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Details of the Fellowship can be found
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Guest Editorial

The Real Millennium?

Jim Clarke writes: Several years ago in our January letter, David Piggott and I referred to the new Millennium beginning on 1st January 2001. One colleague wrote commenting that this was the first reference he had seen to the true date of the Millennium! It was interesting that during the run-up to the celebrations in December 1999, various experts were wheeled out by the media to comment that of course everyone knew that the new millennium really began in 2001, but 2000 was a much more convenient round number! Now various cities, having spent large sums in 1999 are announcing their expensive plans for celebrating the real millennium on 31st December 2000. Two illustrations may show why 1999 could never be thought of as the last year of the 20th Century or the second Christian millennium.

First, for the millennium to end in 1999, the Christian era must have begun in 0 AD! Which is patently absurd. By whatever calendar, the first year must always be 1! So by our current counting we pass from 1BC to 1AD - no 0 BC or AD. Second, as any cricket follower knows, a batsman completes his century when he successfully scores his 100th run. If a century ends on 99 then every batsman dismissed on 99 could claim a century, and Wisden and every other record book would need to be re-written: not at the beginning of the 100th run, but only once the bat has been firmly grounded at the completion of the run can the batsman celebrate his century.

Who knows, perhaps if the Millennium had been celebrated in the right year we would not have seen the various disasters

of Millennium Dome, Millennium Bridge etc. But all of this is really to say, that I hope we will all consider using the excellent Covenant 21 material produced by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, for use by Churches, Associations and the Union itself at Assembly time, as we mark the beginning of the new Century and new Millennium by covenanting together so that at every level as a denomination we renew our commitment to being a missionary people locally, nationally and to the ends of the earth. **bmj**

[Jim Clarke, a former missionary in Brazil, is a member of the BMF Committee, and BMF Hon Treasurer]

Ed: An old dispute. In some correspondence, dated January 4th 1699, the writer refers to 'a great discussion going on at (the French) Court in which everyone takes part from the King down to the lackeys. This is the subject of the dispute: Does the century begin with the year 1700 or with the year 1701? Monsieur Fagon and his party are for 1700 because, they say, the hundred years are then completed: but the others maintain that they are not completed until the year 1701.... I agree with Monsieur Fagon, but the King, the Dauphin, the Prince de Conti, Monsieur and all the Court are for 1701' (quoted in Louis XIV by Vincent Cronin, 1964) Nothing changes!

The Gospel according to The Lord of the Rings

John Garland, minister of Llandough Baptist Church, finds unexpected theological resonances in J R R Tolkien's work.

To the best of my knowledge no god or goddess gets a mention in *The Lord of the Rings*. When I first read it, this was something which struck me as particularly odd. Genuine Nordic myths are suffused with stories of the doings of mighty Thor, wise Odin, wicked Loki and the rest. Yet from Bilbo's birthday party at the beginning to the departure of Frodo and his colleagues from the Grey Havens at the end, *The Lord of the Rings*, though acknowledging the supernatural eschews references to the divine. It was in thinking seriously about that that I first began to wonder if the entire tale might not itself be a reflection of the Christian gospel. Whatever disclaimers Tolkien himself made in the Foreword to his masterwork, I became more and more persuaded that, consciously or unconsciously, he was in fact re-telling, in fantasy form, the story of our redemption. Of course, the parallels are not exact: far from it. When I have outlined my argument, you may feel I've been trying to make bricks without straw. But it seems to me there are enough similarities to amount to at least a prima facie case.

Gandalf

Let's begin by looking at the main characters in the story to see if any of them can be seen to parallel figures in the gospel narrative. Gandalf, the rather grumpy wizard of Tolkien's first major success, *The Hobbit*, becomes a very different person as *The Lord of the Rings* develops. The mention of wizards suggests parallels with Norse mythology and, of course, with Merlin in the Arthurian legends. But what happens to Gandalf of *The Hobbit* and the first chapters of *The Lord of the Rings* could be said to reflect something of the God of the Old Testament, especially of the Pentateuch. This Gandalf 'dies' in a struggle with the Balrog as the fellowship of the Ring seeks to escape from the mines of Moria beneath the misty mountains. But later in the story he re-appears. Although he describes to his friends what actually happened to him as he fell into the abyss of Moria, the reader is left with a very confused understanding: everything is explained, and at the same time nothing

is explained. All that is clear is that Gandalf is not as he had been. Gandalf the Grey has become Gandalf the White. And Tolkien's description of him makes him sound very much like some well known images of the Almighty: 'His hair was white as snow in the sunshine: and gleaming white was his robe; the eyes under his deep brows were bright, piercing as the rays of the sun; power was in his hand'. That description reminds me of the God depicted in the Book of Revelation, and images from that book which decorate the walls of Keble College Chapel in Oxford. As the story develops, Gandalf's role becomes more and more that of benign, loving Father, ever protective of his children. When the Lord of the Nazgul, chief agent of the Enemy, leads his forces at the siege of the city of Minas Tirith it is Gandalf who stands in the breach of the city gate to lead the defence. And when victory is finally secured and the King enters into his inheritance, it is Gandalf who tells him:

'This is your realm, and the heart of a greater realm that shall be. The Third Age of the world is ended, and a new age is begun: it is your task to order its beginning and preserve what may be preserved'. So Gandalf the wizard is transmogrified from God of the Old Testament to God of the New

Aragorn and Frodo

So if Gandalf is God the Father, who is God the Son? Who plays Jesus in Tolkien's version of the gospel narrative? As I see it, the Saviour is in fact an amalgamation of two characters. One, undoubtedly, is Aragorn, who first appears as a dust-stained Ranger of the North, Strider, in the inn at Bree, and emerges in the end as the long-lost King who can return to claim his realm only after the defeat of the great Enemy. The other is Frodo the hobbit, the representative of the most 'despised and rejected' race of folk in Middle Earth, the Halflings, who found himself willy-nilly to be the Ring-bearer and who set his face firmly towards the achievement of his task of confronting the mighty Enemy in the home of his great power, and destroying the ring which embodied that power. The King and the despised suffering servant - the two key messianic elements in Jesus' understanding of his role.

Sauron

Sauron is Satan, the personification of evil and the Enemy who has to be confronted. Just as the gospel narratives give no clear description of Satan, so Tolkien offers us only glimpses. When Frodo was challenged by Boromir at the great Seat of Seeing on the hill of Amon Hen, he put on the magic ring and became invisible. But he felt the power of Sauron seeking him out. Tolkien writes: 'And suddenly he felt the Eye. There was an eye in the Dark Tower that did not sleep. He knew that it had become aware of his gaze. A fierce

eager will was there. It leaped towards him; almost like a finger he felt it, searching for him.' Even at the climax of the tale, when the Ring was destroyed in the fire of Mount Doom, Tolkien's description leaves Sauron a shadowy figure even as he meets his end. 'The Dark Lord was suddenly aware of him [Frodo], and his Eye piercing all shadows looked across the plain to the door that he had made; and the magnitude of his own folly was revealed to him in a blinding flash, and all the devices of his enemies were at last laid bare. Then his wrath blazed in consuming flame, but his fear rose like a vast black smoke to choke him. For he knew his deadly peril and the thread upon which his doom now hung'.

Tom

Tom Bombadil, steeped in the ancient lore of the old world, encounters Frodo and his friends as they are setting out on their journey to Rivendell. After taking them into his home and entertaining them with his tales, Tom reveals himself to be more than just a herdsman of trees. He recognises Frodo as a hobbit with a mission, and speeds him on his way. Is it too fanciful, then, to see Tom as a kind of John the Baptist figure, preparing the way and making straight the path of the Ringbearer?

Saruman

Saruman the wizard who sells out to Sauron, could well be Judas Iscariot, once the idealist who followed Jesus but later sold him into the hands of the Jewish establishment because he failed to live up to that particular idealistic vision. Then the party which sets out from Rivendell to escort the Ringbearer as he seeks a way of destroying the Ring of power: that party consists of representatives of all the major races of Middle Earth: elves, dwarves,

hobbits and men. The universality of the salvation to be offered through the destruction of the Ring is acknowledged by this representative selection. Might this be a reflection of the universality of the Christian gospel as manifested by Jesus, offering salvation to all who would hear, tax gatherer and prostitute as well as Pharisee, Syro-Phoenician woman and Roman centurion as well as Jew?

Gollum

There is, however, one major character in the story who I find impossible to find paralleled in the gospel story. This is how he first appears in Tolkien's narrative: 'He became sharp-eyed and keen-eared for all that was hurtful. The ring had given him power according to his stature. It was not to be wondered at that he became very unpopular and was shunned (when visible) by all his relations. They kicked him, and he bit their feet. He took to thieving, and going about muttering to himself, and gurgling in his throat. So they called him *Gollum*, and cursed him, and told him to go away'. Gollum is a vital character in Tolkien's story. At its climax he plays an unwitting part in the destruction of the Ring itself, his 'precious' as he always calls it. But search as I might in the four gospels, I cannot find a parallel for this loathsome yet not completely unsympathetic figure.

From the Shire to Mordor

Having looked at the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* and attempting to pair them up with those in the gospels, I turn next and last to events in the story itself, again searching for parallels. First, and most obviously, both gospel and fantasy are about a journey. Jesus and his disciples journey from Galilee to Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels: Frodo and his companions journey from The Shire to

Rivendell and hence to Mordor. Then again, both journeys appear to begin in places which are pleasant and safe. Jesus, brought up in the area around the Sea of Galilee, experiences great success in his childhood haunts (except in Nazareth itself, of course. But then, the home-loving hobbits of The Shire regarded Bilbo and Frodo as being rather strange and odd because, unlike most of their race, they chose to go off to strange places for adventures rather than staying at home and enjoying a quiet life). But the journeys both of Jesus and the Twelve and of Frodo and the Eight lead them from safety into mortal danger. Jesus, as Luke tells us, 'set his face firmly towards Jerusalem' in full knowledge of the fact that there resided the might of the Jewish religious establishment backed, as it often was, by the power of the Roman army of occupation. Frodo set his face firmly towards Mordor, the Land of Shadow, where Sauron dwelt and where the controlling ring must be destroyed in the fire in which it was first wrought.

Paths of the dead

Teaching plays a leading rôle both in the ministry of Jesus and in the journeyings of the fellowship of the Ring. Jesus taught largely through parables, simple tales that ordinary people could identify with through their daily experiences. Rarely did Jesus point a moral: he left it to his hearers to draw their own conclusions. Yet we read that his teaching had authority, unlike that of the more established rabbis. In *The Lord of the Rings* teaching also comes through tales, and in songs telling stories of long ago. In Bilbo's Song we find ourselves closest to a Jesus-type story:

The Road goes ever on and on

Down from the door where it began.

Now far ahead the Road has gone,

And I must follow, if I can,

Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.

Journey's end for Jesus was the Hill of Calvary, where he offered himself for those he loved. Journey's end for Frodo was Mount Doom, where he thrust the Ring into the fire. Jesus, against all likelihood, returned victorious over the power of darkness and death. Frodo, against all likelihood, survived the destruction of the ring and the collapse of Sauron's kingdom and returned to his friends. But we must remember that if I'm right in my basic idea, the Jesus-figure of *The Lord of the Rings* was not just Frodo: it was Aragorn as well. And Aragorn, we are told, made his way to the final battle via the Paths of the Dead, a subterranean passageway like an enormous tomb. It was, if you like, only by taking the Paths of the Dead that the King could come into his inheritance.

Acts

But, of course, the story was not over even after Sauron's overthrow and the return of the king. The hobbits returned to their homeland only to find it had been taken over by the wicked wizard Saruman and turned from a pleasant land into an industrialized wilderness. Here undoubtedly Tolkien betrayed a feeling widely held in this country in the early years of this century: a yearning for the

simpler, pre-industrial Britain that was fast vanishing beneath an increasingly urban civilisation. This mood seemed to dominate the arts in the years leading up to 1914, notably in the music of George Butterworth and the young Vaughan Williams. But I think I can deduce something else as well. Salvation had been accomplished. Now it had to be made manifest in real living. The Shire had to be scoured. The hollow power of Saruman must be revealed for the sham it had become. This, to me, is Tolkien's Acts of the Apostles. As Frodo and Sam and their friends bring all the benefits of what has been achieved to their desecrated homeland, so in the first half of Acts the embryonic Christian community struggled to manifest in its life and work the triumph of Christ. For Saruman read Ananias and Sapphira. For the Battle of Bywater, read the Council of Jerusalem.

Tolkien wrote in his Foreword, 'An author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience', 'but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex and attempts to define the process are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous.' I believe that, whether he knew it or not, Tolkien's Christian experience permeated the story of Frodo and the ring, turning what looks like the imaginative tour de force of a professor of Philology into what is for me potentially a theological tract. **dmj**

Up its sleeve

'A parable is one of those stories in the Bible which sounds at first like a pleasant yarn but keeps something up its sleeve which pops up and leaves you flat.' [one of P C Wodehouse's characters, quoted by Michael Ball in *The Radical Stories of Jesus, Interpreting the Parables Today*, Smyth & Helwys, Regent's, 2000]

Choose to have a past

At the beginning of a new year (and, some would say, of a new century and a new millennium!) Peter Shepherd, minister of Broadway Baptist Church, Derby, points out that we cannot expect much of a future without a sense of the past.

This article is a challenge to those who have chosen not to have a past. Those, in other words, who see history as no more than an intellectual theme park for those who enjoy that kind of thing, full of quaint and fascinating stories to entertain and occasionally inspire us, but as having little to do with the real process of living today. My belief, on the contrary, is that a sense of a past is essential to any meaningful attempt to face up to the realities of today and tomorrow.

This is particularly important to say in a time of unprecedented and rapid change. No doubt the past has always seemed like “another country” where people behave “differently”, but today this is especially so. A list of discontinuities with the experience of people living only a generation or two ago would be endless: the disintegration of marriage and family life, the astounding prosperity of the Western world, the creation of the European Community after centuries of conflict, the growth of megacities, our ability to affect the earth’s climate, the globalisation of trade, the end of the Cold War, the emergence of the computer age, the power of biotechnology, etc..

As Christians, and particularly as those called to be ministers, we have a special responsibility to recognise the importance of the past. After all, our identity as believers was forged 2000 years ago on Calvary. Those who protest that the future is more important than the past, and claim that the Gospel is concerned more with moving forward than looking back, should bear in mind that the past is the necessary foundation of the future. The future springs from the past just as plants grow from seeds and soil.

Back to the future

In 1970 Alvin Toffler’s book, *Future Shock*, was published. In the thirty years since then thinkers and writers of all kinds have been expressing their anxieties about the destiny of society, and, indeed, the human race itself. The church too is fearful and uneasy about its future. Every day we are told of new answers to our problems - new methods of evangelism, new ways of “being church”, new ways to harness the energy of the Spirit. And yet we seem helpless to turn the corner and respond effectively to the spiritual hunger of our day.

Is it possible that our obsession with the future is our downfall? Before we can face the future with confidence we need to know who we are, and to be secure in that knowledge. To do that we need to know our past. Living in the past may be wrong, but so too is living in the future. The present, where alone we must live, is where the past and the future meet, and there can be no sensible hoping, planning or dreaming without a strong sense of where we have come from. To forget this is to condemn ourselves to a fate similar to those unfortunate space-travellers lost in space unable to get home because they don’t know where they are. If we want to fulfil the purposes of God in the rest of our lives, and arrive at the destination he has chosen for us, we must know where we

are starting from. Baptist minister Rob Warner has recently embarked on a new project in Wimbledon, South London, to create a "Church from Scratch". With all due respect to Rob for the good work he is doing, it is impossible to start from scratch. After all, none of us starts with a blank sheet of paper.

Anyone who has embarked on any historical exploration knows just how slippery and complex it is. Our individual personal histories alone include countless influences and events and raise questions to which we can never find an answer. All sorts of rivers have run together into mine to make it what it is. Some are personal and intimate; others are much broader and general. The shaping of my life owes a lot, not just to my parents and family, but also to the country where I was born, with its particular language and culture, and to its educational, social and economic conditions. Those who taught and encouraged me, who prayed for me and who played with me have all helped make me what I am.

Part of who I am today is my work as a minister of a Baptist church. I can identify some important personal influences that have led to that, but I also need to acknowledge the broader sweep of church and denominational history that gives ministry among Baptists its particular character and identity. It may be a small part of the whole story of the Church in general, but it is important to me. It gives me the basis I need for discovering what being a Baptist minister might mean for me in the future.

A flexible friend

The infinite complexity of our individual past means that we can pick and choose what we like from it. All societies tend to produce histories that suit them, and on

a personal level we do the same. If I want to prove that being a Baptist minister is to choose a path that has radical and nonconformist roots, and therefore justifies my being awkward or unconventional at times, it is not difficult to do so. If I want to show that Baptist ministers are part of the whole ministry of the Christian Church, and have as much right to acceptance and respect as that of the established church, I can do that too. I can claim independence from association and Union life, or affirm strong ties of interdependence with my fellow-Baptists. I can emphasise my prophetic role in preaching, or my role as a leader, or my caring and teaching role, and I can justify any of these emphases from history. The past is a wonderful friend to those who want to use it to back up what they have already decided to do, because in it there is something for everyone.

Is it then a pointless exercise to look to the past for direction? Is there not always another side to every story? Certainly a degree of humility and care is needed in our approach to the past, but history reveals patterns and stories that have genuine power and meaning if we look for them. After all, the Bible can also justify almost anything we care to do, if we misuse it, and that doesn't stop us looking to it for guidance. There are elements of the past that are basic to my sense of self, even if interpreting them is not always easy. I understand myself to be a Christian, seeking to centre my life on Jesus of Nazareth as Lord. I minister in that stream of the English church variously called Dissent, Nonconformity or Free Church. As a Baptist minister, I share common ground with Thomas Helwys, Andrew Fuller, Charles Spurgeon and J H Shakespeare, whether I like it or not. It is important to acknowledge the importance of history and listen to its stories, even if I

struggle sometimes to grasp their meaning.

The social power of history

History is a powerful force for both uniting and dividing people. People are brought together by a sense of a shared inheritance. Nationhood and race, for example, are primarily matters of history. Where divisions lead to war or hatred, history almost always becomes a tool of propaganda, often used to suit the purposes of a particular group. Its power to shape or reinforce identity and prejudice is seen wherever tensions and conflicts between ethnic or cultural groups exist, such as in Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland.

Some might argue that because history can be divisive it is best avoided. The same, of course, is said about religion. But history, like religion, is a fundamental element of human self-consciousness, and to try to suppress it is to ask for serious trouble. No, it needs to be recognised and respected as a potential power for either good or ill, and handled carefully and kindly. We all need the sense of community that comes from sharing a common past. That's largely what family and church are all about. We enjoy fellowship with other believers because of our shared inheritance in Jesus.

Our sense of a common past as Baptists is stronger for some than for others, but to forget or ignore it altogether is, in effect, to ditch it. And if our Baptist heritage has no value, then by implication, we, as a distinctive group of Christians today, have no value either. Some Baptist Christians may indeed be happy to go along with that, but I would plead for the value of a sense of community with those who have swum in the same stream of history as me. I want to choose to have a Baptist past

alongside the other pasts I acknowledge and cherish. This does not mean that I am proud of human tradition, or that I am interested in perpetuating division. It means that I, together with others who choose the same past, have something distinctive and positive to value and to share with others.

Choosing my history

In order to choose information is needed. We need to know something about the choice before us. We cannot know everything, of course, but we can at least start with where we are: the place where we live, the work that we do, the people we share our lives with. As a Baptist minister, I want to find out what I can about my past, in order to choose it (or maybe reject it) for myself. There will probably be bits of it I am unhappy about. But I start with a positive and hopeful attitude, because it is part of what I am.

There is something very personal about choosing a history. It is not, in the end, something that can be done for me. There is a need to get involved in the process of reading and thinking, listening and talking. It has been said that the Church is always just one generation away from extinction, and the same could be said about the sense of a shared history. If it is not something vital and personal, it is in danger of being lost for ever.

As a Baptist minister, then, what past will I choose? I will choose the past that expressed itself in those who refused to accept the world's status quo, even at great personal cost, out of their conviction about what being a follower of Jesus meant. I want to make those who saw in worldly wealth, power and status, especially in the church, a denial of the

Gospel a part of my history. I will choose the past that valued and sought to preserve personal freedom in community. I embrace as part of my inheritance those who upheld the integrity of each person and the need for personal faith, alongside the importance of sharing faith and service in the community of the local, and beyond that the wider, church. I choose the past that expressed itself in bold missionary initiatives out of a sense of obligation to continue the work of Christ. I want to continue their commitment to reaching out to others with the news of God's love to others.

These themes are not exclusive to Baptist history, and they are not the only ones that are found there, but I do find them there, and I am happy to make them mine.

Memories and hopes

Moltmann, in his ground-breaking book *Theology of Hope*, wrote that history "must be so expounded to the present that the latter can derive from history an understanding of itself and its future path". Our faith is a peculiarly historical one. God works within the constraints of time, revealing himself in definite historical periods and in particular ways, as the incarnation above all demonstrates. If we are to take him seriously, then we must take history seriously as well, for that is the

sphere within which he works.

God gives us, like his people of every age, memories of his past activity. He does not usually come bursting upon the scene without preparing the way. His past activity contains the promise and anticipation of what is to come. The eschatological promise, that Jesus "will come back in the same way that you saw him go" is one that sets the pattern for all his comings. Every remembrance of him includes the promise of his coming again. Memories and hopes, then, are integrally linked, especially around the communion table.

What is true in big ways, as we join together with all Christians in remembering Jesus, is also true in lesser ways. We remember and celebrate his working within our own particular Baptist history, not simply for our amusement and distraction, but because by doing so we find our hope for the future. In history we find not only inspiring examples of courage and faith. We also meet with God himself, the God who holds together in himself our past and our future. Without a sense of the past, and without making a serious choice of which past we make our own, we cannot expect much of a future.

bmj

Together on the Way The suggestion that Prayer for Christian Unity for the year 2001 should focus on the way by which we travel together towards this goal came from a group of Christians in Romania. They explained their decision by pointing out that to reach our destination we have to pay attention to the journey, for something of our goal is already present on the journey. We will never reach our goal if we do not think about the way to get there. We pilgrims are not alone on this path; Christ, who is the way, is our companion and guide upon it. We walk in Christ and with Christ on the way of unity and only in him do we find the goal.
[Resource Book, Together on the Way, CTBI]

Anglicanism as Christianity

In numerous Churches Together groups, Baptist Churches and Anglican Parishes are sharing with others in prayer and mission. On a global scale conversations were initiated last year between the Baptist World Alliance and the Anglican Communion. The following paper, on some distinctive features of the Church of England, by Tim Bradshaw, an Anglican and a tutor in Christian Doctrine in Regent's Park College, Oxford, was one of the contributions to the first meeting of those Anglican/Baptist conversations.

The Church of England understands itself as a current in the flow of Christianity, rather than a new entity starting at the Reformation. On this most of the various theological and liturgical emphases in this church would agree. Hence the claim, surprising to many, that the Church of England is the catholic church in this country. It is simply the ongoing tradition of the Christian faith, having undergone some pruning and reappropriation of apostolicity thanks to the Reformers. Catholic means Christian, in the mainstream of the Christian family worldwide. It is interesting to note the insistence of the description of the term catholic by such as the Church of Ireland scholar George Salmon, Provost of Trinity College Dublin. 'I must decline to compliment away our own right to the title Catholic.'¹ A few paragraphs later he affirms that there are several kinds of Catholicism, Roman Catholicism being one variety.

Salmon's consciousness of being in the flow of catholic Christianity is very Anglican, and Salmon would be regarded by readers as robustly Protestant. For any one denomination to seek to arrogate to itself the label, and to deprive others of it, is to be resisted. It is also typical of the classical Anglican stance not to unchurch Rome, however flawed Salmon thought many of its claims were. For him Rome is a church of Christ, although unclear and erring in many ways. That was the position developed by Richard Hooker, the Elizabethan theologian in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*; it is also implicit in the Church of England's Thirty Nine Articles where we read in Article 19 that 'As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch have erred; so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith'.

It tried hard not be a denomination, to exist as the church of the people of England for the people of England. In many ways this colours several features of this church today. There is no distinctive Anglican systematic theology, apart perhaps from a certain, often parodied 'openness'. Anglicans are very happy indeed to share the riches of all the varieties of Christianity in, for example, church music: the glories of Mozart's masses, of Bach's Lutheran grandeur of medieval and patristic sources. Its lectionary includes 'saints and doctors of the church' from Roman to Confessing churches. It seeks to live AS IF simply part of the one church visible, as if that church were an existent reality.

The Local Church

A closely related point is that Anglicans agree with the Orthodox and many

¹ G Salmon *Infallibility* (London, John Murray (1888) 1914) p xv

Protestant churches that the church is primarily local, hence catholicity does not conflict with local regional identity. The Church of England does not claim, and never did, to be the one holy catholic church visible worldwide. It claims to be part of the universal church catholic, as the citation from Salmon above indicated. Therefore other churches are churches, as Hooker affirmed in face of his opponents on the Roman and Calvinist wings who each claimed theirs alone to be the true church. There is the ocean worldwide, made up of many seas, some more polluted than others, in Hooker's ecclesiology.

This in effect broadly reflects the Reformation approach of mutual acceptance of churches in different places and cultures, with varying customs and usages. The local church is responsible for ordering itself in these matters.² It is essential that the church conducts its worship in 'a tongue understood of the people',³ one of the very changes brought about by the Reformation churches, and again restoring and emphasising the significance of the local church, which is there to help all the people know God for themselves. The Scriptures are to be read in the vernacular, and read often, a feature of Anglicanism often remarked on.

National and regional churches should respect one another. It would not have occurred to German Lutherans or French Reformed to seek to set up churches in post Reformation England, nor would the Church of England have dreamed of setting up congregations or dioceses in Europe: they had their historic churches, Orthodox, Protestant, or Roman. This is of

course the mainline Reformation tradition, and the reason why today Anglicans have hardly any presence in Europe beyond chaplaincies, although now there is the diocese of Europe. The pastoral care and mission of the national or local churches is their business. When it came to church life in the New World, and non Christian continents, it was very different, and Anglicanism spread accordingly - without the mother church's establishment characteristic. The church catholic consists of different visible churches across the globe, an implied territorial understanding applies to Europe in particular. This may be the background against which to interpret the different stances taken towards Continental Protestant churches, such as the German Lutherans, and the Dissenters at home: the latter were taken as an unnecessary fragmenting of the church in this place, a splitting for secondary reasons, a setting up of division; the former were a sister Reformed church of the German people. As we may have time to see, however, waves of contested re-readings of Anglican history occurred to muddy the clarity of that view of the German church.

The 39 Articles of 1563 speak against salvation by membership of a particular grouping, pointing out that 'holy scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved'.⁴ The visible Church of Christ, accordingly, is a congregation of faithful, 'in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance.'⁵ The two sacraments are Baptism and the Holy Communion.

² See Diarmaid MacCulloch *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven & London, Yale University Press 1996) for a brilliant account of the influences of Lutheran and Reformed Christianity on Cranmer and the Church of England.

³ Article xxiv Of speaking in the congregation in such a tongue as the people understandeth

⁴ Article xviii Of obtaining eternal salvation only by the name of Christ

Scripture is the primary norm for church teaching, to be interpreted as a whole, and the church cannot enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation besides what can be found in scripture. The note of clearing away clutter and pruning away thickets obscuring the simple gospel message runs through the Articles and the classic Anglican tradition. The church has its authority, and part of this is ordaining ministers for the local context, in the context of the whole church catholic.

The Community

While still at a point which I guess most Anglicans can agree with what has been said, it might be worth at least raising the issue of who the people are that have been referred to, and so what community or communities are we talking about? Clearly the English Church from Cranmer through to the end of the Elizabethan Settlement presented itself as the community of the whole people. It wanted to be acceptable to many strands of opinion, maintaining continuity of bishops, priests and deacons, the parish system, the cathedrals, public worship. It wanted to be a broad room, especially under the Elizabethan era, having had enough of religious quarrelling and violence. But of course this ideal of a church in which all Christians could feel at home, was at best but an ideal, there were always those who rejected it, at first the recusant Roman Catholics and Counter Reformation.

But also the radical Reformation tradition which found itself persecuted, sometimes even to death, by the Church of England, found that it could not accept the Church of England as a spiritual home on ecclesiological grounds. In particular the establishment of the church by law,

with the monarch as even a titular head, offended the Baptists and Congregationalists. Crown rights over the church belonged not to the earthly king, but to Christ the King. The community of the people of England was not coterminous with the community of the church. In effect they wanted an opt out, but were told that they were, by virtue of being English, included in! Membership of the Church of England came to be mapped onto Englishness.

This was seen as an imposition by the dissenters. To the majority Anglican population it was simply a fact: their Christianity was rooted in this local church where they had their children baptised and confirmed, where they married, and were buried. Historical events which linked religion and politics tended to strengthen this mapping, for example the excommunication and deposition by the papacy of Elizabeth I as legitimate sovereign made the weld between national allegiance and church identity all the stronger. Some residual cultural after effects of this almost certainly strengthens the Euro sceptic gut feeling of many English people still: the very long history of monarchy coupled with church, and parliament, a national community sense at constitutional level, retains a centrifugal force against ceding power to a Continental authority.

The Church of England, because of this orientation and history, emphasises the pastoral side of its role: caring for the people in the parishes and dioceses, counting them in as members rather than seeing them as pagans who need converting. The doctrine of 'charitable presumption' plays a strong part in this: if people come to church and ask for baptism, at the end of the day they should

⁵ Article xix Of the Church

be treated as sincere rather than cross examined. Hence the description of a 'folk church' or people's church, is sometimes applied. Wesley's revival movement shook up this, often complacent, pattern, and tragically the Church of England failed to incorporate that movement into itself. The massive pastoral emphasis mitigated against a missionary orientation at home, charitable presumption being taken to extremes. Today however secularisation is fully recognised and the need for evangelism. Whereas 25 million have been baptised, now under one million attend church regularly on a Sunday. The Church of England is having to go into missionary mode, notwithstanding the phenomenon of many described by Grace Davie as 'believing without belonging'. The assumption of membership of all is increasingly abandoned. The Church needs to convert the nation and bring people into membership of a theological nature.

Here is a key area of discussion for Anglicans and Baptists. Mission and church membership go hand in hand, as for example Newbiggin explains in terms of mission in Hindu culture. The Church of England, in a time of great cultural change, has to face the challenge of remaining pastorally accessible and being there for people, and yet to providing more of a counter cultural model of life and not endorsing all aspects of modern culture. The Baptist tradition, strongly separatist in terms of church and state and anti-constantinian, has important things to say to English Anglicans, although it must be noted not the same things as to, for example, South African Anglicans.

It hardly needs saying that the ecumenical scene in England is very lively,

Churches Together in England includes all the denominations, and there are several Local Ecumenical Parishes in which Baptists and Anglicans work together.

The ministry of the Church

The interpretation of the Church of England's identity has a long history, and the debate goes on as can be seen in so recent a volume as *Visible Unity and The Ministry of Oversight*,⁶ essays produced for the Anglican-Lutheran Meissen Commission, in which the Bishop of Woolwich argues a robust Protestant identity rooting back to Cranmer and the *Book of Common Prayer*, and others prefer the Tractarian view stressing the place of bishops as of the very essence of the church. The latter view can be said to hold sway at present, witness the refusal to acknowledge the German Lutheran ministry of oversight despite acknowledging its baptism and eucharist and despite historic links and mutual debts.

The structure of episcopal ministry is held by all Anglicans to be ancient and precious, but there is debate about whether it is essential for a church to be fully a church, the Tractarian position. In the most recent ARCIC document, *The Gift of Authority* the collective noun for bishops is given as 'the college' of bishops which is then accorded the role of a special 'ministry of memory'. This maximalist understanding will no doubt be contested; but very few Anglicans would favour dropping the structure of bishops, however they interpret their role.

Few would deny that the role of the bishop and of the minister or priest is primarily pastoral in the Church of England. Even the Anglo Catholic interprets priesthood pastorally, as in

⁶ Church House Publishing, London 1997

Moberly's *Ministerial Priesthood*, which brings together pastoral, sacramental and spiritual dimensions of the ordained ministry. Ordination to ministry in the church is regarded as by the bishop representing and enacting the decision of the whole church. The ordained minister is the appropriate person to preside at the celebration of the holy communion, although baptisms can be conducted by lay people in emergencies.

Synodical Government

The practice of synodical government, embracing bishops, priests and lay people, has become characteristic of Anglican polity at all levels. The Church of England is sometimes described as episcopally led and synodically governed. The House of Bishops has some particular rights over doctrine and worship matters, but General Synod has the final say in matters of such importance as the decision to ordain women to the presbyterate.

Establishment

This concerns only the Church of England, the one established church in the Anglican communion. It seems likely that this will mutate in some ways in the light of the growth of other religious groupings in society and the wishes of the next monarch. The Church will have to take

care not to give the impression that it is somehow privatising itself in the eyes of the public, but disestablishment of some kind is quite possible. Few churchpeople regard the monarch as the leader of the church in any real sense, looking rather to the Archbishop of Canterbury and General Synod. One issue raised is that of the formal secularisation of the state if disestablishment occurs. It has also to be said that the Anglican establishment is now regarded as benign by other faith communities, thus the Chief Rabbi does not want disestablishment. The church itself does not seem to have had its prophetic teeth blunted by establishment, as Mrs Thatcher might testify.

Conclusion - a Church in change

The Church of England is facing change in many areas; its need for a clear missionary orientation and at the same time for a revised understanding of membership and community; pressure to evolve its national symbolic role in the constitution; ecumenically the need to maintain 'all round ecumenism' and in that enterprise to interpret the church as primary with the ministry as ministerial to the whole people of God. **bmj**

A Bible reading Church

The Anglican Church is] the greatest Bible-reading church in the world. In no other church anywhere is the Bible read in public worship so regularly, with such order, and at such length, as in the Anglican fellowship of churches.

'Anglicanism is a form of Christian faith that demands and expects a great deal from ordinary people.'

[Bishop Stephen Neill: 'Anglicanism', 1958-1977, quoted by Robert Paterson in The Monarch Book of Christian Wisdom, 1997]

Aspects of Age

Two contributors raise issues connected with seniority. First, Arthur Grimshaw writes about retiring into an alien world, and second, Glyn P R Prosser writes about ageism in Churches and Ministry.

Entering the ministry in the late fifties as a student pastor of a country village church, writes **Arthur Grimshaw**, there was no easing into the job, for me, my wife and two children, although we had been brought up in 'industrial suburbia'.

In my first church pastoral interest came from a Senior Friend who had had a long ministry – from Glasgow to Plymouth! We met weekly when he described his experiences in six churches for my enlightenment – but his experience was largely limited to church life. Our wives met rarely but usefully.

I believe there is scope for a similar Friend just before retirement, but probably a lay person, to induct this delicate creature, the retiring minister, into the real world.

The B.U. retirement course, which my wife and I attended in 1990 was very enjoyable because we met again fellow students and colleagues we had not seen for ages. The financial sessions were of interest but the most 'striking' were with earlier retirees. One gave the impression that he need never retire but hang on to all the offices he had in the Association and ecumenically! Another believed that he could continue in his previous church though not attend church meetings for a year.

I too had this idealistic attitude but was taken aback when a wiser colleague suggested that with all the good will in the world it was not on, for reasons that you can probably imagine.

Winding-down

When I moved to airport chaplaincy in

1980, a colleague whom I had known since college days, took the initiative and welcomed myself and my wife into membership of his church which was adjacent to the airport where I was chaplain. This church was a member of a close-knit ecumenical group and the ministers shared pastoral work in common for families, many of whom worked at the airport.

I have experienced a long period of 'winding-down', having retired eight years ago, and led services occasionally in local churches. I have benefited from working with a Citizens' Advice Bureau and from being a rank and file church member in a U.R.C. church for three years. Industrial chaplaincy gave me the opportunity to mix with a wide range of people at their work on a daily basis and get a feel for the stresses of secular life but even so not exactly to be seen as 'one of them'.

My main concern is that ministers coming to retirement may be helped out of the situation where they have been crucial to the life and work of the local congregation into a situation where this is true no longer and where the change can be dramatic and devastating.

Perhaps this syndrome of the indispensable minister is no longer the case in well-organised churches where team leadership is practised.

Shock

However there is another aspect 'to ministers' retirement. It might be called the 'pedestal attitude'. As an industrial chaplain I have not suffered as much as some, but the deferential, even reverential, approach made to ministers by some church people – of all denominations – can create an artificial environment over the years which some ministers might think real.

We are not alone in this and the shock on retirement may affect others who work in privileged and exclusive groups largely isolated from the cut and thrust of everyday life leading them/us to believe that we are some sort of superior beings. Disillusionment may follow swiftly on starting real retirement!

As we continue in church life we may find that 'comments from the pew', in discussion groups, in social activities regarding the current minister, church officers and the general application of Christian principles in daily life can be very surprising, even lacking in that idealism which probably carried us along in our ministry. This scenario has a parallel in industry where the 'official' policy of the firm, usually summed up in a 'mission statement' is carried out by the different informal organisation of the employees to their own satisfaction!

If this sounds a little cynical it is not meant to be. Retirement can be a new life without timetables where we can develop hobbies and read those books we bought and never gave ourselves time to read. Perhaps we can even plunge ourselves more fully into the wider life of society and qualify to be 'Retirement Senior Friends'.

*

Misjudge

Some twenty years ago, **Glyn P R Prosser** recollects, I had the privilege of being a house group leader in one of our larger churches. Two of our members were a married couple who freely gave all sorts of service to the church. Something led me to ask them their age...under pledge of secrecy they told me. Both were in their early eighties, and they were fearful that if their ages were known others would exclude them from much of their Christian service. That church would certainly have been spiritually poorer if it had done so.

This incident made me aware of how often we misjudge people because of their age. From time to time in all walks of life we have suffered because there are those who have remained in office too long and we have therefore developed a mind set which suggests that people of a certain age should no longer serve in various ways. Yet we are fortunate to live in a period when our life spans have been extended, and many senior citizens make increasing contributions to the life of our society well into their eighties.

At the same time we have developed a "youth culture" within our society, which has percolated into church life. This in turn has led to a neglect in many churches of older church members, and of what is quite clearly a fruitful field for evangelism among the many old, lonely people within every population centre within our nation. We hear of churches calling "youth ministers", or searching for "youth leaders". Rarely do we hear of them seeking for those pastorally equipped to serve senior citizens and care for ageing populations. There is nothing in the Gospels which suggest that Christ was more concerned about John rather than Nicodemus, or in the Old Testament that

God did not see fit to call an old man named Moses to lead his people from captivity. One suspects that at thirty-five Moses would have been little use at that task. God calls us all, young and old, to be members of His kingdom and we neglect all age groups at our peril.

Pain

Hearsay evidence, and that supplied by Area Superintendents, suggests that it is almost impossible for ministers over 50 or thereabouts, and some place earlier than that, to obtain moves to other churches. Excellent records and considerable preaching and pastoral gifts do not alter this situation. Churches are rightly or wrongly wary about those who are "slowing down". Mature judgement, the "wisdom" which comes with age and experience are emphasized in God's Word, but neglected by God's people.

Currently the retirement age for Baptist Union accredited ministers is sixty-five. Some ministers clearly long to retire earlier than that, but a great many go on to serve until about the age of seventy, which I understand is the official retirement age in the Anglican church. A different attitude to the age at which a minister may be called to new pastoral work might well be altered in our denomination, if we considered a change in our own retirement rules. I.e. if we now stated that an accredited minister would retire between the age of 65 and 70, or that allowing for health and fitness a minister might continue in full-time service until the age of 70, with clear provision being made in pension fund rules for those who wish to retire at 65.

Regrettably a further form of ageism has appeared among ministers themselves. The Baptist Union has always considered that retired ministers remain ministers, and as proof of this situation retain their names

in the directory accredited list. About ten to fifteen years ago it was considered by some that retired ministers should be excluded from local "fraternals", which only should be for pastors currently employed by churches. This has caused considerable pain to retired brethren and sisters, and in our district of the Sussex Association to the separate formation of a Retired Ministers and BMS Missionaries Association. Many of those who are retired have played or continue to play honourable roles in the life of the churches. In this area at the last count four were moderators of Baptist churches, and most have served in that capacity. Three have been or are elders of their own churches, and in their hands in much of the pastoral visitation. More than one has rescued his/ her church from awkward situation created by present incumbents. All of this calls into serious question the wisdom of separation into "active" or "retired" ministers. It does little to reinforce the image of the love that there should be between brethren and sisters who have gladly given all to serve the same Master.

Obvious

Secondly, a change in the attitude of churches to older people might well be altered by research, and by increasing provision for their pastoral needs, and information about the type of services which attract them. For example, there are many churches which neglect the obvious, which includes older folks' dislike of over-loud over-amplified music, increasing deafness, and the inability to remain seated for over-long services by an ageing population in which many find that limbs with fibrositis or rheumatism suffer additional pain.

While I am fully aware of the cliché

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STORMY WEATHER

With the awful weather we have had in recent months it is not surprising that the number of claims we receive daily for damage is on the increase.

Although most of our policyholders are perfectly entitled to have storm damage repaired it should be remembered that property maintenance is the Policyholder's responsibility not the Insurers.

I make a plea therefore that those responsible for looking after your property take a few moments to consider the following points.

Fallen leaves from nearby trees can be a major source of problems.

Do you check your valleys/gutters/hoppers/downpipes for blockages annually? (Borrow a pair of binoculars and have a good all-around look at your roofs, and rainwater goods!).

Tell tale signs often seen at Churches is a "damp patch" on a wall behind a downpipe - usually where there is a joint, or a continually wet (often slimy) patch of ground under the eaves of the building at one point. (Slimy footpaths are also a safety hazard!). Water is overflowing or escaping at this point - either due to a blockage, or fracture. In worse cases, grass or other vegetation is often seen growing out of the blockage material atop a rainwater hopper, or in a gutter!

Check all ground level gulleys, drain gratings and soakaways to ensure they are unobstructed.

Have the nearby trees been pruned back in recent years? Do they overhang nearby public footpaths/roads?

Do you give a careful visual inspection annually to all the roofing? (Fixing one loose slate now can save a great deal of time and trouble later).

These are all simple protective measures which if done regularly now, can save a good deal of money later in repair/replacement costs.

Yours sincerely

A.J.GREEN ACII

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

"The future of the Church depends on our young people", I am also passionately aware that we are called to win this generation to Christ. This generation contains many who now live to ages which previous generations did not, and they are fully aware that death will be the

next stage in their retirement. We are called to ensure that they have heard the Master's challenge now, not tomorrow.

bmj

Progressing Pilgrims

Mike Dales, Minister of Sutton Baptist Church, Surrey, draws on his own sabbatical experience to challenge the popular notion that pilgrimages can only be made to far away places.

Whisper the word "pilgrimage" to most people and their minds will immediately fly far away from the streets and lanes of their familiar surroundings. Pilgrimage means a journey, and a journey implies travel. A trip to the Holy Land or Lourdes is a pilgrimage, as is a visit to a place of religious significance a few hours distance away by car. A pilgrimage surely can't be done within your own familiar surroundings!

Strange then that the most famous English Pilgrimage of them all should be in the lanes and valleys familiar to a 17th century tinker called John Bunyan. And yet it's true - the places that served to inspire the 'Pilgrim's Progress' were all within Bunyan's native Bedfordshire. The wonderfully drawn locations and people which fill the pages of Bunyan's masterwork all have their counterpart in the landscape known to him and, thinking about it, that is as it should be - for the 'Pilgrim's Progress' is the story of Bunyan's own spiritual journey.

I conceived the notion of spending part of my Sabbatical cycling through some of Britain's traditional pilgrimage routes as a way of rediscovering the path of my own pilgrimage journey. What better place to start than by following the pilgrim journey of Bunyan on his archetypal pilgrimage?

Bunyan was born in the village of Elstow just a few miles from the centre of Bedford and despite the presence of

nearby industrial estates, it still retains much of its village character. The Parish Church where Bunyan was baptised as an infant is still there, standing next to a curiously separate tower that used to belong to an Abbey that stood on the same site. The path from the north door leads through the well-kept graveyard to a small iron gate that leads onto the village green where all sorts of village sports and entertainments took place (the model for Vanity Fair?). All this was familiar to Bunyan as little has changed over the centuries.

River Ouse

Bunyan was a man tormented by deep feelings, of sinfulness. He loved the sports that used to take place on the green and yet was consumed by feelings of guilt and inadequacy before God. He described it in 'Pilgrim's Progress' as a strong sense that this world was a "City of Destruction" and he resolved to make the journey to the "Celestial City" to find the peace of Christ.

The Pilgrim hero of the tale, called "Christian", begins his journey by going through the narrow wicket gate (the gate out of the churchyard) in order to seek the path to peace and the release of his burden of guilt.

Bunyan did indeed move, leaving his village in order to ply his trade as a travelling tinker in nearby Bedford. It was there that he came under the influence of a charismatic puritan called John Gifford, then the rector of St Johns. The rectory where Bunyan came to seek spiritual advice is still there, south of the River Ouse, as is the backwater where Gifford baptised him. The rectory finds its way into 'Pilgrim's Progress' as the House of the Interpreter.

Gifford's influence on Bunyan was immense as it led to the release of the burden of guilt and shame that Bunyan had endured for so long. The conversion experience seems to have happened in the village of Stevington, a few miles west of Bedford. In 'Pilgrim's Progress' Bunyan describes Christian as labouring up a steep hill, bent nearly double by the weight he carried. Suddenly he reached the top of the hill where he saw the Cross. Christian felt the burden fall free where it rolled down the hill and disappeared forever into the Sepulchre at the bottom. Christian was free.

Amphill

Stevington is a small place and, once again, the details of its geography exactly match the description Bunyan gives. There really is a hill, at the top of which is an ancient market cross. It is easy to imagine Bunyan climbing the hill, very literally bent double under the weight of his tinker tools, including a portable anvil. At the bottom of the hill is a Saxon church with a niche (sepulchre) in the wall where a

"holy well" still pours out water reputed to have healing properties.

Following his conversion Bunyan began to preach the Gospel to others. It was a risky business in those days and he was arrested and locked up in Bedford County Gaol, where he wrote the 'Pilgrim's Progress'. The gaol has long since gone, although its site is marked by a plaque on the pavement in the middle of the shopping precinct.

Bunyan's suffering provides a useful reminder that the Christian pilgrimage is not always a smooth and uncluttered path. The easy-believism and feel-good Christianity that pervades much of the Western church is a long way from the hazards that Christian has to face on his journey and Bunyan makes no attempt to portray faith as an easy enterprise.

Just south of Bedford is the village of Amphill which finds its way into Bunyan's book as the inspiration for "Hill Difficulty" and the "House Beautiful". The hill rises steeply from the Bedfordshire plain and is topped by Houghton House, now derelict but a new and beautiful dwelling in Bunyan's day. In 'Pilgrim's Progress' the hero finds rest and refreshment in the house after facing the pain and difficulty of the journey.

Chiltern Hills

John Bunyan continued to follow John Gifford who, by this time, had established a church in the centre of Bedford. The current church, now called 'The Bunyan Meeting' is still one of the most important free churches in the region and is very aware of its history. A very knowledgeable lady guided me through the story of Christian by showing me the stained glass windows that line the walls, each portraying a scene from the book. Among the most interesting was the window of Bunyan himself sitting at his desk in gaol -

this window is referred to now as the "Waite Window" as a postcard of this scene was among the only things to reach Terry Waite during his captivity in Beirut a few years ago.

In time Christian did of course reach the Celestial City, even if it was only by passing through the cold and bitter waters of death. The characters and places along the way, however, all spring, not just from Bunyan's fertile imagination, but from the places and people he knew from his journeys on foot along the lanes and byways surrounding him. How else could it be? Writing in a prison cell, the memory of these places, and the parts they played in his own Christian experience, were his only inspiration.

'Pilgrim's Progress' has endured as a masterwork of literature and devotional writing for a number of reasons. There is, of course the simple fact that Bunyan's curiously named characters and locations have the power to fire the imagination - who could forget folk with names like Mr Worldly-Wiseman, Mr Money-love and Faithful? Who could forget places like The Delectable Mountains (the surrounding Chiltern Hills) and Vanity Fair?

Cathedral

The book has also endured because there is barely a Christian anywhere who is

unable to see reflections of his or her own experience in the characters, and situations which Bunyan describes. How many of us have never been locked in 'Doubting Castle' or been bogged down in the Slough of Despond?

For me the most important lesson of Bunyan's book is that pilgrimage is not something only to be undertaken far away, but has its roots and true value in the surroundings that have nurtured and built our own Christian experiences. What is the value of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, unless we can first point to the places nearer home where God has met us on the journey? How can a pilgrimage to a Cathedral city far away be of any use, unless we can first visit and revisit the places around us which have a deep and personal significance?

I returned home from Bedford, thoughtful and moved by Bunyan's experience and the landscape that inspired it. Were that the end of it, then Bunyan's most significant lesson would have been lost on me but I returned making the resolution to revisit my own pilgrimage places - places that may mean nothing to others, but which, to me, are filled with spiritual meaning and memory. That is true pilgrimage. **bmj**

Holy and Fun 'In the Middle Ages, when the Christian Church began to weigh itself down with buildings, the longing to join in pilgrimages also grew and the cathedrals, with their shrines of saints became centres of pilgrimage. These pilgrimages were fun as well as holy and we see something of this in Chaucer's Canterbury tales. For the pilgrims, the journey and the companionship were as important as to arrive at the goal.. At the Reformation the good baby of the pilgrimages was often thrown out with the bathwater of superstition. A free thinker like Bunyan, however, could still write in prison a book like "Pilgrim's Progress". The theme of the journey to heaven and the overcoming of temptation was vital for him.' [Resource Book, *Together on the Way, CTBI*]

J-Mail

A Public Theologian

from Ron Armstrong, Clevedon, Avon

With a general election on the horizon maybe many of us would do well to bring our politics and theology together with a reading course in Reinhold Niebuhr? One of his students, Larry Rasmussen, described Niebuhr as 'a dramatist of theological ideas in the public arena ... who decisively influenced the shape of Christian thought and action in the United States for much of the twentieth century.' Early in my theological pilgrimage I remember spending the whole of one summer vacation wrestling with his two volume work 'The Nature and Destiny of Man'!

Niebuhr's theology was shaped when he was pastor of Bethel Evangelical Church in Detroit where he saw how dehumanising was the impact of industry on the city's car workers, publicly attacking Henry Ford. 'The conventional Protestant churches, both liberal and orthodox', he wrote, 'were completely irrelevant to the struggle for justice in the new industry.'

Niebuhr took sin too seriously to be linked for long to the Social Gospel movement, and in his later life he found the realism of St Paul's diagnosis of the human condition a much more relevant foundation than anything Marx had written. Niebuhr was an analyst of the historical process, a commentator on contemporary politics, a prophetic theologian, and a biblical scholar - whose Bible frequently fell open at the book of Amos. With an election looming, I believe Niebuhr still has a lot to say to us in these more affluent times.

From Fraternal to Meeting?

from David M Harris, Coventry

Dear Journal, Last year the Coventry 'Fraternal' decided to drop the word 'Fraternal', substituting 'Meeting' instead. It was brought in out of deference to our new lady Chair, and probably because it was deemed more appropriate as many more women are being called to the Ministry. Moreover, in an age of Feminism, with a reassertion of a greater role for women in society, it was believed the change would be a gain in the religious context. Consider the very words: 'to fraternize' and 'to meet'. The C.O.D defines 'fraternal' as: 'brotherliness, a company with common interests' etc; and 'to meet': as 'to come face to face with; go to a place, to be present at arrival of' etc.

However, the implicit masculine connotation of 'Fraternal' is less relevant when considered Biblically. Only an age of Feminism has forced the implicit masculinity of 'Fraternal' to be its only meaning. 'Adelphos' in scripture has both masculine and all-inclusive connotations. The Feminist influence has driven a wedge between the sexes, making sexuality distinctively one-sided whereas, perforce, every person is a mix of male and female. In consequence, there has been an all out assault upon vocabulary. Instead of husband and wife, we have talk of 'partner' - an attack on marriage!

If 'Fraternal' be dropped, what then is lost? Looking at our own experience, we have lost the former deep involvement, one for another. We are in danger of losing corporate prayer too, as indeed of any clear accurate awareness of who comes or who does not. As I lament a Feminist onslaught - even dismissing the use of 'Fraternal'- I conclude with a few straight questions: Is it right that one sex should seek to assert itself by denying the very essence of the other? Is all-inclusive

translation really necessary, or is it pandering to a current fashion? And, if, having denied the word 'Fraternal' – traditionally so acceptable, what word would better suit us than the effete 'Meeting'?

USA Exchange

from W Ernest Whalley, General Superintendent, North Eastern Area

Dear Journal, The Revd Lou Ann Lee, a minister of the American Baptist Convention at Brighton Community Church in Buffalo, New York State, is interested in an exchange programme with a British Baptist minister, this summer or summer 2002. She would be very happy to enter into direct e-mail (or s-mail) contact with any interested party.

The Church was begun in 1953 and has

a current resident membership of 312 with an average worship attendance between 100 and 125. The congregation is a mix of white and blue collar workers and tends to reflect the mix of the community with teachers, secretaries, self employed and business people. Staff includes pastor, part-time director of Christian Education, secretary, organist and a choir director. The pastor's small apartment will accommodate two adults, and says Lou Ann 'perhaps a couple of small children!' (Small car available.) Of interest in the area: Lake Erie, Toronto and other Canadian spots.

Lou Ann's address is: 8 Spindrift Court #3, Williamsville, New York 14221, USA. e-mail: LAL942@aol.com

The Whitley Lectureship

The Baptist Ministers' Fellowship is one of the Baptist bodies which support the Whitley Lectureship. This now arranges each year for a Baptist scholar to give one lecture at several venues. The lecture is also published. Lectures in this new series have been: 1996-7 Nigel G Wright, *Power and Discipleship: Towards a Baptist Theology of the State*: 1997-8: Ruth M.B. Gouldbourne, *Reinventing the Wheel: Women and ministry in English Baptist life*. 1998-9 Keith G Jones: *A Shared Meal and a Common Table: Some Reflections on the Lord's Supper and Baptists*: and 1999-2000 Anne Dunkley, *Seen and Heard: reflections on children and Baptist tradition*. Copies of these are still available from the Secretary. price £2.50 inclusive of postage.

The 2000-2001 Whitley Lecture will be given by Steve Finamore on *Violence, The Bible and the End of the World*. Venues will be announced in the *Baptist Times*.

In addition the Whitley Lectureship is able to make some grants to assist with the research costs and publication of scholarly work. Applications, with as much information as possible, should reach the Secretary by the end of June each year.

The secretary is Mrs Faith Bowers, 89 Brockenhurst Avenue, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 7RH.

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Baptists in Europe

Ruth Gouldbourne offers this very brief history of our European roots.

Although 16th century Anabaptist life was a significant part of the European religious scene, there is little or no evidence of a direct link between that movement and the nineteenth century development of organised Baptist life on continental Europe. The Baptist movement, as it is recognised today, finds its early origins in the growth of Pietism. In 1674, Joseph Spener, despairing of the formal, cold religion he found in contemporary Lutheranism, published a book "Pious Wishes", which argued for experience as well as theology, conversion, lay participation and the importance of preaching and the emotional impact of religion. He recommended the gathering of small groups for study and prayer as well as mutual edification. This was the beginning of the pietist movement, which spread beyond Germany, influencing the Moravians and Zinzendorf, among others.

It faced resistance and some persecution from State churches, as well as being challenged by rationalism, but in the early 19th century, there was something of a resurgence, with an emphasis on conversion and personal religion. Many of these groups, who gathered for prayer and Bible Study came to baptistic convictions, but with little or no organisation.

The Baptists as a coherent movement largely owe their being to Johann Gerhard Oncken, a German, born in 1800. He came to Edinburgh as an apprentice and became acquainted with the Haldanes, revivalist preachers with Baptist tendencies. He was converted in London, and returned to Germany as a colporteur in 1823. Over the next few years, he came to Baptist convictions about the nature of the church and baptism, and in 1826 refused to have his child baptised. He wanted to be baptised as a believer by immersion, but, despite Robert Haldane's advice, decided, unlike Smyth, not to baptise himself, but to wait for "a Philip". His story was taken by an American sea captain home, and an American professor who was on sabbatical in Germany in

1833 got in touch with him. Oncken and several others were baptised by this man, Barnas Sears, and were formed into a Baptist church in Hamburg in 1834.

Baptist life in Europe largely stems from this church. Oncken travelled incessantly, and seems to have seen himself in an "apostolic" role, both founding and ordering churches, and bringing into the community groups with baptistic convictions and pietist histories. The movement grew largely among German-speaking communities in various European countries, and was helped by the fire of Hamburg in 1842. The church in Hamburg won a reputation for itself by its care and practical concern for those affected by the fire, and for those who came, from various parts of the continent, to help rebuild the city. Several of those who came, having been converted and baptised, then started Baptist communities when they returned home, some in Austria, some in Switzerland.

The movement in Germany was split in the 1870s over whether the churches should all be regarded as daughters of the mother church in Hamburg, as Oncken

argued, or whether they were independent autonomous congregations each relating to the Union which was formed in 1849.

Köbner, a convert from Judaism, was a close companion of Oncken's and like him, travelled a great deal. He went back to his native Denmark and started churches there, which had very close links with the German ones, and in fact, for some time, there was one Union, started in 1849. Baptist congregations were gradually planted in the other Scandinavian churches, usually linked very closely with Germany. There were a significant number of splits in the Scandinavian movement, sometimes over theology, sometimes language - there were two Unions in Finland, one Finnish, one Swedish, with different beginnings, and sometimes over centralisation versus autonomy.

In France Pietism had again led to the start of small groups. One of these came into contact with a Swiss evangelist, who had been significantly influenced by Haldane, and the group was formed into a Baptist church in 1820. It didn't survive, and in 1831, a pastor from Boston who was travelling in France came across a small community. He saw them as having potential to become a centre of Baptist witness and arranged for an American sponsored missionary to come to them. The church was organised in 1835, and an Association in 1849, but the movement never really took root in a significant way.

In Russia, several groups lie in the origins of the Baptists. There were pietist communities meeting, and also an older tradition of those who separated from the Orthodox church in the eighteenth century, and looked for a more personal

religion. They looked for inspiration to the early church. Another significant group were the Stundists, an element within orthodoxy, who were profoundly influenced by pietism. When the Bible Society sent missionaries to Russia in the 1860s, they made contact with people from these backgrounds, and found them ready and willing to be formed into Baptist churches. Because of the variety of backgrounds from which folk came, Russian Baptists covered quite a broad range of piety and practice, and this led to significant strains. They drew on Oncken's thinking, Brethren background, as well as Mennonite and Pentecostal patterns.

In almost everywhere where they started, Baptists came under intense persecution, which lasted in some places until almost the end of the 19th century (to say nothing of the 20th century persecutions in Eastern Europe). This has had its effect in shaping their identity. They were not influenced directly by the Puritanism or revivalism of Britain and the USA. The persecution which they faced tended to make them very inward looking and quietist, but with a profound commitment to freedom of religion. Because of the way they developed, so much from the efforts of Oncken and a few other travelling evangelists, there has been a high tradition of lay leadership and participation, and a continuing suspicion of education. Oncken did start a seminary in Hamburg, but he always viewed education with some suspicion, preferring to look to gifting rather than training. There has also been a significant commitment to personal evangelism. Oncken adopted the motto "Jeder Baptist ein missionar", each Baptist a missionary, and this remained a mark. **bmj**

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Romania –. In post-revolutionary Romania - the inspiration for this year's Prayer for Unity - many people feel lost and do not know which way to go. In this situation 'the churches are seeking to be a beacon of light. They are struggling to find a way together and to offer hope to the people as well as spiritual and practical help. 99% of the population of just over 22 million described themselves as Christian in a recent census. In addition, there are some 9,000 Jews and 56,000 Muslims. A few thousand people declared themselves to be atheists or of no faith.' [Resource Book, *Together on the Way*, CTBI]

Book Reviews

Edited by John Houseago

Prayers for Health and Healing. An SPCK Collection. £12.99 pp128

Of the many books of Prayers, this one belongs to the range that provides a resource and inspiration to those in pastoral ministry. Its best use will be alongside others that provide the sick visitor with sensitivity when covering the vast array of illnesses.

David Adam has drawn upon a wide range of prayers: some old and a few new. These are put into various categories and accompanied by scripture. When reading this book you get the feel of a man writing to equip himself with a good theology of suffering and pain, and prayers for a journey towards a ministry offering healing.

There is, in my opinion, a shortage of original prayers from the author and of good prayers of faith. What it does provide for the ministers, however, is a frame of reference for visiting the sick and for use at services. It could be helpful to the minister personally, whilst preparing a visit. Those who are not helped by written prayers may find the prayers of others helpful to prepare themselves and also to increase their own vocabulary of prayer words.

The author offers some prayers for those rather sensitive encounters. The visit to an AIDS victim or to the bereaved family who have lost a child are good examples. In much of the material, the author makes good use of the prayers which help the suffer live with his pain.

Prayers are given for those who are chronically ill and disabled, a much forgotten prayer subject. A small section on

addition challenges us to cover all our pastoral needs with realism and faith.

Apart from this book being rather expensive, it does provide a useful place on our shelves alongside other tools. To sum up, it is a book to dip into, to use for private prayer, to prepare for a private visit, to use at the crematorium and in acts of public worship. Well-worth getting.

Michael Jones.

Colonies of Heaven: Celtic Models for Today's Church. Ian Bradley. Darton, Longman & Todd. 2000. xii + 255pp. £9.95. ISBN 0-232-52337-1.

Yet another book on Celtic Christianity - and the author's fourth - but if you're looking for a balanced overview of some of the main strands of this most popular of subjects, then you could do worse than start here. Though believing that these distinctive themes in early British Christianity provide models for the revitalising of our churches, Ian Bradley isn't afraid to cut through the uncritical romanticism sometimes associated with all things Celtic. For example, the attractive notion that the wild goose was an ancient Celtic term for the Holy Spirit cannot apparently be traced any further back than "the fertile imagination of George MacLeod"!

Bradley provides six chapters on his chosen themes of monasticism, blessing and cursing, penance and pastoral care, worship, the communion of saints and pilgrimage. He examines how each theme was worked out, both in the so-called "golden age" of Celtic Christianity (the sixth to tenth centuries) and in later

manifestations. From there he discusses the relevance of the theme for today, with ideas for how it might be applied in contemporary Christian life. One of the book's definite assets is to provide varied examples of groups, communities and writers already trying to do just this - suggestions for further reading or, better still, for personal visits.

Whether you're convinced there's still a place for liturgical cursing, regular confession and penance under the direction of another, respect of those with "inherited leadership qualities" and conscious openness to the inspiration of the saints in glory will depend on your churchmanship and, possibly, your politics! The value of this book will be felt most by those already drawn to the Celtic way of faith. The rest of us, if not quite becoming converts, will surely have our thinking broadened by the timeless wisdom of this profoundly rich tradition.

Ken Stewart

***Christ, Our Righteousness, Paul's Theology of Justification.* Mark A. Seifrid. Apollos. 2000. £12.99. ISBN 0-85111-470-9.**

Mark Seifrid is Associate Professor of New Testament at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. This book is his contribution to a series of *New Studies in Biblical Theology* edited by Don Carson.

Seifrid's aim is to restate the Lutheran contention that justification is fundamentally a forensic event in which God's saving righteousness and his righteous wrath stand in a synthetic rather than antithetic relationship. That is to say, there can be no justification of the sinner that is not simultaneously a justification of God in his judgement of the sinner. He is critical of Protestant developments of the

doctrine since Luther which focus attention on the human side of justification and how human beings can be counted righteous while they remain sinners. For Seifrid the answer is to reaffirm the Christocentric nature of righteousness, whereby we recognise Christ as our righteousness, and we become "the righteousness of God in him". The Westminster Confession has it right when it speaks of: "receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness by faith".

Seifrid finds Paul's theology of justification rooted in his conversion and achieving maturity in his letter to the Romans. Both of these are thoroughly examined before we move on to a consideration of Galatians and the other Pauline epistles. Chapters follow on the themes of "law" and "faith" in Paul's theology.

The last chapter is by far the most interesting, where Seifrid sets the theme of justification in dialogue with the rest of the NT, how it relates to Jesus' teaching about the kingdom, and a helpful paragraph about the supposed dichotomy between Paul and James. He also considers the implications of his proposals for ecumenical discussion and finally, their importance for preaching.

This book is a scholarly treatment of the subject of justification in Paul. However it has moments of complexity that result from bible-reference congestion, and not enough discussion of the scholars whose views he opposes.

Ian Birch

***No Ordinary Man 2.* Nick Fawcett. Published by Kevin Mayhew. £19.99**

Any reader who has used Nick Fawcett's previous book of meditations, *No Ordinary*

Man, or his book of prayers, will welcome this book as another helpful aid to both personal meditation and church worship.

It is a collection of 100 Meditations about Jesus as seen through the eyes of characters in the New Testament. Some of the characters we would expect to find in its pages; Mary, Peter and John etc.. Others are less likely subjects; The widow at the treasury, One of the mob calling for Jesus' crucifixion, Felix and Euodia are notable examples. Each of the meditations enables the reader to look at a biblical passage in a fresh way.


It is unlikely we will agree with every meditation that Nick pens, and I found that some work better than others, but as he himself writes in the introduction, 'My hope is that at least something in this book will prompt you to think more deeply about what Jesus means to you and to our world today'.

The layout of the book is clear and well-presented. For each meditation there is a scripture reading, meditation and a prayer. The meditations are grouped together according to the church year, Advent, Christmas, etc. and there are some suggested services using some of the meditations included at the back. There are also some useful appendices suggesting supplementary music and visual material to use with the meditations.

I have used some of the meditations in worship and they have been well received and I use them frequently in my own study. At £19.99 it is not a cheap book but I feel it well worth the money.

Well done Nick on producing a valuable resource now, how about a similar book on the Old Testament?

Stephen Baker



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***Preaching on the Common Worship
Lectionary: A resource book***
Jane Critchlow SPCK, 2000, £9.99

***Twelve Months of Sundays: reflections
on Bible Readings, Year C***
NT Wright SPCK, 2000, £6.99

I was staying with a recently retired ministerial friend and talking about the village in which he now lived, which had no Baptist church, and resulted in him being a regular worshipper at his parish church. He remarked that he found the lectionary very stimulating each Sunday. In his own ministry he had never used a lectionary for the purpose of determining the ministry of the Word among his various congregations. I was surprised that he was such a latecomer to something which I have valued personally, and used in Sunday ministry, over many years.

This approach to 'declaring the whole counsel of God', which is, as I perceive it, the heart of our responsibility as ministers within a local congregation, is why I have used a lectionary to make sure I get beyond my own Biblical favourites and the congregation is faced with all God wishes to say. If this approach is new to you then I can commend Tom Wright's book wholeheartedly for your consideration. 'Year C' in the order of lectionary readings begins in Advent 2000, and Tom Wright will be publishing a similar volume for years A & B over the next two years. They are a summary of

articles already published in the *Church Times*. They note the Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel passages for each Sunday, and then he focuses attention on aspects of the readings in each selection

Joyce Critchlow's book gives all the lectionary readings for the three year cycle, and she has adopted the pattern of providing one 'focus' verse from among all the passages, and illustrating that. It has the advantage of having all the material available, but that is about all. The book is prefaced with advice on how to preach, which the publisher claims: 'will prove refreshing to seasoned preachers, and will hearten those with considerably less experience'. It may do the latter, but I doubt it will do the former, because it is unlikely that the author's focus verse will be yours. And if it is not, then all you really have is the appropriate readings for the day.

My own conviction is that you will get far more help and encouragement by spending £7 on Tom Wright than shelling out more for Joyce Critchlow, not least because the SPCK, who publish both these books, could sell you the Lectionary Readings for the three years for substantially less than a tenner.

Roger Hayden

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.