



# The Baptist Ministers' Journal

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Details of the Fellowship can be found  
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# Editorial

## Faith and the Oldies

A recent survey covering a ten year period, claims that older people are losing faith in God. Given the smallness of the sample (340) and the fact that some two-thirds claimed initially to come from the Church of England it would be easy for the rest of us to discount it. Despite its shortcomings, however, it may be that the survey has touched on something that no Church or Denomination can afford to ignore. Among the reasons given by Oldies for loss of faith was the church's lack of interest in the elderly.

I recall the late Morris West telling me that something in an article in the July 1999 *Journal* had struck a chord with him. It was a piece complaining that '*Our culture is increasingly youth oriented, and, for many reasons, lots of our churches seem to be falling into the same groove – they live with the delusion that the Church's youth represents the Church of tomorrow.*' Had he lived, Morris might have expanded on his reaction with a trenchant article of his own on the same subject!

This is not to deny the importance of challenging the young with the call of Christ, or of recognising the importance of the Christian family in the grounding and nurture of belief. Nor is it to underestimate the vitality and creative disturbance that can come to congregations where young people are actively involved and where the worship invites their participation.

And there is evidence that many churches are succeeding in getting through to the young. *Greenbelt*, this year attracted 10,000, and most of those following *Alpha* courses are said to be under 35.

Even so, we somehow need to keep a balance, and it maybe that surveys such as the one referred to here, for all its defects, could prove to be part of a challenge to every church to recover a sense of the whole family of God.

I certainly look back on some pretty remarkable Christians that I have met in the course of my life. I now realise that those who have affected me most have been those in their later years. I think it is the enduring, mellowing and refining nature of their faith that got through to me, and that remains with me still. Usually, too, many of them had the capacity to go on being surprised by new things! **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.

# Are Preachers born or made?

Stuart Jenkins, Hazel Sherman, John Houseago and Sarah Parry on behalf of BMF answer questions put to them by Albert Richards, National Convenor of the Baptist Forum of Preachers.

- *Stuart, what part did preaching play in your call to ministry?*

The unforgettable occasion when I was first gripped by a sense of call was not as a result of hearing a sermon but while reading the report of a committee! – looking at the challenge of changing times to our expression of faith. In the following years, while I failed to follow my calling to ministry, I heard many sermons. I liked some, endured others, but almost always had the sense that they were honest attempts to deal with deep and sacred things. I thought (and still think) that preaching was an enormously important work and that I should add my own effort.

- *Did your call to ministry emerge out of your preaching, Hazel, or did you start preaching as a result of your call to ministry?*

Probably a bit of both. We were a small group of young people in a small Baptist Church and were given fairly frequent opportunities to lead worship in Youth Services – in which I gradually grew into 'the sermon slot'. However, preaching in other churches did not take place until I was an 'open-option' student in Bristol, when it was one factor in acknowledging the need to apply for recognition as a 'ministerial student'.

- *Was your Minister or Church supportive of your preaching, John, before you were ordained?*

Yes, particularly considering that I was a university student 'passing through' the church. I would not have started house group leadership and then preaching had not the minister – John Matson – suggested it to me.

- *What training in preaching and leading worship, formally or informally, did you receive, Sarah, before your college training?*

I received very little training either in preaching or leading worship. Initially it was a matter of following the pattern of ministers I had heard in the past and I remember one minister recommended the 'Daily Study Bible' series by William Barclay which I used mercilessly for some time. I was able to get a reasonable amount of experience in preaching and leading worship in a number of churches and as part of a 'preaching team' over a number of months.

- *Stuart, do you think pre-college training was helpful or did you look for more support?*

All I had before college was the opportunity to preach to a few bemused but gracious congregations. I appreciated their encouragement and must have learnt from the experience, but, looking back, it is surprising that that's all there was. It's as if I'd asked to learn to drive and someone had handed me his or her car keys; and I was ignorant and arrogant enough to have a go.

- *How, Hazel, have your experiences before your college training influenced your relationships with lay preachers in your own and other churches?*

As a child of a lay preacher who became a lay pastor and later moved to the BU accredited list of ministers after CTP/Residential Selection Conference I would say that I still have some

ambivalence in my perceptions. I was aware from quite an early age of a degree of 'second class citizenship' once accorded to Lay Pastors, despite all protestations and speech to the contrary. (This perception dates from the 1960's, but I think there is still a degree of truth in it.) I am also aware that some lay preachers seem to believe that the title 'Lay' may be used as shorthand for "I understand the real world, which ordained ministers don't". This, together with constraints of time, can be a block to their openness to a range of biblical and theological study. We are not very good at exploring the creative tension here. Interestingly, there is very little outstanding as memorable and lasting from my experience of preachers of any sort before or after my college training.

- *Is lay preaching a way of preparing for the ordained ministry, John, or a ministry in its own right?*

Lay preaching may lead some people into full-time ministry, but it should be regarded as a particular ministry in the church in its own right. However, I believe strongly that there is great benefit to both full-time preachers and lay preachers if training can be shared.

- *What opportunities do you give to lay preachers in your own church, Sarah, or create with other Baptist churches?*

There are some opportunities for our own lay preachers in our church particularly in the evening service and a number of lay preachers are invited to help with pulpit supply. In our Association an annual 'Lay Preachers Sunday' is organised in order to give some wider opportunities to preachers. This is particularly helpful to people who are not so well known as preachers although it does require a level of sensitivity and maturity on churches and preachers for all to run smoothly.

- *One common complaint by lay preachers is that being accredited, or any other form of training, does not mean that Baptist churches will invite them to 'take services'. Is this complaint justified, Stuart?*

Yes, and I'm not surprised if people are angered by this. Idiologically, there is a complementary grouse from 'pulpit secretaries' that it is hard finding preachers. Accreditation should have a much higher profile so that it is better understood, and lists of accredited preachers should be circulated and updated regularly. A job for Associations.

- *Hazel, do you take the opportunity to listen to members of your own church who preach, and do you offer critical but helpful advice?*

There are currently none of my church members who preach, although one or two are being encouraged to develop their skills in leading aspects of worship. Some 14 years ago, when in the West Midlands, I was asked by the Association to offer a 'listening and response' service for lay preachers (via taped services). This had a low take-up, but was I think appreciated by those who made use of it. Probably the fact that I had only a few years in-pastorate experience at the time made it less accessible to many older lay preachers. (I quite understand this, although I think it was a misunderstanding of what was on offer.)

- *John, what do you see as the unique ministry of the lay preacher?*

Lay preachers should be able to bring their experience from the work place to the process of interpreting the scriptures. In my experience this is something most of them refuse to do, limiting them to safe and conventional exegesis! Their life may be even more compartmentalised than the ordained minister. Through the lay preacher, or even the 'worker priest', the church has an opportunity to create an interface with the world beyond

the church.

- *Lay preachers are able to bring insights, concerns and illustrations from the 'secular world into their ministry. Should they be encouraged to do so, Sarah?*

One of the strengths the lay preachers have is to bring some theological reflection from their own experience in the 'secular world'. These insights and illustrations can offer a vitality to the pulpit which is so easily lost by the clergy. However too much personal reflection has its own dangers and lay preachers should be encouraged to train and educate themselves in preaching and broadening their theological understanding.

- *Stuart and Hazel, does being a lay preacher develop gifts and skills for other uses within the church?*

We don't think that ability at, and experience of, preaching necessarily equip you for, say, chairing meetings or leading study groups. But we do think that preaching and leading worship can draw on skills and insights formed in other areas of church life. Being a lay preacher doesn't necessarily develop anything at all – for the person or the congregation. (The same is true of any preacher!) As any preacher, lay preachers are required by their calling to endeavour to further their personal spiritual development, disciplined study, awareness of critical and contemporary questions. There are certain 'functional' skills such as clear speaking, use of language, posture, awareness of mannerisms etc which will also be useful in the church in other areas of communication. These, however, are of a specific task-oriented order, and do not themselves help a person make the sort of connections that will strengthen the life of the church through the quality of its worship, vision, meetings and decisions.

In leading worship there are, or should be, elements of pastoral care, teaching, encouragement, making peace and strengthening commitment within the congregation. Preaching is not a stand-alone activity, but it is a matter of other things feeding into the preaching. All preachers have themselves and the people and places where they are rooted as a prime resource in their preaching. For the minister that will include other departments of church life, for the lay preacher it might include the perspectives of a workplace, or knowledge of a particular area of society. We think lay preachers contribute most when they speak from the context they know best.

- *Sarah and John, should a lay preacher exercise a peripatetic ministry, or as a member of a team within their own church or group?*

There is a place for all three of these models. We have known them all to work well. The important thing is the quality of the product. This requires a commitment to continuing education for all involved in the preaching ministry. The peripatetic preacher needs the maturity to conduct worship in a variety of churches and with sufficient confidence to overcome any difficulties that might arise in an unfamiliar church. A place within a team ministry may offer greater security but a lay preacher who is just starting out may find it difficult to be recognised within his or her own church. It may be easier to learn preaching skills - and make mistakes - in the more anonymous setting of peripatetic ministry. The team and the peripatetic ministries are both appropriate for lay preachers. **bmj**

# Preaching from Luke's Gospel

**Sean F Winter, New Testament Tutor at the Northern Baptist College, Manchester, provides an annotated bibliography for the Gospel in the new Church Year.**

The year 2000-2001 is Year C in the Revised Common Lectionary scheme, and this means that preachers who use the lectionary will be focussing on Luke's Gospel throughout the year. In what follows I offer some suggestions about possible reading in relation to that preaching task, concentrating on more substantial academic works (more popularising volumes can be examined by visiting your local Christian bookshop!).

I assume that the preacher will want some guidance on what commentary to consult or purchase, and begin by discussing some alternatives at length. I will then go on to suggest volumes that might be of help to preachers at various stages of the liturgical year, and finally some general works that offer insight into the theological themes, narrative art, social setting and contemporary validity of Luke. The focus will be on more recent works (from the early 1980's onwards) and on those works that offer exegetical insights into the biblical text.

The task of shaping those insights into a sermon, fashioning the intrusive word or peculiar speech of the gospel for a particular community, well this is the preacher's task and calling and in my view, such things cannot be lifted from books.

## Commentaries on Luke

These continue to appear thick and fast and, at the risk of being overly selective, I have chosen to discuss four significant examples of the genre (in order of publication).

### End of an Era

Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (2 vols; Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1981, 1985): a commentary that marked the end of an era in Lukan studies by virtue of its shift away from a

preoccupation with eschatological issues, towards a more balanced, overall interpretation of the Gospel. Fitzmyer's commentary is broadly historical-critical in its approach, with a discussion of the source, form and redaction of each pericope; detailed comment on the language of each verse; substantial background information from Hellenistic and especially Jewish sources (Fitzmyer is a Dead Sea Scrolls expert); and an overall interpretation of each passage within the context of the Gospel and Luke-Acts as a whole. This work is a model of the genre, packed full of illuminating observations and careful exegetical judgements, along with a helpful introductory essay on Luke's theology. Indeed, theological concerns are never far from the surface of this commentary, and the preacher who uses it will find suggestive comments throughout.

### In the details

Michael D. Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm* (JSNTSup 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989): It may seem a little perverse to recommend a commentary on Luke written by an avowed atheist whose overriding concern is to demolish the whole "Q" hypothesis upon which so much current New Testament scholarship is based (e.g. the work of the Jesus Seminar). Goulder's work is not for the faint hearted at 824 pages and is a highly technical discussion of

Luke's redaction of Mark (so far, so good for most of us) but also of Matthew. Goulder does not believe in "Q", and as a result argues that Luke is a more highly creative theologian than has previously been considered. It is here that the preacher on Luke might spot potential, for Goulder consistently offers new insights into Luke's imaginative, literary and theological capacity and fresh readings of the Gospel in the light of his source-critical conclusions. As an example consider his discussion of Luke 6.48. If Luke used Matthew as his source at this point, then he has made several deliberate alterations including an emphasis on the act of building (the man "dug deeply" and the house was shown to be "well built") and changing Matthew's verb "founded" to the phrase "laid a foundation on the rock". Goulder suggests that such changes are due to Luke's narrative imagination (Luke is fascinated by work) and his theological convictions ("laying a foundation" occurs again at 14.29 and derives from 1 Corinthians 3.10 where the foundation is Christ). The preacher could make much of such themes: imaginatively drawing her listeners into this world of physical labour, before directing them to the challenge of this biblical. In short, Goulder is not the first-choice commentary for the preacher, but it offers us clear evidence that often the gospel is in the details.

### **A Significant reading**

John Nolland. Luke (3 vols; Word Biblical Commentary 35a-c; Dallas: Word, 1989-1993): many readers will already be familiar with the format of the Word series. Each passage is analysed in four main ways: translation and textual notes; form/structure/setting; verse-by-verse comment; an "explanation" section, summarising the exegetical work. This commentary is a major achievement, and while not superseding Fitzmyer, it offers a significant reading of the Gospel in a sustained

conversation with other scholarship. The end result, it must be said, is not an exciting read, nor does it break much new ground in its overall interpretation of the Gospel. Nolland writes from a relatively "conservative" standpoint but not uncritically so. This can be seen in his defence of the historicity of Mary's virginal conception of Jesus and his wriggling around the issue of the "census" in Luke 1.1-2. Nevertheless there is much sensitivity to the development of the traditions about Jesus over time, and to Luke's own theological shaping of his material.

### **First Choice**

Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997): this would be my first choice for the preacher looking to buy one commentary on Luke. Although it is large-scale (over 900 pages), the price of £30.35 is a bargain. Green's reading of Luke has the distinct advantage of including most of the important findings of previous scholarship. But what is really exciting is the way in which this is the first major commentary on Luke to incorporate more recent narrative and sociological approaches into an overall interpretation. My own experience as a preacher who seeks to bring the "story" of the text and the "story" of my hearers into dialogue, suggests that this kind of commentary is going to be of far greater use than those which get bogged down in issues of sources, historicity or doctrine.

As an example of all of this let us consider Green's reading of Luke 10.38-42 (the Gospel for the 9th Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 11)). Rejecting all readings of the Mary and Martha story which aim to establish "the priority of the contemplative life over against the active one", Green reads the passage as a

discussion of the motif of hospitality. He highlights the narrative and cultural contexts that relate to the story, with the result that it becomes a challenging call to subvert socially determined roles in the light of the presence of Jesus as Lord. An extended quotation will provide a taste of Green's approach. With Jesus' presence the world is being reconstituted, with the result that (1) Mary (and with her, those of low status accustomed to living on the margins of society) need no longer be defined by socially determined roles; and, more importantly in this context, (2) Mary and Martha must understand and act on the priority of attending to the guest before them, extending to Jesus and his messengers the sort of welcome in which the authentic hearing of discipleship is integral. (p.437)

This is more Five Core Values than it is Women's Bright Hour! Green's commentary, and preaching that took its reading seriously, will make "the Gospel of Luke and its message come even more alive for contemporary readers".

### Others

There are other commentaries on Luke, which I will only mention in passing.

I. Howard Marshall's Commentary on Luke (New International Greek Testament; Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1978) is based on the Greek text and contains thorough exegetical comments from a conservative stance. It is now a little out of date and Nolland's commentary can be seen as a replacement. Charles H. Talbert, Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel (Crossroad: New York, 1989) is a literary reading of the Gospel as is Robert C. Tannehill's The Narrative Unity of Luke Acts: A Literary Interpretation, I: The Gospel According to Luke (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). Both of these works, while stimulating, lack some of the background

information to the Gospel that the preacher may be grateful for. C. F. Evans' Saint Luke (TPI Commentaries; London: SCM, 1990) is another large commentary with lots of detail, but is pricey for a paperback, and idiosyncratic in places. Finally, if you see a second-hand copy of George Caird's Saint Luke (Pelican New Testament Commentaries; London: Penguin, 1963) then it is worth getting hold of. As owners of his Revelation commentary will know, Caird is always a helpful and suggestive guide.

### Preaching the Seasons

The various seasons of the liturgical year each suggest themes and passages that can be explored in more depth with the help of other relevant literature. I can do little more than list some suggestions here, and not all of the volumes will be easy to get hold of. However, the preacher looking to do some more in-depth reading, should use libraries and bookshops to chase these references down. Websites are always helpful for finding books, and my favourites are: [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) for general enquiries; [www.dovebooks.com](http://www.dovebooks.com) for specialist biblical scholarship; and [www.bibliofind.com](http://www.bibliofind.com) for second hand volumes (the last two addresses are American sites: payment is by credit card, and you may have to wait some time for books to arrive).

**Advent and Christmas:** here pride of place must go to Raymond Brown's The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (2nd ed; Anchor Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1999). This is a massive and magisterial piece of scholarship devoted to exploring every aspect of the Christmas story. Those looking for a more "political" reading of Luke 1-2 should look out for Richard A. Horsley, The Liberation of Christmas: The Infancy Narratives in their Social Context

(New York: Crossroad, 1989) and Jane Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

**Epiphany:** during this season the lectionary guides the preacher to the sermons of Jesus at Nazareth (Luke 4.14-30) and on the plain (Luke 6.17-49). The first passage has been recently explored by Michael Prior, *Jesus the Liberator: Nazareth Liberation Theology* (Luke 4.16-30) (Biblical Seminar 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) and the second is discussed in depth in Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), pp.571-640 (in contrast to most books on the Sermon on the Mount, Betz offers an equivalent commentary on Luke's version).

**Lent:** Again one book overshadows all other studies of Luke's passion narrative, Raymond Brown's *The Death of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives* (Anchor Reference Library; 2 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1994). For those looking for something less detailed, the recent *Regent's Study Guide* by G. Henton Davies and J. E. Morgan Wynne, *The Last Seven Days: The Story of Jesus and Holy Week* (Oxford/Macon: Regent's Park College/Smyth & Helwys, 1999) includes a helpful discussion of the relevant Lukan texts.

**Easter:** The Gospel readings between Easter and Pentecost are largely Johannine. However Luke 24 is the focus for Easter morning and evening itself. Scholarly studies of this chapter are few and far between, and so I recommend consulting one or other of the aforementioned commentaries.

**Pentecost:** the Sundays following Pentecost traverse over the Lukan narrative

passages, stopping occasionally to listen to parts of the teaching material to be found in Luke (the idea of Jesus teaching "on the move" is of course a typical Lukan theme). Several works can be mentioned which might provide some help with these readings. Especially valuable is David P. Moessner's *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). The Lukan parables are brilliantly discussed from the perspective of Middle Eastern peasant culture in Kenneth Bailey's *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant's Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Lukan Parables* (combined ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980). Several key texts are also discussed in Halvor Moxnes' *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel* (*Overtures to Biblical Theology*; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988). Discipleship issues are also discussed in Brian E. Beck's *Christian Character in the Gospel of Luke* (London: Epworth, 1989).

### Other Works on Luke

Introductory volumes are often helpful to a preacher looking to get an overview of the various issues raised by a Gospel. For Luke there are several options, but I would recommend, in order of "difficulty": Christopher M. Tuckett, *Luke* (New Testament Guides; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Jonathan Knight, *Luke's Gospel* (New Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 1998); Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), the companion volume to his commentary and R. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Studies in the New Testament and its World; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982).

Of these four those by Knight and Green are especially suggestive. For a

reconstruction of the social background to the composition of the Gospel see the excellent study by Philip Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). The political dimensions of the Gospel are explored again in Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel* (New York: Orbis, 1978) and are used to powerful effect in John Howard Yoder's seminal *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

It must be admitted that Luke is not always the easiest Gospel to deal with as a preacher. It lacks the immediacy and drama of Mark, the obvious pedagogical thrust of Matthew, or the innate sense of

the "spiritual" that we encounter in John. Perhaps Luke is the Gospel that encourages us to set our preaching in the context of the real world (as opposed to the often rarefied world of the church). Luke's vision is universal, and he understands and deconstructs the realities of oppression, poverty, political manoeuvring and religious posturing that are still so typical of the world, society and communities that we call home. Over against these realities Luke holds up a vision of God's kingdom where roles are reversed, boundaries are broken, all are welcomed, and salvation actually makes a difference to the daily experiences of everyday life. If as preachers we can hold out that vision to those who hear us, and if the resources listed above can help us to do it better, then Year C may offer us all opportunities to "proclaim the year of the Lord's favour". **bmj**



# FORWARD... WITH BMM

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# Pride and Prejudice

**Sally Nelson, Minister of Beechen Grove Baptist Church, Watford, sees metaphorical muddle at the heart of much preaching, and living, the atonement.**

Someone once said to me: 'Listen to a preacher for half an hour and you can tell which theory of the atonement s/he is using'. Of course, I couldn't let this challenge pass, and spent many Sundays engaged in a kind of theological 'I Spy'. More recently, in the course of further study, I had the opportunity to think more deeply about the centrality of the atonement for Christians and concluded that, like salt in cooking, it does indeed flavour all we do - and preach.

A great deal hinges upon the question of how we imagine God to be - what kind of God is he? We soon hit the problem - that religious language relies heavily on *metaphors*, because we are so often trying to express things 'beyond our imagining'. We are told that the Holy Spirit descended 'like a dove'; or 'the head of the body is Christ', but we know that we are not talking about a physical dove or a physical body.

Problems often arise if we understand metaphors too literally. For example, if you tell a child that God made the world out of nothing, you may get the question: 'what did he stand on then?' - which is a literal question about a non-literal description, and more broadly it is a problem about *how* we use human language to express the divine. Adults and theologians are by no means immune to the same sort of misunderstanding!

One area of possible metaphorical muddle is that of the classical 'monarchical' metaphors of Christianity - God as Father, Lord and King - because if applied literally, from within our *human* experience, they project a picture of a powerful, transcendent and masculine God. At this point, hackles often begin to rise, because it is starting to look as if we are challenging biblical authority. Of course God is powerful, transcendent and

masculine - scripture says so, doesn't it? In fact, the issue at stake is not whether the Bible is true, but rather, whether we are assuming that truth is always literal. If a man tells his wife, 'you are as lovely as a summer day', is he actually saying that his wife is really a meteorological artefact? In fact he is paying her a compliment in a poetic form, which has nothing to do with its truth.

## Mother hen

Things get tricky when we take the monarchical picture of God, and then consider our further belief that we are created in His image. Any human being who isn't powerful, transcendent and masculine seems to be falling short of the glory of God - although, in fact, the whole picture may only be reflecting our own fallen understanding of reality, and trapping us in a circle of interpretation of our own making - for God is also pictured in scripture as shepherd, rock, lover, mother hen.

So where does atonement come in? Atonement is variously expressed as a sacrifice, a victory, a punishment, a debt, a ransom. When the most common ones - sacrifice and punishment - are put together with the monarchical metaphors of God mentioned above, and are not leavened with all the other scriptural metaphors at our disposal, we can arrive

at a picture of sin and salvation that appears to confirm the subordinate status in society of women and other minority or disenfranchised groups - a situation of pride and prejudice.

Why pride? Because a narrow view of sin basically as pride and selfishness, and of salvation and sanctification as dealing with that pride through self-sacrifice, has kept women in their places in a male-dominated society - what women already do is to play the subordinate role. As far back as 1869, Bushnell (*The vicarious sacrifice*) argued that women, by nature, are better able than men to fulfill the gospel emphasis on self-sacrifice and thus are more poorly equipped than men for leadership. Thus the gospel appears to confirm the *status quo* (which is handy) and also, possibly, fails to challenge women to a true *metanoia*, to becoming the complete person in Christ that God intends. Sally Alford (in *Atonement today*) suggests that 'Women may indeed be more likely to need empowering and self-development, need to find and assert themselves, rather than to give themselves up'. We might go even further, and ask whether a more holistic message of atonement would begin to fill our churches with men as well as women.

## Trouble

Why prejudice? Because the worldview I have described, which potentially keeps the powerful in power by theological blackmail, is prejudiced against certain weaker elements of society. Can the God revealed in Jesus Christ be so unjust? Or have we simply recreated him in our own image?

Many contemporary feminist theologians regard what they see as the inherent patriarchy of the tradition as intolerable in the 21st century. One example is Sallie McFague, who has criticised Christianity for being unjust and

irrelevant. She argues that the faith no longer creates a meaningful encounter with God for its hearers, because it excludes women, powerless groups, and the environment from our concern.

McFague's solution is new basic metaphors to describe God. So, he is no longer Father, Lord and King, but Mother, Lover and Friend; he is no longer almighty transcendent Creator, but the world is metaphorically God's 'body'. In this way she creates a sense of a God who is just and relevant in an age concerned with ecological and political correctness. Sin is perceived as failing to be fully a part of the network of life on earth; salvation is about healing relationships with people or the environment.

McFague also questions the particular nature of Christ's work and its relevance 2000 years on - how can one person's life and death affect us today? And rather than an incarnate deity, why not see Jesus as a metaphor of God, a sort of example-story from which we may learn a better way to live? And rather than understanding his death as effective for salvation, why not see that we save ourselves by our acts of kindness and humanity? There is not space here for a full examination of the implications of such a theology. However, it isn't any good getting hot under the collar about biblical authority without asking the hard question: why have the classical metaphors caused so much trouble, and how we should use them? It is also so important that we preach atonement holistically, keeping a firm perspective on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

## Upside down

In brief, there is always an interaction between theology and contemporary culture, and one will respond to the other. We can identify several conceptual shifts in our modern western culture which may

raise problems if we use the metaphors of Scripture too literally.

The first is to do with our use of language. Modernism, and a pervasive scientific and reductionist worldview, do not help people to use and understand metaphors as signposts rather than literal descriptions. Thus 'God as Father' need not be literally understood as a masculine authority figure, but rather (and Jesus surely reinforces this view) as a loving parent whose love includes discipline, and so on. With the rise of postmodernism this particular cultural language pattern is beginning to change - one obvious example is the recent resurgence of interest in storytelling methods.

Next we might consider our own fallen picture of what it means to be powerful. Our human experience denotes power in terms of authority and dominance. However, if we use the life and teaching of Jesus as a key to understanding power we see instead the 'upside-down' power of the Kingdom - the power of love (see, for example, I Cor 1: 18ff). Jesus never flattered the establishment; always made friends with the powerless; died under a curse. In him we see God's perfect power, which does not create divisions and hierarchies prone to human misuse.

### **Athanasius**

Thirdly, today's culture finds it difficult to grasp the idea of true representation of one acting for the many. How can Jesus 'do' anything for me by his death on the cross - except to set a good example? How can this one death really achieve anything in eternity? Such objections are part of the mindset of a highly individualistic society, which baulks at the basic fact that we cannot avoid community on this planet, however hard we try. We want to be self-determined, but we were created as relational beings: in fact McFague's concern for respect for other people and

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for the earth is right there in Genesis, where humankind is given responsibility for both. God made it *that way*, not some other way that we might prefer!

Finally, we often have an abstract sense of sin. Sin is perceived as an offensive act against someone (God or human) rather than more broadly as a denial of relationships and of the image of God in ourselves. This reduced idea of sin as a transaction is reinforced by the penal, sacrificial, and ransom metaphors of atonement. Sin can so easily become 'being naughty children' in the eyes of our authoritative and dominant Father God, requiring the discipline of punishment - which is true, but only part of the story. Sin is certainly desperately serious, but its solution is not reducible to self-denial and punishment.

Where does this leave us with atonement and preaching?

First, we can be utterly confident in the effectiveness of Christ's death. Those who argue that Christianity is no longer relevant usually begin with the problem of the state of humanity, and try to deduce an ideal solution. Such trains of thought usually founder on one of the philosophical pegs above. More helpful is an orthodox view such as that of Athanasius, who began his thesis from the biblical person of Christ and his atoning work, and deduced the problem of a world utterly corrupted by sin from God's given 'solution'.

### **Flavour**

Secondly, to remember that the Bible contains many metaphors for the work of Christ and many metaphors for the nature of God. It uses stories and poems, rather than analytical theses, to tell us what kind of God we serve. If we use too few of these metaphors, and if we interpret them too literally, we are trying to put God in a box and that never works!

Thirdly, to grasp the vital fact of atonement - that Jesus did not just have an abstract death, important though that death was. Jesus also *lived* before the death, and a great part of his ministry was to do with healing people so that they were fulfilled as persons. His work looked forward to fulfilment in resurrection, not only back to the Cross. Thus although the message of atonement may well be 'deny yourself your pride'; it could also be 'fulfil yourself and become the person God intended (ie in his image)'. Imagine the revolutionary flavour of such a message in some quarters! It is possible to suppress ourselves out of a supposed humility that actually is a denial of our true, God-given,

personality, and this is a particular problem for women and minorities.

Finally, none of our attempts to preach atonement will be any use if the church does not live its whole truth. Let us not settle for just half of it - the looking back to sins committed and forgiven; but also the half that looks forward to a life that is truly healed in Christ. **bmj**

#### Some further reading

Sallie McFague, *Models of God and The body of God*

John Goldingay (ed) *Atonement today*

Colin Gunton, *Actuality of atonement.*

Athanasius, *On the incarnation.*

**Filling in the Gaps** In *The Tablet* (8 July 00) David McLaurin observed that 'Paul the Apostle was rather fortunate, perhaps, in having Saint Luke as his first biographer. ... Yet Luke and Paul's letters, while they tell us a great deal, are very frustrating in what they do not tell us.' Walter Wangerin's '*Paul, A Novel*' (Lion 2000) - 'a happy marriage between meticulous research and historical imagination' - 'fills in the gaps left by Luke and the Apostle's own pen'.

# **FOR THE BRIGHTEST NEWS OF THE YEAR**

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# Celebration and Participation

**For John Weaver, Tutor in Pastoral Theology at Regent's Park College, Oxford, the eucharist is the place where we can tell our own stories and place those stories within the big Story of our redemption.**

Understanding of the meaning of the Lord's Supper has varied, and still does vary, amongst Baptists. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) states, concerning the Eucharist: *Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.*

Prior to this John Smyth (1610) had spoken of the spiritual supper stirring up repentance and faith, but later Baptists are seen to adopt two different views. There are those who adopt a sacramental position: the Particular Baptist Confession of 1677 speaks of inwardly feeding on Christ crucified; and Robert Hall (1815) understood communicants to be partakers by faith of the body and blood of Christ. Alternatively: John Sutcliff (1800) describes the supper as a memorial meal; Alexander Maclaren (1884) as a memorial; and C.H. Spurgeon (1888) as the commemorative feast of Jesus' friends.

Today our celebration of the Lord's Supper is generally seen as both communicative and commemorative: Christ is present; it is a special means of grace; we are conjoined by the Spirit; there is remembrance and response; it is an outward sign of an inward and spiritual grace; it is a renewal of our covenant with Christ and with each other; and it is a celebration in the time perspective of eternity.

Donald Baillie helpfully asks if we are saved by faith or by the sacraments. His answer is: neither, but by God, who saves us through faith and therefore partly by the sacraments that he uses to awaken and

strengthen our faith.<sup>1</sup> The Supper is therefore a means of grace, and we stand, not in the immediate presence, but between memory and hope, between incarnation and consummation. Hope looks to the future, while memorial looks to the past, and we cry *Marana tha! Come Lord Jesus*, which is both present and eschatological.

However, some Baptists do not move, in their thinking, beyond the supper as a memorial meal of the friends of Jesus. One Maundy Thursday at South Oxford Baptist Church, we explored some of the stories that could be told at our celebration of the Lord's Supper.

## Story number one

Moses, under instruction from God has asked Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt. His refusal has resulted in God sending a number of plagues. The Israelites are to hold an evening meal; a lamb is to be killed and eaten, its blood daubed on the doorposts of their houses; it is eaten with unleavened bread, herbs and wine. When God's angel of death moved through the land he passed over the houses of the Israelites, which were

<sup>1</sup> Donald M. Baillie, *The Theology of the Sacraments* (London, Faber & Faber, 1957) p. 101

marked with the blood of the lamb, but struck down the first born of the Egyptians.

Pharaoh let the people go, though later he changed his mind and chased after them. But God led the people to safety through the Sea of Reeds and made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. They remembered all of this at an annual celebration of being the people of God.

They re-enacted the celebration of the Passover meal, where the youngest present would ask the oldest to explain the meaning, through a re-telling of the story. Through their story telling and celebration, they participated in the history of their people. In the Passover meal they believed that the past events came alive in the present and they became the people of the Covenant. It was this meal that Jesus celebrated with his disciples on that first Maundy Thursday.

### **Story number two**

Twelve hundred years have passed. Jesus knows that his life is coming to an end and he wants to celebrate one last festival meal of the people of God, with his close friends. It is Passover time, and they celebrate the Passover meal. During the meal Jesus does the strangest of things, he takes off his outer clothing and begins to wash the disciples feet and calls them to follow his example. At the supper he calls them to celebrate a new covenant of love. "Love one another", he says. "As I have loved you, so love one another." Follow my example, serve and love; sacrifice and give (John 13). He is, as John the Baptist has declared, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

Jesus gives new meaning to the Passover - it is a new covenant of forgiveness and love, which is in Christ and his death. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper the past event comes alive in the present. As

we share in this meal it is implied that in some way we share in the death of Christ, and we become the people of the New Covenant, "sealed in his blood."

### **Story number three**

Twenty years have passed and the church of Jesus has spread through much of Asia Minor. As a result of the evangelistic ministry of Paul it has reached Corinth. In obedience to Jesus' command at his last meal, the church everywhere celebrates the supper, often as a part of their fellowship together, and as part of a love feast, as we did on that Maundy Thursday evening. It marked their love for each other.

Sadly, in Corinth, there was plenty of division and not much fellowship. Paul, rightly, attacks them for this - it's not the Lord's Supper that you are celebrating. It can't be the Lord's Supper because you are divided - there's no love being shown here. There is little evidence of the new commandment of love that Christ demonstrated and called for at the last supper.

### **The people of the New Covenant**

We, the people of the New Covenant, share bread and wine: the body of Christ - we share this one loaf; one people united in Him; the blood of Christ - one promise of eternal life in Him. But we recognise that our celebration is marred by lack of understanding and response.

Many of the problems and divisions at Corinth came into sharp focus at the supper. Paul says, here is my message to you; I have this to say about your celebration of the supper - it isn't! Its not the Lord's Supper that you celebrate - your behaviour denies what you say you are celebrating.

One loaf (1 Cor. 10:17) - but you are divided: I'm for Cephas; I'm for Paul; I'm

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# **THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY PLC.**

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To the readers of the Baptist Ministers' Journal

## **ELECTRICAL WIRING IN CHURCHES**

With the ever-increasing pressures on churches with limited budgets it is not surprising that some things get put to one side or even totally overlooked. Our surveyor team have visited a large number of churches in recent months and one of the areas which gives cause for concern is the lack of awareness of the dangers of poor electrical installation and the need for maintenance.

Despite increasingly high standards of installation, numerous church fires can be attributed to faulty electric wiring or apparatus. It is therefore important that electricity should be treated with respect.

It is recommended that churches have their electrical installations inspected and tested every five years. The inspection and testing should be carried out in accordance with IEE Regulations, Guidance Note No. 3, and an inspection certificate obtained in every case. The certificate should be kept with the church records.

We now have free guidance notes available for churches which contain some useful pointers for those responsible for looking after the maintenance of church property. Please contact us for a copy of the Electric Wiring in Churches guidance note as well as for other literature on church safety.

May I whilst writing also pass on a timely warning that winter is shortly to arrive with the prospect of burst pipes and storm damage particularly if your church maintenance has fallen behind. Most burst pipes can easily be avoided with a few simple precautions and action now will minimise the possibility of damage and inconvenience occurring.

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

for Christ; I'm for open worship; I'm for liturgy; I'm for the church organised this way; and I'm for the church organised that way; I'm an evangelical; I'm reformed; I'm a charismatic; I'm broad church.

## **Proclamation**

One Covenant in Christ's death (1 Cor. 11:25) - but some claim to be more spiritual; some claim to know the truth; some claim to have tremendous experiences of the Spirit; some claim to be far more sacrificial in their lifestyle.

You are not discerning the risen Christ, says Paul. Some of you are involved in all sorts of non-Christian, Christ-denying practices. You cannot sup the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (1 Cor.10:21). We cannot involve ourselves in violence, inequality, oppression, and immoral behaviour; we cannot exploit God's creation and live in broken relationships with other people; and then enter into the death and resurrection of Christ.

This is no mere memorial meal. This is a public proclamation of the Lord's death until he comes. We look back to his death and forward to his return, confirmed and centred in the resurrection.

Breaking and sharing one loaf, drinking from one cup, serves to emphasise the unity of one body – fellowship in and through Christ

## **Another two thousand years have passed**

Eleanor Kreider<sup>2</sup> helpfully presents communion as Christ's gift to the church, so that through it the great story of incarnation and salvation may be told and retold. She maintains that churches will be renewed when the Lord's Supper, graced

by God's presence and Word, orientated to the living Lord and empowered by his Spirit, is fully restored to the place it had in the early centuries of the church.

She believes, along with the apostle Paul, that Christians must discern the body - to perceive the meaning of their actions, and catch the implications of their behaviour. There is a need for the church to recover a true sense of community and hospitality through sharing meals, which are transformed through acted memory by Christ's own presence and love.

In consideration of more modern developments Kreider notes that memorialism is a product of the Enlightenment rather than Zwingli, and that the central problem for today is that our view of communion is individualistic, narrow, and small. She poses the question: how can we reclaim the piety of early Christianity which in the presence of the risen Lord, at his table, engaged the whole of the community's life - individual, social, and material?

Many strands of Christianity are addressing this question, and we see that each generation has found fresh insights from the New Testament communities. Kreider encourages churches to explore thanksgiving, feasting, sharing, reconciling, forgiving, healing, covenant, discipline, serving, and justice. Such exploration will shape our character and the character of the church.

How we take communion makes a difference - it does matter - for we act out our communion theology. For example, do we partake as individuals or as a community? "Dead ritual" is easy to spot - a moribund rite is no substitute for reality, for example, the breaking of bread and pouring of wine in a congregation of people whose lives are in no way broken for the world or poured out in love for their

---

<sup>2</sup> Eleanor Kreider, *Given for You: a Fresh Look at Communion* (Leicester, Apollos/IVP, 1998)

neighbours. The language of ritual speaks most powerfully when it is deeply connected to the circumstances of the people. In retelling the story of God's creating, redeeming and liberating love, we find that the Spirit is able to minister to our individual and community needs.

## Mural

Just before their church anniversary in 1994, the congregation of El Cordero de Dios Baptist Church in San Salvador decided that they would produce a new mural to hang at the front of the church, behind the communion table. They met together one evening and looked at a series of slides, which showed scenes of the church's life during the previous couple of years. Then each member drew pictures to represent something of that pilgrimage. After a little while they came back together and placed all the pictures on the floor and discussed them. They chose images that the group felt best represented their life as a church.

The resulting picture was sketched on a large plastic sheet (about 2x4 metres) and

painted by the whole group; it was almost dawn, when the mural was completed. The result is a striking banner of images that the whole church can appreciate and recognise as their own story. The people tell their own story in their art and they identify the Gospel story with their own story. Each time they celebrate the Lord's Supper their story is framed by the bread and wine.

The Lord's Supper is embodied worship, it is an encounter with Christ, an encounter with each other, a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and points to our future hope. It is also the place where we can tell our own stories and place those stories within the Story. When we come together around the Lord's table we renew our identity as the people of God. Here, as we participate afresh in the death of Christ, we reconcile our differences with each other, find forgiveness and hope for living, and through the Spirit find strength and courage to live as Kingdom people. **bmj**

## RETIREMENT CONFERENCE

The Baptist Minister's Fellowship invites ministers expecting to retire between now and June 2003 to come to the next Preparation for Retirement Conference from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2001 at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire.

For further details contact the Revd Jack Ramsbottom, 26 Chilton Road, CHESHAM, Bucks HP5 2AT (Tel 01 494 774 689).

☆☆☆☆

'We knew how to make our predecessors retire. When it comes to forcing our own retirement, our successors must find some method of their own' – C Northcote Parkinson, in *'Parkinson's Law'*, who, among other memorable quotes, also observed that, 'Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.' (from *'The Penguin Dictionary of Modern Quotations'*) It goes without saying that neither remark applies to those in Christian ministry! Ed.

# Filioque Out!

**Robert H Allaway, minister of Eldon Road, Wood Green, argues in favour of the Orthodox version of the Creed**

'This is how my thoughts ran about the Persons of the Trinity. I feel my mind being seized by shame, and yet under a constraint to speak because of the harmfulness of it. I thought of the persons of the Father and Son as co-equal; but as for the Person of the Holy Spirit, I regarded him as a functionary subordinate to them.'<sup>1</sup> So wrote Ann Griffiths, a Welsh hymn writer of the Methodist revival. It is my view that she rightly criticizes a distorted view of the Trinity in popular Western Christian thought, and that the root cause of that distortion is the acceptance of the 'Filioque'<sup>2</sup> and the theology underlying it. I shall argue that the Eastern Orthodox are more faithful to the witness of the New Testament in rejecting that doctrine.

In what follows, I take as my starting point that we cannot know God apart from his revelation of himself. The things that he has made may tell us that he *is* (Romans 1:20), but they cannot tell us *Who* he is. Yet our Creator has, in grace, revealed himself within creation in a way that enables us to know him. That supreme revelation - the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Scriptures bear witness - gives our only trustworthy knowledge in time of who God is in eternity.

I believe I can safely say it is scholarly consensus that to call Jesus 'God's Son' is not a later invention of the church, but is rooted in Jesus' own sense of relationship to God, expressed in his prayer to him as 'Abba', Father (Mark 14:36).<sup>3</sup> This sense of sonship, though, carries with it a sense of *dependence* on God as Father that comes across even in the high Christology of the fourth gospel. 'The Son can do nothing by himself.- he can do only what he sees his Father doing ...'(John 5:19)<sup>4</sup>

## Greek Fathers

The Church has seen that Father/Son relationship as revealing an eternal relationship 'within the Godhead, but ignored language of dependence, seeing it as a result of the incarnation. Any

suggestion that it reflects something in the eternal relationship is thought to be 'subordinationism', saying that the Son is less God than the Father (and hence not God at all, since there cannot be degrees of deity). No doubt this fear underlies the Western view that if the Spirit proceeds from the Father, he must also proceed from the Son. By contrast, Greek Patristic thought laid great stress on the Father being the sole *source* of deity, from whom the Son was begotten and the Spirit proceeded, as the basis of God's unity<sup>5</sup>. If the Spirit also proceeded from the Son, this seemed either to equate the Son's Person with the Person of the Father, or make him a second god. Rather, the Son, while co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, was so (as the Creed says) as 'God from God', because 'eternally begotten of the Father'. His is a '*derived* equality'.<sup>6</sup> On this view, his dependence on and obedience to the Father in the humanity of Jesus, do not stand over against what the Son is in eternity, but gave it perfect expression on the created, human level, 'proving himself on earth the very thing he was in heaven; that is, a continual perfect act of filial love.'<sup>7</sup>

Turning now to the procession of the Spirit, do not Western theologians rightly stress that the Son participates in this? Was

not Jesus the One who was to 'baptise with the Holy Spirit' (Matt 3:11, etc.)? Greek Fathers, like John of Damascus, recognized this, and agreed that, in so far as our reception of the Spirit is concerned, he proceeds 'from the Father, *through* the Son"<sup>8</sup>

## Undifferentiated

At what point, though, was it made most clear that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, who was to baptise with the Holy Spirit? The witness of all four gospels is that it was at his baptism. In that event, the Spirit was not some impersonal force of love binding Father and Son, but a distinct person (for want of a better word) proceeding from the Father to the Son, to assure him (and us) of his Sonship. Hence John of Damascus spoke of the Spirit as one who 'proceeds from the Father and rests on the Son'<sup>9</sup>. This reflects the witness of John the Baptist, in the fourth gospel, 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, "the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit". I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.' (John 1:32-34) We should also note that both the conception and resurrection of Jesus are portrayed by scripture as what God the Father does, by the Spirit, to demonstrate that Jesus is his Son. (Luke 1:35; Romans 1:4) Hence, what the Spirit does by grace for believers, as the 'spirit of sonship' who 'testifies with our spirit that we are God's children' (Romans 8:16), is what he eternally does by nature for the only begotten Son of God. Such would not be the case if he proceeded from the Son, which is why Eastern Orthodox theologians can make the claim (surprising to our ears) that 'the filioque is opposed to our adoption as sons'.<sup>10</sup>

I suspect that understanding the sort of Trinitarianism outlined here can counteract some excesses among 'charismatic' believers. On the Western view, God can be seen solely as undifferentiated persons of power and might (even if labelled as Father and Son), while the Spirit is reduced to an impersonal force binding them together (even if labelled as a Person). It is, then, easy to confuse the Spirit with the gifts he gives, and see him especially in works of power, leading to a triumphalist revelling in the ecstatic and miraculous. When, however, God is seen to be not simply Fatherhood, but also Sonship, a Sonship that finds expression in human servanthood, while the Person of the Spirit is seen as one given to work out that Sonship in us, then we will more clearly understand what it is to bear 'the image of God's Son' (Romans 8:29) and 'participate in the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4). **dmj**

<sup>1</sup> Translation by H A Hodges in A.M. Allchin, *Ann Griffiths The Furnace and the Fountain*: Cardiff, 1987, p32

<sup>2</sup> 'And from the Son', added by the Western Church to the words 'who proceeds from the Father' in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

<sup>3</sup> See further: J Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, e.t. J Bowden, London 1971, pp56-61

<sup>4</sup> C.H. Dodd and P.Gaechter both suggested this was using apprenticeship as a parable, see J Jeremias op.cit. P58

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 42:15

<sup>6</sup> E.L. Maskell, *Whatever happened to the Human Mind?* London, 1980, p55

<sup>7</sup> Austin Farrar, quoted by E.L. Mascall, op. Cit. p54

<sup>8</sup> Εκδωσις Ακριβης της Ορθοδοξου Πιστεως 1:12

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by B. Bobrinsky in L Vischer (ed) *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ*, London/Geneva, 1981, p144

<sup>10</sup> D. Staniloae in L. Vischer (ed), op. cit. p177

# J-Mail

## Building Bridges

*from The President of Methodist Conference, the Revd Inderjit S Bhogal*

Dear Journal, I am happy with references to me in your editorial in the July issue. Paul Walker's article and research is very important too. Please convey my good wishes to all the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship. I have very good friendships with Baptist ministers. Every good wish.

## Hope in Christ

*from Malcolm Smalley, Earlsfield, London*

Dear Journal, I was quite moved by Kenneth Toms' contribution to j-mail (April Journal). Like him, I don't want to enter into any controversy over the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ, and I would

find it difficult to describe how it would come about, but I find the Biblical hope a real comfort these days, and find the reciting of the creed on occasions very moving.

I wonder why this hope seems to have faded? Look at number 424 in *Baptist Praise and Worship*. There, in the Apostle's Creed, that phrase, 'from whence He shall come to judge both the quick and the dead', has been omitted. Who decided it should be left out? If, when we covenant together as Baptists next year, and choose to share a statement of faith, will we have to miss out this expression of hope?

If *Baptist Praise and Worship* will be reprinted, shall we have the chance of making suggestions over revision, because what I have mentioned is not the only thing that spoils a very good hymn book?

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# Book Reviews

*Edited by John Houseago*

## **Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in honour of R E O White.**

Editors: Stanley E Porter and Anthony R Cross. Sheffield Academic Press. H/b £55 ISBN 1850759375.

A collection of essays is always a strange book to read at one go – related, but very different topics swim into view, and some of the treatments seem foreshortened by being confined to an essay format. This Festschrift for REO White is no different. There are two sections to the book, representing his own major concerns and contributions. The first, and longer section is a series of essays examining various biblical passages and themes relating to baptism. The second part of the book is made up of historical and contemporary theological considerations.

The biblical essays take us through the gospels and the letters, and include an excursus into a consideration of the cult of Isis and Serapis. The final essay in this section, by Neville Clark, reflects on baptism as an eschatological event, and is an essay for which alone it is worth buying the book.

The second section covers early church, reformation, eighteenth century and modern day controversies, and by including two essays of particularly Scottish focus, reflects REO White's particular contribution to Baptist life in Scotland as Principal of the College in Glasgow.

By bringing together such a wide group of subjects and writers, not all of whom by any means are Baptist, the editors have produced a volume which opens up intriguing by-ways for those of us who are not specialists in all areas. We are allowed

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glimpses into controversies and issues which might have passed us by completely.

The book is introduced with a biographical sketch of REO White, which, although it gives the relevant facts, is disappointing in giving little of the flavour of the man and his personality. That aside, this is a very useful volume in the consideration of such a topic. It is, as Sheffield Press books are, expensive, but those who wish to buy it for study purposes – for example, pastors – are entitled to a discount.

**Ruth Gouldbourne**

**The Revelation of Jesus Christ** by Margaret Barker T&T Clark, Edinburgh. 447 pages. £16.95.

Barker writes books full of creative ideas which challenge scholarly orthodoxies. Those on the great angel, the temple and Enoch are particularly interesting. The thesis underlying her work is that the deuteronomistic reformers who inspired Hezekiah and Josiah's reforms, successfully changed the official religion of Israel. However, the original religion of the first temple was not forgotten. It survived in the work of the apocalypticists and at Qumran. It also lies behind and helps to make sense of the New Testament claims about Jesus. Using creative imagination, the world view of the first temple and of primitive Christianity can be reconstructed. Now she applies these ideas to Revelation.

Barker regards Revelation as a collection of visions, the oldest of which can be traced to Jesus, collected by John, the beloved disciple. The core of the book is temple visions; mystical experiences of the holy of holies, received by those who

saw themselves as the true priesthood of Israel.

This produces some interesting ideas and fresh insights. However, it fails to engage with the present form of the book, nor does it take account of the subtle ways in which the author (or redactor) has adapted apocalyptic traditions to serve Christian ends. Nevertheless, in reminding us of Revelation's apocalyptic context and offering a way in which those intriguing ancient texts should be approached, Barker has performed a great service. The book is written in an accessible style, although it is perhaps not so easy to read as some of her others. The lack of details of engagement with other scholars is academically unsatisfactory, and its overall approach does not lend it to use in Christian preaching. A treat for her fans, but those looking for help in interpreting Revelation might do better to turn to Aune, Bauckham or Rowland.

**Stephen Finamore**

**Varieties of Unbelief** by John Habgood. Darton, Longman and Todd. 2000. £8.95

This book is the published form of the recently delivered Bampton Lectures, and offers an interesting, if somewhat abbreviated (133 pages), exploration of the worlds of the unbeliever. And through it, as Habgood himself says, he doesn't seek so much "to argue with unbelief as to understand it".

Habgood's title includes an allusion to the significant research of William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, written almost a hundred years before these lectures were delivered, and Habgood indeed reflects a good deal of his discussion in the light of James and a wide range of other writers. Following James he declares his primary concern as being not "with philosophical or theological arguments, but with the feelings,

experiences and cultural influences which tend to tip belief or unbelief in one direction or another". Thus, having defined what he means by unbelief, he identifies and discusses the rejection of religious belief with, for example, polite indifference (see ch 2), with academic disrespect (ch 3), with passionate moral intensity (ch 4), and so on; these are not his chapter headings!

The book considers the outlook of a number of novelists as well as scientists and philosophers, and as such rewards careful reading. Habgood shows how seemingly plausible the present day culture of scepticism is, and believes that believer and non-believer can benefit from honest mutual criticism. Thus this book could well serve as the substantial basis of a (ministers') discussion group, on say a chapter-by-chapter basis.

**Andrew J Henton Pusey**

**Dread and Pentecostal - a Political Theology for the Black Church in Britain** by Robert Beckford. SPCK 2000. £15.99p ISBN 0-281-05136-4.

Robert Beckford was, until beginning post-doctoral studies, Tutor in Black Theology at Queen's College, Birmingham. In this book he engages with a question familiar to many of us. How do we move our churches on from occasional acts of political protest to a more effective strategy of political engagement?

Beckford writes from within the British Black Pentecostal movement he knows best, seeing it as 'the most effective African Caribbean Christian tradition in Britain to date.' Influences on his thinking and writing include James Cone whose angry polemics in the 1980s first alerted many of us to the justice of calls for a Black theology of liberation. 'Black theology' he writes, 'was the product of a dialectic between the theology of Martin Luther King and the

Black power philosophies of Malcolm X.' The interlocking chains of race, class and gender continue to oppress. A new kind of church community with a cogent political theology is needed to liberate Black people in Britain as this new century begins.

The chapter *Downpression* offers a powerful analysis of contemporary racism in British Society. It distinguishes helpfully between old and new racism. Old racism works itself out through the ideologies of white supremacy into the institutions, attitudes and choices of the majority white population. New racism is more subtle but just as invidious. It assumes that Blacks who refuse to integrate and become part of One Nation are somehow less tolerant or cultured than those who do choose to assimilate. After an informative chapter *Uprising* which traces multiple examples of Black Christian and political resistance in history, Beckford turns to making the case for what he calls a Dread Pentecostal Theology (DPT). I can think of more than one deacon over the years worried by charismatic renewal who would sympathise with that term! In fact Beckford charges it with new associations. DPT 'is concerned with praxis, it goes beyond liberation and calls for transformation.' The mechanism by which he sees such transformation happening in Britain is through a new Black Pentecostal Christian Convention that will network with existing Conventions whilst being unashamedly political in its focus and emphasis. This will offer a 'political theology capable of social transformation.'

It has been painful reading this book so soon after my presidential travels with the faces of so many white people in mind. In Baptist House, in Associations all over our Union and (with a few exceptions) in our churches, a largely white denomination has - usually- met me. This book has helped me to understand a little more

about why so many Black Christians have not found a spiritual home among us - and of the tragedy for our Union that represents.

**Michael I Bochenski**

**Understanding the Holy Spirit** by Harry Young; Autumn House. £5.95. 102 pp.

Harry Young seems eager to give a biblical perspective and be reluctant to judge, yet I found his treatment of the Charismatic Movement and the Toronto Blessing, in particular, veiled in critical innuendo and far from rigorously biblical.

The early chapters give a back to basics resumé of the Holy Spirit through Old Testament and in the life and teaching of Jesus. They are not a rigorous study, but are littered with incidental references for which a fairly good knowledge of scripture is needed to comprehend his allusions.

The real thesis is subsequently revealed where a thoroughly conservative evangelical approach to the Holy Spirit is assumed as the norm for measuring all other interpretations. Harry's criticism of the Toronto Blessing is that "some are attracted, many are alienated..." The subsequent chapters seem to be a veiled attack on charismatic spirituality. Harry is critical of tongues but doesn't even mention interpretation, or the other *charismatic* gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, miraculous powers, and discernment. Prophecy is summarily reinterpreted as preaching. Miraculous healing is obstinately avoided. Unyielding conservative roots are displayed when "*the organ, played with competence and sensitivity, ... choral singing of psalms ... and congregational singing, when volume modulates the mood....*", is cited as the exemplar of Christian worship.

The book was difficult, sad and disappointing. Maybe the title belies the

problem. We cannot understand the Holy Spirit. This is more like an attempt to get the Holy Spirit back into the control and confines of a conservative, western, white spirituality, rather than to acknowledge that the wind of the Spirit blows wherever it pleases and we cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. I would not recommend this book, except to someone studying different attitudes to the Holy Spirit.

**Philip Mader-Grayson.**

**Hope from the City** by John Vincent. Epworth. 2000. 117 pp. £8.95.

True to its title, I found this a book full of hope. Or, to be more accurate, I found this a book that both depressed me and then left me with hope. The depression came from the reminder of the nature of urban poverty. Among the many facts Vincent relates is that in the Pye Bank District of Sheffield in 1993 82% of all families with children had no wage earner (p. 13). Vincent offers a good description and analysis of poverty - and the persistence of such suffering and consequent diminishing of life is depressing

The book comprises a series of short chapters in which Vincent brings together an aspect of inner-city life and a biblical reflection, allowing the two to illuminate each other. For example, when faced with the criticism that he was not one of the poor since he chose to work in the inner city and therefore had the freedom to leave, he offered a reflection on the nature of incarnation. The tensions surrounding immigration are seen through the lens of the story of the Syrophenician Woman. The examples are all from Sheffield, but any pastor intent on relating pastoral experience to biblical knowledge could use the method.

The hope? The hope comes from the triumph of individuals and communities.

This is always a costly business. In a section on handicap he quotes Jan Royon, a co-ordinator of Burngreave Monday Lunch Club, who writes of 'costly love which shows us how to respect those who are not generally respected in society, and how to respect the dark and hidden sides of ourselves' (p. 92) The book is well indexed and contains a good bibliography.

**John Houseago**

**Paul - A Man of Two Worlds** by C J Den Heyer, SCM 2000, vii + 312pp, £17.50, ISBN 0-334-02756-X

What is of foremost interest to Den Heyer in this new book is Paul the man. Pauline thought is obviously discussed but in pursuit of the man behind the letters. Den Heyer therefore approaches the material chronologically rather than systematically. After setting out his stall Den Heyer assesses what we know of Paul's early Jewish life, 'conversion' on the road to Damascus and initial years as a preacher of Jesus Christ, and then turns to the letters themselves. Den Heyer only accepts seven to be by Paul himself and thus considers, in order, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Philippians (although this is thought to be two letters brought together), Philemon, 2 Corinthians (again thought to be conflated from a number of original letters), Galatians and Romans. This approach also necessitates frequent discussion of the relationship of the letters to Acts.

The picture of Paul that emerges is of a Hellenised Jew who always upheld his Jewish tradition. The two worlds in mind are predominantly Jewish and Greek, but Den Heyer also uses this picture to describe Paul's conviction that he was both a Jew and a follower of Jesus Christ. Paul was always zealous, was and remained an apocalypticist, a more unusual stress, and was always a pragmatic theologian, responding to new situations and asking questions. Even Romans is very much

contextual theology.

This book is very readable and is an attempt to be a 'popular' account. Footnotes are kept to a minimum and then only to indicate other literature, mainly German. The problem is that it may fall between several stalls. The Chapters on individual letters may be some help in a sermon series, but generally a good commentary will have more to say. It's general style would make it more widely

accessible, but its quite detached liberal position - as well as his views on Pauline authorship, Den Heyer describes Luke's positive assessment of the early Church as taking on a 'fairy-tale character' (p. 90) and thinks that 'much of what Paul wrote in his letter can no longer have any meaning for us' (p. 283) - suggest a cautious approach. Still, for some it could be stimulating and provocative read.

**Anthony Clarke**

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