

Baptist Ministers' Journal

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Editorial

When on 13th June, 1793, the *Kron Princessa Maria* slipped out of Dover under a fair wind, bound for India, no-one could have foreseen the consequences. And so inauspicious were the passengers - John Thomas and William Carey and family - that they were included among the list of "sundries" when the ship berthed five months later in the Bay of Bengal. Thus it was that the poor shoe-maker from Paulerspury, deep in Northamptonshire, realised the passion of his heart - his reason for being - that he should take Christ first to India and thence to the world. As it turned out India was to have the whole of the man, for the whole of the time, but others were to catch his global vision. Thus was born the Modern Missionary Movement.

Against the background of his time William Carey represented a spiritual strand in that mighty nineteenth century expansionism which saw the great European powers competing for large chunks of the earth's surface. Carey himself comes somewhere between the founding of the East India Company and the full-blooded Raj. The relationship between imperialism and missionary endeavour is complex, but sufficient tensions existed to show that missionaries did not simply underwrite the actions and attitudes of compatriot traders and governors. Carey distanced himself both from the dissolute behaviour of Europeans and their attitude to the ethnic population, incurring antipathy as a result. With the benefit of perspective, it is possible to see that Carey and his successors transmuted the prevailing and secular spirit of colonialism into a transcultural work for God and by the same token, helped to undermine it.

To help celebrate the Bi-Centenary of the Baptist Missionary Society, Carey's living testament, we initiate a series of articles dealing with crucial aspects of the missionary task today, bearing in mind especially the great new fact of the World Church and the consequent mutuality of mission. Basil Amey, Chair of the Bi-Centenary Committee, provides an introduction and some historical perspective. The presence of the world on our doorstep in a multi-cultural Britain, is illustrated by the distinctive ministry of Kingsley Appiagyeyi among his Ghanaian compatriots in London. He shares the priorities of a Church which has experienced considerable growth from tiny beginnings.

One wonders what Carey would have made of our next article: "Do They Worship the Same God as We Do?", by Edward Williams, Secretary to Joppa, the Baptist Group for Christian Witness in a Multi-Faith Society. Is the key the problem of language?: "The limit of our language is the limit of our world". Next Philip Clements-Jewery commences a three-part series on Intercessory Prayer, dealing here with its perceived decline and demand. Finally, Michael Humphreys brings his training in statistics to bear on Bible, Church, and faith, with some hair-raising probabilities. It certainly tempers dogmatism.

And now a word of thanks. Since Arthur Bonser became responsible for "Of Interest To You", he has significantly increased its range and usefulness. Circumstances make it necessary for him to hand over this responsibility. Therefore we express warm appreciation of his valued service whilst welcoming Ted Smalley who succeeds him.

Inheritance and Vision

The Bicentenary Celebrations Working Group of the Baptist Missionary Society met for the first time on 15th April 1986. The General Secretary, Revd Reg Harvey, spoke briefly about the setting up of the Working Group as a sub-committee of the General Purposes Committee and described its task.

"It's role was to raise all the relevant issues and ideas that needed to be considered in planning the Bicentenary celebrations and make suggestions to the Officers, the General Purposes and other Committees as appropriate. It was deliberately intended to be a small group, although it would clearly need to recommend the forming of additional committees at a later stage for specific tasks. The Group could co-opt individuals if necessary".

The first relevant issue to be raised was whether or not the BMS should mark its Bicentenary in any significant way. There are those who argue that missionary societies are a hangover from an earlier period of mission and should not be encouraged to continue by all the publicity gained through anniversaries. Others draw attention to the increasing importance of the church structures, organisations and leadership in the areas of BMS work and say that it is unsuitable to highlight the role of the Society at a time when its significance is decreasing.

With its days numbered and its influence decreasing, why try and breathe new life into the BMS by Bicentenary celebrations? Such efforts will only produce the swan-song for the old traditions and in so doing hinder the ongoing mission of the church. The Working Group was aware of these, and other reasons for non-celebration, but saw in them warnings rather than deterrents. The celebrations must not concentrate on what happened 200 years ago or become an adulation of Carey and the other pioneers, however great their individual contribution and sacrifice.

Positively, the celebrations must emphasise the belief that it is God's purpose that has been worked out in the developing pattern of mission, the growing strength and importance of the churches overseas and the developing relationships of the Society with the Baptist Unions of the U.K. From this background a threefold aim emerged which is to Celebrate, to Educate and to Inspire. This aim was seen to give the correct balance between past, present and future.

CELEBRATE

Even here we must be careful. One definition of celebrate is "*to observe with solemn rites*". That is not our intention! Our concern is "*to make publicly known*," "*to publish the fame of*". The celebration is to be making known what God has done in and with those who have been part of the BMS through all the 200 years, but it is best to begin at the beginning! But where did the Society begin?

The first minute of the first meeting of the BMS reads, "The origin of the Society will be found in the workings of our brother Carey's mind, which, for the last nine or ten years, has been directed to this object with very little intermission." Carey's mind was most fully expressed in his book, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, but the workings of Carey's mind cannot be seen in isolation. There were other influences, such as Sutcliff's *Call to Prayer* of 1784 and the publication of Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation* in 1785. The significance of the geographical nearness of these three ministers, Carey, Sutcliff and Fuller, together with Ryland, was picked up by M.F. Hewitt in his unpublished biography of

Sutcliff: "It could not have been by accident that while Carey was living at Hackleton and Moulton, Sutcliff was at Olney, Ryland at Northampton and Fuller at Kettering. Surely, 'this was the Lord's doing'. 'Coming events cast their shadow before', and if there had been living a man with true prophetic insight he may have seen in the Divine Providence which brought these ministers near together a promise of something that was about to happen".

The 'something that was about to happen', was the forming of the Baptist Missionary Society and one reason for celebrations at its 200th anniversary is that there is evidence of Divine Providence on many occasions. In 1793 Carey went as a missionary to India. In 1799 he was joined by others and the work was established at Serampore. The three leaders were William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward. They were men from different backgrounds with differing temperaments and abilities, but God took them and for over twenty years they worked as a team to establish a base from which BMS work was to spread and grow. The work of the Baptist Union of North India, the Bengal Baptist Union and the Baptist Church of Mizoram, linked within the Council of Baptist Churches in Northern India and Dioceses of Cuttack and Sambalpur within the Church of North India, as successors to the Utkal Christian Church Central Council, are the continuation of that work in India, and there is also the Bangladesh Baptist Sangha across the frontier created by the 1947 partition.

The BMS work in Jamaica was similarly established by a trio, Thomas Burchell, James Phillippo and William Knibb. The three were committed to their work in Jamaica and travel was not easy, but at the crucial moment in the fight against slavery in England they were all available in England to address public meetings and meet with parliamentary commissions.

The same Spirit inspired the Jamaican Christians and the BMS Committee to commence a mission to western Africa and about forty years later the existence of that west Africa mission proved providential in the opening up of the Congo mission. J.B. Myers, the BMS secretary, wrote, "Very evident to a devout mind is the working of Divine Providence in the circumstances which led the Baptist Missionary Society to enter upon missionary labours in Congo land. In the origin of no similar enterprise were the concurrence of events and conditions more remarkable."

This evidence of Divine guidance runs right through the BMS history. May it, perhaps, be seen in the present situation with missionaries having to leave Zaire at a time when there are urgent calls for assistance from eastern Europe? There is much to celebrate from 200 years experience of Divine Providence, but celebration must be accompanied by education.

EDUCATE

Carey's *Enquiry* is seen by many as the foundation document of a new phase in the history of the Christian Church. It led to the forming of the BMS, which in turn influenced the growth of the missionary movement from the UK and then through the world. The *Enquiry* was essentially for the purpose of education; its strength lay in the fact that it was based on careful research and the argument can be developed from accurate information and knowledge of the questions being asked by those for whom it was intended. The *Enquiry* reviewed previous efforts at mission and surveyed the state of the world, as it then was, but its final challenge was to the individual.

That challenge was in the terms of obligation. Carey was aware of the many to whom the gospel had not been preached, but he does not paint pictures of unhappy souls doomed to everlasting fire as the incentive for mission. His call is for Christians to be

obedient. It is this awareness of the obligation requiring them to share the gospel, and their concern to be obedient, that is the stimulus for service. The service is to be in words and deeds for in his introduction Carey writes, "to use every lawful method to spread the knowledge of his name". For him the use of pious words without pious deeds is hypocritical.

The opening words of the *Enquiry* are "As our blessed Lord has required us to pray that his kingdom may come..." and the final sentence is "Surely it is worth while to lay ourselves out with all our might in promoting the cause of the kingdom of Christ." This is Carey's concern. He suggests that a society be formed "amongst the particular baptist denomination", but that is for practical, and not denominational, reasons. His hope is "that everyone who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, would in some way or other engage in it."

If we take the *Enquiry* as a model for our stress on education in the Bicentenary year then we see the need for careful research and the setting out of the present position, on which the argument for mission can be developed; the call to Christians to recognise their obligations to others and be obedient; the need to link actions with words and to see the purpose not as the increase of the BMS but "the cause and kingdom of Christ".

Any research will show that the position which we face is very different from that faced by Carey or the pioneer missionaries to the Caribbean, or West Africa or China. Their main work was in establishing churches where none existed, or where there had only been local, often individual, witness. Now we usually work overseas at the invitation of already existing church bodies and normally within their structures. The pattern is changing from the build-up of major areas of BMS work to the spread of BMS work in more countries but with fewer resident missionaries.

This requires a new understanding of the obligations resting on us and a readiness to recognise the identity of the BMS as of secondary importance. All that this means in terms of advocacy for the BMS needs to be understood by ministers so that they can educate the members of their congregation accordingly. The articles to be published in future issues will, we hope, assist in this educational process as they consider: the dynamics of future relationships between the BMS and the Baptist Unions; the response to a multicultural community, the cultural factor in world mission; the relationships between mission partners and the place within these of wealth and power; the future for the ministry, theological education and lay training; and overseas mission in an ecumenical context.

INSPIRE

The BMS found its inspiration through prayer. Carey set the tone in the *Enquiry*, "One of the first and most important of those duties which are incumbent upon us, is fervent and united prayer". This will lead to action, "We must not be contented however with prayer, without exerting ourselves in the use of means for the obtaining of those things we pray for. Were the children of light, but as wise in their generation as the children of this world, they would stretch every nerve to gain so glorious a prize, nor ever imagine that it was to be obtained in any other way."

So, the BMS found inspiration also in the actions of those who served. The record of achievement and sacrifice which appeared regularly in reports and, from 1819 to the present day, monthly in the *Missionary Herald*, has been the challenge to others to serve. The Bicentenary gives opportunity for local churches, Groups and Associations to recall the names and service of those who through the years have been valedicted for service with the BMS. A search in the Minutes may show links that have not been

remembered for many years.

But the BMS has never sought its inspiration only from the past. There has always been a seeking of God's will for the present and the future. It is here that the Bicentenary Fund will play its part. The aim is to raise #2 million as a **FUND FOR THE FUTURE**. This will make possible the taking of new initiatives. These will include new partnerships in mission, new strategies with youth and urban mission and support for media work. Some of the fund will be used for the extension of study and experience visits, and scripture and literature work. The making known of these possibilities can inspire not only giving to the Fund but also the giving of service and self to the work of the BMS.

The Bicentenary Celebrations Working Group has worked steadily to develop a full and varied programme to run from Assembly 1992 to the meeting of General Committee in June 1993. The BMS Event in Nottingham on Saturday 30th May 1992, the use of a common theme for sermons on October 4th and then the World Mission Forum at Nottingham with the Assembly of 1993, are three occasions in which all can share. Details of these, and other plans, have been appearing in the Missionary Herald and other BMS publications. It is hoped that ministers will keep in touch with all that is planned, encourage celebrations locally, and ensure that their church is fully involved so that as Baptists together we **Celebrate, Educate and Inspire**.

Basil Amey

N.B. Some of the material in this article appears in *The Unfinished Story* - a study-guide History of the Baptist Missionary Society, published by the C.T.P. of the Baptist Union.

Reaching Africans in London: An Ethnic Ministry

As I write this article, I write not as a master of all that I seek to share with you, but as a fellow pilgrim seeking God's highest and spiritual best.

We are living in very exciting times with prophecies unfolding before our very eyes. The 20th Century idols of atheism, humanism and communism are falling worldwide, creating a spiritual vacuum that must be filled in the resulting contest for souls. The Church faces formidable opponents in new age religion, satanism and Islam. The question is, "Is the British Christian prepared for a spiritual Armageddon" that will put to flight the demonic supernatural works against the works of the Holy Spirit? Are we prepared to pay the price to bring the enemies of Christ under His footstool by praying and sharing Christ in a society that is turning her back on God? We at Christian Baptist Church are prepared to pay that price. Let us have something to live for and something to die for.

Small Beginnings

The beginnings of CHRISTIAN BAPTIST CHURCH are very humble. I came from Ghana in 1985, with the approval of the Baptist Convention, to study at Spurgeon's, with the hope of going back to help with the teaching in our local Baptist Seminary. However, God proved that His ways are not our ways. Proverbs 19:21 "There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless, the Lord's counsel - that will stand". Paul had many strategies for his missionary journeys, but had to give in to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Because, under the dispensation of grace, the work is not by might nor by power but by

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the Holy Spirit.

In the beginning eight Ghanaians from our local church came to me in 1986 at Spurgeon's to discuss the possibility of planting a church for the many Ghanaians in the U.K., who for some reason have totally fallen out with the mode of worship in this country, and were not going to Church, and for those who miss the tradition of worship. The eight people became the nucleus of the church which started as a house group. Under the encouragement of the godly man, Reverend Bob Allen, who was then the minister at Crofton Park Baptist Church where I was serving as student-pastor, we were offered a room where we began meetings on Saturdays in 1987. What is happening at Christian Baptist Church is God's doing and all we can say is that it is marvellous in our eyes. Over the years we have followed the Lord whole-heartedly. He has made it clear to us that success in ministry does not depend on our good programmes and strategies. Our clear cut vision is to reach every African in London for Christ.

As in every ministry, as in any house, there are vessels not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble, but if a man purges himself he will become an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful and prepared to do any good work. In these last days as has been from the past, God looks for a people whom He can use.

The Bible tells us that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him - when He found Moses He made known His ways unto him and His acts unto the church of Israel: I believe God wants to make His ways known unto men and pastors who will be loyal to Him so that His acts of signs, wonders and miracles will become known to the church of Jesus Christ and the world. From eight members in 1987 God has now blessed us with 350 faithful souls.

To outline the work at Christian Baptist Church, the Lord has led us to concentrate on four areas which have yielded great fruit for His glory:

1(A) EVANGELISM

This decade to us must become the culmination of centuries of global evangelism and revival, the consummation of the toils and tears of former generations of God's anointed. We are following in the footsteps of spiritual giants who pioneered the gospel in Africa - we are reaping with joy where they once sowed in tears. The Lord is drawing to Himself, through us, as many as must be saved. The African heart is already fertile to receive the Gospel.

As ambassadors of Christ, we believe that God is making His direct appeal through us - the ministry of reconciliation is entrusted to every believer. The Acts of the Apostles was written because the Apostles acted. We teach our people how to share their faith because to us the Church is a lifeboat and not a pleasure boat. From Captain to Cook all hands are needed on deck for soul winning. We teach them to seize opportunities as they come their way each day on the buses, underground and in the streets. Even though David Livingstone did not see a convert in Africa, he prophesied that one day thousands of Africans will turn to the Lord. He was right and this is the vision that pursues me, that Africans wherever they are, will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

1(B) PERSONAL EVANGELISM

This has been a major area - everyone can reach his "world" and turn it upside down, in his own generation. When the jailor in Acts 16 became saved, his whole family

became saved. Matthew invited all his publican friends to a party and invited Jesus - an opportunity for them to be saved.

The other method is what we term "Operation Andrew" - that is, come and see what God is doing in our Church. In John's account of the call of the Apostles, Andrew said to Peter "We have found the Messiah" and brought him to Jesus. Philip found Nathaniel and said to him "We have found Him". Every sermon ends with an evangelistic appeal to give people an opportunity to give their lives to Christ. If the crucified Messiah is to "see the travail of His soul and be satisfied", each Church member must make it his or her aim to win a soul for Christ. You are able because it is not by your might. Plans and methods do not evangelise the lost, but people do. Revival comes from God, yes, but when? - when we repent of our plain disobedience and return to the basic task of evangelism. Marine scientists tell us that ocean waves travel thousands of miles crossing apparent calm stretches and even going under the surface of the water. As they approach land they develop a majestic crescendo, hunch their mighty shoulders, build up volume and rapid momentum, then burst finally and magnificently upon the shore. In a similar way, since the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, a ground swell of Holy Spirit power has been rolling all the way to the final decades of this century. Now in the 90's this swell is rising to a spontaneous crescendo worldwide, as if hurrying to the shore. I believe that the lifting waves of evangelism and spiritual power we now see are signs that the final shore cannot be far away. Have a burden for souls for this swell.

2. WORSHIP

We believe that worship is the most natural response of God's creation to manifest His presence - God inhabits the praises of His people. Worship in most of our churches is too "stiff" as if God is dead. Worship in our Baptist churches needs a radical change. Jesus said, "True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks."

Worship to us, must not be some kind of acquired skill that can only be reached after years of religious training. In God's presence His power is displayed. Many people get healed during worship even before hands are laid for healing. In worship, we have discovered that God reveals His purposes - one discovers anew how much God loves the world; as He brings His words of encouragement and exhortation through the gifts of the word of knowledge, prophecy or tongues and interpretation.

Many people oppressed by demons and those demonised are set free under the anointing of the Holy Spirit as we are lost in the wonder and beauty of our Lord in worship. We spend about 45 minutes in worship only because in His presence is fullness of joy and the joy of the Lord we have discovered is our strength in this world. God's presence scatters His enemies and the powers of doubt and unbelief flee, preparing the way for faith.

3. PRAYER

Prayer activates the Host of Heaven to minister on our behalf - lives are transformed on earth and Satan and his demons are rendered powerless as the Church prays. We live in the very last hour of God's timetable and the Church of Jesus Christ everywhere is being called to pray without ceasing. We must prevail in prayer for situations where God's will is being thwarted and where Satan is delaying and blocking Christ's cause. Prevailing prayer is lacking in our churches today - Elijah prevailed in prayer that it will not rain for three and a half years. He was a man with like passions as ourselves. Moses prevailed for Israel's victory over Amalek and Epaphras prevailed for the church at Colossae.

We strongly believe that there is nothing within God's will that is outside the scope of prevailing prayer. Our intercessory team meet and pray for an hour each Sunday before church services begin. On Saturdays they meet for three hours. Once a month the whole church prays from 11pm through to 5am. These are beside normal praying hours for the Church. In the days of the prophet Ezekiel God sought for a man that might stand in the gap and pray, but found none. It is my prayer that God will find you and me faithful in these last days to pray His will. We have prayed intellectually enough - let us pass on and pray in the spirit also, for I believe it is only then that the gifts of the Holy Spirit will begin to manifest itself in our services - that is when our preaching will be backed with power, then God will confirm His Word with signs and wonders.

4. EXPOSITORY PREACHING

There is a thirst in the hearts of people in these last days for the Word of God. God leads His people to where they will be well fed. People come to Christian Baptist Church on Sundays because they know they will hear God speaking to their needs through His servants. Allowing the Bible to speak for itself is a tool God has placed in our hands. There is no Sunday that God has not given us light from His Word - "The entrance of His word gives light". Training at Spurgeon's has helped this and I strongly believe we have to depend more on revelation knowledge from God's Word than using too many commentaries.

Our congregation is made up of 95 per cent Ghanaians with the rest coming from Nigeria, India, Liberia and England. Using our own local worship songs has been a great inspiration to many as well as the preaching of some sermons in our local language.

With faith we look forward to the year 2000 with much enthusiasm. We see the Lord planting Churches around London, Paris and Canada. We believe the Lord will use these ethnic churches to draw to Himself those whom the local churches cannot reach. This is the desire God has put on my heart - to reach the unreached in my generation and to tell the untold about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am able to reach my people effectively because I know their thinking, understand their language, and share the same culture.

Kingsley Appiagyei

Do They Worship The Same God As We Do?

When I was a hospital chaplain in Birmingham, I often wanted to say to a Muslim patient, "God bless you". How should I say it? If I were to say it just like that, "God" would be an alien word to the Muslim. Should I (**could I**) say, "Allah bless you"? For me, that would have felt too forced and unnatural. I could have said, "May the Lord bless you". In fact, I used to say, "May the Almighty and All-Merciful One give you His blessing.

If I had been an Arab Christian speaking in Arabic, there would have been no problem. I would have said "Allah" for that is the word in the Arabic Bible; Christians were using the word before the time of Muhammad and he simply continued its use. The very question, "Do we worship the same God?", would be meaningless, (or, at least, a very different question).

If I were a Bengali Christian, the situation would be different again. If I came from a

English Churches Housing

APPEAL FOR HELP

This page used to be headed Baptist Housing Association Limited. On 1st July BHA merged with Church Housing Association to form English Churches Housing Group. That of course is a fairly drastic change, but it does not change the fact there are over one hundred properties between Falmouth and Preston which were built on Baptist property with the active help and encouragement of Baptist churches. This also does not change the fact that we still need volunteers to help run those Local Management Committees who are, by their work for those less fortunate than themselves, expressing in the most practical way their love of God and man.

If one of these properties is near where you live, and you are willing to help, please either contact the Local Management Committee, or write to the Deputy Chief Executive of English Churches Housing Group at the address below. If you don't know where the properties are, we can send you a list of them all.

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Muslim background, I would use the word 'Khoda' which Bengali Muslims use when they talk about God in their own tongue. But the Bible which is used by West Bengali Christians in India (and in Bangladesh until long after independence) uses a Hindu word for God, 'Ishwar'. Use that word to a Muslim and it would seem obvious that Christians worship a Hindu God! So **do** we worship the same God or not?

To come at the question from a different angle, consider two people describing the Prime Minister who preceded John Major. "A marvellous woman - she's put this country back on its feet - the best man we've got!" And from the other, as I often heard him say, "Every time I see that woman on the telly I want to spit! " Are **they** talking about the same person? Let Margaret Thatcher walk into the room and both would exclaim, "That's her!" So they are **referring** to the same person, but **describing** her differently.

The Biblical Testimony

The Shema, Deut 6:4, is notoriously difficult to translate. The RSV gives four possible renderings, and GNB three. The latter are all paraphrases, but catch the three main possibilities accurately. For our purpose it is important to retain the original 'Jahweh' rather than replacing it by 'LORD'; and I add emphasis on the key word each time:

1) "Jahweh - and Jahweh alone - is **our** God". Other people may serve other gods, with other names, but our exclusive loyalty is to Jahweh. "He is our God, and we are His people".

2) "Jahweh, our God, is the **only** God". These other so-called gods can't compare with ours - they are nothing - there **is** no other god.

3) "Jahweh our God is **one**". From a declaration that there is no other God for **us**, through a declaration that there **are** no other gods, we now have a theological statement **about** God.

At this point we are **referring** to one and the same Being (even if we then go on to describe Him differently). It is here that it becomes appropriate to move from the personal name denoting **our** God, to a generalised title: "the LORD". Many factors lie behind the change in practice, but it was surely providential.

These three renderings represent three stages of understanding that can be traced in the Old Testament. the **first** can be illustrated in countless ways. For example, in Numbers 6:22-27 we have the instruction for the Aaronic blessing:

"...Say to Aaron and his sons, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel... "Jahweh bless you and keep you..." So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel."

The implication here is that each nation or tribe has its own god, just as it has its own chieftain or king - give your allegiance to him, and it will be his duty to protect you. After that, of course, will come the struggle for supremacy, when some tribes will get a reputation: "Their god/idol/deity is powerful". So Jethro says to Moses, "Now I know that Jahweh is greater than all other gods" (Ex 18:11). It is a small step from here to the **second** stage.

The transition is seen very clearly in the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal, "You call on the name of **your** god and I will call on the name of Jahweh". In his own prayer he then says, "O Jahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel". Thus far, it is a question of which is the god for Israel. But then he continues, "...that this people may know that you, O Jahweh, **are** God". And at the end the people say, "Jahweh, he is God".

On the face of it, are not Elijah and the prophets of Baal calling on two different gods?

They certainly thought so. But there **is** only one God, who **heard** the prophets of Baal but did not **respond** to their prayers. If He had responded, how that would have misled the people! The One God responded to Elijah in order to lead the people on in their knowledge of Him.

This monotheism is abundantly clear in, for example, Isaiah 45:18 "Thus says Jahweh, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it... I am Jahweh, and there is no other".

Similarly in the same chapter, verses 4-6, (and we may now write 'The LORD') God addresses Cyrus: "I call you by your name...though you do not know me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, Besides me there is no God; I gird you, though you do not know me, that men may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other."

When, in verse 18, Isaiah had referred to creation, he had taken to the ground on which monotheism became inevitable. As long as one thinks about God's acts in history, then rival nations may have rival gods. They may also have rival stories **about** creation. But there cannot actually be rival **creators**. By definition, when other peoples told their Creation stories they were not talking about 'different' gods and therefore different 'creations'. They were **referring** to the one Being but **describing** Him differently in His actions.

Similarly, in their worship and prayer they were not worshipping a different god, a wrong god, but worshipping the one God in the wrong way. This is the clear conclusion by the end of the Old Testament.

Whether the stage represented by the **third** rendering of the Shema is actually reached within the OT is not clear. It may be that the command to worship Jahweh in one shrine, rather than in many, represents a theological understanding of His oneness. Zechariah 14:9 is usually translated as, "The Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and His name one", but this is not certain.

By the time of the **New Testament**, recitation of the Shema had clearly become a declaration of theological monotheism. (Similarly, six centuries later, the Muslims' Shahadah declares, as correctly translated, 'There is no God but God'.) In this monotheism, a key passage is obviously Acts 17:22-31, when Paul is speaking on Mars Hill. He refers to an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god". Clearly, he is not trying to say that our God is to be identified with one (unknown) member of the Greek pantheon; he takes the inscription in the sense, "To God Unknown", and continues, "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you". It is striking that what Paul says to these worshippers of pagan gods is almost exactly what Jesus says to the Samaritan woman, "You worship what you do not know" (John 4:22). Paul **identifies** his God with what they worship (though they worship in ignorance).

The question, "Do we worship the same God"? is in fact a question of semantics (it depends what you mean by "the same"). Paul makes just this point in 1 Cor 8: 4-7: "We know that...there is no God but one". For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth - as indeed there are many 'gods'...- yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things...However, not all possess this knowledge."

In other words, all worship is **really** directed to the One, though different names or even many names may be used. The one Being is [referred] to, though the theological description may be different and indeed mistaken.

The Real Question

In arguing whether others worship the same God as us, we are not in fact tackling the basic issue. The real question on which Christians differ is this: *Are other forms of worship valid?* Does God hear the prayers of Jews? Does God hear the prayers of Muslims, offered to the one all-mighty and all-merciful God by those who do not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ? Does God hear the prayers of Hindus, calling Him by many names and using descriptions far removed from the revelation which we have in Jesus?

Does God **hear**? The answer can only be Yes! A young Jehovah's Witness once argued with me about the use of the name 'Jehovah' by saying, "If you don't use His correct name, how will He know you are speaking to Him?" I think we may safely leave that to God!

Does God **respond**? That is a different and crucial question - and surely God may do as He chooses, and not always do the same?

I have known many Indian Christians, and one of the finest is Yesu Das Tiwari. The name means "servant of Jesus" but he began life as a high-caste Hindu. While a young man, facing and failing to overcome temptations, he prayed in all the ways that he knew within Hinduism, to no avail. Then, having learned at college about Jesus Christ, he prayed to Him in desperation, "O Lord, if You are, save me from myself". From then on, his temptations no longer defeated him, and he became a follower of Jesus.

How do we interpret this experience? That his earlier prayers were inherently non-valid and unacceptable to God? Or that God was at this time and in this way graciously leading the young man to Christ? (But if this one God hears some simple soul praying in her inner room, perhaps in devotion or may be in some anguish of soul, then even though she uses some other name, may He not bless her in response to her prayers? Who are we to set limits on what God may or may not do?)

It may be argued that Yesu Das, a Hindu, presents a different situation from a Muslim, for Hindus are not monotheists. But who says that they are not? It is often stated that all Hindus in Britain **are** monotheists. We may want to argue the point with them, and then I remember what it felt like when I once found myself on the receiving end of a Muslim's exhortation to "stop believing in three gods"! I knew and felt deeply that he misunderstood and misrepresented me, and that he ought to accept my own statement of what I believed.

Doubtless it may **feel** as if my Hindu friends and I are worshipping different gods, but that is another matter. Kenneth Cragg (than whom no Christian can be more sensitive to the spiritual depth of Islam) once asked a highly-intelligent Muslim convert whether he felt that he now knew more truly the God he had always worshipped, and received the reply, "No, it feels as if I now worship a different God".

In such settings, it may often be more **descriptive** to speak of worshipping different Gods. But when we ask what is the **reality** behind our description, then it is profoundly misleading to say anything else than that "God is One", and it is He whom we all seek to worship.

In conclusion, I believe that along these lines it is possible to hold a great respect for those who worship God by other names. Belief and worship and prayer may be mistaken or misguided or misdirected (and who are we to say that this may not happen with Christians also?) and God may withhold Himself as one way of leading us to know Him more truly. But as there **is** only one God, so He alone is worshipped whenever and however worship is offered.

Edward H.B. Williams

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To the Readers of the Baptist Ministers' Journal

In my letter printed in the October 1991 issue of *The Fraternal* I expressed concern at the upsurge of losses by theft from the Churches. I cited a number of reasons; the absence of scruples in robbing a Church, the economic pressure of the recession and the changed nature of the contents of Churches e.g. electronic equipment, amplification systems etc.

The situation has continued to worsen and in the last six months the cost of theft claims has doubled. A substantial element is the damage caused to doors, windows, roofs etc to gain entrance. Intruders no longer seemed to fear making a noise! We continue to encourage Churches to examine the protection of the buildings and to take the advice of local Crime Prevention Officers.

Unfortunately the co-operation of Church Officers in this way is not sufficient on its own, and we have been obliged to recognise the heightened claims experience by increasing premiums. Church treasurers will find a notice with renewal papers drawing attention to the increase.

Nevertheless, the general level of our premiums remains very competitive.

Yours sincerely

M. E. Purver

Intercessory Prayer: Its Decline and Demand

The origin of the thoughts expressed in this paper is a concern that intercession does not occupy the place it should in many services of worship. It is possible to attend services of worship in churches where the element of intercession is entirely absent. Does this mean that intercession is a disappearing practice in our churches and, if so, what might be the cause of this apparent decline in intercession? Of course, part of the problem may be that while some perceive decline, others do not recognise the existence of any such thing.

However, it must be pointed out that we are urged in Scripture to offer intercession (1 Tim 2:1-4), so that to fail to intercede is disobedience and therefore sin.

Obstacles to Intercession

The first possible source of difficulty I mention only for the sake of completeness, although I do not think that it looms large in the minds of many in our churches. But perhaps some do have problems of an intellectual, philosophical or theological nature concerning intercession. I do not intend to go into questions about how prayer works, about the relation between prayer and providence. I suspect that questions like "If God already knows our need and is willing to give, why do we have to ask?", or, "what is the point of intercession if God does not depend on our prayers or need our persuasion in order to act?", are not very important causes for this alleged apparent decline in the practice of intercession.

However, there may well be emotional resistance because intercession is often badly led and done. People are turned off by prayers that resemble shopping lists, prayers that are uninformed and poorly related to the facts of the real situation; the addition of phrases such as "if it be Thy will" as a kind of insurance policy in case what we ask is not granted; and by vague, unspecific catch-all prayers.

More profoundly, there may be an emotional resistance to intercession because intercession involves opening the eyes of a congregation to a wider vision of God's world and God's church, and people may wish to shut out the wider world and its needs because they find such knowledge too uncomfortable and demanding. Thus, such intercession that is practised will be limited to the immediate concerns of the fellowship and its members, and will hardly go beyond praying for "the sick".

This kind of parochialism contrasts unfavourably with the example of Jesus in the "high-priestly" prayer recorded in John 17. Admittedly, Jesus does begin with prayer for those closest to him: "I pray...for those you have given me" (v9). But he does go on to pray for "those who will believe in me through their message" (v20), so that this prayer is one that spans space and time. And even if in v9 Jesus does say, "I am not praying for the world", the world nevertheless remains within the view of the prayer, and concern for the world is expressed in the wish that "the world may believe that you have sent me" (v21, cf v23)

Parochialism in intercession may also be the result of a theological deficiency. Evangelical Christians can sometimes be excessively individualistic. We are in danger at times of replacing "God so loved the world..." with "God so loved me.."

One writer asserts: "If you forget the total involvement of God in the world as seen

in Jesus Christ, and the necessary response to that in mission to men and service for men... (you) can be in real danger of betraying the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ" (David Jenkins in *Still Living with Questions* (SCM Press, Chapter entitled, *Worship and Doctrine*). He continues, "Worship must not be seen as an isolated activity of the church... the body of Christ exists for God and for the world, and the Church does not exist for herself" (op cit).

Related to this theological deficiency there is, I believe, an identifiable liturgical impoverishment in many of our churches. Such impoverishment takes a number of forms. One is a lack of a sense of direction or of structure in worship. If our services of worship lack shape then it is easy for intercession (and, let us add, also confession and even the reading and preaching of God's Word) to be pushed aside in favour of more immediately appealing, rewarding and less demanding activities such as praise.

More profoundly, there is the point made by David Jenkins: "There is a very direct connection between the poverty of much worship, in both its practice and shape, and the danger of losing grasp of the objectivity, the otherness, of God. ...worship is primarily attending to God as God" (Op cit.).

There is an understandable tendency these days to make worship "user-friendly", to emphasise the element of "entertainment value" in worship. Of course, it is right to want to hold the attention of the worshipper, especially where numbers of uncommitted people are present, but the tendency can go too far.

We need to balance this emphasis on the nearness and friendliness of God (his immanence) with a recognition of his transcendence, his otherness, his holiness and greatness. According to Isaiah 56:15, God does indeed dwell with the humble and contrite in heart, but he is also the high and exalted one, whose name is holy and who inhabits eternity.

If we were able to redress the balance, perhaps to recover a greater degree of reverence in worship; if we paid more attention to "attending to God as God", then maybe intercession (and also some other relatively neglected aspects of worship) would be restored to its rightful place, simply because "attending to God as God" involves taking seriously "the total involvement of God with the world".

It is, therefore, no accident that historically the practice of intercession in the early church began in the context of the Eucharist.

The Methodist writer on prayer and spirituality, J. Neville Ward, has written, "Christian intercession cannot be understood correctly unless seen as within that great action (i.e. the Eucharist). It is only when we stand with God and his redemptive purpose... that we can think of the needs of the church and the world...as God thinks of them" (*The Use of Praying*, Epworth, 1967, p88)

So I would like to make a plea for the restoration of the objectivity of worship, at least as a balance to subjectivity. This is not a matter of sitting on the fence, but a matter of being comprehensive. Such objectivity is expressed above all in the celebration of the Eucharist. The revival of the practice of intercession, together with other neglected aspects of worship, is not unconnected with an emphasis on the holiness, transcendence and sovereignty of God.

The Cost Involved

Such an emphasis exposes another dimension to any problems that may arise in connection with intercessory prayer. To intercede for others means coming with them into the presence of a God who is not only gracious, compassionate and loving, but who

is also, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, "a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29) He is the Living God "into whose hands it is a dreadful thing to fall" (Heb 10:31). Thus intercession is always a costly and a risky business, and the call to intercede can be met by some **spiritual** resistance.

A classic example of intercession in the scriptures is that recorded in Genesis 18, where Abraham intercedes for Sodom. One feature of that story which impresses itself upon us is that one has to be greatly daring to approach God to ask anything of Him. What comes over in Genesis 18 is the extreme diffidence of Abraham: "May not the Lord be angry(!) but let me speak". It is almost as if Abraham fears that the fate he seeks to avert falling on Sodom may fall on him.

There is an element in intercession that requires the intercessor to become almost a substitute for those being prayed for. This comes out even more clearly in the case of Moses who is reported in Exodus 32 to have interceded for the people after they had sinned and to have actually used the words (v32) "...please forgive their sin - but if not, then **blot me out of the book you have written**"!

It is also noteworthy that the supreme moment of intercession for Jesus is found in the words: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing". We hardly need to be reminded about what was happening to Jesus when he uttered those words.

Thus intercession is always a costly business. It requires identification, incarnation and self-sacrifice. All the writers on prayer emphasise this point. Harry Williams writes: "We can't pray for people unless we are at least prepared to find ourselves in some way or another with them and with Jesus on the cross" (*Becoming What I Am* DLT, 1977, p73). Neville Ward writes, "Every Christian prayer for others involves the realisation that he who prays is inextricably bound up with the answer" (op. cit. p88) and goes on "to ask that God's will be done involves at the same time offering ourselves to God to be truly part of that (i.e. Body of Christ) through which he intends to answer prayer for the world's salvation".

The Letter to the Hebrews, similarly, makes the point that Christ could not intercede for us as our great High Priest had he not identified himself with us in incarnation: "He had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God" (Heb 2:17). Disciples ought not, therefore, to expect to find their intercession any less costly than that of their Lord. Yet we do shrink back! That part in us which is not yet fully redeemed naturally prefers other kinds of prayer that are less risky and less costly than intercession.

Philip Clements-Jewery

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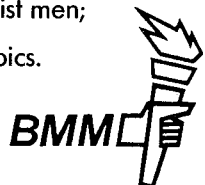
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When The Most Probable Answer Is Probably Wrong

It is well known that the best horse does not always win the race, and so bookmakers get rich and punters get disappointed. The likelihood of the best horse winning could, I suppose, be estimated from the quality of the horses rather like this:-

Suppose that Gospel Thunderer is twice as likely to win as Charismatic Cookie, which is twice as likely to win as Liberal Loper, Heavy Shepherd, Bishop Beautiful, or Plain Quaker. Calculated overall, Gospel Thunderer, who is by far the best horse, has a forty per cent chance of winning the race, Charismatic Cookie has a twenty per cent chance, and the others each a ten per cent chance. The chances add up to 100 per cent, which of course they must. It follows that the best horse, although having the best chance of winning (forty per cent compared with twenty and ten) will probably not win, for although he has a forty per cent chance of winning, he has a sixty per cent chance of not winning. Probably some other horse will beat him past the post.

Exegesis and Probability

A similar situation can arise in the exegesis of Scripture. I was reading Romans 12, and considering that part of verse three which says:-

"To each as God divided a measure of faith"

Being puzzled to know just what Paul meant, I pulled down Cranfield's commentary on the Greek text 1. In his discussion of the phrase, he points out that the exegesis turns on:-

1. the meaning given to 'measure', listing six possibilities. 2. the meaning given to 'faith', listing five possibilities. 3. the kind of genitive of 'faith', giving two possibilities.

Cranfield comments, "It is obvious that a considerable number of combinations are at least theoretically possible". This is clearly so, but of more interest is the likelihood that the answer, after all the discussion and weighing of different possibilities, is right.

To provide a background for our estimates, let us suppose, quite unrealistically, that each of the listed possibilities had an equal chance of being right. The chance of making the correct decision for 'measure' is then one in six, for 'faith' one in five, and for the type of genitive, one in two. If the three decisions were independent of each other, the chance of getting all three stages correct would, by the rules of probability, be obtained by multiplying these three fractions together. This gives an overall probability of one in sixty ($1/6$ times $1/5$ times $1/2$) that the exegesis was sound. It would almost certainly be wrong.

However, let us not become weary or faint-hearted. The situation is not really so bad, since evidently not all the options are equally likely, otherwise we should have no basis at all upon which to decide the matter. Let us reduce the problem to more credible dimensions by shedding the less likely answers, and trying to give appropriate weight to the more likely ones. What then?

As far as 'measure' is concerned, there is but one generally favoured scholarly opinion, from which Cranfield dissents, giving reasons. Suppose, out of regard for Cranfield's learning, and for the reasons he adduces for favouring this unusual interpretation, we are willing to say that his opinion is twice as likely to be right as is the common view. On this assumption we would say that the chance of Cranfield being right

was two out of three.

The same situation pertains to the type of genitive, again giving a two out of three chance of being right.

As far as 'faith' is concerned, there are two commonly held scholarly opinions, and Cranfield agrees with one of them, again giving substantial reasons. Suppose again we give Cranfield's view double weight. We might say that there are three points in favour of Cranfield - two for him and one for the view which agrees with him, and one point against him. So we estimate that the view with which Cranfield agrees has perhaps a three out of four chance of being right.

So at every stage in the argument we believe that Cranfield is right. But what is the chance of him being correct overall? Multiplying the three together we get $2/3$ times $2/3$ times $3/4$, which equals $1/3$. There is one chance in three of being right, but two chances out of three of being wrong. So in spite of giving very substantial weight to Cranfield's great learning and sound judgment, so that we are persuaded that his solution to the exegesis of the phrase is superior to any other, and even though we think he is very probably right at every stage, nevertheless this most probable solution is probably wrong!

This is not Cranfield's fault. He has done his best in a difficult situation. It is, however, not an uncommon situation, and it is all too easy to over-estimate the reliability of the best answer. The situation can arise whenever the number of possible answers is more than two. It becomes severe when the number of possible answers is large, and when it is difficult to decide between the rival answers. It becomes even worse when several stages of argument are necessary.

This problem has concerned me since my move from a branch of research in which statistical methods were routine, to the study of theology. I estimated for my tutor the chance of the scholarly consensus about the relation between the book of Deuteronomy and King Josiah's reforms being correct. I concluded that the most probable answer was probably wrong. My tutor laughed and advised me to adjust my levels of certainty. I am not sure that this was wise advice. It is not very important to know exactly how Josiah's reform came to happen, nor does much turn on our exegesis of a single phrase from Romans, but if a large proportion of our 'knowledge' is wrong, our overall grasp of truth becomes significantly distorted, and then anything built upon it is built upon sand.

Probability and Humility

I offer some reflections upon these matters:-

1. We should not be discouraged from the careful scholarly exegesis of difficult texts. The most probable answer remains the best approximation to the truth. But we need to bear in mind the strong possibility, even probability, of being wrong.

2. We should never use an item of this type as a building block in any argument of the type where each stage depends on the correctness of the previous stage. If we do so, the reliability plummets as the number of stages increases. If we have a two-stage argument of this type, where each stage has a seventy per cent likelihood of being right, the overall likelihood of being right is 0.7 times 0.7 . This equals 0.49 , so the answer is slightly more likely to be wrong than right. Had there been three such stages, the probability of our solution being correct would have fallen to 0.34 . It would very probably be wrong. It is not just that the chain is as weak as its weakest link. This type of argument is always *weaker* than its weakest link. It appears to me that this makes very risky at least two areas of Biblical study:

(a) The reconstruction of a history of Israel from clues gleaned from the Old Testament. Such reconstruction entails a number of successive stages, at each of which we have had to weigh evidence, yet perhaps remain unsure. So although we may be convinced that the biblical history is in some places unclear or disordered, the chances of our correcting it may be quite remote.

(b) The re-arranging of a text which we suspect is out of order. The possible rearrangements are numerous. We may be convinced that some parts of the fourth gospel are not in their original place, but the chance of hitting on the correct rearrangement is small.

Such thoughts encourage us to pious humility, and go a long way to explaining how it is that Old Testament Introductions are so astonishingly diverse, and why Bultman's commentary on the Fourth Gospel is so different from Kingsley Barrett's.

3. Humility is logical also in our present ecumenical quest in Britain. Even the best constructed theology is in certain respects probably wrong, for each is, at least to some extent, the result of a sequence of decisions often much less than certain, and therefore the overall likelihood of the construction being right is small. Any theology agreed between the churches would also probably be wrong, and therefore any agreed statement of faith should not be insisted upon with any degree of rigour. Only a construction built from a few robust parts has a good chance of itself being robust. Cumulative arguments are stronger than sequential arguments, because different rules for combining probabilities then apply, and it is necessary to allow for this when assessing the strength of a position. In the sciences it is unusual to publish a paper without demonstrating that its result was unlikely to have arisen from chance. Do we not need some such quality control in theology and in Biblical Studies?

4. I have also wondered what are the implications of this for the more fundamental decisions of faith. At best, presumably, only one 'faith' can be correct. Here we have the difficulty at its more severe. There are many possible options for faiths and for non-faiths, each in itself a complex construction. So it seems from the arguments above that the faith that I have embraced, and which I consider most probable, is probably wrong - and so is yours!

There is no way out of this, unless it is to reject the idea that the various faiths are to be regarded as mutually-exclusive rivals for truth. If instead we considered them to be diverse ways of living and thinking, with broadly similar function, we would have quite a different setting for decision. The choice would then become mostly a quality-evaluation rather than a correctness-decision. It would no longer be competitive in the exclusive sense, but in the weaker sense of quality-judgement. (Whether quality is objective or subjective or neither is entertainingly argued in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

2) For example, it is not crucial what make of carpet one buys, so long as the quality is appropriate for the use to which it will be put. This approach need not entail syncretism (one does not often buy a patch-work carpet), nor the reckoning of all faiths to be of equal value (one chooses the best carpet within the constraints of function, availability and finance), and it would leave room for the enthusiastic proclamation of the Christian Gospel, firmly believed to be the best quality article (Hey! - Come and see my beautiful new carpet.)

Cromwell's appeal to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in August 1650 is still pertinent: "I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, think it possible that you may be mistaken". Neglect of this advice continues to lead to bloodshed. And as I have shown, it has good theoretical justification; tolerance is a logical necessity. However, the Editor

will perhaps reject this paper on the grounds that, although it sounds right, it is probably wrong.

Michael A. Humphreys

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Book Reviews

Air Your Faith by Edwin Robertson (Jay Books, 1991, 20pp, £1.75)

A stimulating book written by a Baptist minister who has immense experience as a writer and broadcaster.

This is helpful not only to those who dream of addressing the nation, but the contents are a challenge to ministers and churches as we face the twenty first century with its many opportunities in the field of communication.

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Independent local radio scene. Considerable space is given to the newly developed 'community radio' and churches are urged to be community minded in order to relate and broadcast in meaningful terms. The necessity to be trained is emphasised and Edwin Robertson spells out the fact that broadcasting is a professional job and it needs to be learnt. "Preachers may feel they have nothing to learn, but they have...radio is not preaching to a larger audience, it is speaking to one, two or three."

There is a useful section at the end of the book which gives details of radio courses available and some useful addresses.

Written in chatty style, you feel you have had a very profitable conversation with the writer who encourages all would be broadcasters to take a tip from the parables of Jesus. He would have needed only two minute slots because he did not elaborate the meaning of his parables.

A book which deserves much attention from each church if we are to respond to the challenge to communicate the faith. If you see this fascinating field of radio work as a boost to your ego, the author will soon burst your bubble, but as he points out, few towns or areas are without their local station - there is an open door. This is informative and inspiring because it is about our work of communication.

Hedley J. Feast

Association Life of the Particular Baptists of Northern England, 1699 - 1732 by S.L. Copson (Baptist Historical Society, 1991, 164pp, £8.00)

This book is based on a thesis for the Oxford M. Litt. It is essentially a book for church historians and its main appeal will be to this limited but important clientele. It has a wealth of detail, is extensively annotated and carefully indexed.

The first chapter on the history of the churches involved contains considerable material relating to the years prior to those which are the subject of the thesis. This is necessary and understandable when one remembers the disturbances of that period - times of persecution alternated with relative toleration of dissenters.

For the general reader, and perhaps for the historian, a short resume of the international and political background of the period would have been helpful. This was a time of great national danger owing to the ascendancy of Louis XIV of France and ultimately relieved by the victories of Marlborough. The danger must have seemed far removed from isolated Baptist communities in Northern England, but the perilous nature of the times undoubtedly played a part in their thinking.

One third of the whole book is taken up by transcripts from Association Meetings. Many of these are interestingly set out as question and answer. Understandably there is much repetition. These transcripts show the strength of Association life and the trust and mutual help requested and given between the churches - surely a lesson for us today!

This book is not easy reading, much is in eighteenth century English, the print is small and that of the notes, very small. As a historical document it is a work of importance and all Baptist readers will find much to create interest and present challenge. The records presented show evidence of a deeply thought out and scripturally based Christian faith and practice which is a fine example for us today.

David Charley

Faith and Festivity by Paul Beasley-Murray (Monarch, 1991, 192pp, £7.99)

This book has two sections, the first, "Celebrating the Faith", is an examination of the component parts of worship. Prayer, Scripture, Lord's Supper, baptism. He also explores the practical aspects of contemporary worship, the role of structure, handling of open worship, baptismal services. The final chapter in this section deals with the relationship of evangelism to worship.

The second section looks at the liturgical year. Personally it was this section that I found most helpful. Here are some practical suggestions in terms of material and approach for making the most of the great festivals of the faith.

Paul's great gift is the ability to summarise: he draws together a wide range of material and presents it in a concise form. At times this analytical style can be frustrating. For example, in the section on the Lord's Supper, the issue is raised concerning a 'fence' around the table. While there are some provocative statements, I would have liked to have seen a fuller discussion, and to have known more of Paul's own thinking.

If anything, the book lacks a little zest: twice we are told that worship is both a science and an art (pp 11, 88). The feeling I had, especially in the first section, was that of a scientific analysis.

Faith and Festivity reflects a considered and fairly structured approach to worship, indeed this is its avowed intention "...the worship leader needs to have a sense of liturgy. It is to this need that this particular book is directed..." (p 10). That being the case, the book fulfils its purpose. Addressed to "today's worship leaders", it provides a good introduction to issues involved in worship, meeting a need for material for worship leaders and teams. A useful book to have especially for its handling of the festivals.

Frank Rinaldi

Holidays 1992

Holiday Bungalow

"Seacot", the detached bungalow with a large garden, facing the sea on a private road, at Seasalter, Whitstable, Kent, which has been available during the last ten years, is provided again for holidays for ministers / missionaries and families, and accompanying friends, when arranged, throughout 1992. It is fully furnished and sleeps up to six. We ask for a contribution to cover all costs which includes the provision of heating, lighting, TV and the rest. There are no extras, and the contribution asked in 1992 will be kept at £43 a week inclusive for ministers / missionaries and their children of school age.

Bookings / details from Sydney Clark, High Meadows, Fernfield Lane, Hawkinge, Folkestone, Kent CT18 7AW. Telephone Hawkinge 2580

Holiday Cottage, Summer Wine Country, Holmfirth.

3 bedrobed stone built, semi-detached cottage, nearly 200 years old, but completely modernised. Sitting room with stone fireplace and beamed ceiling, dining-kitchen, also with beamed ceiling, 1 double bedroom, 2 singles plus bed settee in sitting room. Modern bathroom with over-bath shower. Gas central heating with constant hot water.

Lovely views over surrounding Holme Valley countryside and out toward the Peak District National Park. Convenient for Peak District, Dales, Bronte country and major West Yorkshire cities.

Nicely furnished and well equipped, all the furnishings and equipment being bought in the last year. No pets or smokers.

Prices from £100 in winter up to £185 in high season, with short breaks available except in peak season.

Further details available from: Graham & Rev Mrs Pat Holmes, 72 St Mary's Road, Bradford BD9 4QE: tel 0274 - 491166