The Baptist Ministers'

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Contents 1

Editorial: For the sake of the Cause 2

ONE **'Rocky saw him'** 3

PHILIP CLEMENTS-JEWERY **It pays to advertise** 6

DEREK A RUMBOL **Looking forward to what is to come** 10

COLIN SEDGWICK **In search of strays** 14

In House: Jonathan Edwards, Jim Clarke 19

J-mail: Michael I Bochenski, Mike Smith 22

Review Section 24

Of Interest to You 29

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

EDITORIAL

For the sake of the Cause

I only caught sight of it in passing. A vivid colour photo on the front page of the newspapers of someone who'd set fire to herself outside the Greek embassy in London. The story coincided with an equally, though differently, shocking report of a paramilitary gunman in Northern Ireland who told his interviewer that he felt no remorse, that indeed he felt nothing at all, after killing his target on the man's own doorstep in front of his horrified wife and children.

Both the self burning and the cold-blooded killing were done in the name of a cause. Both too reflected the different religious and cultural backgrounds from which such actions stem. For the east, the protest meant turning the pain in on yourself. For the west, the pain is directed away from the self to the other. We may want to cry out against the frightful self injury of the Kurdish protester, but to my mind her action was much nearer to the mind of Christ than the actions of those who use his name to maim and kill others.

We are all, of course, the product of our cultures, and it is never easy to understand those whose actions seem utterly alien to us. But equally, many of the things we do are often utterly mystifying to others. That embassy story triggered a memory from a quarter of a century ago. It was of a seventy year old Vietnamese monk who burned himself to death in a Saigon street in order to draw attention to the sufferings of his people. Not long after, a woman doctor from the West happened to share a flight with a Buddhist friend of the Saigon martyr. For her, self burning was an act of savagery, violence and fanaticism. Her Vietnamese travelling companion tried to explain that his friend had been a kind and lucid person, calm and in full possession of his mental faculties when he set light to himself. But the western doctor just couldn't believe it 'I said no more,' the man from the east recounted later, 'realising that she could never understand.'*

It would be gratifying to think that twenty-five years on we might be better able to understand, if not to agree with, the Kurdish woman's costly protest outside a London embassy this Lent. And in trying to understand it, perhaps to see such acts - however alien - as much closer to the mind of Christ than those who press their cause by means of the bullet and the bomb. BMJ

G A-W

**Thich Nhat Hatih: 'Vietnam: The Lotus in the Sea of Fire' (SCM 1967)*

'ROCKY SAW HIM'

The ONE version of the New Testament is an ongoing project. The latest portions to appear are 'Letters from Paul to Corinth'. For this Easter issue of the JOURNAL we publish, with acknowledgement, the ONE version of 1 Corinthians 15.

I think I need to remind you, my friends, what the Good News is all about. I gave it to you and you accepted it and based your lives on it. (2) This Good News I gave you will bring you to full life and health if you keep on trusting it. But perhaps you're beginning to think it's all a waste of time?

(3)Let me give you a summary of the essentials you learned through me. Our wrongdoing caused the death of God's Chosen. There are hints this would happen in the old books. (4) After being in a grave for three days he was brought back to life again. You can find that in the old books too. (5) Rocky saw him alive and so did the other friends in that group. (6) On one occasion he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers at the same time. Most of these are still alive to vouch for what I say, though a few have gone to their rest. (7) He also visited his brother James, and all his other close friends. (8) Then, last of all, he came to me, though I didn't make things easy for him! (9) That's why I should be thought of as the least important of all his special friends. I don't deserve the title 'friend' because I caused God's people such dreadful trouble. (10) I'm a Christian today because of God's goodness. But I've done my best to make up for lost time. I've worked harder than the lot of them put together, except I musn't claim any credit for it, since it was God doing all the work through me. (11) What does it matter who does the work, providing it's done? We have the same message, the message you accepted.

(12)The fact that God's Chosen came back to life after being dead is the central theme of the Christian message. So how can some of you say that death is the end of everything? (13) If that's true, Jesus could not have come back to life. (14) If it never happened we've all been wasting our breath and your new-found confidence has no basis. (15) It means we've been telling lies about God. We have given God the credit for bringing Jesus back to life: But God couldn't have done that if ' the dead 'remain forever dead. (16) If life after death is impossible, as some of you think, then Jesus is not alive today. (17) Without Jesus nothing makes any sense and you are as rotten as ever you were. (18) It means too that Christians who have died have gone forever. (19) If the hopes we've pinned on Jesus only apply to this present life, we deserve everybody's pity.

Jesus, our Leader

(20) But Jesus did come back from the dead. And he is only the first to do so. (21) Death is part of being human. But now life after death is also part of being human. (22) Just as we all die because we are all of the same human stock, now we all come to life because we are part of the new same stock as God's Chosen. (23) We have to wait for our turn: Jesus is just the beginning of new life from the dead. The day will come

when all who belong to him will be included. (24) That will be the end of things as we now know them. Jesus will present the New World to the Loving God when all the world's bullies and thugs have been put in their place. (25) One by one Jesus will get rid of all those things which prevent life. (26) Finally, death itself will be abolished. (27) God has put complete control of everything into his hands - everything, that is, except the central being of God. (28) When the operation is complete, the one who is God's true likeness will return to God the overall authority he was given. God will have no rivals!

(29) I'm not sure about the practice of those who register a Christian commitment on behalf of others who have died. At least, by going to such trouble they are declaring their belief in life from the dead. (30). I go to a lot more trouble than that out of the same conviction. I face danger every moment of the day. I am so proud to be the one who brought your lives into a relationship with Jesus, our Leader. (32) You don't think I fought with animals in the arena here in Ephesus just to prove myself a man, do you? If there's no life after death, there's no point in bothering. In the words of the old proverb, "let's eat and drink all we can now, because tomorrow we won't be here!"

(33) Stop playing with silly ideas. If you want to develop a good personality, be careful who you mix with! (34) Start using your minds and check up on your mistakes. I've come to the conclusion that some of you don't know God at all. With the opportunity you've been given, you should be ashamed!

Beyond time and space

(35) I can hear someone asking, "How can the dead come back to life? What sort of body do they have?" (36) That's a silly question, but I'll try to answer it. When you sow a seed in the soil it doesn't start to sprout until the case around it rots away. (37) The seed you sow is just a small plain looking object. It's difficult to tell whether its wheat or some other seed. The seed gives no clue as to what the plant will look like when it's full-grown! (38) God has in mind the final plant that will develop from the seed and sees to it that different seeds turn into the various forms of plant they are meant to be. (39) The same is true of forms of life more like our own. Animals come in all shapes and sizes. We have two legs, other animals have four legs, birds have feathers, fish have fins, and so on. (40) The stars and the planets in the sky have their own particular shapes which we recognize as beautiful. Things down on the ground have quite different shapes but we recognize these as beautiful too. (41) Even among the things we see in the sky we can distinguish different types of beauty as between sun, moon and stars. (42) This should help us understand the mystery of life after death. When our bodies are buried they rot; but they will appear again in a form which won't rot. (43) The bodies we bury are like rubbish we have no more use for; when they re-appear they will be good-looking and fit .(44):The bodies we bury belong to the world we know now ; when they re-appear they will belong to the world beyond time and space. There are different bodies for different forms of existence. (45 & 46) the old books tell us how God gives life to human beings. But the new life which begins with Jesus has an extra added-plus which gives our basic human life an new dimension. (47) Our living bodies are composed from elements we find on this earth. Jesus brings a new humanity which comes from beyond time and space. (48) When we

only have the old humanity we are bound to this earth. But if we belong to the new humanity pioneered by Jesus we lose all restrictions. (49) In the same way that up to now we have all conformed to the same basic pattern we call human, in future we will conform to the new pattern introduced by Jesus.

(50)We cannot be full citizens of God's New World in our present form. We need that new dimension! (51)I'm letting you into a secret. We shall not all die but just as if we were obeying a trumpet-call, we shall undergo a change, in a split second. At that moment what was dead will come to life and will not die again. This change will come about for everybody. (53) The bodies we have now which die and rot will have a new component added to them so they will never die or rot. (54) This event will remind us of the words in the old books, "Death has lost the battle once and for all!"

55)"Death, you're like a bee that's lost its sting! Your triumphs are a thing of the past!" (56)Death got poison for its sting from feelings of guilt and fear of breaking the rules. (57) All that's behind us now, thank God, because of what our Leader, Jesus, God's Chosen, has done. (58) So then, my dear friends, stand your ground, keep your nerve. Let your work for the Leader be a full-time job. Nothing you do for him is ever a waste of time! BMJ

Footnote: The ONE translation is a community translation being prepared by ONE ('ONE. for Christian Renewal' Website:- http:/www.gn.apc.org.one/). It strives towards genuine contemporaneousness and ease of comprehension, and includes cultural as well as verbal translation. It is consistent in its exclusion of sexist language and bias, and should be especially welcome to those who are not academically trained or narrowly religious.

Already in print: MARK, JOHN, ACTS, ROMANS, CORINTHIANS, HEBREWS and JAMES. (The whole collection to date is available for £5.00, plus 75pp&p from the Translation Co-ordinator: John Henson, 2 Sycamore Street, Taffs Well, CF4 7PU) MATTHEW is to be published next.

Stumped

The story is told that the late Professor C H Dodd and his New English Bible Committee were stumped in their search for a more modem version of the words 'the fatted calf' in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). Finally, armed with their list of alternatives, Professor Dodd went to London's Smithfield meat market. Giving the list to one of the men there, Professor Dodd asked, 'Which if any of these terms would you use to describe a calf about to be slaughtered?' The man read the list through with care, shook his head and returned the piece of paper. 'We shouldn't say any o' them, guv'nor,' he said. 'You see, we've got technical terms for these things. We always calls 'em "fatted calves"'

- *The Monarch Book of Christian Wisdom*

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

Philip Clements-Jewery describes a particular evangelistic initiative for which he is responsible as Director.

The Christian Enquiry Agency in England was founded almost exactly ten years ago, following the establishment of a similar agency in Scotland which is no longer operating. Formally CEA is an agency of Churches Together in England, although the Evangelical Alliance, the Bible Society, the new / house Churches, the black-majority Churches and the Christian Brethren are also represented on its Council. CEA's remit is to seek to make contact with people in the community who may be asking questions about faith, in particular the Christian faith, but are not as yet in touch with any local church. We are thus part of the total national "mission map" and we reach into areas not yet touched by others.

The remit has been fulfilled in various ways over the years, mainly by means of advertisements in the press or freepost reply cards left in public places such as hospitals, historic churches and cathedrals, prisons, waiting rooms, libraries and bookshops, cafes and refectories, etc. The CEA relies on churches and individual Christians to order and place these materials in suitable locations. In latter years the CEA has been able to call on the skill and expertise of world-class advertising people belonging to a group called *Christians in the Media*, and this has resulted in some eye-catching publicity that uses a form of gentle humour to attract attention. All enquirers are sent in the first instance a copy of one of the Gospels (kindly supplied to us by the Bible Society) together with a letter that offers further information, literature or a local contact.

Another way in which our work has been developing in recent years has been through co-operation with other evangelistic projects where the CEA has offered an alternative, back-up response mechanism. Examples of this include the Jesus Video Project, the Churches' Advertising Network and the booklets prepared in connection with the European Football Championships in 1996 and the World Cup in 1998. These free booklets were offered to the public through advertisements in the sports pages of the national press, with by far the greatest response coming from readers of *The Sun*. There are few other evangelistic initiatives that are targeted at such a group. We are also developing an Internet site as a further extension of our work.

Non-threatening

The foundation on which this work is based is the research which shows that there are many more people who are interested in matters of "faith", and who might also admit to some form of spiritual experience, than those who actually attend church. It is assumed that among these there are people who are willing to respond to the offer of the gospel provided they are not put under pressure to do so. The CEA provides a non-threatening way for such people to make their response when they might not respond to other, more direct forms of evangelism. Support for such a claim may be seen in the fact that a disproportionate number of enquiries come from men aged 21-40, a group not noted for its prominence in the life of the churches.

By the end of 1998 some 19,000 enquiries in total have been received, with 18% of these initial enquiries resulting in requests for further information and/or a local contact. Such referrals are done only at the specific request of the enquirer and are made through diocesan contacts in the case of Anglicans, by means of the services of the Catholic Enquiry Centre, or through denominational headquarters in the case of other churches. Enquirers who do not admit to any church preference or previous church involvement are referred via the Contact for Christ Service, and those in prison (a high proportion of enquirers seeking further help) via the Prison Fellowship

Because we have neither the knowledge nor the resources to refer enquirers directly to local churches, those churches may have difficulty in seeing the direct value to them of the work of the CEA. The use of our materials by one local church might result in a referral to another church. This is an obstacle to our work that we are constantly seeking to overcome. It requires on the part of local churches the willingness to count the wider purposes of the Kingdom of God as being more important than, to put it crudely, more bums on pews.

Credibility Gap

While the CEA does have the support of the major Churches and Christian bodies in England, there is, I feel, a need for a greater ownership of our work by those Churches. We have a claim to be the main - or, indeed, the only - agency for dealing with enquiries about the Christian faith whose origin is completely outside the Churches, but I sense that this is not always recognised. There is a large credibility gap to be overcome, and we need to be taken more seriously than we are sometimes. I hope that this article may help in part to address this problem. A consequence of the credibility gap that I have identified is the comparative shortage of funding, which results in our having a somewhat hand-to-mouth existence. All the major English Churches offer us as much financial support as they can, for which we are very grateful, and we do have some Trust income, but so much more could be done, and more new materials developed, if there were more resources available.

There is another issue that needs to be mentioned, and it has to do with sensitivities over national boundaries in the British Isles. The fact is that advertising does not recognise such boundaries, and in consequence we do receive enquiries from Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The present situation is that, in the case of enquirers from these countries wanting referral to a local Church or Christian, lists of addresses of the main Churches in Wales, Scotland and Ireland have kindly been supplied to us, and we are happy to make referrals to these bodies. However, we are technically an agency of the English Churches, and it would be difficult to see how this part of our identity could be altered without at least vastly enlarging the representation on our Council. Furthermore, expansion into Wales would require the production of materials in Welsh, and this has financial implications that may well be beyond our resources at present.

Frontiers

Yet another issue is the validity of the advertising medium as a means of spreading the message of the Gospel. There is much misunderstanding in the Churches as to what

advertising is able to achieve. To put it bluntly, it is extremely unlikely that any advertisement will convert anyone. However, it might sufficiently raise interest to allow some people to want to find out more. It is worth noting that both the Alpha Course advertisements in the autumn of 1998 and the regular Churches' Advertising Network's posters at Christmas and Easter have been of the "if you're interested, here's where you can find out more" kind. The latest CEA reply cards in our "10 things..." series are in exactly the same mould. But this often causes much misunderstanding among church people, who apparently would much prefer a more "in yer face" kind of message. However, there is a lot of that kind of advertising around, from church wayside pulpits to scripture posters on railway stations. I do not think it is necessarily the task of the CEA to do what others are already doing, and some might also question the effectiveness of that more traditional kind of advertising.

To put it briefly, what pleases many Christians may not communicate; what may communicate, doesn't please some Christians. Of course, there is an issue here that concerns all who are involved in one way or another in the work of evangelisation. The language that belongs to church culture is understood within that culture, but - these days - hardly beyond it. Likewise, the sort of language that is used in non-church cultures is often barely understood by people in the churches. There is scope here for much confusion and misunderstanding. Christians who are on the frontier, seeking to communicate the Christian message to those beyond the boundary of the Church, are likely to come in for a lot of flak from the very people they are trying to serve. The business of communicating the Gospel in culturally relevant ways can be quite risky.

I see advertising the Christian message as being in the tradition of the parable that was our Lord's distinctive method of teaching. Parables might appear to be a rather hit-and-miss method of getting a message over, but surely the point of them is that people need to be encouraged to take responsibility themselves for whatever they might believe or think. Jesus was not willing to provide neatly packaged answers on a plate, ready to serve. It was only to those who had begun to catch on to the secret of the Kingdom that was being revealed in Jesus that he was ready to explain his parables, and that only in private.

Back Up

It is in this tradition of encouraging enquirers to discover the truth for themselves that the CEA belongs. It is possible to identify several different types of enquirer. I always groan inwardly when I receive an enquiry that has obviously been made by a well-meaning person on behalf of someone else. I wish that such people could see that an enquiry is likely to be far more effective if the person on whose behalf the enquiry has been made had been encouraged to take the initiative her or himself. There are also those who return a reply card simply in jest. Others may do this as a practical joke on someone they know. There are even cases when this has been done maliciously. There are others who send in multiple responses without it ever seeming to make any difference. But there are those for whom contact with the CEA is the first step on a journey (or a return) to faith. There was the woman whose life was falling apart until she found a brand-new family in a local Church. We could also mention the woman, isolated and embittered through disablement, whose contact with the CEA led eventually to her return to the Roman Catholic faith and to new friendships and relationships in

the life of her parish.

The final thing I would like to mention is how I see the future of our work. The traditional methods of advertising and the promotion of materials such as our replycards will continue, of course, and in this we do very much rely upon people in the churches to obtain our materials and place them in suitable locations. But we also rely on people like the readers of this *Journal* to spread the word about CEA. We have a claim, as I wrote earlier, to be the main agency fielding enquiries that originate from outside the churches, certainly in England and until such a time as similar agencies are set up in the other countries in the British Isles, to a limited extent in those countries too. One thing that this might mean is churches, at national, intermediate and local levels, linking their Internet sites to ours, just as in the same way web-surfers who visit our site can make use of links to the main church and Christian sites if they want to find out things for themselves.

I also see the future very much in terms of developing the sort of links we already have with other evangelistic initiatives, including those to do with the Millennium, where we offer an alternative, back-up response mechanism, not in competition but as an adjunct to them allowing people who did not respond the first time to have another opportunity of responding to the invitation. This is a low-cost and effective way of developing the service we offer to other Christian agencies without straining our resources too much. I am also exploring possibilities in connection with local radio. BMJ

Readers who would like to know more, or receive some samples, should contact: Christian Enquiry Agency, at Inter-Church House, 35-41 Lower Marsh, London SE1 7RL Tel: 0171 523 2123; e-mail: enquiry@christianity.org.uk Website: http://www.christianity.org.uk

the footprints of God

The African setting of the 8th Assembly of the WCC last December provided a focus for exploration of issues affecting modem day Africa; a continent which is largely 'forgotten', yet which contains the footprints of some of the earliest human ancestors - indeed these were proposed, in the African Plenary, to be representative of the footprints of God himself. ... I felt inextricably linked with this African suffering, as a white Briton; Zimbabweans drive on the left, and a Zimbabwean cooked breakfast consists of bacon, egg, sausage and tomato. Small features, yet speaking loudly of the legacy left by years of British colonisation. I wanted to spend a lot of time with Africans; I wanted to hear their stories, to be part of their culture, to experience their vibrancy and to identify with their struggles and suffering. But many times I wondered what Africans, and Zimbabweans in particular, thought of me. Despite my fears, I found a warm welcome, generosity, friendship and acceptance. Many I spoke to talked of the worsening economic conditions in their countries, and yet despite this, they all, without exception, had hope for their country's future. The theme 'Turn top God, Rejoice in Hope' was therefore perhaps a description of the Churches in Africa and more of a challenge to the rest of us.

- Hugh Clements-Jewery (Alliance of Baptist Youth).

Looking Forward to What is to Come

Derek A Rumbol, formerly BMS regional Representative for Africa, finds retirement a different sort of challenge.

It is lovely to receive cards and letters of good wishes on retirement. Often they say gracious things about your work and ministry which have a tendency to play havoc with your humility! One good friend commented sagely: "I would appreciate learning from Derek how he managed to avoid doing all those jobs around the house that were supposed to be done and yet still keep the blissful domestic happiness of retirement intact!" Yet another friend said: "I don't like the word retirement very much; it reminds me of 'hospice' - a sort of last stage of one's journey through life."

So then, what is retirement? I was so glad of the opportunity offered by the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship to attend a Pre-Retirement Course, for that provided a couple of days away from the pressurised working life to give a little attention to the subject. I have recently met a retired police officer who did not give time to reflect on the question and he knows he is the poorer for not doing so. Anyway, the experience of sharing the BMF course with colleagues and spouses was a reminder that we are all different. We have different temperaments and personalities; we end our working lives in a variety of church situations or appointments; and we have different expectations of what retirement will bring, or mean for us. And that is only natural.

Therefore in these ruminations, I can only describe something of what the experience has meant for me a year after the event, in the hope that it will help the reader to start asking him/herself some of the questions before the "great and terrible day" catches him/her up unawares.

"We hope that the days ahead will be happy and useful days for you both without the pressures of Baptist House moulding and squeezing your lives. May you have plenty of time to be yourselves and develop those interests that have had to be put on the back-burner for the moment ". So wrote a friend. Perhaps like parents who, on their first holiday without the children, find themselves wondering what to do and how to talk to each other, the advent of retirement forces the question, "Who am I?" The stimulation of discussion at the office whilst thrashing out new policy has gone. Maybe for a minister in pastorate, the kudos of being the person in the pulpit, has gone. What is left? Who am I when the mask of my task has been stripped away? What is my relationship with my partner going to be like now that we have more time to be with each other?

Learning to say 'No'.

Another friend wrote, "I hope that you can settle down in the new environment, find time to enjoy your family and also have space to do the things that matter for both of you. May your health be good, your energy great, your love strong, and your phone often silent." Rather unnervingly, the latter has proved to be true, and how strange it was at first, but how welcome later.

I suppose the key phrase in the last paragraph which helped me in preparation for the great event was "have space to do the things that matter for both of you". I didn't want the oft-repeated phrase "you'll be so busy in retirement you'll wonder how you had time to work" to be true of me. If I were going to be busy, then I would want to set the agenda myself and learn to say 'No' as well as 'Yes'. I almost kept to the idea of not discussing any commitments or preaching engagements until I had been retired six months. That gave me space to find myself in my new environment. Of course I had a list of things I wanted to do with all my free time - some of them have become actuality, others may come later, one or two have been dropped. The Pre-Retirement Course, along with some tapes on the subject obtained via the office, helped me to think of housing, finance, making/updating a will, health, leisure activities, voluntary help for others, church involvement etc.

I had always lived in a tied house, whether with the BMS or BUGB, so obviously housing was a top priority on my list and Brenda and I spent many hours in looking at finances and then in house hunting. For various reasons we decided to move from Didcot; we had to move from the BMS house anyway, and we felt it would be good to start a new life together rather than for me to find a way to fit in with Brenda's existing commitments in church and community. Both sets of parents had died and we had no roots elsewhere so we wanted to move to be near our married daughter and family. Yes, that can be a risk in these mobile days but the signs were that she and the family would probably stay in the same city.

So, amidst an extremely hectic schedule of work at Didcot involving several overseas visits, we prepared for the "last stage of our journey".

Piano Lessons

I found the final days of work quite traumatic what with all the speeches and farewells, not to mention winding everything up in a way that those left behind could fathom what was going on, and then of course the move! Retiring and moving house - all in a week. Exhausting, yes. But it got everything over in one go, leaving us to unpack at leisure and to comb a new area for us in search of dentist, doctor, supermarket (we really are spoiled for choice in this country aren't we?!), etc.etc. We were most grateful for our first visitor who came on behalf of the community in Ravenshead with a Welcome Pack. I gather this idea originated in a women's Bible study group belonging to the local Anglican church. And then there were other folk who called in and from whom we gleaned all sorts of useful information, as well as the consolation of being able to pick out familiar faces when we went to the local shops.

The best moment was on a sunny day in November when we neglected all the packing boxes and on the spur of the moment, went for a walk in some beautiful woods. There were no diary entries to prevent us. And even now, a year on, yes, our diaries are fairly full but only with the things we have chosen to put in. If we are too busy, we have only ourselves to blame. But so far, I think we have got it right.

It takes some courage, at the age of 66, to phone a local piano teacher to ask if he wants a challenge by helping someone of that age to learn to play. But that's what I did and find to my delight that he is one of those people who makes you feel really good

about what you're doing so that you want to come straight home and continue practising.

That was one of my objectives being fulfilled. Others include watching a bit of cricket, going to the occasional concert or play, joining the Rambling Club and agreeing who will do the hoovering! I have used the local library a lot for a variety of books, and have even been reading some of the books on my shelves that have lain unread for far too long, and have included in our budget the occasional purchase of new books in order to keep the brain ticking over. Being fairly near St John's College, Nottingham, I have a readers' ticket which enables me to catch up on various journals or the latest "in" author if I want to.

Multi-ethnic

For the first year, I logged on assiduously to the Internet Executive Press Service for news of Congo and Angola. I still take journals on Africa because I don't want to lay down everything belonging to my former incarnation. But it did come as a shock to me after three months when I heard that a former colleague had been on a BMS visit to the Congo. "Hey!", I thought instinctively," he's doing my job!" I have been back to Didcot for one or two working groups connected with Africa and also to hand over to my successor, but I found myself increasingly relieved to be away from the working atmosphere. And now, after a year, I think I have become emotionally released from my former job.

Yes, it's a delight to be grandparents, to see quite a bit of the energetic, stimulating grandchildren, and to be able to hand them back to their parents when we've had enough! But I appreciated our daughter's comment. "My parents are enjoying the freedom and opportunity of retirement to pursue their various interests and we enjoy seeing them more often. It's been reassuring for me having their support only ten miles away."For missionary parents who had to send their children away to boarding school at an early age, that comment is very precious.

But we've also been learning. Our elder daughter and family live in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic area of Nottingham and we have been privileged to share with them in school activities, and also a Pakistani wedding feast at the local Muslim centre, as well as being the recipients of tasty Asian dishes passed through from next door. We have also learned about life and work in inner-city Sheffield through our son who is involved in youth and community work. And through our other daughter, learning of work with people with special needs as well as some broader social issues dealing with the poor in our society. All of this is of great stimulation and challenge.

Apart from family interests, the piano, the sorting out of photographs, transparencies and postage stamps which had long lain neglected, there is one other area I need to mention.

Church Fellowship

I did not retire from a pastoral setting. The trauma of attending my first Christmas and Easter services having left pastoral charge is still with me - someone else had done all the preparation and was leading them! - but that was 12 years ago. So I retired having been well used to sitting in the pew. Some ministers find that difficult, others can adjust reasonably well. Brenda and I did think long and hard about where we should

link up. We attended the local Anglican church a few times (all our efforts to live in a location which had a Baptist church failed) and the local Community Church but in the end felt that we should worship regularly in a Baptist Church. There are two within five miles of us - a small one and a medium size one and they are in different social settings. In the end we have joined the latter which is in the town where the folk in our village relate to for shopping and often for work.

We have tried to become regular members of the church and to play our part there but not to become over-committed. I am limiting my preaching engagements there or elsewhere to one Sunday a month so that we can be part of this church fellowship. We are trying to get to know our fellow worshippers and to pick up the history of the church and the vibes of relationships etc. We have been led to believe that our presence is supportive and non-threatening. I have accepted the invitation to become a Deacon and thus have responsibilities for coordinating World Mission interests, and am liaison deacon with Junior Church which has involved me in learnng about the Safe to Grow policy for example. Brenda's gifts in pastoral care have been recognised and she is now coordinator for the church in that area, and also helps with the current Alpha course. We are both coordinators for the local Neighbourhood Care Group connected with the church and lead a bi-monthly housegroup. I have also accepted a three meetings a year job as secretary for the Association Church Relations Group thus making use of ecumenical experience when a pastor in this country. At the moment we feel this is a fair use of our time and have been able to decline other requests to help in very worthwhile and needy causes.

We have tried to make it a practice to attend the weekly prayer meeting at the church thus putting what we say we believe into practice, and we are seeking to update our own devotional and prayer times at home-

And finally, is this really retirement? Well I suppose the difference now is that we can choose what we want to do. Do I miss the past? In many ways, yes. Am I looking forward to what is to come? Most certainly. BMJ

The next pre-retirement course will be from 15th - 17th June. Enquiries concerning the course in 2000 should be directed to Jack Ramsbottom.

it ain't necessarily so

Vicar: I'm very sorry to be leaving this parish, but I expect that you will get a better man than me next time.

Parishioner: Not necessarily; that's what the last vicar said!

- The Monarch Book of Christian Wisdom

In Search of Strays

Colin Sedgwick, minister of Lindsay Park Baptist Church, Kenton, tackles an unpopular aspect of the pastor's role

As pastors we have to carry out various difficult duties. None of us, however committed or experienced, however Spirit-filled, relishes being summoned, say, to a child's deathbed, or called on to get involved in messy marital difficulties. We naturally shrink from such tasks, and go only with a deep sense of inadequacy - and urgent prayer.

Yet I for one have decided after nearly 30 years in the pastorate that there is one area of duty which tops even these for difficulty. There is nothing I dislike or detest more than having to go *in search of the strays*.

You know the sort of thing I mean. Joe and Betty have been less and less regular in worship of late. On the occasions they have come you have tried to probe just a little: "How are things? Is everything OK?" Perhaps even: "Is it time I popped round for a chat?" Their answers are civil but evasive. They really are terribly busy... Perhaps in a few weeks' time... You have a word with their house-group leader or pastoral carer, and they report much the same thing.

Eventually you do "pop round". There is no reply. You leave a note, or the church magazine, consoling yourself with the thought that at least they will know you have called (you've done your duty!). You ring. No-one answers; so you leave a message on the answerphone. But they never ring back.

The weeks turn into months. What do you do? You have genuinely tried to make contact, but your approaches have been rejected or ignored. The point of embarrassment has been reached. You would find it awkward to run into them outside Woolworth's.

But you are their pastor. By becoming members of the church they have accepted that they are under your pastoral care. You cannot simply ignore them (nor, hopefully, would you want to). So you go again. This time you catch them in. You have a toe-curling three minutes on the doorstep, declining a stilted invitation to go in (it's clear they are just about to eat). But you manage to arrange a visit. And so at last you get face to face...

Boxing in the dark

However it ends up - restoration to the church, the resolution of some problem, even, sadly, removal from membership - it is an enormous relief when it is all over. Lord, give me a visit to the dentist any time!

Why are such situations so difficult? One reason is the not knowing what the real root of the problem is. With bereavement or marital crisis, at least you know where you stand and roughly what is expected of you. However fumblingly and incompetently, you can attempt to bring the light and love of Jesus into sadness, hurt and confusion. Your mere presence may be of more value than anything you say. Above all, you are

there because, directly or indirectly, you have been *invited* into the situation.

But searching for the strays is a bit like boxing in the dark. You don't know where you stand. Are they ill? Has something happened to upset them? Did you say something in a sermon that caused offence? Are they going through some kind of crisis to do with money, work or family, but feel unable to talk about it? Are they just quietly drifting? We all shrink from intruding on peoples' privacy, pastor or not. It's all the more difficult if the people concerned have been with you only a short time, so that there has not yet been opportunity to build a good relationship.

Perhaps worst of all, as far as I am concerned anyway, such scenarios chip away at your confidence. Deep down inside there is that little voice: "Well, what do you expect? Why *should* people stick with a crummy little church like yours? What have you got to offer in comparison with that church down the road?" You end up blaming yourself - which, while it is no doubt part of the truth, is by no means the whole of it. In a word, you fall prey to the temptation called discouragement.

Pussy-footing

So what is to be done in such situations?

I think I know some of the answers in theory; it's putting them into practice that's the problem! But perhaps stating a few obvious things might help.

First, we need to make it clear from the word go to incoming members that we take membership very seriously, and that absence from worship and fellowship will be quickly and thoroughly followed up. From a personal point of view we need to explain that we see ourselves as answerable to God on the judgement day for the way we have exercised our pastoral role. If we have some kind of written guidelines to go through with the prospective member, so much the better. If they do subsequently absent themselves from fellowship, they should be thinking, albeit perhaps only subconsciously, "We'll be getting a visit soon!" Let's at least start off with the right understanding!

Second, when the situation begins to become acute, we need to act decisively and positively. Pussy-footing around is no good. People will respect us and respond to us far better if we are plain and to the point. I don't say we should be brusque or insensitive - of course not; but why shouldn't we take the bull by the horns and say something like: "I've been feeling concerned about you recently; I really think it's time I came round to see you!"? After all, if we say this we are only speaking the truth; and can that be bad? The church isn't a club to be drifted in and out of, so in a proper sense we need to be thoroughly businesslike. Looking people in the eye and "telling it how it is" is surely the way of Jesus. If we find this doesn't come naturally to us (oh for a bit of American up-frontness!), then we will simply have to learn it. Farewell to the mealy-mouthed expression of concern and the plastic pastoral smile!

Procrastination

Third, we need to school ourselves not to allow such situations to browbeat us into timidity or crush us into defeatism. After all, however imperfect our churches and our

ministries may be, we have nothing, in principle, to be ashamed of (and, if Hebrews 10:25 is anything to go by, the problem is not exactly new!). The church is the body of Christ on earth. If people drift away from it, even for understandable reasons, the least we should require of them is that they give some kind of explanation. If they have a genuine grievance or problem, fair enough, we must take steps to put it right. If they don't, then it becomes our pastoral duty to warn them of (dare I say it!) the error of their ways.

In all this, the one thing we *mustn't* do is - do nothing. Or, just as bad, *seem* to be doing nothing. Various surveys tell us that when people drift away from a church one of the things they most frequently say is: "Well, I hadn't been to church for several weeks, and *nobody seemed to bother*. All right, their comment may in fact be grossly unfair (their house-group leader really had done her best); but if that perception of the church exists we must bend over backwards to put it right. Those moments of embarrassment on the doorstep are infinitely preferable to the charge of indifference. Even a phone call, though no substitute for a proper visit, is better than nothing.

Two negative attitudes threaten to ruin my effectiveness in this area.

First, I find it desperately easy to *put off the necessary action:* "I'll just give them one more week... perhaps they'll turn up next Sunday... "Yet I find that if I do that the whole business simply weighs on me and becomes more and more oppressive. It is, surely, one of the rules of life, not only of the Christian ministry, to get the difficult duties done first so that you can then have a free mind to get on with the rest: tidy your bedroom, and then you really *can* enjoy that TV programme. Procrastination is invariably a curse, but nowhere more so than in this kind of situation.

Peevishness

And second, I slip into the mentality of starting to see the people involved as merely a *problem to be solved* rather than as - well, fellow human beings. All right, I *am* concerned - but only because it's my job to be. I don't really care in the way the biblical shepherd cares for his sheep. In a word, I find that I am "doing a job" rather than exercising a ministry: a worrying development, surely, in any aspect of our work as pastors. Those people are *people*; they matter to God. So they should matter to me.

Yes, there are some tricky psychological barriers to be hurdled. But if we make the effort, experience suggests to me that there may be lovely surprises in store. Those people we thought we had lost for good may well sort themselves out and come back. Why should we expect only the worst outcome; isn't God with us? We may have to swallow the cynicism and peevishness which we had allowed to invade our thinking. Next time we shake hands at the church door there may well be the words: "Thanks for what you said the other evening; we didn't enjoy it at the time, but we're glad you said it!"

In a situation like this, it's not a bad idea to turn things round and put ourselves in the position of the stray. Suppose I were not a minister, but a church member who has lost his way a bit: how would I want the pastor to deal with me? The question only has to be asked for the answer to jump out at us: we would like to be treated seriously, firmly, lovingly, efficiently. Surely this is a classic case of doing to others what we would like them to do to us.

THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY PLC.

19/21 Billiter Street
London EC3M 2RY

Telephone No. 081-980-9411

To the readers of the Baptist Ministers' Journal

1998 was an important year for Baptist Insurance Co. We moved to new premises in Billiter Street, our new computer system was providing us with real benefits and best of all, we passed the £1 Million mark in our donations to Baptist causes. At the same time we had to deal with settling our largest liability claim on record of almost £¾ M which arose from an accident involving a small child in 1990! As well as this we finalised settlement on our largest fire claim of almost £½M caused by arson at a church in Yorkshire. Both these claims were handled efficiently by our claims staff with all payments made by their due dates.

On a sadder note, it was the year we saw the retirement of our General Manager, Terry Mattholie and we are sure you will want to join us in wishing Terry and his wife Janet, a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Looking to the future, it is very much "business as usual" with Alf Green, our Assistant General Manager being responsible for the day to day running of our affairs. We are also looking for further opportunities to improve and widen the insurance services we offer to our customers. One immediate example of this is our new Baptist HomeOwners "Plus" policy which provides better cover than Baptist HomeShield which it replaces. What is more, we have done this at no increased cost to our customers.

If you require any further details on any of the forgoing or would like to receive a quotation for our Baptist HomeOwners "Plus" policy, please contact us on **0345 697 414.**

For and on behalf of The Baptist Insurance Company PLC.

"I will search for the lost and bring back the strays," says the Good Shepherd in Ezekiel 34. Dare we do less? "My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (James 5).

Good words! Let's get on with it then - and let's do it with a bit of confidence and conviction! BMJ

Prayer of an indigenous church community in Malaysia

our great Creator God

Your Son, our Lord, came to our world in the form of Jesus, that we might more clearly see your love in action and your power over evil, sin and death. Teach and inspire us Lord, never to be afraid of the power of those who are greedy and abusive of the resources of your world and of others. With the love of Jesus in our hearts, we can transform every human situation for what is good and acceptable in your sight. We only pray that your church will be more courageous than cautious; that the church will not remain silent when people are suffering; that the church will not 'pass by on the other side' when the wounded earth is waiting to be healed. We praise you, Creator God, that you still make all things new.

CORRYMEELA

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Working to heal the hurts of years of violence

CORRYMEELA is a dispersed Christian community which feels itself to be called an instrument of God's peace.

It works to break down barriers and build bridges between individuals and groups. "If Christianity has nothing to say about reconciliation, then it has nothing to say" (The Revd. Dr. R.R. Davey, OBE., founder of the Corrymeela Community)

CORRYMEELA LINK, based in Great Britain, seeks to spread the vision and support the work of the Corrymeela Community: it needs your help if this aim is to be realised.

PLEASE support with your prayers especially on CORRYMEELA SUNDAY which is held annually on the Sunday before St. Patrick's Day

Information and Donations

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Telephone 0118958 9800

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In House

Jonathan Edwards, Secretary of BMF, reviews the past year.

Over the past few years our Baptist family has spent a huge amount of energy reviewing its life. The Baptist Ministers' Fellowship Committee has warmly greeted the openness of this period, and has been eager to contribute to the many debates that have taken place. During the past year the issues which have come before us have included ministerial settlement, the appraisal of ministers, the care of ministers who are out of pastorate, the probationary period and the relationship between the Colleges and the Union. The BMF Committee brings together representatives from all over the country and is well equipped to consider such a range of issues which affect our ministry. We are glad to work in partnership with the Ministry Department and are grateful for the cooperation and encouragement of Malcolm Goodspeed.

The Journal continues to be mailed out to about 1,800 ministers worldwide and we are grateful to our new editor Gethin Abraham-Williams for maintaining a high and stimulating standard of articles. There is no doubt that the Journal is the public face of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship and we are much in debt to Gethin and the Editorial Board for their hard work and creativity.

Keeping in touch with our international constituency has never been an easy task and we are grateful to George Neal (Commonwealth and USA correspondent) and Michael Bochenski (European correspondent) for their work on our behalf. George and Michael both indicated their desire to stand down and so the Committee has decided to appoint an International Correspondent in the person of Clive Doubleday. Clive's international network of contacts is well known and we are confident of his ability to take us forward in this important aspect of our work.

Strengthening the Church

Keeping contact with our members in this country is a huge task and we are grateful to our team of UK correspondents. Heading up the work of the correspondents is David Piggott, our membership secretary, who has a remarkable knowledge of and affection for our ministers. Jim Clarke, our Treasurer, has been the bringer of consistently good news over the past year. For this we are grateful for the generosity of our members. One of the very happy aspects of our work is that many financial gifts are made during the course of the year to ministers in need. Thank you for making this possible.

We were delighted by the appointment of Michael Bochenski, our chairman, to the vice-presidency of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. We pray that God will give Michael all the energy and wisdom that he will need for his year of office.

We hear much these days of how hard it is to get Baptists to associate. This is certainly the case, and it is surely of the first importance that ministers should set a good example. We hope that the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship makes at least a small contribution to the deepening of fellowship between ministers, and so to the strengthening of the church as a whole.

NOMINATIONS INVITED

Vice-Chairman
Michael Bochenski will end his period of office as Chairman of BMF at the 2000 Baptist Assembly and so we seek to appoint a Vice-Chairman at the Assembly this year. Nominations should be signed by the proposer, seconder and the nominee and should be sent to the Secretary by April 14th.

Secretary
Nominations are also invited for the post of Secretary to the BMF, having a proposer, seconder and the signed permission of the one being nominated. Nominations should be sent to the present Secretary, Jonathan Edwards, by April 14th -A job description is available on receiving an SAE.

Area Representatives

North West
Stuart Jenkins 3, Chapel Walks, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, SKB 7LY
Ted Kelly 163, Charles Street, Leigh, Lancs., WN7 IHF.

North East
Alison Fuller 3, Millmoor Close, Sunnybank, Dalsy Hill, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD9 6EW.

East Midlands
Bob Almond The Manse, 11, Barns Close, Kirby Muxloe, Leics., LE9 2BA.
Don Page 8, Irwell Close, Oakham, Rutland, Leics., LE15 6SX.

South Western
Jonathan Edwards, 96 Honiton Road, Exeter, Devon, EXI 3EE.
Niels Waugh 115, Wembdon Road, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 7P].

Westem
Josephine Fowler 4, Raeburn Road, Bristol, BSS 8PS.
Graham Warmington 32, Eden Vale Road, Westbury, Wiltshire.

West Midlands
Ian Furlong 11, Norton Drive, Woodloes Park, Warwick, CV34 5FE.
Arthur Williams 29, Whitcroft Road, Pershore, Worcs., WRLO 1EW,

Central
Sarah Parry: Greenhill, 39, South Road, Chorleywood, Herts., WD3 5AS.
Jack Ramsbottom 26, Chilton Road, Chesham, Bucks., HP5 2AT.

Southern
Lesley Edmonds 26, Fergusson Road, Grimsbury, Banbury, Oxon., OX16 7HQ.
Alison Overton 4, Bartlemy Road, Newbury, Berks., RG14 63X.

Metropolitan
Paul Collett 52, Bushey Hill Road, Camberwell Road, London, SES 8Q].
Clive Doubleday 117, Kingsway, Petts Wood, Orpington, Kent, BR5 1PP.

Eastern
Ron Day The Manse, New Street, Stradbroke, Eye, Suffolk, IP21 511.

South Eastern
Tony Cross 33, Calland, Smeath, Ashford, Kent, TN25 6QD.
Paul Kerley 9, Nyetimber Lane, Aldwick, Bognor Regis, West Sussex, P021 3HQ.

Wales
Andrew Henton Pusey 23, Raglan Road, Tycoch, Swansea, Wales, SA2 9LR.

Baptist Ministers' Fellowship

Statement of Accounts 1998:(1997 figures in brackets)

General Account		1998		1997
Income				
Home Subscriptions		5598.00		(4406.50)
Overseas Subscriptions		120.00		(48.00)
BMS Subscriptions		55.00		(25.00)
Journal		580.00		(972.00)
Interest	1670.17			(1367.51)
less trans to other accounts	340.00	1330.17	(310.00)	(1057.51)
Total		7683. 17		(6509.01)
Expenditure				
Journal: Printing		2407.17		(2129.98)
Envelopes		133.71		(-)
Postage		1672.16		(1237.12)
Committees: General		2009.81		(1265.95)
Editorial		164.65		(290.77)
Pastoral Session		50.00		(50.00)
Whitley Lectures		70.00		(50.00)
Officers' expenses		643.99		(568.24)
Stationery		-		(92.94)
Total		7151.49		(5685.00)
Balance on year		531.68		(824.01)
General Reserve				
Balance @ 31.12.97		444.85		
Surplus on 1997		824.01		
Balance @ 31.12.98		1268.86		

Benevolent Fund	
Balance @ 31.12.97	4046.70
Income during 1998	2752.00
Interest added	60.00
Grants made during 1998	3350.00
Balance @ 31.12.98	3508.70

Pre-retirement Courses Fund	
Balance @ 31.12.97	2096.99
Income from fees	1115.00
Interest added	120.00
Expenditure 1998	1991.10
Balance @ 31.12.98	1340.89

Life membership No1 Account	
Balance @ 31.12.98	5135.00

Life membership No 2 Account	
Balance @ 31.12.97	12108.00
New Subscriptions	562.50
Interest added	160.00
Balance @ 31.12.98	12830.50

Summary of Balances

General	531.68	(824.01)	Bank C/A	626.26	(42.25)
Reserve	1268.86	(444.85)	Bank FSA	2979.44	(2625.60)
Benevolent	3508.70	(4046.70)	NS bonds	21000.00	(17000.00)
pre-retirement	1340.89	(2096.99)	NS inv	-	(4983.18)
Life No 1	5135.00	(5135.00)	Petty cash	9.93	(4.52)
Life No 2	2830.50	(12108.00)			
Total	24615.63	(24655.55)		24615.63	(24655.55)

j-mail

AWAY DAYS

From Michael I Bochenski, President designate, Baptist Union of Great Britain, 18 Gurney Court Road, St Albans, Herts AL I 4RL. Tel 01727 856537. Fax 01727 765071. e-mail: Bochenski@msn.com.

Dear Journal, During the course of the Presidential Year, I am organising a series of AWAY DAYS for those of us involved in Baptist ministries. As Baptist Ministers, we are soon being called to make the leap into a new century. This is an exciting - if challenging - time for those of us practising something of the range of ministries to be found within our Union.The fruits of recent reviews and reports, of much lobbying and many new ideas are beginning to show. New patterns for probationary care and for career-long ministerial development as well as a new appraisal scheme are being explored and, where appropriate, implemented. So too are some new approaches to settlement and to support structures for those of us in Baptist ministries. These are being introduced by our Union in time for the new century.

With the encouragement and support of the Union's Department of Ministry, a team of us will be presenting a series of away days at which we will seek to introduce and explore with you some of these changes, policies and programmes. The speakers' team will be drawn from Malcolm Goodspeed, Viv Lassetter, Paul Beasley-Murray, Paul Goodliff and myself. Ten such away days have been arranged in the following venues: The timings will be from 10.00-16.00 hours. These are the dates and venues:

October 1999
14th Northern Baptist College, Manchester
20th South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff
21st North Wales Baptist College, Bangor

November 1999
3rd Spurgeon's College, London
10th Regent's Park College, Oxford
11th Bristol Baptist College

February 2000
3rd Moortown Baptist Church, Leeds
9th Eastleigh Baptist Church,Hants.
10th Histon Baptist Church, Cambridgeshire
16th Westhill CFE, Selly Oak, Birmingham

The programme for the Days, starting with Worship, at 10 a.m. and ending at 4 p.m will cover the following sessions: Trends in ministry, church and society in contemporary Britain; Issues of spirituality, power and pastoral care within Baptist ministries; Probationary care, ongoing ministerial development and appraisal, new approaches to settlement and support; and will conclude with an Open Forum. To book and to receive further details, please contact me at the above address.

In order to draw on Home Mission monies as little as possible, a charge of £10 will be made for the away day programme. For students and retired ministers, the charge will be £8. This will include tea and coffee, lunch and materials for the day. Please note that there will be a trigger-point of 30 bookings for each away day. The administration for the away days is being handled by the pa to the President, Mrs Tracey Massey (01727- 831344). We do hope that many 'Journal' readers will be able to join us for one of them. Please pray for us in all the planning and preparation for these days and for me - please - in the responsibilities and travels of a demanding year. BMJ

EVIDENCE FROM THE PAST

from Mike Smith, Minister, Golcar Baptist Church, Huddesrsfield

Dear Journal, I hope I may be allowed to reply, to John Morgan-Wynne's criticism of my article (*Journal* October1998) *Evidence from the Past* (*Journal* July 1998). Although I cannot cite exact chapter and verse, all the opinions I stated have been given in my hearing.

I see John Morgan-Wynne still clings to the documentary hypothesis on the Pentateuch. Even though such procedures are otherwise unexampled in ancient literature, and were invented long before modern archeology had produced comparable documents from the Ancient Near East.

As to the alleged clash between a swift invasion, and a gradual infiltration, I would suggest that when we have two accounts of the capture of a town, probably they are both true. And in between the Canaanites retook it. After all, no ancient writers are too keen to report their defeats!

As to the Ketef Hinnom amulet, with all respect this is a piece of Numbers, not the mythical document P. This would be recognised in any other context. For example, "conticuere omnes" on a tile from London, or a few words on a scrap of papyrus from Masada, are both recognised as pieces of Virgil, not some mythical proto-Virgil otherwise unknown.

The altar on Mount Ebal is concrete proof of Israelites behaving just as described in Deuteronomy and Joshua - i.e building an altar there. In any other branch of ancient history, this would be accepted. Perhaps one could compare the way that Dio Cassius' account of Claudius' invasion of Britain (written nearly 200 years later) was accepted without demur as the basis for interpreting finds near the Houses of Parliament in an episode of "Time Team" last year.

Finally, when I was at Oxford, my tutor John Baker (later Bishop of Salisbury) lectured on the post-exilic period of the Old Testament. On one occasion I remember challenging him to produce any piece of the Pentateuch which was definitely to be dated after the time of Moses. The best he could do was a possible reference to king Solomon's trading of horses from Kue (Cilicia). BMJ

Holidays 1999

Yorkshire dales: stone built cottage, three bedrooms (sleeps four), peaceful, good views, garden, full gas central heating and open fire in lounge, villages with all facilities, even accessible by public transport! Centre for good walking.

Details from:
Eric and Brenda Bray, 45 Westholme Road, Withington, Manchester, M20 3QZ. Tel 0161 434 4352

a prayer

Thyself the Gift

O give thyself unto me,
for without thee
no gift at all can satisfy.
And because thou thyself art the gift,
o give me what thou art,
that I may give thee what I am,
and be made a partaker
of the divine nature.

- *Thomas Traherne*

Book Reviews

Thank you to those who responded to my request for reviewers. Volunteers are still needed. I am particularly short of female ministers. - John Houseago

Christology Revisited **John Macquarrie. SCM Press 1998. £9.95**

Many of us have been grateful in the past for Professor John MacQuarrie's ability to present complex subjects in digestible form.

This book on Christology is no exception. An introductory chapter sets the subject in context, he raises briefly the challenge of relativism and rejects it. After questioning if moderns have the privileged position we think they have he emphasises our need to learn from the past. Then, unsurprisingly for MacQuarrie, he nails his colours to an orthodox position. In Jesus Christ is the absolute paradox of the God/Man without which Christian belief collapses. Chapters follow exploring aspects of this confession.

Those dealing with Adoptionism and with the language used in debating the Chalcedonian definition are excellent. The chapters on how we know Jesus, where the emphasis is on knowledge by acquaintance, and the Metaphysical Christ, what is ultimate in Him, are helpful. A disappointment for me was the chapter dealing with the Humanity of Christ as portrayed in the New Testament. It consists, in large part, of considering those aspects of the tradition which cast doubt on the true humanity of Jesus e.g. the virgin birth, miracles and sinlessness. The arguments are well worn and I am sure the probing can go deeper than it does here. It may have been more helpful if MacQuarrie had developed a previous statement (p.16) "(Jesus') central convictions, expressed in both word and deed - concerning the sin that disfigures human life, the righteousness necessary for the health of society, above all the love in which human life is brought to its highest pitch of fulfilment."

One significant omission in the chapter 'How We Know Jesus' is that of obedient discipleship. This book both informs and provokes questions. It is thus a pity that it lacks suggestions for further reading.

Bob Smart

The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism. **D.A. Carson. IVP. £9.99**

I have some personal experience of feeling pushed and pulled in the discussions on the need or otherwise, of our language to be more inclusive.

I therefore came to this book with my own mixed reaction to the debate and bitter experiences of how people on both sides of any debate are prepared to ignore the feelings of others in order to win the day!

The debate about 'Inclusive Language' has been so hotly contended in America that Carson coins it 'Bible Rage'! It is into this fierce and sensitive arena that Carson endeavours to "lower the temperature, slow the pace of debate, and bring up some

things that, in my view, (Carson's) are sometimes overlooked."

The author sets about meeting his own high standards by highlighting the difficulty of translating one language into another and educates his readers into the complexity of the languages of the original texts of the Bible. This is important to Carson as he feels that people on both sides of the argument would have to admit to holding their strong views without much of a grasp of Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, translation theory and linguistics. He helps us to see that over the centuries translators have been working hard to discover the original meaning of the texts and not always agreeing.

He continues to do this throughout his book with clearly explained difficulties for the translator and illustrates this by the use of biblical texts that are worded differently in various translations. There are also chapters devoted to Old and New Testament passages, which whilst the passages may not relate to the specific subject, do underline how some of the linguistic and interpretative principles work out in practice.

Carson finishes his book with a passionate plea to avoid 'Bible Rage' by remembering the feelings of others.

As an author Carson lives up to the high standards he set himself. He also managed to set out the complexities of the situations without arguing for one or the other side of the debate, which is a rare achievement.

The technical aspects of translating languages may not be to everybody's taste but they show how difficult it is to claim to have the absolute truth.

This book is a valuable contribution to the debate about the inclusivity of language with its patient and gentle style helping to take some of the heat out of any debate. But because of Carson's wide ranging choice of biblical texts as examples of how translation is a difficult task, this book goes beyond the debate of its title and challenges us to look again at other passages of the Bible and see how the preaching and teaching ministry of the church could be enriched by a greater understanding of the complexities of language and therefore the impact on the various translations of the Bible we hold dear.

This kind of understanding may also help us to be more gracious in our dealings with each other as issues, such as the one the book discusses, arise.

Sarah Kinch

***Power for God's Sake*. Paul Beasley-Murray.**
Paternoster Press. 1998. £8.99. pp xiv + 194

In *Power for God's Sake* Paul Beasley-Murray draws attention to a crucial issue confronting the Church in today's world in the abuse of power in the local church. Sometimes the abuse of power is high profile, as exampled by the stories of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, the struggle in Lincoln Cathedral, the resignations in Selby Abbey, the excesses of the Nine O'clock Service, the suicides in Jonestown, or the siege at Waco. At other times the abuse of power goes unchronicled, but is no less damaging to the lives of individual Christians and the welfare of local congregations.

At the heart of Beasley-Murray's study lies a new survey intended to chart the extent of the problem. This new survey demonstrates both the enormous potential contribution such empirical evidence can make to shaping the future of the church, and the real difficulty the churches have in undertaking such research. In chapter two Beasley-Murray charts his frustration in failing to find the appropriate academic support among theologians for such an enterprise. Unlike the situation in many parts of continental Europe, the churches in England and Wales have been very slow to establish effective departments of empirical theology.

The sample comprised the 231 ministers on the mailing list of the Richard Baxter Institute for Ministry, 116 of whom returned the questionnaire (50% response rate). These ministers were also asked to pass two questionnaires to key officers of their church and one questionnaire to a minister in another church. This generated 120 returns from lay people and 25 further returns from ministers.

The replies to the questionnaire are set out clearly and form the basis for theological reflection. From the rich and illuminating data Beasley-Murray selects five challenging headlines: nine out of ten ministers feel that their churches treat them badly; most ministers under forty-five have considered giving up their calling; one in six ministers leave their churches in 'unhappy circumstances'; one in seven ministers confess to sexual misbehaviour; one in five churches is racked by power politics.

A strength of the book is that the questionnaire is set out in full in the appendices. This instrument could provide the basis for further research among larger and more representative samples of clergy, alongside additional questions more securely rooted in relevant psychological theory concerning the assessment and interpretation of power-related behaviour.

Professor Leslie J Francis (Trinity College, Carmarthen)

***Care in a Confused Climate: Pastoral Care and Post-modern Culture.* Paul Goodliff. Darton, Longman and Todd. 246 pages £12.95**

This book is in two sections. Part One offers definitions of Pastoral Care and Pastoral Theology together with a brief history of these this century. A succinct but wide ranging analysis of post-modernism follows. Then there is a theological response, together with some discussion about pastoral care in the light of post-modern ethics. The author argues for a creative engagement by Christians with the spirit of the age. At times this will mean being a prophetic voice into the world, at other times it will mean learning from the world. The final chapter in this section argues the church's unique contribution comes from its insights into Community, which is where Pastoral Care is to be exercised.

Part Two explores what the author sees as the priorities and methods for pastoral care in the post-modern world. Separate chapters discuss what the author sees as the urgent tasks, namely: Building Christian Community; Creating Relational Health; Healing the Wounded Soul; and Nurturing and Sustaining Faith. Final chapters look at the resources available to do these tasks, and consider how to build a Pastoral Care team in the local church.

I warmed immediately to a book that itself suggests one may want to read only one part, begin with the second section, or even skip chunks! The presentation makes this easy to do. Each chapter is headed with an overview and the text is divided up with sub-headings. In the analysis of post-modernity sections set in boxes are in effect extended footnotes, and the text can be read without referring to these without interrupting the flow.

This book spurs one on to further evaluation of pastoral ministry and I appreciated the bringing together of scholarship, reflection and praxis. Complex matters are covered in a readable way with full notes for those who want to pursue a particular aspect in more detail. This is a useful book for those in pastoral ministry to read, dip into, and refer to again.

Ruth Bottoms

Prayers for all Seasons **Nick Fawcett. Kevin Mayhew. 1998 £24.99**

The last time I reviewed a book of prayers I lamented the absence of examples of the opening prayer of thanksgiving and confession that are a familiar feature of traditional Baptist worship. Nick Fawcett's book provides a rich source book for this need, and a number of others too.

The large format paperback is set out in three sections: The Christian Year, Life and Faith and Ordinary Sundays. In total there are more than three hundred prayers. They are comprehensive, covering all the types of prayer to be found in public worship, including special occasions. The book contains a good contents section and a comprehensive index. Fawcett uses language well, the phrases are fresh and yet not so unusual as to jar.

I have used this book regularly in church for the last couple of months. Most of the prayers I have been able to use without changes, other I have amended to make them suitable for local needs or to make the phrasing my own. The amount of white space on each page made this easy. I found the prayers of invitation for communion especially helpful and a number of worshippers commented after the service; one even requested a copy of the prayer. No one has ever asked for one of my prayers!

If I have any criticism it would be that I prefer a smaller format book. This one takes a lot of space in the briefcase and in the pulpit. The cost is high, but even so I have no hesitation in recommending it.

John Houseago

From the Holy Mountain **William Dalrymple. Flamingo. 483 p. £8-99**

This is essentially a travel book, and therefore not the type of book that we normally review. However, since the editor suggested it I thought I should least have a look at it! I found it a fascinating volume that deserves its place in this journal on the basis of the amount of history of the Eastern Churches it contains and of the analysis it offers of the complex political situation in the contemporary middle-east. The bringing together of these two streams with the travel narratives makes learning an interesting and painless

experience.

The book relates a journey that Dalrymple made tracing the journey of John Moschos from Mt. Athos to Egypt. Moschos was a monk who made the journey in 587 AD. He set out to collect the wisdom of the desert fathers, sages and mystics of the Eastern Empire, which was clearly falling into final decay.

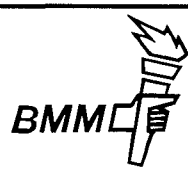
I found the book disturbing when it related the situation of present day Christian communities in Turkey and of the continuing conflict with the Kurdish people. Both of these situations are largely unreported in the West.

Dalrymple's time in the Lebanon produced interviews with leaders of the factions which became familiar names while Terry Waite and John McCarthy were hostages. This book provides the most digestible introduction to this situation that I have come across.

I was left with one major concern. The publishers blurb describes the book as 'witty, learned and very funny'. I agree with the first two adjectives, but failed to do more than smile weakly! It may be that I am too slow on the uptake to appreciate the humour.

The book contains an excellent glossary, a bibliography and an extensive index.

John Houseago BMJ



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