised. Do we now need a new model, which will express and nourish the relationships which deeper insight into the meaning of the body of Christ has revealed? As a cockshy, how about that of a good and godly Rep.?

*- Peter Baelz, former Dean of Durham*



# A Stray Strikes Back

**A church member takes issue with Colin Sedgwick's article 'In Search of Strays' in the *Journal's* last issue.**

Baptists are individualists. This means we have strengths and weaknesses because we are individualists. New members are briefly fussed into membership, but later neglected. We are told we must stand on our own feet. Let's face it, a year after conversion, in the local average church, you are on your own. It's a case of sink or swim.

Baptists have little sense of solidarity. In the Christian battle it is presumed that you are maturing and coping amidst life's stresses and strains. Each Sunday we greet one another with "How are You? All right?" then move away without waiting for an answer. Nobody really wants to hear the answer. In Baptist churches, any casualty in life's battle who wants to pour his or her troubles into your ear is regarded as a bit of a bore.

Life must go on, and Colin's practical advice is good and will be helpful to working ministers. It is not ideal for a church to have to carry "dead wood". However, I am convinced that, if a fraction of the time and effort which is devoted to evangelism, and conferences on topics like "Leadership", was given to pastoral care of the weak and "the strays", then we might staunch the current haemorrhage in our national church membership. Evangelism without loving pastoral care is like trying to fill that bath with both taps running and the plug out!

So when names are removed at the church meeting, for whatever reason, nobody is surprised. The implication is that these errant members are deadwood anyway. They have rejected the pack, so the pack must reject them - they are failures, we are the faithful. Even the title, "strays", is a loaded description - the implication is that the shepherds and the flock do not stray, it must be "the strays" who are deviant and out of step. So, having chopped half a dozen names off the membership list (as required by the constitution - that relieves the faithful of any lingering guilt), the church closes ranks and moves on to the next business. . . "Now the woodworm in the roof - we have some estimates". Thus the impression seems to be given - people don't matter - property does. The world's values have invaded the churches.

## **Reversed Values**

After the Church Business Meeting, we go home. "The strays" have been dealt with. Hardly anyone ever talks about them - they are no longer our problem. Their welfare and spiritual future needs are not our responsibility. It is all rather reminiscent of the Communist trials in 1930's Russia. During the purges, thousands of faithful party members were imprisoned, and many were murdered. They were deviants, revisionists, the decay had to be cut out of the body.

Using Paul's metaphor of the body, when I hurt my toe or finger, it is not just the injured part that hurts - the whole person suffers. But when a church excises members, the spiritual body does not seem to feel pain. There seems to be no real sense of loss, no mourning. We wept with joy when Joe was baptized into the church, but we can discharge him

whether he wants to go or not, and we never shed a tear. It is no longer people we are concerned with, they are just an item in the Minute Book.

What about our ecclesiology and soteriology here? Do we presume that those outside the body of the church are no longer in the Lamb's Book of Life? But if they are beyond the pale (our pale anyway), and are still Christians, what does that tell us about (i) the individual believer, and (ii) the relationship of a member to the Church?

It's as if the offender had ceased to exist, like the ancient Romans, who cut the names of the disgraced out of their memorials, it's as if these separated sisters and brethren have ceased to be - the 99 are more important than the one lost sheep. We have reversed the Gospel's values in our drive for administrative efficiency.

At this point, I must raise the question, "Do we, at any time, consider the failure of the church, which might have led to the non-attender separating from the congregation? Colin doesn't touch on this point. Perhaps he has a well-nigh perfect Church. In that case why do people lapse?

### **Out of Step**

Of course, in these situations, it is assumed that the non-attender is the problem. If only he/she would repent and start attending regularly, that would solve the problem. But perhaps it would not solve that individual's problem.

The fact is that sometimes demission of members is a failure of the Church itself. We know that Churches also need to repent. The risen Christ told the Church at Ephesus to repent (Rev 2.5). History shows that repentance was often a prelude to spiritual revival. There are failed churches as well as failed individuals. The question needs to be asked, "When a Church demits its members, is it not usurping the place of Christ who alone has authority and who alone is Head of His Church?

What has triggered off this article is simply that, whether Colin believes it or not, I am now virtually one of "the strays". For the first time since I was converted, I am no longer in good standing with my local Baptist Church. By not attending the church, I am in breach of the by-laws. But I have a good conscience. I believe that the church is out of step with the Holy Spirit while I am seeking to be true to scripture and to my conscience. It is worth remembering that, at one time, Martin Luther, was in the same position. Someone once wrote a book called "The Church's debt to Heretics". When members are removed from the roll, it need not be to their disgrace. At one time I believe William Carey's orthodoxy was suspect because of his world vision. So we need, when we are faced with the problem of deviant members, to consider honestly who is out of step with the Lord, the "strays" or the Church - or both?

### **Embarrassment**

In my case, the church has never taken any initiative to effect reconciliation. The pastor has regularly visited, but has never asked "Why do you not attend? What is your problem? Have we failed you?" In his position I feel I would certainly have done this, following Colin's own practice, and would have asked a couple of deacons also to keep up regular visiting to try and work out some reconciliation. But the church has maintained an impassive face. I am an embarrassment to the church - it is easier to ignore the problem

and hope it (me) will literally go away. No doubt, one day, I will receive a letter threatening the removal of my name from the Church Roll. This will be embarrassing both for the church and myself. I remember as a young person, hearing that a recently retired Baptist minister was now a member of the Church of Scotland. I could not understand it, how could he be so disloyal? But I understand how it could happen now.

I am sure Colin is a man of great integrity and pastoral concern, but some of his statements give the impression that he is more concerned for the righteous than for the lapsed members. He is, I'm sure, a faithful pastor, and he does, in the closing paragraphs, try to put himself into the shoes of those who are "the strays". But all through the article, and I've scanned it a few times, the implication is that the lapsed members are the guilty ones, never a suggestion that the church has failed them. If the failed church member should repent, shouldn't the church that has failed them also repent? Marriage Guidance Counsellors know that when a marriage fails, there is never an innocent and guilty party. There is usually failure on both sides. So what does this tell us about our practice of removing names from membership rolls, and Jesus' command to forgive an offender seventy times seven?

## **Repentance**

A minister's whole life can be wrapped up in the local church - often to the neglect of his or her own family. But that's not the case with most lay persons. Only a segment of their lives are invested in the church. I know that a lay person is still a church member while at their daily work, but the point is - they are not consciously giving time and attention to their Church relationships seven days and nights a week. They have other obligations, to family, community, etc. They are dedicated to Christ 100%, but that doesn't mean their local church can claim 100% of their time.

So it is easy for a local minister to begin to scold church members who don't seem so totally committed to the church as the pastor is. In fact, we know, the minister is largely shielded from a hostile world, while the lay person is living and working at the interface between a godless society and the Christian community. The lay person knows tensions and conflicts from which ministers are absolved. Have ministers therefore the right to put themselves up as examples of fidelity, when they are not being tried and tested as much as their deacons, and their members? I once heard of a prominent Christian preacher saying jocularly, "I wonder if we would attend two Sunday services every Sunday for fifty two weeks in the year, if it wasn't part of our job to do so?"

Of course Church members make promises of loyalty to the church and I do not defend those who lightly neglect those promises. Of course our loyalty to Christ also demands that we show loyalty to our church. But I am questioning why we tend to assume that Christians who fall away from their church must be out of step. Not only with the church but with the Lord of the Church. I am asking why churches don't examine themselves before demitting members, I am suggesting that repentance should operate in both parties.

## **Rejection**

I will not go into all the reasons why I find myself out of fellowship with my local Baptist Church. No doubt, part of the failure is mine. But bearing in mind the church's responsibility to minister to its members, as well as the individual member's responsibility to support the church, before we demit lapsed members, should the church not go through



an exercise of self-examination? Is the question never asked "How have we failed our brother / sister that they have left us?" Again the Revelation passage, chapters 1-3 is relevant here reminding us that there are unfaithful churches as well as deviant individuals. The minister's only attempt to be helpful was to suggest that we transfer membership. This seemed to be the final rejection.

For our spiritual nourishment we are now cast upon the services of other churches, like nomads we wander from one to another. We link our family prayers to the B.B.C. Daily Service, and it is a comfort to know we are worshipping with all Christians, and "with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven", but I feel like my little daughter who was frightened of the dark, and when I put her to bed saying "God is with you, dear." she piped up, "Yes but I want a God with skin on his face".

I write this article to counter-balance Colin's and to show that there are lapsed Church members who represent another side of the fractured relationship. The failing is not all on one side.

### **Delusion**

I would just add a coda which is linked with my main thrust, but which is not precisely the same. Our culture is increasingly youth orientated, and, for many reasons, lots of our churches seem to be falling into the same groove - they live with the delusion that the Church's youth represent the Church of tomorrow. I was told that when I was sixteen, but none of my friends from that period are found within any churches today. The fact that I am still a practising Christian within the fellowship of Christ's Church is simply because I received the encouragement and nurture which I am missing from the church today. A segment of the church, the 60's plus, feels itself alienated from modern worship styles, and finds itself marginalised.

The ancient Greeks said a society should be judged by its treatment of children and the elderly. The African Churches give great respect and reverence to the elderly - which contrasts with the current attitude of the media, and sadly, with many of our churches in this country also. Small wonder that many of these senior citizens are amongst "the strays", at one time many of them were the backbone of their churches, who bore the heat and burden of the day. **BM**

***Ed: Articles are only published anonymously when there is good reason, as in this case, and then only when authorship has been acknowledged.***

### **in God's own life**

The Church is not the sum of individual believers in communion with God. It is not primarily a communion of believers with each other. It is their common partaking in God's own life whose innermost being is communion. Thus it is a divine and human reality.

*- The Nature and Purpose of the Church, WCC Faith and order Paper No.181*

# Still Enjoying My Job

**Geoff Walters enthuses over his new ministry.**

At the beginning of last year I left the pastoral ministry of Ashford Baptist Church to become Senior Chaplain to the Pilgrims Hospices of East Kent. Currently this group consists of two hospices at Canterbury and Margate, with a third about to be built on my "old patch" at Ashford. At the time it felt like an unusual thing to be doing but I have since discovered that I was following something of a trend in two respects. Firstly, there has been a movement within the hospice world towards full-time professional chaplaincy. I was in fact the first full-time chaplain at Pilgrims and a year later was pleased to welcome a full-time colleague to care for our hospice in Margate. Secondly, I have since encountered a number of Baptist colleagues in various parts of the country and do not feel myself quite as much of an oddity in an Anglican world as I might at first have expected.

One thing about my move that was unusual however was that it did not involve - like most Baptist ministerial moves - a trek across the country and I am still in fairly frequent contact with the inhabitants of my "previous life". Members of my old church still look at me a little quizzically. "Are you still enjoying your job?" they ask. I smile broadly and say, "Yes, it's brilliant!" This answer is met with a gaze of incredulity. The timid reply, "Oh good!"; the more daring ask, "But don't you find it terribly depressing?" How do you respond to such a question? Of course there are plenty of sadnesses in this job. Sometimes the sadnesses accumulate. But then there were sadnesses in being a church's pastoral leader too. So how can I convey the fact that this is perhaps the most fascinating ministry I have ever exercised? It may be that readers of this journal are equally incredulous and so I welcome the opportunity to give a little flavour of life in the hospice movement through this article.

## **Cloak**

There are perhaps few Baptist ministers who have not been through the doors of a hospice. If a visit was not part of pastoral training then it is usually something encountered early in ministry when a member of the congregation, friend or contact finds themselves in need of the unique kind of help that hospices offer. So probably most readers will be already past the stage of revelation experienced by some of our patients and their families. "I was dreading coming here," they will typically say, "I expected it to be a gloomy place - a place where people just die. But it is so lovely and peaceful." Now it might be worth saying that the sense of "peace" encountered in a hospice is like that of a swan gliding over the water - the picture under the surface isn't always quite so calm. Nevertheless, it is a credit to the normal, fallible human beings who staff most hospices, that this is precisely the kind of experience that many people encounter on their first visit.

Of course, the sense of tasteful homeliness can sometimes be overdone. I heard someone recently compare the typical hospice decor to that of a Sanderson or Laura Ashley showroom! But more important than the furnishing is the feeling that people have that here is a place where I am listened to and taken seriously as a full human being and not as a hopeless medical case. It is often sensed as a contrast with the feeling of

*Baptist Ministers' Journal July 1999*

impersonalism that, with the best will in the world, and the best efforts of caring staff, is often experienced in a large and busy hospital. It is gratifying when patients say, "It's like a four-star hotel". It is even more satisfying when they say, "It feels like home."

So widespread has the modern hospice movement become that it is difficult to believe that, in its present form at least, it is not yet forty years old. It can be traced back to the pioneering work of an ex-nurse turned social worker called (later Dame) Cicely Saunders, an evangelical Christian, at that time a member of All Soul's, Langham Place. Cicely tried to persuade the medical staff at St. Joseph's, the Roman Catholic hospice where she worked, that such drugs as morphine could be used, not just to give temporary relief when pain reached an intolerable crescendo, but that, administered on a regular basis, they could offer a vastly improved quality of life to patients suffering from terminal diseases like cancer. On being told that her opinions would not be taken seriously because she was not a doctor, she went off to study medicine and returned to put her revolutionary ideas into practice.

Thus, there came into being a whole new medical discipline called *palliative medicine*. Deriving its name from the Latin word for a cloak, this is a branch of medicine which has as its objective not the cure of disease, but the relief of symptoms enabling patients who know their life expectancy to be limited to direct their minds and emotions to other concerns than such all-absorbing experiences as those of pain, nausea or breathlessness.

Dame Cicely founded also a tangible symbol of her new concept of care for terminally ill patients, in the shape of St. Christopher's Hospice in South London which is in reality the mother of the modern world-wide hospice movement. Being a typical prototype, St. Christopher's has in many ways been overtaken by its own offspring. More recently built hospices tend to be smaller, more intimate and look less like hospitals. Nevertheless, directly or indirectly, it is to the model and inspiration of St. Christopher's that subsequent hospices owe their origin.

## **Confidentiality**

The spread of hospices in the past thirty years or so has been truly phenomenal. It is not simply that few areas of the British Isles do not now have a hospice within reach, with more coming into being year by year. It is that hospice is taking root in more and more countries of the world and developing in increasingly different cultural forms. During the months that I have worked at Pilgrims, for example, we have received visitors from the U.S.A., Russia, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Cyprus, Kenya, France, Spain and Sweden most of whom are already working in well-established hospices or palliative care units in their own countries. It has proved clearly to be an idea whose time has come, one of the great human achievements of recent times. And, in terms of the origin both of the movement and of many individual hospices, it can be said to have been largely a Christian achievement.

It will, I hope, be clear that the concept of hospice is not simply about a different kind of medical care. An important part of the legacy of Dame Cicely to the movement is her overriding concern that patients be treated not as cases or as examples of a disease but as complete, individual and unique human beings. The aim is that palliative medicine should remove debilitating symptoms in order to allow patients to feel themselves to be human again and perhaps to give their attention to other concerns they may have -



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personal, social, emotional, creative, intellectual or spiritual. It is for this reason that our group of hospices - like most others - employs a range of professions and disciplines in addition to doctors and nurses and the necessary ancillaries of administrative and domestic staff. We have social workers, counsellors, complementary therapists (practising, in our case, aromatherapy and reflexology), physiotherapists, diversional therapists, a hospice artist, volunteer hairdressers and manicurists and a kitchen staff who take a creative interest in patients' individual dietary needs and preferences. And then there are chaplains!

This is not to say that such team work always operates easily and smoothly. It is sometimes a struggle to prevent the "bio-medical" model from predominating where doctors and nurses outnumber the rest. Tension can arise between those disciplines trained to relieve pain and those trained to "stay with" a different kind of pain (counsellors and chaplains, for example). For a minister (perhaps especially a Baptist one!), used to exercising a relatively autonomous role in the pastoral care of a church, being part of a team of such highly qualified and diverse professionals brings its own special rewards and challenges. Issues of confidentiality (the confidentiality of the team versus the confidentiality of the pastor, for instance) also naturally arise. The wonder is, not that such team work presents difficulties, but that it works as well and as often as it does.

### **Costs**

One misconception which ought by now to have been overcome is the idea that a hospice is simply a place where you go to die. At Pilgrims, the average stay as an in-patient is about two weeks and most admissions end when the patient goes home. In fact the hospice community is much wider than the number of in-patients at any one time. For most of our patients, the first contact with the hospice is likely to come in the form of one of our "Palliative Advisory Team", a specialist nurse who works with the patient at home in co-operation with G.P., hospital specialists and community nurses. In addition or instead, a patient may be referred to the Day Centre. Each of our hospices operates a Day Centre every weekday where up to 10 different patients per day will meet, be involved in various activities (including occasional worship) and hopefully form a community of trust and shared experience.

By the time a stay in the hospice is necessary, it has, for many, ceased to be such a threatening place. This will usually be for the relief of symptoms and may be followed by subsequent admissions when particular problems arise, drug regimes need to be reviewed or patient and carer at home need a period of respite. Sometimes too patients come to die in an environment where they feel safe and know themselves to be surrounded by the necessary care. Equally death may occur later at home, in hospital or a nursing home. A number of patients, whom I first met fifteen months before writing this article are still very much alive. It also has to be said that in the same period over 300 people who have been hospice patients in Canterbury alone have died. Almost all of these I have known to some extent and with many I have been quite intimately involved. This is one of the special costs of what is otherwise very rewarding work.


I have stressed earlier the high level of Christian influence in the early years of the hospice movement. The second generation, however, presents a more complex picture. Again my own hospice group provides an interesting case history. The first Pilgrims Hospice was opened in Canterbury in 1982. It was the result of the compassionate vision of a

Christian woman, Ann Robertson, who was awarded an OBE for her achievements in this year's honours list. Ann, now an Anglican lay-reader as well as chair of Pilgrims Hospices, was in the late 1970s a community nurse who caught a glimpse from a visit to St. Christopher's of what might be possible in East Kent. There was a great deal of input from churches and individual Christians into the process that brought Ann's vision to reality. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the group logo features a very prominent cross between two caring hands, Pilgrims was never a religious institution. A survey of the current staff now would no doubt reveal a complete cross-section of religious views including, of course, many whose world-view would be completely secular.

## Companions

The hospice movement, like many other historical humanitarian movements which have their origin in impulses inspired by Christian compassion, is undergoing a process of secularisation. This may be resisted by some Christians. The St. Columba's Fellowship, for example, exists to maintain a visible Christian presence in the hospice movement. No-one would want to argue, however, that Christians have a monopoly of compassion and many find great excitement in serving Christ alongside others who may have different motivations for the same aims. Chaplains, of course work within the tensions created by this development. No wonder that the theme of this year's Conference of the Association of Hospice Chaplains was *Spirituality and Secularisation*.

Most chaplains, in fact, myself included, would resist any attempt to define our work in narrowly religious terms. The giving of religious care can easily become reduced to giving care to religious people. Rather, we would see ourselves as having a responsibility to all our patients of whatever faith or none. This does not imply a form of "last-chance evangelism" but a drawing alongside all kinds of people at a point of great crisis in their lives. Many issues arise for people at such a time that they may well want to discuss with a representative of Christian faith - or they may simply appreciate a companion on the journey. Sometimes, within this process of interaction, wonderful things happen in people's lives: like the lady whom I recently baptised at the age of 72 in the hospice chapel or the man who discovered faith for the first time in his illness, who took communion from me and then asked me what it meant. It is tempting, writing for Baptist colleagues, to say that these are the sort of thing that make the work worth while. It is truer to say, however, that every encounter has something of great value to offer and that one sometimes finds Christ looking out from the most surprising pairs of eyes.

Finally, here is a rare attempt to address Baptist ministers, from the world of hospice. Can I encourage you to believe that it is not really such a strange and frightening world? There is probably a hospice near you. Do not wait until you have to go in to visit someone. Search out the chaplain and get to know him or her. Find out what you can offer or learn for your own ministry. When someone you are caring for needs the hospices services it will be so much easier if you are working in co-operation with those whose ministry is exercised there all the time. Who knows where it may lead? Opportunities to serve in hospices are arising all the time - and there is still room for more Baptists! 

**Ed: Rev. Dr. Geoff Walters is the author of *Why Do Christians Find it Hard to Grieve?* (Paternoster, 1997)**

# People Who Fit the Bill

**Alastair Campbell, New Testament tutor at Spurgeon's College, argues that the recovery of a separate order of evangelists is not just a matter of faithfulness to Scripture.**

The word 'evangelist' is rare in the NT, occurring just three times, all significantly in NT documents that are closely associated with the Pauline mission and which either presuppose or provide for the church situation in the absence of the Apostle.<sup>1</sup> In other words the word 'evangelist' makes a late and brief appearance in one section of the early church, not being heard of again until it re-emerges to denote the writers of the Gospels<sup>2</sup>. It would be a great mistake, however, to confine our investigations only to those passages which use a particular word, for if the word 'evangelist' is rare, the concept of evangelist is not at all rare, and it can be expressed by other words and by stories which describe evangelisation but do not use the word 'evangelist'. We shall start with the stories.

During his ministry Jesus sent the Twelve and then as many as seventy, or seventy-two, to preach the gospel of the Kingdom in word and deed. The Twelve are referred to as apostles (Mk 6:30, Lk 6:13) and this mission was probably the origin of the Christian use of the term, but what were these people if they were not evangelists? They occupied no office, and nothing is said of their gifting, but as long as their mission lasted they preached the gospel and so must be called 'gospellers' or evangelists, and the instructions Jesus gave them have always been seen as setting out principles relevant to evangelists and missionaries in any age. Secondly, when Barnabas and Saul are sent out by the church at Antioch on what has become known as Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3), it is not said that the church looked out two evangelists to send. Barnabas and Saul are introduced as prophets and teachers with a settled ministry among the believers (1:26). The church in fact set apart some of the best leaders it had for this significant new work of evangelisation, people with a proven record as preachers and teachers in a pastoral, church-planting context. Luke subsequently calls them 'apostles' (14:4, 14), the only time he uses the word of people other than in the Twelve. The word here means no more than 'missionary', and describes Paul and Barnabas as those sent out to preach by the church. They could equally well have been called 'evangelists', had the word been in general use at the time.

## Coined

Turning from stories to vocabulary, we note that if the noun *εὐαγγελιστής/evangelist* is rare the verb *εὐαγγελιζέσθαι/evangelise* is common enough (25 times in Luke/Acts, 21 times in Paul), and in default of evidence to the contrary we should assume that an evangelist is someone who evangelises. To this should be added the occurrences of the synonymous verb *κηρυσσεῖν/to preach* (17 times in Luke/Acts, 19 times in Paul), though

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<sup>1</sup> The authorship and dates of the relevant documents are disputed. Those who accept the Pauline authorship of Ephesians and the Pastorals should still agree that these letters come from the end of the apostle's life and at least prepare for the situation created by his absence. The same would apply to Acts, if that document is given an early date, but most scholars would think it post-pauline, though arguably by a companion of Paul.

<sup>2</sup> See further, Alastair Campbell, 'Do The Work of an Evangelist', *EvQ* 64, 1992, 117-130

interestingly the cognate noun κηρυξ /herald is as rare as ευαγγελιστης . The Acts of the Apostles and Paul's letters combine to show that Paul was hardly ever without partners in ministry, some of whom were part of his mission and in some sense under his authority, and others recognised by him as independent colleagues in the same business.<sup>3</sup> Paul uses no official titles to denote these people, not only not 'evangelist' but not 'teacher' or 'prophet' or 'leader' either. He develops his language of 'gifts' in the service of calling on the churches to esteem all their members as gifts of God, not for bestowing titles of honour or office on individuals.<sup>4</sup> Instead he refers to his co-workers whether locally based or itinerant by a variety of common words of which the most common are συνεργοι / fellow workers , and αδελφοι /brothers. At other times he refers to them and to himself as διακονοι /servants, and in this context the term has been shown to mean 'preachers' or 'teachers'<sup>5</sup> The sense of διακονος in fact cannot be limited to waiting at table, but referred both in the Hellenistic world and in the NT to those who performed a representative task whether as the diakonoi of God or of human principals.<sup>6</sup> This means that in its original Christian sense diakonoV is not basically different from αποστολος /apostle, and both need to be considered when building up a NT picture of evangelists.

The basic meaning of αποστολος is 'messenger' and this usage is found in the NT, both on the lips of Jesus with reference to himself (John 13:16, cf Heb 3: 1), and of messengers sent by churches on various errands (Phil 2:25, 2Cor 8:23). From a very early point in time it was used to refer to a group, apparently wider than the Twelve (Rom 16:7, 1 Cor 15:5), who were active in spreading the gospel, though we have no means of knowing how large the group was or how a person came to belong to it. As travelling preachers 'apostles' are still found active as late as the Didache (Did. 11: 1-6). These people should all be seen as 'evangelists'. Before long, however, the term 'apostle came to mean something more specific, someone personally commissioned by the risen Christ. It is in this sense that Paul insists that he too is an apostle (1 Cor 9: 1), and it is likely that the controversy over Paul's status contributed to the narrowing of the term, so that in the perspective of the second generation 'apostle' comes to mean one of the Twelve, or the Twelve plus Paul, one of the original witnesses whose testimony guarantees the truth of the Christian message. Peter in Acts 1:21-22 requires a replacement apostle to be among those 'men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us', enabling such a person to 'become a witness with us of his resurrection'. Ephesians also places the 'apostles' in the founding generation (2:20, 3:5), while the Pastorals present Paul as apostle in a sense that clearly does not apply to, for example, Timothy. It is because they needed a word to describe those who did what the apostles had done, but who were not themselves apostles as the term was now to be understood, that the writers of the second generation coined the term 'evangelist', and we shall now examine each occurrence of the word.

## Shoulders

We begin with Eph 4:11-12, as the most important reference, since here for the first time the ministry of the church is the subject of sustained theological reflection. When

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<sup>3</sup> See E.E. Ellis, 'Paul and his Co-Workers', NTS, 17, 1970, pp437-452 for what follows

<sup>4</sup> See especially 1 Cor. 12

<sup>5</sup> Ellis, op cit p442. Cf D Georgi, The Opponents of Paul in 2 Corinthians, Edinburgh: Clark, 1987, pp27-32

<sup>6</sup> See J.N. Collins, Diakonia, Oxford: OUP, 1990



we put these verses in the context of 4:1-16 we see that the readers are being assured that God has given them all they need to lead a life worthy of their calling and all that the church needs to grow in love and unity. In particular, the ascended Christ has returned through the Spirit at Pentecost with gifts for his church, the various ministries here mentioned.<sup>7</sup> The idea of every member having or bringing a gift, familiar to us from the earlier Pauline letters (1 Cor. 12:41, Rom 12:6-8), is here developed to focus not on every member but on the church's leaders in particular. As A.T. Lincoln puts it: 'What does the exalted Christ give to the church?

He gives people, these particular people who proclaim the word and lead.'<sup>8</sup> The writer mentions five gifts, or rather four, since 'pastors and teachers' are best understood here to be referring to one group.<sup>9</sup> The apostles and prophets elsewhere in Ephesians are closely linked together and seen as the foundation of the church (2:20), the original receivers of the revelation by which the church lives (3:5). As such they necessarily belong to the first generation, so that Lincoln is probably right to say that, 'In the post-apostolic period it is the evangelists who carry out many of the activities of the apostles and it is the pastors who now exercise the leadership role alongside the teachers, previously exercised by the prophets'<sup>10</sup> If so, at the present time the church is built up and kept safe through the leadership of evangelists and pastor-teachers, who stand on the shoulders of the apostles and prophets, and who form the vessels through whom the Head supplies the rest of the body (4:16). The passage does not intend to describe the constitution of the church, but to emphasise the richness of God's giving. The thought is not of gifted people, but of a gifted church, and her gifts should not be seen as offices, but as people through whose activity blessing has come to the church. It is not said that these people have gifts, but that they are gifts, the gifts of Christ to enable his church to grow. What the activity of evangelists in particular might be is not stated, but if the parallel between apostles and evangelists is soundly drawn it would be reasonable to see it in terms of initiating Christian work and venturing into new areas with the gospel. There is no doubt that the church should pray for such gifts today, and set aside men and women for such work, but this passage does not tell us what kind of person we should be looking for.

## Frontiers

We may turn next to the brief notice of Philip the evangelist in Acts 21:8. Not much can be deduced from this. Luke probably describes Philip in this way to distinguish him from Philip the apostle, and this exactly reflects the way in which the word came to be used. As we have seen, when the word 'apostle' came increasingly to denote a closed group of original witnesses, those who engaged in the evangelistic work that the original apostles had done were known as evangelists. Luke may also intend to mark Philip out as 'that Philip whose evangelistic exploits I have already told you about', or Philip may even have been given this nickname because of his well-known pioneering achievements. In either case this will not have been an office Philip held, but a name he acquired, and which he acquired in virtue of the work he did not the gift he had. Luke does not talk in

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<sup>7</sup> Following G.B. Caird's interpretation of vv8-10. See Paul's letters from Prison, Oxford: OUP, 1976, 73-75

<sup>8</sup> A.T. Lincoln, Word Biblical Commentary 42; Ephesians, Dallas: Word, 1990, 249


<sup>9</sup> This is because the definite article that appears before each of the first four is not repeated before 'teachers', suggesting the kai is expegetic. See M. Barth, Anchor Bible 42a: Ephesians 4-6; j New York, Doubleday, 1974, 438-9. Lincoln, however, op cit 250, allows no more than 'close association of functions between two types of ministers.

<sup>10</sup> Lincoln, op cit 250

terms of 'gifts' at all, but if he did he would think of gift-recognised-through-work not of work-assigned-on-the-basis-of-gift.

That 'evangelist' should be defined in terms of work done rather than particular abilities or traits of character displayed would seem to be confirmed by the third reference, 2 Tim 4:5. This verse addresses the 'resident church leader' and calls on him to 'do the work of an evangelist'. That may seem a surprising assertion in view of what we know of Timothy as a member of Paul's itinerant mission. However, I think we must distinguish between the historical figure of Timothy as we glimpse him from brief references in the earlier letters and in Acts, and Timothy as the implied reader of this letter. Whatever kind of ministry Timothy may have had in reality, there seems to me no doubt that the Pastorals are concerned with establishing a resident ministry (1 Tim 3:1-13), for which 'Timothy' is to provide a pattern. He is to model the role of church leader, or episkopos (1Tim 4:11-16). He is to be 'the man of God' witnessing by his life and his work in the situation in which he finds himself (1 Tim 6:11, 2 Tim 3:17). In particular, he is to preach the word and bring its moral challenge to bear (2 Tim 3:16-4:4), and he is to 'do the work of an evangelist'. This no less than pastoral preaching is a part of his work. There is no suggestion that this is an exceptional or temporary requirement. On the contrary, it is a clear call for him, and those who follow him, to be concerned for those outside the church as well as those inside, 'to make Christ known on the frontiers between church and society' in fact. But how could he do that if he needed a special gift for the work?

Both Scripture and experience convince me that in our search for evangelists we are starting in the wrong place and asking the wrong question. Rather than starting with people who feel called to be evangelists, accrediting them, and asking the churches to find them jobs, it would be better to call on the church to create evangelistic opportunities and then asking what sort of person they need to fill each post. Such a post might come about by a church surveying its neighbourhood and weighing up its opportunities and responsibilities, or by several small churches coordinating their efforts and pooling their resources, or through an Association pioneering a new work or setting up an itinerant work. In any of these cases the job would be defined first, and the evangelist would simply be someone who fitted the bill. Instead of calling on the Union to recognise evangelists, we should call on accredited ministers to recognise evangelism, that is to recognise that it is an essential part of their calling 'to make Christ known on the frontiers between church and society', and to seek whether by in-service training or the re-ordering of priorities to fulfil it better.

**Ed: This article is an interpretation of the New Testament evidence behind the views expressed by Dr Campbell in his contribution to the July 1998 Journal, "Whom shall We send?"** 

### Costly loving

Evangelism must begin with the costly loving of those who cannot afford the price we set.

- Robert M E Paterson

# J-Mail

## Creating something where there was nothing.

*From Bob Paul, Industrial chaplain in Newport and Gwent.*

Dear Journal,

Ian Hargreaves' article in the January Baptist Ministers' Journal raises a number of interesting issues, but I wish to comment particularly on his conclusion. He suggests that the churches have a wonderful opportunity because the government has a definite role for the voluntary sector in achieving its plans for the community. But are the churches to be seen as no more than social agencies in the voluntary sector? And are the voluntary organizations generally happy with their lot?

On the first point, Ian seems to see the

churches as merely social agencies no different from the rest of the voluntary sector. He does not appear to recognize that they might have distinctive purposes and roles and that they might be facing particular problems. The church that he describes is hardly typical and the range of activities that he lists hardly core in nature though many of us would value them greatly.

Concentrating on social action rather than worship and belief, Ian by-passes the questions of faith within and without the church, and of the set of values that shapes our personal and corporate lives. We are very much a collection of selfish, materialistic and greedy individuals who have lost many of the caring skills that bound families and communities together. Even many who do care about others see the church as irrelevant and faith as outmoded and quaint. A consequence of this is that a large number of churches are weak and out of touch with the



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communities around them. They are often quite unable to tackle the spiritual, social and material problems that surround them.

Before going on to my second main point about Ian's article, I would add that despite questioning his optimism, I do not go along with the extreme pessimism of the recent Free Church Council of Wales report featured in the November 1998 Free Church Chronicle. This talks of social collapse, moral bankruptcy and national disintegration and links all this to the emptying of Churches and Sunday Schools. That paints far too gloomy a picture. But it does get us looking in the right place and direction. The real problems facing us today are those of moral values, social cohesion and spiritual belief. In trying to address these areas I would suggest that the church is today fighting a battle against great odds.

Having said that I must add that, in the course of my ministry as an Industrial chaplain in the South Wales Steel Industry, I come across a great many people who do care about others and are concerned about the break up of family and community and about the values that shape society today. It was because of his great concern about the predominance of greed that Lord Brookman, until recently General Secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, asked chaplains in the steel industry to write a regular column for the union's newspaper.

Then there is the question of the voluntary sector in general. Many of the caring charities feel that the government is loading on to them tasks that are too much for them. Charities that are having to enter into binding contracts to supply services to local authorities and having to satisfy the increasingly high standards of accountability demanded by the Charity Commission, are finding it more and more difficult to find trustees. People are scared of the responsibility. If charities are to fulfil the demands being made upon them by government they will need more than mere

monetary support, vital though that be. The voluntary sector needs more people who care and are willing to get involved, devote time and take responsibility.

We need the moral and spiritual revolution called for in the Free Church Council report. The report says rightly that the government cannot achieve that on its own. But it does point out that the government must help create the culture in which it can happen, in which people are encouraged to believe that others do matter and that caring is important. It must also create a framework of support which gives people the confidence and the gifts that they need to play their part in the voluntary sector.

I would suggest that the church's real task is to get stuck into the business of values and beliefs and to try to change both the attitudes of individuals and the culture of society and its institutions. Social action is important but alongside it we need an effective challenge to a lot of the assumptions of individual people and of government as to why we are here and how we should be using our gifts and our resources. I hope that the government will prove as ready to listen to the churches' challenges and criticisms as it is to accept their help in achieving its own vision. I hope also that it will recognize that it is in danger of overloading the voluntary sector and needs to offer more support and a greater variety of support. **B.M.J.**

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# BOOK REVIEWS

edited by John Houseago

## ***One Like Us: A Psychological Interpretation of Jesus:* Jack Dominionian.**

**Darton Longman and Todd. Pages xv + 237. £10.95**

Helpful autobiographical details are given in the Preface. Dominionian works with the insights of five psychologists from Freud to Erikson, and relates these to Jesus: personality as a dynamic entity; the importance of early experiences with parents, especially mothering, for our capacity to make affectionate bonds, to exercise trust, and to have a proper self-esteem (chapter 2) Jesus must have had a good relationship with Mary and Joseph to enable him to develop his human potential (chapter 3).

I'm sure that this is in essence right, though it's as much speculation as that which he condemns in scholars (p. 9). Dominionian looks at significant people and events; love (probably the best chapter in the book); the kingdom; the close of Jesus' life.

The reservations with which I began reading were never dispelled:

- (i) The gospels aren't interested in the psychology of Jesus, rarely mentioning his emotions. Dominionian defends his venture by saying that (a) the gospels give us globally a correct picture, and (b) it is the Christ of faith which has shaped Christian consciousness (p. 11). I accept (a), but (b) seems to call the whole venture seriously in question.
- (ii) It is presumably (a) which explains why Dominionian rarely quotes Mark (acknowledged on p.122 as the primary source) but mainly 'edited' versions in Matthew and Luke. From my presuppositions this is a methodological flaw.
- (iii) Dominionian uses the Fourth Gospel as if it contained Jesus' *ipsissima verba*. Here is another chasm between his and my presuppositions.
- (iv) He uses the Two Natures model for the person of Jesus (e.g. p. 212 "He would have cheated if (on the cross) he had allowed himself to be comforted by his divine nature."). We come perilously near a schizophrenic person who sometimes operated his divinity and sometimes his humanity, and certainly not "One like us".

**J E Morgan-Wynne**

## **The Person of Christ,** Donald Macleod. IVP, 303 pages, 1998. £14.99.

This book is the latest addition to an excellent series called *Contours of Christian Theology*. Each volume, written by a scholar in the orthodox evangelical tradition, explores a major theme of Christian doctrine in a contemporary manner.

This edition is a clear and lucid account of the development of orthodox Christology from its biblical foundations to the modern challenges to the uniqueness of Christ from Bultmann, the Myth of God Incarnate, the "Anglican Unitarians" (Robinson, Lampe, Cupitt, Nineham et. al.) and liberation theology.

The book is written in two parts, basically divided between the scriptural foundations of Christology and its subsequent doctrinal development. Biblical topics cover the virgin birth, the pre-existence of Christ and the Jesus of history versus Christ of faith debate.

The second section considers the achievements of the ecumenical councils from Nicea to Chalcedon in lively and engaging fashion. Macleod is clearly on home territory reviewing the Patristic material. The modern debate includes a discussion of issues such as Kenotic theories and the sinlessness of Christ which is understood in terms of Jesus being not able to sin though Macleod thinks Jesus may not have been aware of this during his lifetime. Throughout the whole, the book is a restatement of orthodox Christology in its most conservative form, unashamedly adopting a 'Christology from above'. Macleod, has a clear commitment to the decisive authority of scripture for the theological enterprise. My only criticism is that sometimes the evaluation of the biblical debate is overshadowed by his dogmatic presuppositions. However the book is to be highly recommended. It is never dull, but always accessible and trying to elevate the status of Christ to the highest position. For this reason it is not merely informative and interesting, but also inspiring.

Ian Birch

***Duet or Duel? Theology and Science in a Postmodern.***

**J. Wentzel van Huyssteen. SCM. 182pp, £12.95)**

The John Albert Hall Lectures Series was established as the result of a legacy made in the 1930's to stimulate harmony between Christian religion and contemporary thought. This book gives the published text of the 1998 series held at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. The author, J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, is the Professor of Theology and Science at Princeton Theological Seminary. With this provenance it is perhaps not surprising that the book abounds in words that my computer has yet to learn.

The author covers the means by which interdisciplinary reflection is possible in our postmodern context, looking at the relationships between religion and cosmology and between religion and knowledge (actually evolutionary biology). He ends with a chapter entitled 'From bitter duel to graceful duet.'

Unlike some books on science and religion, van Huyssteen addresses the question of whether our universe only makes sense in the light of Sinai and Calvary, avoiding the trap of deism. His approach is somewhat rationalist and he assumes that all our knowledge, including our scientific and religious knowledge, is grounded in biological evolution. It seemed slightly strange (and inconsistent ) to me that, early in the book, he dismissed Barbour's four-fold taxonomy for relating theology and science through either conflict, dialogue, independence or integration as being too generic and universal, yet was able to reduce the relationship to one of duet or duel.

To sum up, this is a book that will teach you all you ever wanted to know about evolutionary epistemology and more. The scientific content of the book is weak and the sources are largely secondary. It is more a contribution to our understanding of knowledge than a book about the relationship between theology and science.

Judy Holyer

***Signs of Life: Sermons and Meditations.* Gerd Theissen.**

**SPCK. £14.95. 211 pp paperback.**

'Is the Christian Faith necessarily intolerant?' A fascinating sermon upon the German Christian mindset and Hitler. This is one of a few curiosities in what seems an otherwise bland collection.

Gerd Theissen is Professor of New Testament in the University of Heidelberg. These sermons and meditations were preached mainly to one congregation over a period of seven years. As Theissen observes, 'Sermons are addressed to a community and their power to communicate to an individual reader *sans* the impact of the occasion, is limited'.

The theme of the collection is Paul's famous statement in Galatians 3.28. The author expounds various bible passages from the perspectives of gender, social status and religious practice. Theologically inclusive, Paul's final phrase about the unifying power of Christ is approached tangentially. It does not sit comfortably with the author's thrust.

Some of these sermons are constructed in a way that shows the usefulness of lateral thinking and this fresh approach in tackling well known passages could prove a useful tool in preparing sermons. For example, the sacrifice of Isaac, 'God's Terrible Experiment' - from the perspectives of an imaginary commission, consisting of an expert in religious studies, a philologist, a philosopher and a woman theologian.

How useful is the book as a whole? 'Signs of Life' falls between two stools. It is presented as an aid to personal meditation - but is addressed to a congregation. The sermon as a literary form tends to plastic spirituality. For the jaded pastoral palate this may be as good as it gets. After all, plastic makes the world go round.

The chapters are short and each begins with a bible passage quoted in full, and concludes with detailed notes of when, where and why the sermon was delivered. Allusions are helpfully explained. An index is missing, which is frustrating.

**Charles Rutter**

***Animal - Gospel:* Andrew Linzey: Hodder & Stoughton £6.99**

The author has a senior research Fellowship in Christian Theology and Animal Welfare at Mansfield College, Oxford.

Mr.Linzey has a great passion for animal liberation. He tells us he has a dream, adopting Dr.Martin Luther King: it is "precisely God's dream" (p.81) when animals will share the protection of law that their kindred humans have. Human carnivores are shameless.

With a multitude of illustrations and copious references from literature, religion and academic studies, this book is designed to attract Christians and the clergy, who should be aware of this state of ungrace. The annotation is excellent with sources.

The cover is attractive: a fragment of mediaeval art depicts God and creation at peace, the unicorn, symbol of purity watching, a mistranslation from the Vulgate, for ox.

There is a kind of gnosis working here. The more one embraces animal liberation, the more one enters the Good. God - never Father - has seen his Son die. When you look into the face of the dying Jesus you see the agony of animals in the abattoir.

Despite the passion for animal welfare, which many of us share; I am less assured by the authors use of Scripture. Genesis 1:25 becomes the sanction for vegetarianism, overlooking Genesis 9;3-5, Noah's covenant and flesh eating. Jesus ate the Paschal Lamb.

The death of Jesus, as with all Christian Theists, is a desperate visual aid of cruelty, rather than Holiness meeting Holiness with redemption. In his list of beliefs, the author omits the Resurrection and Pentecost. The Holy Spirit becomes the Essence of Life lifting us into the next millennium with renewing moral insights.

The book is mainly a collection of the author's articles and tires with its repetitions but might be useful for discussion.

**Ralph Stephens**

***Life and Christian Belief* Malcolm A. Jeeves & R. J. Berry,  
Science, Apollos\IVP, 1998 £16-99**

An ecological geneticist, and a psychologist present an excellent exploration of science and faith issues before focusing upon the important, current debate concerning the nature of human beings. Having recognised the shortcomings of a number of philosophical approaches they conclude that only a realist philosophy of science, which presupposes that science attempts an accurate account of the truth of how the world is, will be productive. They maintain that the creationist argument is sterile, and that an evolutionary model recognises God involved in the everyday events of this world. A theology that separates God from the natural world is less likely to respect it than one which sees God's intimate relationship with creation.

They explore the physical universe and assert that everything in the Universe is kept in existence by God's sustaining activity, the laws of science being a reflection of that faithful activity. They believe that God worked through evolution by natural selection, and that what makes human beings distinctive from animals is the "image of God" placed in an already existing animal (Genesis 2:7).

After disposing of both the dualist view of two distinct substances - body/soul, and the reductionist view of only atoms and molecules, they explore the Hebrew-Christian pictures of human nature. The biblical words translated "soul" are demonstrated as normally referring to the whole person, and most frequently carry the meaning "life". They assert that we are not controlled by our genes; virtually all human behaviour can be unintentionally or consciously influenced by the environment. Having stated that survival of a foetus to birth is not the norm, the authors courageously argue that we can only speak of God being involved with us from conception as the retrospective view of a rational being (Jeremiah 1:5). Throughout they maintain that we are morally responsible - accountable for how we use whatever freedom we have, and that what we decide matters.

**John Weaver**

***The Revelation of Being: by Don Cupitt, SCM Press, 1998. 116 pp £8.95***

"I expand the notion of 'Man', the human realm, to incorporate the whole known and language-traversed world; and then I empty out the human self - and suddenly feel very happy. If you've followed that point, you have understood this book" (p.97). Don Cupitt's books are becoming, even he admits, very hard to categorise. They are full of philosophy but are concerned with the times we live in and the possibilities for religious life today. This one has a particular interest in spirituality.

In *The Religion of Being* (1997), Cupitt revisited Heidegger. This 'spin-off essay' starts from a religious experience Cupitt had, looking out over Parker's Piece in Cambridge.  
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He borrows Heidegger's terms 'Being', 'Man,' and 'Language' to reflect on this. Arguing, yet again, that the only 'real' world is that which is made available to us through language, he nonetheless focuses on that, 'Being', which is always just beyond such availability. This formless, chancy, forth-comingness has always frightened us, but we can learn, he says, to love it, taking pleasure in pouring ourselves out into its contingency.

As always, he writes enthusiastically and seductively. Those, like me, who have problems with his non-realism, will find them again in this book. Newcomers to Cupitt's recent writing will probably be baffled by the strangeness of it all. He is ploughing a lonely (and extremely meandering) furrow, far, far away from the debates of *The Myth of God Incarnate* and only hinted at in the survey that was *The Sea of Faith*. But who else writes about what philosophies feel like or how they can help us be happy? And who else would ever tell us about 'bloody Plato', how easy thinking is, how old the galaxies are (about 75 years), or how to achieve bliss by watching insects?

Stuart Jenkins

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International Correspondent : Clive Doubleday

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