



# The Baptist Ministers' Journal

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Details of the Fellowship can be found on the inside back cover

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# EDITORIAL

## Getting the tenses right

'We're no longer living in the present,' said someone on the radio as I drove home, half listening, half watching the road. Look at serious analytical pieces on TV and in the newspapers, let alone advertisements, ran the argument, and they are invariably about the future.' It's what life *will* be like in ten, twenty years or more, that most engages our attention. Even this first 'double-0' issue of the Journal in this third millennium is no exception with a crop of articles speculating on church, college and communications a decade or more into the new century. And there is a sense in which such an approach is entirely in keeping with a people whose earliest baptismal creed looks to the last things with the Aramaic invocation: *Marana tha* - 'Come, O Lord!' (I Corinthians 16: 22). In some contemporary eucharistic liturgies too it is common to repeat such the words as : 'Christ *will* come again' (as in the second pattern for celebrating The Lord's Supper in 'Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship').

As Christians, however, we also hold to a faith that is historical, where the central action of worship is and always has been one of remembrance, of looking back. 'The Church – every gathering of the church, everywhere, under every form – *remembers* that on a certain night its Founder said and did certain definite things .... There has not been one single week in which this act of remembrance was not made, one generation reminding another,' wrote C H Dodd memorably in his '*Founder of Christianity*'.

We are, therefore pulled both ways, without always realising it! And the challenge is to discover meaning for now, by both looking forwards *and* backwards – at the *same* time. In a little monograph

on the great theologian and palaeontologist, Teilhard de Chardin, Bernard Towers commented that 'if much of this is research into the past, the pressing problem for reflective man (*sic*) is research into the possibilities open to the future. Psychological and sociological research is vital if man is to avoid such abuse of his new level of freedom that he destroys himself, at the very time when it is possible dimly to discern the goal ahead.'

The minister's task in leading worship and being involved with people week by week may hardly ever be couched in such sophisticated terminology, but ultimately it is what it's all about: showing how to live transformed lives now because of what has been and will be. **bmj**

**The Journal is read in:** Albania, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Equador, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Latvia, Liberia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom & Northern Ireland, USA, Zimbabwe.

# Where will we be in 2010?

## **Kenneth Walker, Minister of Beckenham Baptist Church believes the future could be exciting.**

A funny thing dawned on me the other day. Since I was at school I have been under the impression that I would, if spared, be 48 years of age in the year 2000. Amazingly it has now struck me that because, as the BMS Birthday Scheme knew all along, my birthday is not until August, I will for the greater part of the year be only 47!

But there's another thing that has dawned on me. When my schoolchild calculation was made, I knew that 48 was quite old! On the brink of it, however, I now find it feels pretty young! The position from which we take our view hugely affects what we see. How can we reliably look ahead as I have been asked to do in this article? The answer is we can't! It is not long since we were battering down the hatches - the demise of religion was widely forecast and there was an increasing Angst about the profession of faith. Yet as the year 2000 dawns, the patient looks to be far more than in a state of remission.

Harvey Cox in his book "Fire from Heaven" sees a future that is Pentecostal. He is, of course, not alone in identifying this, but he is a particularly eloquent and loving witness to the view. His 1996 book is a delight to read, as it follows a trail from the inauspicious Azusa Street beginnings in 1906 to the present day when one in four Christians is some kind of Pentecostal, and at nearly half a billion people, this constitutes the fastest growing part of the church. It was Cox whose "Secular City" of the sixties was for many the definitive expression of the collapse of traditional religion in the West. Yet now he sees a vibrant religious future epitomised in the phenomenon of Pentecostalism, if not in its often authoritarian structures.

Cox identifies a battle between fundamentalist and experientialist

attitudes. The energy of this new religious power comes from its generally unwitting and actually disclaimed chaotic openness to things buried deep in culture and folk religion, enabling a more whole understanding of what a human being is. Against many of its leaders and teachers, Pentecostalism has provided significant space for women to express their religious gifts. In Brazil there are signs of a growing social awareness paralleling the insights of the basic Christian communities. We should look beyond the highly organised and controlling cult leaders and discern a genuine movement of the people.

### **Fluid**

For the well staged birth of the 6 billionth person Salman Rushdie wrote an understandably impassioned plea for us to turn away from religious authority figures. He has every reason to make such a plea, but paradoxically this is also a time of increasing respect for a religious view of the world. We may confidently affirm religious experience that enhances and more fully expresses what human being is. But with Rushdie we need to recognise that it will not be the authority of leaders that carries the day. In the West we certainly seem to be heading for a world in which everything has to stand up on its own merit, and be seen and felt to prove its worth.

As we look forward we do not need to be fearful whether religion or Christianity has a future - that is, as long as we are not

too anxious about the forms in which it may express itself! It's amazing how things change. I think I had a perception that when I was training for ministry the student body was divided into two. You were either heading to be a traditional minister, or some sort of new minister typically influenced by things charismatic. For all that I understand that Area Superintendents still need to know whether you are charismatic or/and ecumenical (or neither!) it really doesn't feel as if the world divides so neatly any more. We have long since grown used to the idea that allegiance to denominations is not what it was - it does not get us to the heart of our Christian identity. Yet the cross-denominational groupings that have replaced them are also at this time very fluid, superseding the firm structures that were emerging a few years ago.

I am grateful to have been brought up in a Baptist church where an ecumenical outlook was taken for granted. Perhaps because of this, I find I work with two contradictory ideas of the local church. I am persuaded of the importance of the voluntary and preferably radical Christian community. But I am equally convinced that the church should be as inclusive and all-embracing as possible - a parish church writ large! I believe in the importance of having an ecumenical vision. A lively sense of God's whole inhabited earth with the church as a significant witness within it continues to excite me. It is a driving force. The twentieth century threw people together as never before. New concepts of a common humanity and of our dependence on the planet had to emerge. Hans Küng's Global Ethic is a passionate developing expression of this. The ecumenical movement has largely been identified with bringing churches together. But behind this lies the far wider purpose - establishing the vision of one world, with the church exercising a missionary function

of common service and witness for justice. How can a divided, even squabbling, church expect to play any worthwhile role with the requisite integrity?

### A Lie

Yet for all the challenge of such a global vision, I found myself nodding agreement with the Free Church Chronicle's headlining of David Goodbourn's quoted remarks soon after taking office as General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland last spring. "Dull, boring ecumenism needs a fresh vision". Needless to say, that isn't exactly what he said, but it does reflect first-hand experience for a lot of people. Lowest common denominator services devised by supposedly representative committees come to mind! Local ecumenical activity easily becomes "dull [and] boring". In some ways ecumenism has been hijacked. It does not belong first and foremost in committees made up of committee type people! It is, like Harvey Cox's Pentecostalism, a people's movement. It is not an organisation, but an energising way of thinking and living.

But still more significantly for me, ecumenism is possibly not even about trying to establish common ground. Hope for the world will not be found by establishing all the ways in which "we're all the same really", but rather by an increasing ability to accept and value one another in the richness of our difference. Ecumenism becomes boring where it is the pursuit of the ways in which we are the same. The interesting thing about other churches and indeed about other people is precisely that we have something new to learn from one another. The art of surviving on the planet, the celebration of which is at the heart of ecumenism, can only be on the basis of accepting and indeed rejoicing in difference. The quest for visible unity ultimately turns out to be

a boring one and in fact a lie - it will always tend to downgrade the varying diversity that is necessary to relevant and living enduring Christian witness, not to mention a denial of the way God made the world!

Much the same concern is evident in our involvement in the European Union. Most of us know that we have to belong, but the Europe we belong to has a diversity we do not want to see minimised. We may be conscious of threats to our island existence, but in Britain we are scarcely aware of the extent to which English language based culture is a dominating force threatening many aspects of European civilisation. European integration should not be at the expense of what makes this intriguing continent what it is. The will to acknowledge and affirm the diverse national identities within Britain is to be understood in the same way.

### **Instability**

Another interesting case in point is what is happening within evangelicalism. A few years ago it was possible to feel a pressure within the Baptist Union towards a rather generalised non-denominational evangelicalism. Yet the advance of evangelical influence in the British churches has borne an unexpected fruit in the broadening of the movement and the increasingly rich diversity within it. John Drane, Dave Tomlinson, and Nigel Wright with "Evangelism for a New Age", "The Post-Evangelical" and "The Radical Evangelical" are among those who have challenged us to affirm diversity. Their example is important for the wider church, not least because it is often more liberal Christians who are the most strikingly intolerant and dismissive of views other than their own!

In looking forward to 2010 we must develop our ability to cope with diversity

and continuous transition in all areas of life. The instability of personal relationships looks bound to pose ever-increasing problems in the years to come. Adult enquirers and converts to the faith typically come with painful experience behind them. Local congregations are not the settled communities they once were. What will happen about the care of all our elderly? The world of work has already changed beyond recognition for many. New jobs are largely to do with what the 18th century Quaker John Woolman would have called "superfluities"! The distribution of money is often all too detached from the question of value. Global communication is transforming the way many people relate to each other. This will yield as yet largely unenvisaged opportunities, but how long will it be before being locked in front of a computer screen is seen for the tyranny it is? The re-casting of political alignments is clearly set to continue, with the art of occupying what was historically someone else's ground, albeit in your own characteristic way, looking like a very useful skill to acquire!

In all things, external authority looks to be in for a hard time. The Baptist type approach to faith with the emphasis on the individual's need and right to make their own decisions regarding the spiritual life may well commend itself - especially if our congregations can maintain the kind of non-judgmental openness that characterises an all-embracing, inclusive community.

The dual vision of maintaining our own identity, and affirming the identity of others will always involve tension, but that is how life is. As we learn to accept and value people and churches as they are, it may well be that we in turn become increasingly comfortable working with

different theologies and insights, according to situation. This will always be provisional and often finally unresolved, but such is the context in which we are being called to live and witness as we look ahead.

For that matter, those looking in at us will be more interested to see that we are seeking to be honest, and that we demonstrate the reconciling love of Christ, than that we are totally consistent. They will be more interested in being able to experience a shared quest for meaning and faith with us (Raymond Fung's "The Isaiah

Vision" offers a strategy for this), than to hear that we have all the answers. Our structures could be in for a pretty challenging time through the years ahead, but freed of some of the constraints of past authority and ways of doing things, there will be plenty of opportunity for the imaginative use of all kinds of gifts in the increasingly diverse community of faith. I reckon there will be a fair measure of excitement on the way!

I'm glad I'm still young! **bmj**

## AN ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

'A pilgrimage to the Holy Land should include opportunities to meet and engage with people living there' says Christian Aid in its latest leaflet published in conjunction with CTBI 'Planning a pilgrimage to the Holy Land?' For details of churches and organisations in the UK which promote alternative tourism, visit the website: [www.christian-aid.org.uk](http://www.christian-aid.org.uk)

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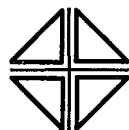
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# The Internet - Devil's Distraction?

**Bob Almond, minister of Kirby Muxloe Free Church, Leicester, ventures into cyberspace.**

Talk about the Internet, and half of those listening will respond with interest, even passion. The other half will believe you are speaking in tongues, and avoid you like the plague. It's a subject that polarises. For many, it carries associations of pornography, malicious viruses and anarchy; for others it is a treasure trove of sermon illustrations, a window onto the world and a new gospel opportunity.

The truth is that it is all of these things at once. It's impossible to get a sense of scale, because the figures are changing all the time, but current estimates suggest that around 150 million people have internet access world-wide; that the UK will do £9.5 billion in business on the Internet this year. There are around 100 million web sites to visit. And how do I know all this? Simple. To use a phrase I now hear almost daily, 'I looked it up on the Internet!'

## **What are you talking about?**

To begin at the beginning. What is the Internet? At its simplest, it's three things. An agreement - 'let's connect our computers together, and if I receive a message that isn't for me, I'll pass it on.' A code - a group of four numbers that identifies a particular computer, so that a message can have an address. And a language - not English, although that has become the dominant language of the Internet, but a language called TCP/IP that is understood by computers everywhere and carries instructions that route messages from sender to recipient, no matter how tortuous the journey.

Put these things together, and you have a global network of computers, that can carry messages from any one place to any other. It doesn't have a centre, nor an administrator, just a handful of simple rules that allow it to work.

There are three key uses of this

network. One is e-mail - sending person-to-person messages via this network. Just like a letter, only very fast and very cheap.

The second use is the World-Wide Web - WWW for short. Another language - this one called HTTP, invented by the very English Tim Berners-Lee - makes it possible for computers connected to the Internet to make available screens of information which other computer users can read - and this is the Web, and is in fact what most people mean when they speak of the Internet.

The third use is like e-mail, but with a twist. The network can enable group discussions - various forms exist, called 'chat rooms' or 'newsgroups.' Here groups of people with a shared interest can carry on conversations, sometimes in real time, like a phone conversation, or sometimes in a way more like the exchange of letters. You can establish a close friendship with people scattered across the globe.

## **What can you do in Cyberspace?**

Four major uses spring to mind - Communication, Information, Entertainment and Commerce.

a) Communication. You'll be interested to know that over half of the members of the BMF Committee have e-mail addresses, and the number is rising daily. I send copy for the church magazine to the editor by e-mail, hymns to the organist, and membership

alterations to the church registrar. I can send messages and attach files and pictures to them - and all for the cost of a local phone call. Rapid, simple communications are helpful.

But a number of problems go along with this. First, the speed of e-mail means that messages are in style more 'spoken' than 'written' - but without the advantage of being able to read expressions. 'Smileys' have been created in response to this - simple combinations of symbols to express an emotion - so :- ) is a smile, and ;- ) a wink (turn head sideways for instant understanding!) Despite this, misunderstandings happen easily.

Second, and this is true of much of the use of the Internet, it is easy to create an information-poor underclass - people who are left out of the loop, because they can't hear what is being said. And as usual, the better off are 'in', and the poor, the elderly, the uneducated and the isolated are marginalised. The winners - like Bill Gates - become fabulously wealthy; the poor just go on being ignored.

- b) Information. The Web is explored through 'search engines' - directories of the millions of websites. Type in a word or two, and a massive list of 'hits' - websites that refer to your words - results. Search for 'Baptist Church' and you'll get 180,000 hits - mostly in the US. Almost everything that is known is there somewhere. But - and it's a big but - there's no easy way to judge the quality of the information. That's why most of the virus warnings circulating are hoaxes, and many of the heart-rending appeals about people in need are myths. Much of what is out there is rubbish! But there is real gold - I'll list a few selected sites later.
- c) Entertainment. There's no shortage of music, downloadable video, and easily accessible art out there. Radio stations

across the world also broadcast onto the Web. Have a listen to Premier Radio at [www.premier.org.uk](http://www.premier.org.uk) - but there are thousands of others.

However, the largest volume of 'entertainment' by far is pornography. It's a big money-spinner, and all that's needed is a credit card number. Because the internet is global, porn can originate legally in other countries and be accessed here. There are programs to prevent children accessing such sites - schools use them - but none are so effective that they can't be fooled. Keep the PC somewhere in view, and be aware of what it is used for.

- d) Commerce. e-commerce, as it is called (to be trendy, just put a lower case e- in front of a word or add cyber- to it!) is developing rapidly.

Books, CDs and computer software are already selling in vast quantities over the net, and pizza, groceries and jewellery too. There are some concerns about security, but on the whole there are few problems. And the international nature of it all causes many headaches for national governments and customs officials.

### **How is this relevant to me?**

Well, because there's bound to be something of interest. I found a recipe and instructions for a hog-roast without too much effort! I've collected some examples of where to go and what to find. To save space, I'll omit <http://> from all addresses.

First mention has to go to Youthwork magazine - the magazine and the website both have excellent suggestions for further exploration: [www.youthwork.co.uk/](http://www.youthwork.co.uk/) websites. The Web is a great source of sermon illustrations: [www.sermonillustrations.com](http://www.sermonillustrations.com)

There's all kinds of theological research going on - [www.bsw.org](http://www.bsw.org) has a good list, and the Christian search site [www.goshen.net](http://www.goshen.net) is worth using. Christian



organisations all have websites - check out the BU: [www.baptist.org.uk](http://www.baptist.org.uk), the BMS: [www.bms.org.uk](http://www.bms.org.uk) and of course the BMF itself, and the related website for Connexion, for those married to Baptists in Ministry and Mission: [www.revbob.co.uk](http://www.revbob.co.uk) is the easiest route for these.

Just in case this is all too heavy, take a trip to the Louvre: [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr), or to the Millennium Dome, [www.dome2000.co.uk](http://www.dome2000.co.uk). There's a Christian approach to the Millennium at [www.2000ad.org](http://www.2000ad.org), and [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk) has the BBC news online. The British Museum has interesting material at [www.british-museum.ac.uk](http://www.british-museum.ac.uk), and the British Library at [portico.bl.uk](http://portico.bl.uk).

Nasa has a library of superb pictures at [www.nasa.gov/gallery](http://www.nasa.gov/gallery), and if its free software you're after, try [www.nonags.atlnet.com](http://www.nonags.atlnet.com). Even Mr. Spurgeon is online - [www.spurgeon.org](http://www.spurgeon.org).

### **Should there be a Christian view?**

There are many already! Patrick Dixon, writer on AIDS, the Internet and much else from a Christian perspective has an interesting article at [www.globalchange.com](http://www.globalchange.com). But I do want to point out a few pitfalls and a few opportunities.

First - some real temptations. The Web does open up a whole new world, and it is genuinely attractive in places. There are plenty of Ministers who have been attracted by pornography in the past, and the Internet makes it readily available from the study. There's no denying that sexually explicit, perverted, hate-filled material is out there. Terrorism, prejudice, evil - all have a voice on the Internet. And it can be a thief of time - sit down to find a

reference, and without noticing, you've followed link after link, and an hour has vanished. You know that you've grown addicted when you see an Internet address in a book, and try clicking on it with your pen! Then it can also be divisive - separating the world and the church into the literate and the illiterate, as I've explained earlier.

But it can also be seen as a tremendous tool for good. As access continues to spread, the disenfranchised can receive a voice. It is hard for oppressive regimes to control - just watch what happens as China comes online in the next few years. Keeping in touch with missionaries becomes interesting and exciting, and news is shared in hours, not weeks. Students, who never reply to the letters the church sends, will gladly send news by e-mail. Within moments of global events happening, reports are available, photographs and the like. Your Sunday morning intercessions can include acetates produced from photographs distributed by e-mail. News is no longer just the views of the media moguls and press barons. There is the potential for a global democratisation, with all the attendant risks that could bring.

There's much more to be said - this is just the beginning of the discussion. There's the issue of evangelism we've not mentioned, for example. But those who discern a revolution in our way of life as significant as that caused by the printing press, or the industrial revolution are surely correct. And Christians need to be involved, both providing what is good and resisting what is evil. Oh - and if you want to pass on the content of this article to someone else, then tell them 'it's on the Internet!' **bmj**



# Changing Attitudes

**John Nicholson, a former General Superintendent, finds encouragement in the changes now being made in the life and mission of our Colleges.**

*"We recognise that ministers in every generation tend to judge Colleges by their experience as students.. "*

In the 1950s the composition of the student body consisted of single males in their 20s, most of whom had come to College from school or university after doing national service. Only one of my contemporaries was married, and his wife and family lived on a caravan site 30 miles away. Today all our Colleges have students of both sexes, most of them married, many with children, and I would guess the average age is late 30s. When I retired from the Superintendency 5 years ago the average age of inquirers for the ministry was 35 - remember that my conversation with them would be right at the beginning of the acceptance process and it would be at least four years before they were ordained. Yet I discovered as a superintendent that many churches were hesitant about having a student pastor, still thinking of a student as a callow youth in his 20s.

This rise in the average age of ordinands has been made possible by the introduction of "church based" and "part-time" courses. These include women and men with considerable experience both of the church (having served as preachers, youth leaders, elders, deacons) and of the world (having reached positions of responsibility in their professions). They have much to contribute, not only to the churches, but also to the Colleges. Yet there is another side to this. Some regret the decline in the number of young men and women who devote their whole working life to the ministry having been moulded in College through the traditional disciplines, and being available to develop into the scholars of the future. Others say that some with experience of leadership in other spheres find it difficult to adjust to the very different context of a Baptist church.

The composition of the student body of our Colleges however cannot be confined to those preparing for Baptist ministry. Our Principals would claim that they each have several hundred students, when you count the numbers who attend activities

organised by the Colleges, but more of this later.

In my day as a student the objective of training was to obtain a degree in theology, and in the process to be taught certain skills, such as preaching and pastoral care. Today it is "*ministerial formation*". This phrase includes studying theology and developing skills for ministry, but far more such as personal growth, team work, and above all theological reflection where the aim is not so much "*reading theology*" as "*doing theology*". The pattern is experience - analysis - reflection - action. This is worked out especially through placements. In my student days we had student pastorates - during term or in vacations. In my case two of us shared pastoral oversight of a church. A tutor preached at our welcome, but as far as I can remember we were given no opportunity for reporting on or reflecting on that ministerial experience.

## Self Appraisal

Today all our English Baptist Colleges have "church based" courses, where the student spends roughly 50% of his or her time as

pastor of a local church, and a key part of their time in College is reflection on that experience. "College based" students likewise have church placements, and students in some Colleges also have community placements, and in reflecting on these are able to grapple with some of the key issues in contemporary society. Those students who are "part time" in the sense that they also continue in a job, part-time or full-time, are able to add to such reflection their experience at work in the secular world. This means that local churches have the opportunity of playing a vital part in ministerial formation today. Students on placement have some form of 'church group', the members of which share in the whole process of formation. One principal 15 years ago at the annual day for these church groups used to tell them "you are all part of my staff".

Yet here too there is a downside. Some tutors complain that church based courses put an intolerable burden, time wise, on the student, and that academic study is the part that loses out. Although the student has the opportunity to reflect on ministry as it is exercised, is there time for proper self-assessment of that reflection?

In all walks of life evaluations, appraisals and assessments are now common, and theological education is no exception. The keynote however is personal self-appraisal, the essence of the process is the individual learning more about him or herself, and so growing through reflection with the help of fellow students and a tutor.

In my day we were all taught to be solo performers, and older ministers have commented to me how difficult they have found it to work in a team. As a superintendent I know how some ministers (of any age!) find problems in working with 'awkward' deacons or elders. This is another sphere where reflection in a group is an essential part of ministerial formation.

## **Pendulum**

The "sermon class" of my generation has provided countless tales for mirth in later years, such as the student who preached on "Moab is my washpot". Many ministers have complained about the lack of practical training they received in College. I suspect some of us didn't listen because it didn't at that time seem relevant.

Today because of placements and theological reflection the situation should be very different. In most Colleges today a student's sermon is within a service of worship, either in College or in the student's placement church, and members present have the opportunity afterwards to comment. An effort is made to cover a whole range of skills besides preaching - the leadership of worship, pastoral counselling with its many departments, the rites of passage, ethical issues, evangelism, social involvement, political action and, last but not least, leadership in the hope that these will provide an integrated approach to ministry.

Most of our Baptist ordinands now take courses which lead to degrees or diplomas in ministry or in applied theology, rather than in pure theology. Fortunately the desire of the Colleges for such a change has coincided with the need of the Universities to validate as many courses as possible! Most of these moreover are examined by assignments rather than by the traditional written exam. This enables various components in a student's actual ministry to form part of his or her assessment. Some purists complain that this development has resulted in a decline in the academic standards of the ministry. I personally believe that this danger is outweighed by the advantages, and it is interesting to note that whilst the study of New Testament Greek is not always regarded as essential, the pendulum is swinging back with regard to this particular subject and students are asking to learn it!

## Rivalry

The changes in context are just as radical, and perhaps are more significant in the long run for both ministers and churches: All my contemporaries lived in College for the whole of each term. Today the situation is vastly different. As already noted there are various patterns of training, and even on the College based pattern many students live out of College. Two of our Colleges no longer cater for any students living full-time in College. Has this meant a loss of community spirit which was one of the main characteristics of College training in past generations? I put this question to a second year part-time student, who works in the Information Technology (IT) department of a University. He maintained that short periods together (in his case six weekends a year plus two residential five days) led to a close fellowship between those present, and he claimed that with developments on the Inter-net it will be possible in future for groups to maintain such close contact in between actual meetings. Others will comment that such limited time cannot possibly match the many hours of discussion over coffee far into the night.

Many of my contemporaries took their degrees in Universities where the lecturers were of any denomination or none. Nevertheless today the ecumenical element is much stronger in most of our Colleges. Some have joint worship as well as joint teaching, and the teaching is usually done more by staff of other theological colleges than of university departments, so that the whole emphasis is on ministerial formation. Some placements are in churches of other denominations. Some have staff from other traditions. Some have students from other 'evangelical' groups as fellow members of the student community. Some have lay students reading other disciplines.

In past generations inter College rivalry not only took place on the football or cricket field but extended to relations between staff, and struck one newcomer as unfortunate and unhealthy at his first Joint Staffs Conference. The situation has changed since then, and the present English Principals meet regularly for fellowship, and the booklet *"Something to declare - a study of the Declaration of Principle"*, (1996) was one sign that competition has been replaced by co-operation, at least at that level. It is a moot question whether this has extended to staff, students or ex-students! Another sign of a new attitude was the production for College Councils of a document in January 1997 entitled *"The Complementarity of the Baptist Colleges in membership with The Baptist Union of Great Britain"* (reproduced as Appendix B in *Partners Together*).

## Electronic

For some years now all students have at some point in their course visited Didcot to meet members of staff of the Baptist Union and of the Baptist Missionary Society. They have also met each other there, and that has produced some interesting reactions! Another sign of a much closer partnership between Colleges, churches and the Union is that four present superintendents and two former ones had been College tutors.

*"Preparing the Church for Mission"* is a quotation from the Complementarity document. All our Colleges see their task in these terms, and each seeks to fulfil this objective in its own way. In addition to all courses being open to lay students as well as ordinands, each College has developed a particular project which it hopes will be of service to the churches. Northern has its *Community Learning Network* of 'community educators' who help churches and individuals to think theologically about their life and mission, and is about to

initiate a new partnership with the five Associations of the Midlands and the North in appointing a part-time Field Worker within each Association to promote the resources available from all the Colleges. Spurgeon's have created an *Open Learning Centre* using electronic forms of communication to support an extensive ministry. Regent's *Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture* provides a 'think-tank' for mission in the modern world using the opportunities provided by its situation in Oxford. Bristol has a Tutor for Continuing Education, organises *Prepare for Service Saturdays* at the College and is developing a degree course in youth ministry in conjunction with Oxford Brookes University. Cardiff works closely with the University Department of Religious and Theological Studies.

Post-graduate study as in-service training has been a growth point in the 90s for all our Colleges. Each has established Masters Degrees which offer between them a wide field of part-time further study for ministers, and are another example of complementarity and co-operation, so that a minister can pursue the study he or she wants, often at the nearest College, whether she or he was trained there or not. Moreover most of these are modular, so individual topics can be taken by

themselves, perhaps during a sabbatical. This development is also an example of the growing partnership between the Union and the Colleges in furthering the Ministry Department's programme *'From Start to Finish'*, support for ministers throughout their active service.

In this article, I have attempted to describe the changes in the life and mission of our Baptist Colleges in the hope that ministers will take advantage of those changes themselves, will recommend members of their churches to use the resources offered, and will promote the Colleges in the Churches. **bmj**

*John Nicholson trained at Regent's Park College, Oxford 1952-4; was part-time tutor at Northern Baptist College with responsibility for the Alternative Pattern of Training (for church based students) and for the Christian Leadership Course (for part time students) 1979-86; was a member of the Baptist Colleges' Joint Consultative Committee 1986-99 (and chair 1987-93), representing the Superintendents' Board 1986-94 and Northern Baptist College 1994-9; was Chair of Governors of Northern Baptist College 1994-9; and Convenor of the Union/Colleges Partnership Task Group 1997-8).*

## FACING THE TRUTH

'I would like the Church to be more open about sexual abuse and not give the impression that it does not exist in Christian circles, or if it does, "don't mention it and it will go away". I would like the churches to speed up the implementation of procedures to protect children in their care and to take the issues more seriously. I feel it would be better to concentrate on helping children sexually abused in a church context rather than trying to protect "the Church's reputation". I am quite sure that God is not one bit bothered about the "Church's reputation".'

- from *The Courage to Tell* edited by Margaret Kennedy and Jean Mayland, CTBI 1999.

# Taking off our shoes

**Paul Sheppy, minister of the West Craven Fellowship, Barnoldswick, and BUGB representative on the Joint Liturgical Group, explains the craft of the liturgist.**

Liturgists are predominantly (though not exclusively) concerned with liturgical texts. That is to say, we busy ourselves with studying and preparing texts which will shape or support the worship of the people of God.

The old tag *lex orandi, lex credendi* means that our praying shapes our believing. I have some problems with this if it means that theology cannot shape worship. For me the two are interactive rather than crudely cause and effect. However, it is true that what we pray often betrays what we believe. We have all heard prayers which leave us wondering if the one praying has thought about what has just been uttered. Surely, they don't believe *that*, we say to ourselves.

If the Westminster Confession is right in its assertion that our "chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever", then worship is the primary function of the Church – dare I say it? – even before mission. When we adore and worship God in spirit and in truth, that selfsame Spirit impels us into mission. We have no mission without a vision and knowledge of the presence of God, and we find that vision and that presence in worship. It is vital, therefore, that we pay attention to the ways and the places in which we worship. These ought not to be matters of indifference to us. Moses took the shoes off his feet, for he stood on holy ground.

Liturgists are concerned about how we enter the holy. Do we, for example, begin immediately with confession? Or is this to put the human condition at the centre when our primary gaze should be upon God? Do prayers of intercession (an essential action of the priestly people of God) precede the sermon or follow it in response to the proclaimed word of God?

Do we take an offering at the start of worship, or include it in that section where we begin to see how we are to go out with the good news into the world of which we are part? Do we celebrate the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Eucharist, every week or less frequently? Are our reasons based on private psychology (it becomes cheap if we do it too often) or on tradition (we've always done it this way – actually, we probably haven't!) or what? How much scripture do we read – just a few verses, or selections from the Old and New Testaments (perhaps including both Epistle and Gospel)? Do we read the Psalms, or sing them as they were meant to be? How often? Who chooses the scripture texts – the minister with some private plan, or do we use a lectionary? Does a lectionary stifle the Spirit (that old objection again!), or does private choice mean that the congregation hears less scripture and from a narrower range? When we pray what kind of language do we use – Cranmer's Elizabethan periods, or contemporary words *ex tempore* full of *justs* and *ums*? Is God always "he" or "He"? Do we pray for our fellow men or is our language inclusive? Trevor Hubbard, a great Welsh exponent of *ex tempore* prayer, used to speak of "men and women, boys and girls" – how refreshing *that* was!

## Willow Creek

These are the sorts of questions that liturgists are passionate about! In order to find their answers they do not simply observe current developments, they

investigate the story of Christian prayer and worship through the ages. This interest is not simply antiquarian, but an attempt to address the present by understanding the past.

One of the major concerns of liturgists at the present time is the question of inculturation. How do we make worship culturally relevant? Now this is not a dry academic issue, it is a central question for missiology. Whatever you think of Willow Creek or seeker services or housegroup worship, they all reflect a concern to make the experience of Christian worship relevant. The difficulty for all inculturation processes is to discern how far we can immerse ourselves and the gospel into the culture we wish to address.

This problem is as old as the Gentile mission. The Apostle Paul refuses to allow either Gentile culture (cf. the Corinthian correspondence) or Jewish culture (cf. the Galatian letter and the Acts 15 narrative) to dictate limits to the liberty of the Gospel which, as he clearly saw, is at times counter-cultural. The Apostle resists the suggestion that the world (what he calls the flesh) can shape the worship and the ethics of the Church (the life of the Spirit).

Theology has to adapt its terms to meet the variety of cultures and societies it addresses; the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, for example, has quite a different universe of discourse from that chosen by Paul in the letter to the believers at Rome). In the same way, the expression of how we worship will vary according to the world we understand ourselves to be inhabiting. It is at this point that some of the questions I raised earlier about the actions and language of worship begin to grip. Different situations may well call for different answers.

One of the current hot potatoes in liturgical revision is the question of which

version of the Lord's Prayer we should use. A couple of years ago I ventured into the debate in the *Baptist Times*. Some readers may remember the correspondence. Assuming that we use the Lord's Prayer on a weekly basis is still controversial among some, who argue that the Lord only taught his disciples to pray "after this wise" rather than prescribing an exact formula.

### Confusion

Even if for the purposes of the argument we ignore this objection, it is not without some force. A quick look at Matthew 7.9-13 and Luke 11.2-4 shows that the Evangelists did not have a set text. Luke is considerably shorter than Matthew. Luke has "Father" rather than "Our Father in heaven", he talks of the forgiveness of debts rather than trespasses, and he omits the petition for deliverance from evil (or "the evil one"). Neither Evangelist includes the doxology at the conclusion of the prayer which is commonly used in worship.

Consider two Modern English language forms of the Lord's Prayer. They vary in the translation of the couplet which in the traditional form appears as:

And lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.

The ELLC (English Language Liturgical Consultation) text has "Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil". The ASB (Alternative Service Book of the Church of England) has "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil".

The ELLC text works from the Greek text, while the ASB (at this point) works from the Latin. The ELLC text (written in the mid-seventies) is controversial because it followed Jeremias' exegesis of the Lord's Prayer as an eschatological text of the Kingdom. Current NT scholarship (led by Luz) reverts to reading the Greek



*peirasmos* as “temptation” rather than as “the eschatological trial” – which was what Jeremias advocated. Proponents of “temptation” appeal not only to the NT Greek but to the liturgical tradition, which in the West came to us in the Latin – *ne inducas nos in tentationem*.

It is interesting to remember that Jerome had a similar problem when he translated the scriptures into the Latin Vulgate. He did not use the text of the Greek Septuagint for the OT, but went directly to the Hebrew. In so doing, he ignored the liturgical tradition of the Church, which used the Septuagint for the reading of scripture in public worship.

Jerome’s concern was with accuracy to the original text; his critics (of whom Augustine was one) were anxious not to create confusion among the faithful when the version they knew varied from the new translation. Does this sound familiar?

### **Political Correctness**

And what are the criteria for deciding what the modern language text for the Lord’s prayer should be? If we suggest the NT texts as determinative, we raise two separate problems. Should we use Matthew or Luke? And can we so quickly abandon the liturgical text which has added the concluding doxology?

Even if you think all this is irrelevant, you are still left with the question of why we should teach people in the third millennium to recite the central prayer of the Christian Church in the periods of Cranmer’s English. To insist on the modified traditional form of the Lord’s Prayer as the only suitable version is to force new believers into an alien way of speech (which, of course, was itself probably controversial when it was introduced – “Why wouldst thou meddle with the Pater Noster, sirrah? Canst thou

not leave well alone?”). How does this differ as a missiological issue from Paul’s concern to resist circumcision as a central cultural requirement for new Christians?

The Lord’s Prayer is but one example of where liturgists find the shoe pinching. They continually have to ask questions about what they are inviting congregations to do when they write new prayer and service texts. One further case may demonstrate the problem. When we pray a prayer of confession, who is confessing what?

If (with the Millennium already upon us) we confess that slavery has been the foundation of much of our national wealth in the past and we ask God to forgive us, it may be dismissed as political correctness. Or it may be viewed as an appropriate acknowledgement that our past shapes our present, and that part of the institutional racism of our society stems from the earlier use of black people as slaves. If you take the second view, you may feel that you are justified in using a prayer which asks God to forgive our society for the sin of enslaving Africans and transporting them in chains to the Caribbean in the filthy and stinking holds of ships at the mercy of wind and wave. But what if in your congregation you have people of African-Caribbean heritage? How can they be part of the “we” who confess such a sin? How can a Brazilian immigrant in your congregation be asked to confess “our” indifference to the fate of the Jews in Nazi Germany?

### **Guilt-inducing**

Part of the difficulty of prayers of confession is that they either produce shopping lists of sins where inevitably something gets left out (ageism, sexism, whatever), or they are so vague that nothing is addressed with any real cost or chance of repentance, forgiveness and

conversion. Equally, some people come to church knowing their guilt and their brokenness, and do not want to be told immediately that they are sinners. An abused child needs affirmation not confession. To begin with our sinful state will add an even greater burden to the woman whose husband beats her, and believes that she must have done something wrong to deserve such punishment.

Prayers of confession are not as straightforward as we like to think. Is it possible to devise ways of confessing which are not in themselves guilt-inducing? Perhaps if we remembered that as well as confessing sin we confess the name of Jesus, we might have a different starting point. If we remembered how God is holy – in love, in justice for the oppressed, in mercy, we might have a new way of confessing. If we remembered that Jesus, who showed us how God is holy, did so by compassion on the outcasts, by touching the physically and ritually unclean, by eating with tax-collectors and sinners, we might see things differently. We might recall how Christ's holiness is not seen in disengagement from the world, but manifests itself in the risk of being besmirched that others might be cleansed. Then we might begin to extol the goodness, the mercy, the generosity and the vulnerability of God in prayers of confession. Then we might include a vesicle and a congregational response:


V: Lord, you are holy. You call us to be

holy, as you are holy.

R: Lord, have mercy upon us.

This is the sort of work I have included in my texts for the Millennium which Churches Together in England (CTE) have published in the NewStart worship resources books. My concern as a liturgist is to ensure that the words we invite congregations to use in worship and prayer will enable them to worship and pray in spirit and in truth. Part of that goal is achieved by ensuring that what we say is authentic to our situation and is honouring to God.

Recently I went to Kerala in Southern India to represent the Joint Liturgical Group at a meeting of the English Language Liturgical Consultation and to attend an international liturgy congress. On the Sunday I attended a service in the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Cathedral. I couldn't understand a word of the liturgy, which was in Malayalam (the local vernacular) and Ancient Syriac. Fortunately, because of my liturgical training, I could understand what was happening. The shape and the actions of the liturgy made everything clear. The Cathedral was packed with worshippers (men on the left, women on the right) who stood throughout. Two things were abundantly evident: the deep reverence of the liturgy rooted in a long historical tradition, and a congregation rooted in its attention and full of joy of the Lord.

That is what liturgy is about. 

## BEYOND EXPLANATIONS

'When Christians find in the world a state of affairs that is not in accord with the truth they have learned from Christ, their concern is not that it should be explained but that it should be ended.'

- Philip Potter in the foreword to Keith Clements' biography of the ecumenical pioneer, J H Oldham: 'Faith on the Frontier', T & T Clark 1999.

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## **To the readers of the Baptist Ministers' Journal**

In recent weeks I have come across several incidents where individuals have suffered injury on church property with the result that they are now taking legal action against the church. Whilst we are in a position to provide an indemnity for these unfortunate incidents it is evident that some churches are not fully aware of their responsibilities for church safety. I feel the need therefore to remind churches that in a changing society where compensation is all too readily sought it is essential that greater attention is needed to safety than hitherto.

The Church Deacons have a duty to ensure the safety of anyone who may visit the Church and it's associated buildings and grounds for any purpose. This includes paid employees, voluntary workers, regular members of the congregation, visitors and contractors.

If you have not already done so we suggest that your church appoint a member with responsibility for health and safety. This person could, if practicable, lead a small sub committee who should be given the specific responsibility of checking out potential hazards on an ongoing basis so that action can be taken.

Paths and driveways regularly produce accidents and warrant special attention. These must be kept free of potholes and steps must be in good condition. They need to be properly drained to prevent collection of rainwater and the growth of moss. Where paths are regularly used at night they must be adequately lit. Steps and steep paths should be fitted with handrails.

I also strongly recommend that you check whether your church has any responsibility for maintenance of shared drives and paths. These are often left to their own devices and it is only when an accident occurs that it is discovered that the church is responsible for their maintenance.

We do offer the help and advice of our surveyors without charge and if you feel that this would be of benefit please do contact Baptist Insurance.

**A.J.GREEN ACIJ ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER**

# Love too Strong for Killing

**David Butcher, minister of Loughborough Baptist Church, savours some of the poetry of faith.**

Let me share with you my own overriding interest in poetry which illuminates the story of Jesus and our knowledge of Him. We rely heavily on sermons to do this for us but poems which people have spent a great deal of time writing, may be even more stimulating and effective. We can also use them to illustrate our sermons or use them alongside Gospel readings in public worship.

There are lots of poems which give new slants on the Christmas story, I am disappointed, however, when I look for poetry to illustrate the lifetime of Jesus. Mary Batchelor's Collection, *Lion Christian Poetry Collection*, has 51 poems on the Nativity and then (maybe taking her cue from the Creed!) moves straight on to His Passion and Resurrection, with 31 poems. This shortcoming is also found in our "Baptist Praise and Worship" with 55 hymns for Advent/Christmas/ Epiphany and 63 for Passiontide/Easter/Ascension yet only 19 for "Our Lord's Ministry". Yet half the Gospels' text is between the two!

Some years ago "100 Contemporary Poets" was published based on submissions from Radio 2 listeners. There were some good things in that volume, including, Lorna Inman's "Only a broken flask"

Only a broken flask,  
But through her love  
A fragrance stole upon the evening air,  
And Christ was honoured there

Only a broken loaf,  
But from His hands,  
A food sufficient for the souls of men  
Was offered to them then.

Only a broken life,  
But from that Cross  
A love to save the world went forth in power,  
Born of His darkest hour.

A flask, a loaf, a life with love infused -  
Are all things broken that are greatly used?

And the heavily sarcastic "Ipsissima Verba?" of Muriel McNair, which certainly makes you think about familiar Gospel sayings, for example —

"You are the salt of the earth.  
Gather it together in heaps lest it be polluted;

Keep it in the jar.  
Let society rot in its sin  
and be redolent of its putrefaction -  
the saints in their pristine whiteness  
shall be gathered together  
as a memorial pillar to me."

Or Joan Bidwell's "Supper being Ended", to read between the story of the footwashing and the sharing of Communion —

"In the quiet place / at close of day  
He washes the feet of my mind from the dust of its fret."

### **The Tamarisk Tree**

The best set of poems illustrating the life of Jesus is Clive Sansom's "The Witnesses", a series of 34 poems, each as spoken by someone who met Jesus, but with varied metre and style according to their character. Written for the Festival of Britain in 1951, Sansom did his Biblical and historical research thoroughly, yet wrote truly interpretative poetry. It's hard to choose which to quote from, but here are some examples —

John the Baptist  
"Come to this ford on Jordan river / Come down and wait.  
Cleanse your hearts; drown in the water's spate your wrongs for ever"  
"Stop! Look! — under the tamarisk tree — / See! — there he stands!  
Those Devil-mastering eyes, God-serving hands ... / It is He — He!"

### The Woman of Samaria

"He came to me with his eyes and asked for water,  
Stretched out his hands and spoke.  
His mind burned into mine like the noon sun,  
My pitcher of thoughts broke."

### Nicodemus

" You will say I am ancient and cautious as a tortoise...."

### Martha

"It's all very well / Sitting in the shade of the courtyard  
Talking about your souls.  
Someone's got to see to the cooking....."

### The Donkey's Owner (with Cockney accent)

"Snaffled my donkey, he did — good luck to him! —  
Rode him astride, feet dangling, near scraping the ground.".....

### The Boy Mark

"That night, moonbright, in the Upper Room,  
I served him with meat and wine.  
When he told the Twelve of his coming doom  
Their grief was mine ..."

(the story of the betrayal and arrest is told and the poem concludes)

"I left my robe in their hands that night,  
My soul in his."

### The Centurion

"What is it now? More trouble?  
Another Jew? I might have known it.  
These Jews, they buzz around the tail of trouble  
Like lascivious flies..." (goes on to describe crucifixion)

### Mary of Bethany (begins and ends ...)

"Master! they have taken me who have taken you;  
No life is life but in your will.  
It is I stand charged in the judgement hall,  
Mine is the road to Caesar's hill."

Such poems can brilliantly illustrate sermons or stand alone in services; In my Church I have produced them as a complete piece, with actors learning and speaking each in character.

### **Scapegoat**

More recently, SPCK published "To the Cross", a sequence of 18 Dramatic Poems by Michael Justin Davies. There are some evocative and imaginative pieces here, I especially like the sensitive speeches of Simon of Cyrene, the first ends

"When I remember that I obeyed / His murderers  
And did not protest / at the ritual / of His killing,  
I am anguished and distraught."

The second, using the tradition of Cyrenians being lamp-makers, then concludes

"The clay of every lamp I make I sign with a hidden cross,  
Remembering how I was called To help Jesus to His death;  
And he / Lying in the road / Blessed me."

More recently, David Winter has compiled an anthology of poetry about Jesus also published by Lion. Strangely titled "The Master Haunter", an explanation of that is offered and there are introductions to each of seven sections, from "The Birth" through to "Resurrection" and on to "The Christ of Human Experience". There are some good things here, but some are hard to grasp let alone communicate to a congregation. They are chosen from across the centuries, including Chesterton's "The Donkey"

"I also had my hour;  
One far fierce hour and sweet:  
There was a shout about my ears,  
And palms before my feet."

and Robert Graves "In the Wilderness" with its harsh portrayal of the terrain and its creatures and final depiction of "the guileless old scapegoat."

During the last five years, H.J. Richards has published five "Anthologies" of Readings and Prayers for Worship and Reflection, which have now been brought together in one volume "An Anthology for the Christian Year" (published by Kevin Mayhew @ £16.99). There's lots of useful material here, from George Herbert to Tim Rice, including "A King's Crown" by Donald Hilton

"Do not lose your crown of thorns, Lord Jesus Christ.  
Hold fast the mocking robe of purple,  
For these are the symbols of true Kingship.

Your humility has won us over...  
Your defeat has led us to victory....  
Your weakness is the strength by which the world is conquered.

Do not lose your crown of thorns.  
Hold fast the mocking robe of purple.  
We have beheld our King."

## Slit the Shroud

In "The Christian Poetry Collection" there's good material not only for Easter Day but for the Saturday —

"And so we took Him down  
(or thought we did)  
Wiped off the sweat and spittle from his face  
Washed the dried blood, / Threw out the crown of thorns,  
And wrapped Him once again / In swaddling clothes".  
Elizabeth Rooney.

And how about starting Easter Day with Stewart Henderson's?—

There was no grave grave enough to ground me / to mound me  
I broke the balm then slit the shroud / wound round me /  
that bound me  
There was no cross cross enough to anil me / to still me.....  
There was no cross, death, grave / or room to hold me.

Or Clare Richards'

"Christ on the cross, / not crushed by death /  
but living on in love too strong for killing."

Or from Henry Vaughan (1622-95)

"Death and darkness get you packing,  
Nothing now to man is lacking ...

Graves are beds now for the weary,  
Death a nap to wake more merry... ....and so on,

As with hymns, poetry is evocative, not only of mood and feeling, but also of faith, which is why I like Alice Meynell's "Easter Night", contrasting the noise of Friday with the

quietness of Easter morn —

“Public was Death; but Power, but Might,  
But Life again, but Victory,  
Were hushed within the dead of night,  
The shuttered dark, the secrecy.  
And all alone, alone, alone,  
He rose again behind the stone.”

I can only give you a taster. There is so much to savour in the poetry of faith. **bmj**

*Ed: Where books referred to are out of print, David can help with copies of individual items.*

## Holidays

The Overton family have a house in Boston, Lincolnshire, which can be let for holiday/retreat use. It is available for whole or part weeks on moderate terms.

Contact Alison Overton on 024 7650 6499 for details.

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**BMM**



# J-Mail

## STUDYING ABROAD

from Keith G Jones, the Rector of the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague. E-Mail: [Jones@ibts.cz](mailto:Jones@ibts.cz)

Dear Journal, the following degree and other programmes currently offered by IBTS may be of interest to British Baptist ministers and, in addition, EBTS is a good place to stay. All the programmes offered below are in English!

### Degree programmes

MPhil/PHD: full time or part time, validated by either the University of Wales or the University of Manchester (depending on the topic). Opportunities currently available include Biblical Studies; Baptist/Anabaptist studies; Missiology. (The Residential fee scheme is as for MTh students).

M.Th: full time or part time, validated by the University of Wales, in Biblical Studies or Baptist/Anabaptist studies.

MA: full time or part time in Missiology validated by the University of Manchester.

### Directors' Conferences

These week-long events are ideal for people wanting to look at specific topics in a multicultural, international setting. I enclose the programme details for 2000. All contributors are European Baptists.

### Sabbaticals

We continue to offer facilities for individuals or families to take sabbaticals here. The current rates for accommodation are low. There is full access to our 55,000-volume library, we

can set up programmes of guided study and those on sabbatical can attend lectures, join in our regular programme of Baptist identity and post-graduate seminars etc.

## Certificate in Christian Pedagogy

This programme will commence September 2000 and replaces IBLA in Budapest. It is ideal for those wanting basic theological input and intending to work in churches as teachers, lay workers etc. We would like to get information about this programme into the churches, which is a 9- month residential programme. **bmj**

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### Holidays

If you're thinking of a visit to Powys Castle, or a climb up Snowdon's Miner's path, or days on the sands at Aberdovey – our 200 year old cottage with all mod cons could be the answer.

Ring Denise for details: 029 2051 5884.

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*"... it has been a successful holiday?"  
'Let's say, it's been interesting.' 'Well,  
that's the best we can hope for isn't it?'  
Holidays can be terribly dull  
occasions.'" – John Mortimer's  
'Summer's Lease'.*

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### Holidays

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# Book Reviews

*Edited by John Houseago*

***Pathways to Wholeness. Pastoral Care in a Postmodern Age. Roger Hurding. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1998. 464 pp. £12.99. ISBN 0 340 67129 7***

It was at the 1996 conference, *Pathways to Wholeness*, in which Roger Hurding first, I think, articulated in a seminar his overview of these pathways. I remember it well because, as chairman of that Conference, I was thankful for the sustained brilliance of Roger's ability to synthesise the trends and patterns in pastoral care. That the sapling of that seminar should grow into the mighty tree of this substantial book is remarkable, not least for the degree of physical illness Roger has suffered during the period of its gestation. He remains one of the 'Fathers in God' of the pastoral care and counselling movement, now so widely represented among mainstream churches, not least Baptists. This is a major contribution to the understanding of that movement, both in its cultural context, and agenda.

I was struck by the breadth of engagement with contemporary culture and with theological and psychological disciplines. There have been other 'big books' on contemporary culture and the Christian faith (especially Carson's *The Gagging of God*) but I am glad to say that Hurding's book is less defensive than most.

He explores the possibilities of making maps in the postmodern world and in Part 1, *The Territory*, he describes the landscape of postmodernity. This is difficult material and he does not seek to trivialise what is complex. Having explored the same territory myself, I wish that he had published before I had written!

Part 2 looks at the territory of pastoral care and then looks at five dimensions of its calling: Biblical counselling which transforms the mind, healing, pastoral counselling, spiritual direction and social change. Throughout the book is Trinitarian, Scriptural and generous hearted. I believe this book to be more substantial and theologically literate than its predecessor, *Roots and Shoots*. and a book that every thinking practitioner of pastoral care will want to have on her or his shelf, however demanding this might be. Perhaps the next book could be more accessible to the every day practitioner, but I'll stick with this one and commend it warmly.

**Paul Goodliff**

***The Better Marriage Guide*  
Michael Lawson.**

**Hodder & Stoughton, £7.99. 300 pages**

The introduction to this book sets out its aims very clearly. It is intended that the book will help people deal with problems within their marriage and also enable others to enhance what is already working well. It has also been written in a way which enables the reader to dip in or read from cover to cover.

In order to fulfil its aim the book has been laid out in three sections. The first section explores the promises we make in the marriage service (*Foundations*). The language of banking is used to describe the initial relationship, the investment we make in that relationship and the way our behaviour puts debits and credits into our love-bank.

The author then looks at Marriage Bruisers, the behaviour that sends our love bank into overdraft such as selfishness, anger and criticism. The final section deals with Marriage Builders such as gender difference, rediscovering romance, communication, sex and dealing with change.

Each chapter has an introduction explaining the issue to be explored and uses a case history for illustration. After discussion a list of searching questions is suggested and a summary made of the points covered.

As a general book to get you thinking it is very good. It deals with issues that are common to all marriages especially the selfishness that kicks in when we are tired or when we are insensitive to our partners' needs. The questions are searching and demanding and some could be used for marriage preparation. I particularly appreciated the emphasis on the marriage promises and their use as tools for dealing with problems. The language of banking is refreshing and adds humour to the text. The book has already come in handy for sermon illustrations.

**Lynn Britten**

***Sunday by Sunday Vol. 1 Advent to Trinity* by Ken Taylor.**

**Kevin Mayhew. 1999. £10.99**

At a time when many Baptist ministers and preachers are rediscovering the richness of the liturgical year through the lectionary, a book of resources to accompany gospel readings for years A, B and C of the Revised Common Lectionary is to be welcomed.

Even with so many worship resource books to choose from, I think this will prove both useful and enjoyable in preparing Sunday worship and Bible studies, and for personal reading.

It was written by Rev Ken Taylor, a retired Methodist minister, and begins at Advent and ends at Trinity and is the first volume of a series to cover the Christian year.

I like Ken Taylor's style; he writes meditations on the gospel texts which are thoughtful, and intuitive; they are not quite prayers, and not always poetry, but fluent enough to be read aloud, the right length to add comment following a Bible reading or sermon; stimulating enough to challenge or inspire, and meaty enough to enrich personal Bible reading. Don't be put off if you don't follow the lectionary Sunday by Sunday; there are meditations on a good proportion of all four gospels, covering the themes from Advent to Trinity, and the index of references at the back takes you straight to the relevant piece for the passage you are preparing.

In the end, the usefulness of resource books is a personal matter - you either feel comfortable using other people's often quite intimate thoughts in worship or not. I would rate this book highly, so buy it, or get someone else to buy it for you, and look forward to volume two!

**Jenny Few**

***On Being A Theologian; reflections at eighty*, John Macquarrie, edited by John H Morgan with Georgina Morley and Eamonn Conway. SCM Press, 1999, ISBN 0-334-02771-3. £12.95**

As I struggled to make sense of a doctrine course, somebody put John Macquarrie's book into my hands, and the world became a clearer place. Since then, I have found that his writing often has this effect, as he takes difficult subjects and, while not dumbing them down, makes them accessible and interesting. So, it was with expectancy that I read this latest book, a sort of reverse Festschrift, published for his eightieth birthday.

The book grew out of a series of conversations and is intended to "give a picture of what it is like to live and work as a theologian". Central to the book is a series of autobiographical chapters, outlining his academic and theological progress. Each chapter is followed by significant writings which relate to that period. In chapter 6 Macquarrie writes on "The Papacy in a United church", and this is followed by a response from Eamonn Conway, an Irish Roman Catholic theologian. The final chapter is a bibliography of Macquarrie's work, with significant outlines of the major works.

The book is fascinating, both in the insight it gives into the life of the man, and in the way in which certain key themes are set in context. It is also very helpful to have so many of the significant lectures gathered together, in particular *An Anthropological Approach to Theology*, and *Ebb and Flow; Christian Theology at the End of the Second Millennium*. To read them is to remember the importance of clear thought and clear communication, at both of which Macquarrie excels. The chapter on the papacy I found disappointing, presumably because I don't agree with him, and for once found his argument less than convincing. But it does not take away from the interest or importance of this book.

**Ruth Gouldbourne**

***Soul Friendship* by Ray Simpson  
Hodder & Stoughton. £7-99. 1999**

The author's intention is to bring a specifically Celtic slant to the literature on mentoring. As Guardian of the Community of Aidan and Hilda on Lindisfarne, he is well-qualified to do so, so the book reads with confidence and authority.

His approach is to establish why mentoring is needed, then to take an anecdotal look at how it worked for Celtic saints, before finally returning to how mentoring works in practice. On his own

admission, the first and the last sections stand on their own - a useful tip for the busy reader, especially as the middle section takes up half the book! Nevertheless, for those who enjoy reading biography at bedtime, there is much of value in the latter.

It is designed as a workbook, with a useful statement of intent at the head of each chapter and exercises at the end for either the soul- friend- seeker or the soul friend or both. Chapters read easily and are divided up by sub-headings and lists into coherent and manageable sections.

Reading the book gave me a peg to hang one aspect of pastoral ministry on. If, as I do, you enjoy walking for a season with individuals and hopefully imparting something of the gleanings from your own journey of faith, this is a book for you. Behind soul friendship lies a commitment to the seeker's growth in faith and personhood. When so many in our churches seem to be stuck or stagnating, this is a task that energises me. Ray Simpson's book is a handy tool to enable me to be a more effective pastor to those who want to 'go on' with God.

Not that the book lets the soul friend off lightly - 'a soul friend, first and foremost, is someone who daily dedicates themselves to their own spiritual journey. The spiritual journey has to be lived. It has to be worked at daily. It has to be an experience that is shared, not just an idea that is broadcast.'

**Andrew Hardcastle**

***Builders and Fools -Leadership the Bible way*, by Derek J. Tidball.  
IVP 1999. 149pp + notes. £7.99**

Derek Tidball's pastoral heart, together with his concern for ministerial formation of the highest quality, determines the tone of this book. Easy to read (if a little

sermonic), well laid out, with questions ending each chapter. The stated aim is to help "...regain a sense of direction in ministry and overcome something of the malaise from which many a busy pastor, labouring under the tyranny of an activist approach to ministry, suffers."

Eight Pauline images are used as a way into examining the role of the minister/pastor today. Apart from the two in the title, he also includes ambassador, athlete, parent, pilot, scum, and shepherd. As he admits, the choice is not exhaustive. Tidball is already known for his study of the shepherd image, while his treatment of some of the others leaves me wondering. For example, his inclusion of Pilot, which he finds in 1 Cor.12:28 (usually translated *administration*, though with a literal meaning having a navigational link) I feel owes more to Tidball's own nautical connections than to his usually rigorous biblical scholarship.

Most of his treatment of the biblical material and use of other writers (including Chrysostom, Shakespeare and Julie Birchill) I found helpful, and the end-notes contain many useful lines for further research.

I particularly benefited from Tidball's consideration of 'fool'. Indeed that and his chapter on 'scum' are welcome reminders of our out-of-placeness - which ministers and society at times notice.

So who should read this book? Clearly it is directed at those of us "in pastoral charge" of a church.

However, it is a bit light - and tells us what we probably already know. Perhaps it may be of use to those considering or already preparing for the role of minister. Ah! So it's another text-book for the students at LBC?!

**Peter Slee**

***The story goes... Vol 1: The Stories of the Torah; and vol II: Mark's Story and Matthew's Story.* Nico ter Linden, translated from the Dutch by John Bowden. SCM Press, £14.95. each volume**

What makes a good sermon? How should we preach? For anyone searching for alternative models to the traditional three-pointer, these two volumes offer a refreshing contribution to the debate and reaffirm the power of telling and retelling the story. They contain no explicit handy hints for the would-be preacher, no discussion of the state of the genre; rather, each volume is an absorbing collection of .. well...Bible stories, each recounted and explained in a matter of four or five pages with deceptive easy-to-read simplicity.

Famed in the Netherlands for his Biblical sermons, Linden makes his way through each story with ingenious insight and pastoral imagination, imparting the wisdom of western scholarship as though he were chatting to you on the telephone. Volume 1 deals, if a bit top-heavy, with the stories of the Torah. Forty six chapters out of the total seventy four deal with stories from Genesis, while poor old Deuteronomy only gets a look-in in five of them! Linden occasionally alludes to the New Testament but is much more intent on allowing the Old Testament stories to shine in their own light. In Volume 11 the author turns to the gospels, devoting the first half of the book to Mark, the second to Matthew, and giving full value to the particular theological stance of each. Meanwhile, he never loses sight of the stories of the Torah which lie in the shadows of the New Testament text. The depth and user-friendliness of his interpretations and his delightfully non-didactic style are a challenge and example to any preacher.

For those familiar with the often

devastating way in which the likes of Sara Maitland retell Bible stories, or for amateurs of the powerful tales retold by Walter Wangerin, Linden's stories may seem pale and a little over-protective. Seeking always to uphold rather than undermine the viewpoint of the Biblical narrator, he becomes necessarily party to the patriarchal biases within particularly the Old Testament text and finds himself having to offer an apology for nigh-indefensible elements in a story. Poor Hagar is one victim in point. Meanwhile, some troublesome bits are

conveniently skirted over or forgotten altogether!

For all that, it is well worth having these volumes on your shelves. Read them as part of your devotions, read them on Saturday night when you just can't think what to say tomorrow, read them when you want to curl up by the fire, read them as bed-time reading.... though they certainly won't send you to sleep.

Mary Cotes

## Holidays

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# IN HOUSE

The BMF Committee meets twice a year. and discusses a wide range of issues related to ministry. In order to keep members better informed about what goes on. we plan to include a very brief digest of topics covered at our meetins in the Journal. Some of the subjects covered last Autumn included:

- a A review of John Drane's challenging address 'Tomorrow's Pastors may not preach' and the subsequent discussion of it in the Baptist Times.
- b Plans for next year's Ministers' Session at the Assembly - Andrew Green has been invited to speak - and suggestions for 2001. An approach is in process.
- c We debated the relative levels of stipend across denominations, and agreed to do some further research.
- d We discussed the progress of the 'Relating and Resourcing' proposals across the country. and noted a wide variation in the degree to which preparations had been made
- e Malcolm Goodspeed is a regular and valued contributor to our meetings, and brought us up to date on issues such as the proposed new probationary studies programme and the suggested new form of the 'Register of Ministries.' He also drew our attention to recent legislation concerning work with children. and the importance of well thought out procedures for appointment of workers with children and young people - volunteer or paid.
- f We met for a while with the 'Baptist Forum of Preachers,' and explored ways of working in informal partnership. Some suggestions were made which will need to be worked out in detail
- g As usual, we received reports on pastoral needs at home and abroad; on the work of the 'Journal'; on those joining and leaving the BMF; on the (very well received) pre-retirement courses the BMF arranges; on the work of the Pension Fund; and on the state of the Retired Ministers' Housing Association
- h And finally. we identified a number of issues as key ones to be raised at the annual meeting with members of the Baptist House senior staff - planned this year for the end of November.

If there are other issues you feel we should be discussing or contributions you have to these debates. then please write to the Secretary or contact any member of the Committee.

## SENSE OF WORTH

'During my days as a Baptist minister in the north-east of England, I occasionally met with a Dominican friar (who once was a Baptist) with the purpose of exploring some of the issues which shape my spirituality. He enabled me to reflect on what the motivational forces are behind my spiritual endeavours ("prime categories", he called them). It was through these reflections that I began to trace just how significant it has been for me that I come from a family where diversity, the ability and confidence to ask questions, and a strong sense of worth are the name of the game.'

- Jayne Scott in *Wrestling and Resting: Exploring stories of spirituality from Britain and Ireland*, edited by Ruth Harvey, CTBI 1999.

# Prayer

'We have to distinguish between two main types of prayer: prayer as **an act of expression** and prayer as **an act of empathy**. The first type comes to pass when we feel the urge to set forth before God a personal concern. Here the concern, and even the mood and the desire to pray, come first; the word follows. It is the urge to pray that leads to the act of praying.

'While it is true that the prayer of expression is a common and universal phenomenon, it is inaccurate to assume, as most people do, that prayer occurs primarily as an act of expression. The fact is that the more common type of prayer is an act of empathy. There need be no prayerful mood in us when we begin to pray. It is through our reading and feeling the words of the prayers, through the imaginative projection of our consciousness into the meaning of the words, and through empathy for the ideas with which the words are pregnant, that this type of prayer comes to pass. Here the word comes first, the feeling follows.'

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'Prayer clarifies our hopes and intentions. It helps us discover our true aspirations, the pangs we ignore, the longings we forget. It is an act of self-purification. It teaches us what to aspire to, implants in us the ideas we ought to cherish....

'We pray because the disproportion of human misery and human compassion is so enormous. We pray because our grasp of the depth of suffering is comparable to the scope of perception of a butterfly flying over the Grand Canyon. We pray because of the experience of the dreadful incompatibility of how we live and what we sense.'

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*Quotations from the writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel, a contemporary of Martin Buber, with thanks to Rabbi Harvey Meirovich of the Edgware Masorti Synagogue.*

*'Heschel claimed that polarity is the key to religious self-understanding,' according to Meirovich, 'and is a vehicle towards structuring our perception of reality.' For Heschel 'there is a polarity in everything except God. God is beyond all dichotomies.'*

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