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# The Baptist Ministers' Journal

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The Baptist Ministers' Journal is the journal of  
the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship.

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

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

# Editorial

## In Proportion

In the immediate aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> the Praesidium of the Protestant/Orthodox Conference of European Churches (of which Keith Clements is General Secretary) while 'recognising the gravity and importance of the issues' raised by that event and unanimously condemning 'this violence', also pleaded that we should not lose sight of all those other matters that affect our world, inform our prayers and require us to act. The CEC Praesidium listed some of these: the threat of climate change and global warming (following the unsatisfactory outcome of the Kyoto process); migrants and refugees resulting from poverty, oppression and conflict; and increasing disparities of income and wealth between different parts of the world.

Not long after that European Statement was issued an editorial in a national British daily commenting on President Bush's speech to the UN's General Assembly last November, made much the same point. Whilst recognising the need of all nations to support the US against the terrorist threat, the paper bewailed the fact that apart from a 'brief reference in favour of combating Aids and not much more than a passing reference to the Middle East' Mr Bush said 'almost nothing about any other issues that actively matter to the rest of the world. Nothing about poverty and debt. Nothing about nuclear weapons or the arms trade. Nothing about global warming.'

While therefore there are articles in this issue that rightly reflect on, and grow out of the 'nine-eleven' event (as the Americans now refer to September 11<sup>th</sup>) and its immediate aftermath, we think it important that the terrorist threat is not allowed to overshadow or distort our concerns as Christians with every other aspect of life as well.

The 'Stop! in the name of God' campaign this coming June, to which John Rackley draws our attention in this issue, is a useful call to restore a sense of balance to our lives. To give ourselves space and time to stand back from the whirly gig that is modern life - not to escape into a world of our own, but in order to be able to return and to re-engage with life more realistically from a saner, God-centred perspective. And that re-engagement may well result, and often does, in a more costly form of discipleship; a theme which also underlies this year's CTBI Lent Course, 'Called to be Saints'.

Lesbia Scott's children's hymn, 'I sing a song of the saints of God', may have become rather hackneyed by now. And it's more verse than poetry. But for all its simplistic imagery and predictable rhyming, its definition of 'sainthood' is still spot on: 'they followed the right, for Jesus' sake, The whole of their good lives long.' And that is and always will be the Christian's fundamental calling. **dmj**

# The roots of religious fanaticism

**Edward Kessler, Executive Director of the Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations Cambridge, offers an interpretation of the sacrifice of Isaac post September 11th.**

In recent weeks we have constantly heard the refrain that there can never be any justification for acts of terror against innocent civilians. Yet this statement is very puzzling for, in the eyes of the perpetrators and those who are responsible for their actions, we encounter people who are willing to sacrifice their lives, and the lives of countless others, for what they consider to be an issue of life and death. In fact, in their view the issue is more important than life and death.

Is the world simply becoming increasingly irrational and out of control? Or is it possible to understand what motivates the fanatics to commit terrible atrocities? Religious fanatics can be found in various guises; not just Abrahamic - Jewish, Christian and Muslim - but also appear as Hindus and Buddhists as well.

What drives the fanatic? The scapegoating and the demonization of the 'other' is one reason. Historically, demonization has served as a means to sharpen the distinction between "us," the good people with right on our side, and "them," the bad people who err in their ways. Demonizing the Jew as the personification of evil, for example, was the image hovering between the lines of documents drafted at the recent UN conference against racism in Durban. Has the identification of the Jew with the devil - an early Christian invention - now become the province of the Middle East?

Language is a central issue. You cannot say you are for peace while you use the language of death and destruction. For example, many Arabs have portrayed Israel as the tool of American imperialism, the Iranians have described America as "the Great Satan" and Israel as "the Little Satan."

## Language of violence

On other hand, the simplistic equation of Muslim with Arab, common in Western

media, is false. Many Arabs are Christians and many Jewish Israelis are Arabs. Another prejudice is the stereotypical image of a Muslim depicted as a man with a long beard holding a kalashnikov. This portrait fails to depict Islam but illustrates our own prejudices. It is often forgotten that the most populous Muslim country in the world is Indonesia, thousands of miles away from the Middle East.

A number of commentators have focussed on Israeli-Palestinian violence as a backdrop to these attacks. Again one has to be careful because well after the Oslo Peace process and before the Intifada uprising began, the World Trade Centre was bombed and the culprits were associated with Osama Bin Laden.

However, it is certainly true that the violence in Israel and the Palestinian Autonomy has exacerbated the language of hate. In Israel, the language used by some of the settlers is offensive and demeaning to Palestinians. It is also worrying to see that the demonization of "the other," the Jew, has filtered into Arab schoolbooks. Textbooks used in refugee camps describe Jews as the enemy of God and the enemy of Islam.

According to one mainstream Palestinian newspaper, Al-Ayyam, (Sept. 2, 2001) "The Zionist Movement is an

American invention...The American leaders are nothing but priests, obedient to their Hebrew High Priest..." Is it a surprise that some children who are taught such hatred at school may grow into adults who carry out acts of terror? As, Paul Spiegel, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany said, the language used in school texts "sow the seeds for bomb attacks".

Waving a book of antisemitic cartoons distributed at the Durban conference, UN High Commissioner Mary Robinson - in a dramatic act of identification with the 'other' vilified in the pamphlet - declared "I am a Jew". She has shown us an example that, in the cause of peace and reconciliation, we must condemn the language of violence wherever it is used.

### **Estrangement from God**

On the other side of the same coin, Muslim fanatics are also driven by an increasing prejudice in the West against Muslims. Islamophobia also provides a context to these horrors. At this time, despite the presence of violence in many regions of the world, the Western world associates Islam more than any other religion with violence. The Muslim conquest of Spain, the Crusades - which were not begun by Muslims -, and the Ottoman domination of Eastern Europe have provided a historical memory of Islam as being related to force and power. Moreover, the upheavals of the past few decades in the Middle East and especially movements using the name of Islam and seeking to solve problems of the Muslim world created by conditions and causes beyond the control of Muslims have only reinforced the idea prevalent in the West that in some special way Islam is related to violence.

Yet the history of Islam has certainly not been witness to any more violence than one finds in other civilizations. It is

tempting to believe that we are witnessing a battle between civilisations. It is no such thing. The fanatics are small in number and the vast majority of Muslims stand totally opposed to violence against the rights of others. According to some Muslim thinkers violence perpetrated by Muslims is due not to the teachings of Islam but the imperfection of the human recipients of the Divine Message: Humankind. Rabbi Hugo Gryn, a survivor of Auschwitz, put this point somewhat differently. The question is not, where was God at Auschwitz, but rather, where was man?

Some would suggest that the fanatic reflects human estrangement from God and that they are not so different from the vast majority of us. Perhaps we should look closer to home and within our own religious traditions. The willingness of someone to give up his own life for a greater cause is not unknown to religion. The three Abrahamic Faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, extol self-sacrifice.

### **Bizarre**

This is illustrated by one of the most famous stories in the Bible – the Sacrifice of Isaac. This story is similarly depicted in Islam, except Ishmael is viewed as the son Abraham wishes to sacrifice, rather than Isaac. The focus of the story is normally understood as Abraham's relationship with God and how his faith in, and commitment to God was demonstrated by his willingness to sacrifice his long-awaited son at God's command.

As a piece of writing, the biblical account has everything. It has tension and drama. Enough action for a five-act play. Yet it is compressed into 18 verses. It is packed with energy and dynamism, arousing both terror and pity. It deals with the biggest themes and touches the deepest emotions. And, it seems to have a happy ending.

It has every thing except one - an immediately apparent, morally acceptable and topically relevant message. How could Abraham reconcile the bizarre demand by God to sacrifice his son against the divine promise that he would be the ancestor of a people who would spread throughout the world?

In the three faiths, Jewish, Christian and Muslim commentators commend Abraham and describe how Abraham passed the test with flying colours. If those who have perpetrated the violence of the past few days have any religious affiliation, the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac would have been close to their hearts.

It is perhaps for this reason that we need to reconsider Abraham's response to God's command. Abraham's willingness to fulfil the command to sacrifice, immediately and obediently, mirrors the sacrifice of the suicide terrorists. Of course the sacrifice of one son, even a promised son, cannot be compared to the sacrifice of thousands of innocent people. However, in the mind of the suicide bomber it was the act of sacrifice which counted, not the cost of innocent lives. For Abraham also, it was the

command to sacrifice that was of concern, not the pleading of the son or the mother.

### Feeling the pain

Judaism, Christianity and Islam have traditionally extolled Abraham's actions. It is now well overdue to state categorically that Abraham failed the test. Some rabbis have suggested that God wanted Abraham to challenge and question the command as he did at Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, God waited until the last possible moment before preventing the sacrifice in order to give Abraham as much time as possible to consider mounting a challenge.

It was Abraham's failure on Mount Moriah that had such an impact on Isaac. There is even a rabbinic tradition that Isaac died during the test and that the angel was too late to save him. According to this tradition Isaac was restored in bodily form i.e., he was resurrected. Nevertheless, his ashes remained upon the altar. In rabbinic tradition the image of Isaac's ashes should perhaps be interpreted to mean that, as a result of what Abraham did to his son, part of Isaac died. **bmj**

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**NOTE:** The Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations is an Associate Member of The Cambridge Theological Federation. The idea for the Centre came from Dr Kessler, who's attached to Wolson College, and the Rev Dr Martin Forward who teaches at the Federation.

Jewish-Christian dialogue has grown significantly in recent years, but relevant courses are still taught in relatively few places. The Centre responds to an increasing demand for study in this field, and is the only independent institution of its kind in the UK.

The Centre offers educational programmes to students of all ages and backgrounds, on both a full and part-time basis. Most students enrol for the MA Degree, but modules can be studied out of interest, or as part of another modular degree. The on-site and distance learning courses are fully integrated, so students have the option of combining home and on-site study.

The Centre is endorsed by the Council of Christians and Jews, Anglia Polytechnic University (APU) and members of the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Cambridge, as well as religious leaders and eminent public figures. [www.cam.net.uk/home/cjcr](http://www.cam.net.uk/home/cjcr)

# 'God bless America'

**Simon Carver, Minister of New Road, Oxford, reflects on a sabbatical at Calvary Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky.**

The events of Tuesday September 11th have made writing this more difficult, but in many ways my experiences in Kentucky have made it easier to understand what has happened since. Our visit made it possible to see again American friends on their own turf as well as to make new friends in the churches we visited and what I write here is written in the spirit of friendship. But while we Brits might number Americans amongst our friends, can we truly say that we are brothers and sisters? If we are brothers and sisters then we are like those families which have been separated at birth. Or another analogy might be to think of the United States as one of the Galapagos Islands.

You will remember that the Galapagos Islands were visited by Charles Darwin who found that there were species of animals and birds which were similar, but different from those in other parts of the world. There were tortoises, but much bigger than those found in other parts of the world. I believe that the reason for these phenomena was said to be that the remoteness of the Galapagos Islands meant that the habitat of its flora and fauna was unaffected by the outside world.

In America, one can see many things that are familiar, but noticeably different from those found in other parts of the world. An obvious example can be found on the roads. Like the Galapagos tortoises, American vehicles are bigger than their European counterparts. The reasons for this could be akin to those given for the development of big tortoises. The cost of petrol in the US is famously lower than anywhere in Europe – just over £1 per gallon this summer. This means that fuel economy is not the priority for motorists there in the way that it is here. So conventionally European-sized cars are dwarfed by the sort of pick-up trucks about which a laddish Billericay roofing contractor could only dream. The vehicles are not just bigger, they have also developed in different ways. One of my biggest surprises

was to see a concrete mixer reversing at high speed down a dual carriageway. At a second glance, it became clear that the truck was going forwards, it was just that the mixing section of the vehicle was the opposite way around from how we would expect it to be.

## **My son is a soldier**

The pick-up and the concrete mixer are symptomatic of two phenomena. These trucks with their huge wheels and a load area the size of a small soccer pitch are bought by ordinary people as well as tradesmen. They are not purchased for what the family needs, but rather for what they *might* need. The concrete mixer is built 'the wrong way round' because 'doesn't everyone build them like that?'

Much in America has developed in the way that it has because of this sense of 'why not?', but more significantly because it is a country that is a nett exporter of culture. America is a country which has not been influenced by the outside world in the way that European countries have. If Britain and the US - the two largest English-speaking nations - have shared cultural values and experiences it is because we have received from them, rather than in a reciprocal relationship.

This has made what happened on 11th September all the harder for them to understand, in that they were as unprepared as a child for the idea that someone could dislike them so much as to do such a thing. Yet perhaps their 'separate development' has left them better able to deal with their post-disaster feelings.

One of the most memorable sights during my visit was of a bumper sticker on one of these pick-up trucks. It read *My son is a soldier*. How many Britons would take such obvious pride in this career choice? We leave overt support for our armed forces to the likes of Jim Davidson, going to Bosnia or the Gulf to cheer up the troops and when we talk of soldiers it is seldom with pride. American patriotism and pride in their armed forces may make them seem to be spoiling for a fight, but it has also prepared them to deal with their feelings at this time. A people who will stand, hand on heart, for the National Anthem at a baseball game, will know the words when they come to sing it together in a time of national crisis.

### **Anything, anytime, anywhere**

We carried on with our soccer matches on the Tuesday of the Attack, but cancelled them on Wednesday – more than a day after the event - and at the weekend's games the players wore black armbands. On the Friday we stood in silence, and on Saturday we cancelled some of the more patriotic songs at the Last Night of the Proms. In America, a group of leaders spontaneously burst into 'God bless America' and when baseball started a week later the players wore flags on their shirts and caps. Every spectator was issued with a flag, and again 'God bless America' was sung alongside the National Anthem or instead of the traditional song at the seventh innings.

At St Louis, in the Mid-West, a poem by

Jack Buck was read as part of a pre-game ceremony. Buck is a broadcaster closely associated with the St. Louis Cardinals team and his folksy thoughts have been included in anthologies such as *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. The first few lines are as follows:

*Since this nation was founded...under  
God*

*More than 200 years ago*

*We have been the bastion of freedom*

*The light that keeps the free world aglow*

*We do not covet the possessions of  
others*

*We are blessed with the bounty we  
share*

*We have rushed to help other nations  
...anything...anytime...anywhere.*

It is hard to imagine a poem by John Motson forming part of such a ceremony at a soccer game, but then again baseball seems to evoke spirituality in a way that the 'working man's ballet' has failed to do. There have been a number of good stories set around baseball such as 'Field of Dreams' and 'The Natural', whereas soccer has little to offer beyond 'Escape to Victory', perhaps best remembered for the acting performances of the likes of Pele and Bobby Moore. But baseball is the national game of America in a way that soccer is not the national game of Britain. It seemed appropriate for supporters and players to wrap themselves in the flag that week, because the flag, and all it stands for, was already part and parcel of the game.

In America, Church and state are separated by the constitution. Yet, in contrast to England, where the established Church and the state are constitutionally bound together, the ties between Christianity and nationhood are much stronger. Spirituality is bound up with who they are in a way that is alien to us. And

American Christianity touches the heart in a way that its British equivalent does not. Our outreach and our spirituality is aimed at the head, while their target is about twelve inches lower.

### What moves us

One of the reasons why Christianity is spoken of without embarrassment in America is because it is so much part of their culture, but this is no reason why on our side of the Atlantic, where upper lips as well as shirt collars are stiff, we should ignore the heart. While American film directors, such as Steven Spielberg, are masters at touching the hearts of their audience – his latest film, *A.I.* is a good example – this does not mean that we British have hearts of stone. Perhaps it simply means we 'feel' differently. If we act and feel differently, from our American cousins, this does not mean that the heart is not important. The Briton knows passion, we simply need to look for it. There was passion between Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard in 'Brief Encounter'. Passion was evident in 'Chariots of Fire', when Eric Liddell spoke of his experience of God in his life. There is passion in any Saturday afternoon soccer crowd.

Perhaps rather than speaking of passion, we might consider what it is that moves us – that which touches our inmost being. It

might be hearing the music of a choir echoing around one of the great cathedrals or college chapels. It might be sharing in a major life event – birth, marriage or death. It might be hearing or seeing great bravery, or simply the decency of the human spirit at large in the words and images with which we were confronted during those days in the middle of September.

I saw an American version of Jeremy Paxman interviewed on U.S. television and he described his experience growing up after his parents had been divorced. He spoke of the weekly visits he made, as an eleven-year-old, to the golf course with his Dad and remembered what a wonderful experience this was and how fortunate he had been to spend time alone with his father. The natural way in which he spoke of this was moving and I believe that the mission of the Church in this country could receive new life if this ability to speak of that which touches our hearts was to be recaptured or perhaps discovered for the first time.

Christianity must not become all style and no content and nor must it be all heart and no head, but I believe that the Church in this country needs to find a way to the hearts of our congregations and to the hearts of the people outside. **bmj**

## I LOVE YOU

In the light of the terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, Dr Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi asks, 'What were the last words of those on the planes knowing they were about to die? Not: "Why me, God?" or "Why is this happening to me?" but "I love you" .

That shows how wrong we were to think of the United States only as a commercial and secular culture.' The Rabbi also spoke of the need to distinguish between optimism and hope: 'Optimism is the belief that things are going to get better. Hope is the belief that *together* we can *make* things better.'

# 'to make us think of God'

**G Alex Potts, now a full-time Community Chaplain, explains what's involved in being a commissioned chaplain to the forces.**

It is often asserted and rightly so, that there has been a Chaplain in every battle, or deployment of the Army since 1796. That is the year that the Royal Army Chaplains Department was founded. But there have been many instances before that when clergy were present in battles. As early as 430, a Bishop Germanus led an army in battle in Wales against Saxons and Picts and the battle became known as the "Hallelujah" Battle. The Venerable Bede also mentions clergy playing a leading role in other battles in Wales, Chester, York and Scotland.

William the Conqueror had his half brother, Bishop Ido, present at the Battle of Hastings and is depicted as such in the Bayeux Tapestry. Edward I employed two types of Chaplains: *Capellanus Magnificus* to be attached to the feudal classes and *Capellanus Vulgaris* who looked after the rest. The former got one shilling a day and the latter sixpence a day!

By the time of Edward III there were three classes, with the highest in the retinue of the king. When Edward III was away in France, the Scots raided England and were met by an Army raised by the Queen. The first Division was led by the Bishop of Durham, the second by the Archbishop of York, the third Division by the Bishop of Lincoln and the fourth Division by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Scottish Army was defeated by this formidable phalanx of Church leaders!

There are a number of other instances of clergy being present in famous battles, the high point being reached with Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army, where a number of clergy were in charge of key units. Master Bowles, a Presbyterian, for example, was the Senior clergyman, and Master Hugh Peters was the Chaplain of the train.

Regiments then appointed their own chaplains, noted for their absenteeism

according to the reports that have been kept. In 1796 by Royal Warrant the Rev John Gamble became the first Chaplain General. He discovered that there were 340 Chaplains on leave! (They'd appointed deputies to do their work!) These Chaplains were recalled and told to report by December 25<sup>th</sup> or be retired on a pension of four shillings a day.

## **Padre**

The qualifications required of their replacements are of particular interest: zeal for the profession and good sense; gentle manners; a distinctive and impressive manner of reading the Divine Service; and a firm constitution of body as well as mind.

Since then the Chaplains have been at every battle or war that the British army has fought. Church of Scotland Chaplains were first appointed in 1827 and Roman Catholic Chaplains in 1836. The Methodists were recognised as Chaplains in 1881. A Jewish Chaplain was recognised in 1892.

It was the First World War before the United Board of Chaplains was formed. These were Wesleyan Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists and Primitive and United Methodists. The Methodists (who have since been recognised separately) are no longer part of the United Board, which now consists of the Baptists, the URCs and the Congregational

Federation., with the General Secretaries of the URC and the Baptist Union of Great Britain as joint Chairpersons.

The Peninsula Wars broke out soon after the formation of the Chaplain's Department and the first Chaplains were deployed. It was then that the soldiers first heard the local people calling their Roman Catholic priests 'Padre' – a nickname still in use today.

Initially the Chaplains were without rank. During the Crimea War, however, a Chaplain asked his Quartermaster for a horse, and was refused one, because he had no rank! After that ranks became a necessity!

There have, of course, been many heroes amongst the Chaplains, and four have won the Victoria Cross: the most famous of whom was the Rev Theodore Bayley Hardy. He served during the last half of the First World War. Though 55 years old, he was commissioned due to the loss of Chaplains and a general shortage: 192 chaplains were killed in that war. In a period of eighteen months Theodore Bayley Hardy won the Military Cross (MC), the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and the Victoria Cross (VC): the three highest medals for bravery. He received them for going into no-mans land and bringing back wounded soldiers. His catch phrase, which everyone knew, was 'It's only me', and this became the title of his biography. Though King George V wanted him to return to Britain, he continued to serve on the front line, and died of pneumonia in 1918.

### **Presenting the Gospel to Soldiers**

G. A. Studdert Kennedy was another famous First World War hero. He became popular with the soldiers because he gave them Woodbine cigarettes as he met them before they went to the front, and was affectionately known to the soldiers as

'Woodbine Willie'. He also met many of the new Chaplains on the front, and advised them about their duties, among them, Theodore Bayley Hardy. Kennedy survived the war, helped to care for wounded ex-soldiers, and became renowned as a speaker at Retreats and Conferences. Probably he is best remembered for his poems, which grappled with presenting the gospel to soldiers who were suffering harsh times.

It's over twenty years since I became a Chaplain. After a six weeks course with doctors, dentists and lawyers in Sandhurst, I joined my first Regiment. Since then I've been a Chaplain to a number of Regiments serving in different parts of the world. In that time I've listened to a number of ex-Chaplains talking about their experiences, and shared thoughts and conversations with a number of my colleagues in the forces. The following models may not be original, but they sum up the role quite neatly, and represent the things I've tried to put into practice as an army chaplain.

*Clown:* A clown is an important person in the circus. He is the one who comes into the arena between the acts of the specialists. He provides the ongoing entertainment; or else there is a gap in the performance. But he is himself also a specialist. Regiments are run by a number of specialists, with the Commanding Officer in charge. On many occasions there are gaps, and someone has to fill them. It may not necessarily be the Chaplain, but often it is. I spent a large amount of my service in Training Regiments. Here we met newly enlisted sixteen-year-olds, for whom I produced talks on "Bullying," "Safe Sex," "Family Life," and "AIDS." - subjects suggested by the Commanding Officer.

### **Monitoring morale & skirting boundaries**

*Jester:* In the Medieval court, the Jester was employed not only to amuse the King, but

also on occasions to offer him advice. He was the only one who could point out problems that may be occurring in the realm or even in the royal administration. In the army the Commanding Officer is a kind of 'king'. He has reached the pinnacle of achievement in the Army. From the day he enters Sandhurst he's been prepared for this job; watched and monitored throughout his career, with numerous courses en route. A Commanding Officer's job can, however, be a lonely one. Which is where the role of Chaplain as Jester is important.

The Chaplain is primarily pastor to the Commanding Officer, and I have always tried to talk with Commanding Officers on how they felt, and how their command was affecting them. Chaplains also monitor the morale of the Regiment, since they are with the soldiers and can gauge from what they hear how the Regiment's heart is beating. A general report on this mood is always helpful to the CO, especially if one of his orders has caused a drop in morale. The Commanding Officer of course has others gauging morale as well, but the Chaplain is a key member of the team.

*Tight-rope Walker:* A tight-rope walker balances himself precariously on a thin wire. His act in the circus demands a concentration that keeps him focussed. The Chaplain, like all clergy persons, lives in a world where there is no longer right and wrong ethics. People follow the ethics of relativity. The Army Chaplain therefore often finds himself in situations that could be seen as unethical, but he has to walk the tight rope in between, skirting moral boundaries.

The Government and a vast number of individuals see abortion as permissible. A Chaplain may be against it, as I am, but there are many soldiers' wives or girl-friends who have their foetuses aborted. Chaplains are placed in a quandary in dealing pastorally and lovingly in these situations. I remember counselling a soldier's wife,

and pointing out the rights and wrongs of abortion. She then phoned me up from the hospital where she had had the operation. I believed then, and I still believe, that any condemnation of her actions would not help her, and would not have been the most loving thing to do in the situation.

### **Prophetic role**

There are other moral situations that one has to work through lovingly, e.g. pre-marital-sex. In a great number of weddings that I have conducted, the bride is pregnant, and that may be the reason for the wedding. I find that "situation ethics," which may have been downgraded by some, still has its relevance in a number of these pastoral encounters.

*Square peg in a round hole:* This image was given me by one of my Senior Chaplains when I first entered the Department. I was told this was our prophetic role. I totally agree. If we become fully integrated into the system, we will not be able to see anything wrong. The Old Testament prophets were square pegs in round holes. They did not fit into the systems of their day, and they could see things that were wrong with their society or peoples' personal lives, or the misrule of the kings of their day.

Chaplains are called, like all clergy persons to be prophetic, and that means you do not totally identify with the system. This enables the Chaplain to see and note things that are wrong, actions that are questionable, and directions that are wrongly followed. Again this can be pointed out, not judgementally, but lovingly. Soldiers who are given permission to get drunk are one example in which I was involved. The Commanding Officer heeded my advice and put a restriction on the consumption of alcohol. Many Chaplains also cite times on deployment, when their prophetic role is appreciated and affirmed.

*Teacher:* If a Chaplain is in a training regiment he has a great number of "Padre's Hours" to conduct. There is a syllabus, which is continuously revised and updated, dealing with matters of belief and behaviour. Chaplains could have up to forty Padre's Hours a week in a Training Regiment.

### **An inner life**

As part of the general Army training, it was agreed in 1998 that every officer, senior Non-commissioned officer and soldier had to attend two 40 minute periods a year. At these, six moral issues to be taken by the Chaplains are discussed: courage, discipline, loyalty, integrity, respect and commitment. Chaplains are allowed to introduce these subjects using their own expertise and method and drawing on well produced resource files. I have added on these sessions after my Wednesday morning worship service. The soldiers have a 15 minute worship service, followed by a 15 minute coffee break and then the session.

*GP and Specialist:* Most Regiments have Welfare Officers or Family Officers, who look after all the Welfare cases in the Regiments. The Chaplain fits into this team where he is both GP and Specialist. A soldier or his wife will see the Welfare Officer initially. The Welfare Officer will, on most occasions, deal with the problem himself. He may however decide to refer it to a GP, to a Specialist such as the Medical Officer, a Relate Counsellor or the Chaplain.

The most common welfare problems that are referred to the Chaplain are marriage break down and bereavement. The Chaplains' Department has in the past sent me on Courses to deal with these. But, as all ministers know, the counselling procedure for these two problems is constantly changing and requires regular updating.

*Clergy Person:* The last point is not a model, but is the Chaplain's vocation. He is in the Army to be a priest or minister to all the soldiers. He leads their worship, conducts their funerals and weddings. A Baptist Chaplain is not expected to baptise infants, and I have managed to get Anglican, Methodist and Church of Scotland Chaplains to conduct these services.

A minister is an evangelist, a Bible teacher and a preacher. He is a listener to people's troubles and stresses. He shows by the life he lives, that he is a follower of Jesus Christ. Chaplains are encouraged to consider their inner life and are encouraged in their personal devotions, in order to provide them with the strength they need to continue in their work. The Chaplains' Department organises study weeks and Retreats to help with this.

In a poem by the late Rev Ken Parkhurst, a Baptist Chaplain with the Royal Welch Fusiliers in Burma - whom I met briefly when I first started my ministry in Birmingham and he was at Queen's Road, Coventry - he sums up the army chaplain in these words:

*'He's not a saint, and yet it's grand  
though some might think it odd,  
That we should have a fellow here to  
make us think of God.'*

I don't think you can better that. **bmj**

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*Any Baptist Minister (Female or Male) interested in joining the Royal Army Chaplains Department, should contact the Secretary of the United Board of Chaplains: The Revd John A Murray, "The Holt" 109 Willingdon Park Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 0DF (Tel: 01323 502048)*

Books:

'The Army Chaplain' by the Rev P Middleton Brumwell (Adam and Charles Black), 1943  
'It's only me' by David Raw, 1988  
'Woodbine Willie' by William Purcell (Mowbray) 1962  
'God on our side' by Michael Moynihan 1983

# Padre

by Ken Parkhurst

The Padre's got a cushy job, he roams  
about all day,  
He doesn't work, he merely talks and  
wastes his time away.  
He wears his collar back to front, and  
looks professional  
But don't you let him take you in, he  
doesn't work at all.

It's war, boys, and we've got to fight, and  
that's our job for now;  
The CO and the Officers are here to tell  
us how.  
The MO's here to patch us up - we'll need  
him in this war -  
But is there anybody who knows what a  
Padre's for?

The Army must be mechanised if we're to  
make a show  
And every Fusilier admits we want an  
MTO.

A Quartermaster there must be to  
superintend the store,  
But only the Almighty knows just what a  
Padre's for.

And yet I've just been thinking, chaps, that  
surely he was sent  
To do a job of some kind, for he's not an  
ornament;  
I've heard it said by friends of mine who  
met a few in France  
That Padres can come up to scratch if men  
give them a chance.

I get problems and my thoughts, I get  
temptations, too,  
And secret fears I'd like to share with  
someone, Bill don't you?

We're not the only ones like that, there  
must be many more,  
And so I've sometimes wondered if that's  
what Padre's for.

Mind you, I'm not afraid to die, and I  
don't ask for fuss,  
But we've got girls or wives and kids who  
think the world of us,  
And if I get knocked out tonight and laid I  
don't know where,  
Although I'm not a churchy chap, I  
wouldn't mind a prayer.

Take that young fellow over there, who's  
getting on so well -  
If he gets shot his mother's heart is going  
to ache like hell;  
If Padre wrote it couldn't bring him back,  
for nothing could,  
And yet she'd be relieved to know that  
someone understood.

That someone understood, you know,  
someone who was nearby,  
Who lived with him, and knew his name,  
perhaps who saw him die,  
And every mother in the hour of bitterness  
and loss  
Might like to know that someone tried to  
help the boy across.

I've asked you what a Padre's for: well  
now, I wonder, Bill  
If he's been sent by Jesus Christ to help us  
up the hill?  
He's not a saint, and yet it's grand though  
some might think it odd,  
That we should have a fellow here to  
make us think of God.



# Stillness, Silence and Prayer

**John Rackley, Minister of Manvers Street, Bath, and Chair of the Retreat Association, invites us to 'Stop! - in the name of GOD' this coming June**

"Our human need is for silence, for waiting on God, and for that spark from heaven which, in that silence, can transform our lives, kindle a new vision and a new commitment" - The Archbishop of Canterbury.

George Carey was speaking at Old Alresford Place Retreat Centre in Winchester. He went on to highlight the precious gifts of stillness and waiting on God in "a pressurised, stressful and busy world with its ever-increasing speed of life!

Intriguingly he also emphasised the very close link between spirituality and evangelism. He observed that Christian retreat centres are places where men and women who have very little contact with organised Christianity can find "a place where they can name God or start on the journey towards him"

Spirituality and evangelism are notoriously slippery words. They can have so many definitions. But if Spirituality is the shape that Christ seeks to take in our life and Evangelism is proclaiming the good news of what Christ was and is and will do for us then the connection is apparent. Evangelism needs to earth the experience of Jesus that we share as together we engage with the struggles and hopes of our society. Our Spirituality is not separate from what we do in his name. It is what we do. An exploration of our Spirituality helps in this process.

As Christians we cannot escape being seen as the message of Christ for today. So how we live, the values and style we adopt are part of what others will believe about Christ. A daunting responsibility. George Carey commends the qualities of silence and waiting on God as part of that witness.

Our own denomination is not without  
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its place for such opportunities.

## **In a busy world**

I was recently in the Lake District and pleased to find the chapel at Hawkeshead Hill. The congregation have seen the potential in their location for becoming a place of quiet and reflection. The children with the help of a local environmentalist have turned the graveyard into a place of life and pleasure. Three slate seats have been installed, two delightful willow arbours and numerous species of common and rare wild plants encouraged. The Minister there, Kath Todd, told me "When you live in a beautiful place in a busy world it's important to offer what it gives to others!" They are seeing the gift of God's peace they can offer in the special delights of the Lake District. It was great to see what they are seeking to offer. But that is not the setting that many of us have. We minister in places of noise, distraction with all the consequences of living in crowded islands driven by market values.

Places of retreat and rest offer one experience of the peace of God. It is important to discover and offer others. The idea of setting aside the third Saturday in June each year as an annual Quiet Day has been provided by the Retreat Association since the mid 1990's. In towns, cities and villages Christians gather together to hold a variety of Quiet Days. Many are organised by local Churches Together groups and are open to all comers. Paddy Lane, Executive Officer of the Retreat Association writing in CTE'S Pilgrim Post observed about Quiet

Day 2001 that each "event was different, but all had the same purpose to help people, particularly those for whom this was a new experience, appreciate the opportunity to be still and enjoy the life-giving benefits of stillness. In quietness some people can become better aware of the presence of God in their lives".

In other words, a Quiet Day may be a pastoral support and evangelistic opportunity.

### the London eye

In 2002 the national Quiet Day is being re-launched. The Retreat Association is seeking to provide the weekend of 14-16 June 2002 as an opportunity for people from all walks of life to experience a time of stillness and quiet. The idea of using the weekend means that there would be still opportunity to focus on a Quiet Time together with the fetes, holidays, Association Assemblies and all the rest that go on in the crowded weekends of June.

**STOP!...IN THE NAME OF GOD** is the theme given to the weekend. Not only can the weekend or parts of it be used but there is the hope that some new bold ways of commending the importance of stillness and prayer will be offered to our society.

Suggestions begin with the obvious but then move on!

- An evening service given over to prayer and stillness
- An evening service given over to prayer and stillness
- A Quiet Day for a congregation
- A visit to one of the Quiet Gardens
- A walk in the countryside
- A series of silent vigils moving around the churches of the locality.

But why keep to religious locations?

- A Quiet Day for a congregation a park bench as children play on swings
- A Quiet Day for a congregation a quiet

vigil in a sports centre, hospital, airport

- A Quiet Day for a congregation a boat-ride round say, Caldy Island
- A Quiet Day for a congregation a quiet prayer walk stopping at local places of business, administration, culture.

Some of us in the Retreat Association are planning to go on such a walk in Westminster London and incorporate a ride in the London Eye - a quiet pod !

In Bath members of City-Centre Churches plan to visit the various holy sites of a city that has been a focus of spiritual longings since before Roman times.

The request is that we be innovative!

### A desire for things to be different

Materials for use on Quiet Days as well as a special pack for the 2002 venture will be available from the Retreat Association. In addition from the beginning of the year there will be a series of training opportunities for people who wish to find out more and need some help in running Quiet Days and such events.

In an admirable set of meditations on the biblical creation stories, David Runcorn notes that in Genesis 2v: 2 Adam's first full day in creation is a day-off. The Sabbath principle is set at the very heart of Scripture's creation theology. As David Ford writes:

*Faced with the idolizing of urgency, Efficiency, problem-solving, successful, achievement, money, practicality, crisis management and all those other compulsions that never let us take time off with a good conscience, the Sabbath is the secret of resistance.*

Of course it wasn't a day-off! But it was an engagement with creation at a deeper level than the superficial and reaction. A celebration of all that's wonderful. And in this damaged creation a heartfelt desire for

things to be different.

The Sabbath is subversive. It challenges the desire to define ourselves by what we do and say. Retreats and Quiet Days are an expression of Sabbath living. They offer an alternative way of living. Living against the desire to be heard "by the number of words" that are used (Matt 6: 7) They offer another way of pacing oneself. They show a commitment to "letting be" as a valid part of creativity (Gen 1.3). It may seem facile and naive to suggest silent walks around busy streets or quiet corners in motorway service stations (being considered by one group). But at another level could these be prophetic actions? Not doing all that has to be done. Not saying it all but still holding out a challenge to the status quo.

### Need for distance

I return to what George Carey was suggesting concerning the link between spirituality and evangelism. One of the important questions we face in our town-centre church is, what are we here for? We take part in city life and enable various types of social concern outreach to happen. But that is not all that Mission entails.

What we are finding is that the people we reach are often trying to pray, not sure of the direction of their life, carrying burdens of regret and fear from their past. Don't we all? But this is where I believe the work of Retreat Centres and the idea of Quiet Day can be helpful. What many Retreat Centres find is that they are increasingly sought out by people with those needs but who cannot take them to

the local church.

Those of us in local churches can learn from this.

The local church seems too rigid, too ready to absorb, sometimes too ready to pounce and not let people keep their distance. The distance they need to address the issues at their level and pace. They aren't ready for Alpha or Emmaus; maybe not even Y. But what they do need is a sense that nearby is a company of people who understand, believe in the search for God and are ready to provide opportunities for journeying together. A journey that is open to God and life. I believe the opportunity for this to happen is offered by 'STOP! In the name of God'. I commend the Quiet weekend 2002 to you. **bmj**

### NOTES

1. The full text of George Carey's address can be found in APR Newsletter Summer 2001 obtainable from the Retreat Association
2. The Quiet Garden Trust offers a list of open spaces providing opportunity for stillness learning about Christian Spirituality. Contact: quiet.garden@ukonline.co.uk The Quiet Garden Trust Stoke Park Farm Stoke Poges SL2 4PG
3. For further information about "Stop in the name of God" contact: Paddy Lane The Retreat Association The Central Hall 256 Bermondsey Street London SE1 3UT info@retreats.org.uk
4. The Creation of Adam -David Runcorn Grove Spirituality Series
5. The Shape of Living -David F Ford: Fount

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**CALLED to be SAINTS:** One of the strands which underlines this year's CTBI Lent Course is the theme of pilgrimage. 'In 1999 the European Co-ordinating Group for Mission and Renewal reminded us that we are all called to be pilgrims as Christian life is a journey with Christ, from death to life, from separation to reconciliation, from despair to hope.'

# Does the future have a denomination?

**Darrell Jackson, BUGB Mission Adviser, argues in favour of sustaining Baptist communities in an age of insecurity.**

Gill and Howard arrived five minutes before the Sunday morning service began. They immediately felt comfortable with the informal style that the person leading the morning worship adopted. As they left they were thrilled that they had discovered a church in the town to which they had just moved that was not at all different to their last one. They gave little thought to the fact that it belonged to a different denomination than their last church. After three months they were approached by an elder of the congregation who asked whether they had considered membership. The question had never occurred to them, in fact as they grappled mentally with it, they asked themselves whether they did not already consider themselves members. After all, the church seemed happy to accept their weekly offering, they were settling quickly into a housegroup, and Gill had already done one evening's stint at the night shelter.

Gill and Howard are often offered as the classic examples of post-denominational Christians. They are happy to opt into the worship and mission activities of the church, happy to benefit from all that the fellowship offers them, yet they remain unconvinced about formal membership and all that this might imply. They know little of the denominational tradition to which their new church belongs and with which (in any case) it identifies only loosely. Gill and Howard are not unique.

If the story of Howard and Gill were not sufficiently depressing, it seems that they are also increasingly scarce commodities as churchgoers (whether as attenders or members) and that Gill, especially, is something of a sociological anomaly.

This malaise has not only struck at the church, however. In his book, *Bowling Alone*,<sup>1</sup> Robert Putnam develops a cumulative and persuasive argument that demonstrates the gradual disengagement in the USA of individuals from voluntary, charitable, and other community groups or clubs where membership or affiliation involved a measure of responsibility for the governance of the club.

Putnam suggests that there is a high level

of correlation between increased levels of motivation, a sense of purpose, general well-being and health, satisfaction with life, etc. and increased social engagement with community and voluntary groups and clubs. Of particular significance, Putnam suggests, are religious communities.

## **Decline in social engagement**

What is true for North America seems to be true for the UK also. Most notably, the last UK General Election saw levels of voter turnout fall to an eighty-year low of 58%. Membership in political parties has fallen rapidly from a combined membership of 3.9 million members between the Labour and Conservative parties in 1950 to a figure of only 700,000 in 1994, with members likely to be less active than were members of the earlier decades.<sup>2</sup> The percentage of Trade Union members in the workplace fell from 50% in 1976 to 33% in 1995.<sup>3</sup> Membership of uniformed youth organisations such as Scouts, Guides,<sup>4</sup> and the Boys Brigade has fallen<sup>5</sup>. Membership of the National Federation of Women's Institutes has fallen from 467,000 in 1945 to 275,000 in 1995.<sup>6</sup> Nearly 60% of young people in Britain profess 'no interest in politics'<sup>7</sup> Knight and Stokes conclude that chief among the

## **THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY PLC.**

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**Telephone Number: 020 7481-8072**

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

### **DO YOU BELIEVE IN LUCK?**

In any home or church, very few things are maintenance free. While it is a bitter pill to swallow, the fact is that preventative maintenance, with all the time and money it consumes, is still far more cost effective than trusting to luck that nothing will happen.

Every year at this time we receive a great number of claims as a result of bad weather. This is not surprising in itself as we know that even with the greatest of care there is a certain inevitability that damage will occur and need repair. However it is a fact that the damage and consequent inconvenience is often greater than it need be due to lack of simple maintenance.

Please do not rely on just luck as part of your own maintenance programme and make the effort to ensure that those responsible for looking after your property, both church and home, 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 regularly? (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. Water is overflowing or escaping at this point - either due to a blockage, or fracture. In worst cases, vegetation is often seen growing out of the blockage material atop a rainwater hopper, or in a gutter!

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. Can you find your mains water stop valve? Does it work?!! Are all the tops and sides of water tanks and related pipework properly insulated?

These are just a few simple protective measures which if done regularly now, can save much inconvenience and amount of money later in repair/replacement costs.

Yours sincerely

A.J.GREEN ACII ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

reasons for this decline in social engagement have been the transformation of the home into a private entertainment centre, the changing role of women, the changing shape of the family in society, the changing world of work, poverty among the lower working classes, the shifting focus of Charities towards lobbying and away from active member participation, and the fixation of the media with national political figures rather than local and community politics.

In 1998 the Henley Centre asked respondents to indicate those institutions which they felt they could trust. Coca-Cola, Rowntree, Nescafe, Heinz, Cadbury and Kellogg all rated more highly than did 'Our church'.<sup>8</sup> It is no longer the church that helps these respondents cope with life, instead it is the daily, health-packed bowl of Kellogg's cornflakes that helps them aspire to the fulfilled lifestyle depicted on the packet.

How one should respond to this climate is not at all clear on a first reading of contemporary theologians. For example, Stanley Hauerwas argues with, one assumes, his characteristic hyperbole, that the nonconformist understanding of the church as a voluntary association is its Achilles heel.<sup>9</sup> In a society where all relationships are voluntaristic and non-contractual, he argues that voluntaristic Christian communities have no counter-cultural Gospel to offer. By contrast, Miroslav Wolf suggests that whilst nonconformist ecclesiology is individualistic, in practice it is highly communal, flexible, participative, and capable of transition.

### **Centres of social utility**

Wolf writes with an awareness of emerging ecumenism and post-denominationalism and points to the increasing movement towards

congregationalism within other denominations. He believes that this can also be observed with the Roman Catholic Church of North America. What both Hauerwas and Wolf demonstrate is that it is impossible to discuss ecclesiology, or possibly any theology, without taking account of the context.

For the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the story of the last century has been one of gradual membership decline. Over the last twenty years, the trend for those entering church membership following professions of faith and/or baptism is downwards. Over the same period there have been more people transferred out of church membership than have transferred in (although over the last six years, there has been a steady increase of people transferring into church membership from another church).

In contrast, the last five years reveal an interesting pattern of increasing missionary engagement. In four of the last five years there has been an increase in baptisms compared with the previous year. The numbers of churches planted has been increasing over the last three or four years. Across the decade of the nineties there has been an increase in Baptist church attendance of 2%. At a typical Baptist Sunday service, there are two members to every one regular attender present. It also seems that during the nineties there have been fewer members who have had their names removed from church membership as a result of inactivity, disillusionment, or dissatisfaction.

It would hardly be disingenuous to suggest that, as the cumulative result of these trends, there has been a weakening of the link between personal faith, baptism, church membership, and Baptist identity in our churches.

The Baptist Union was founded in 1813

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as a 'society' (as was the Baptist Missionary Society). This helps locate Baptist self understanding at this time in the social context of the early nineteenth century when voluntary societies were important vehicles for social cohesion and change. As centres of social utility, the Baptist churches of the mid to late nineteenth century had developed understandings and practices of church membership and meetings which helped serve these purposes. With changes in British society, Baptist churches began to experience a measure of decline at the end of the nineteenth century.

### Profound changes

Payne believed that the self-understanding of Baptist churches as voluntary societies began to change in 1916, when with the founding of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, the Union began to act representatively, or denominationally, with all that this implied.<sup>10</sup>

It is my own view that 'denomination' is a relatively recent social construct in our Baptist history. It has not necessarily, nor always been, an unhelpful construct, but my central contention in this article is that at this current point in our history, we would do well to take account of other possibilities for understanding and articulating how Baptists might work together at regional and national level.

Baptist identity has always informed how local congregations should respond to prevailing social and cultural contexts. But, is Baptist identity principally a denominational identity? I am convinced that this is not necessarily the case and I am optimistic about the possibility of a collective identity emerging from the practices of local baptistic congregations that are engaged and distinctive.

How this might be achieved will only be possible if we recognise the profound

changes in surrounding social realities. We can continue to say to people, "Come to church the way it has always been, and on our terms," but the evidence seems to suggest that they are not responding to this invitation. A number of urgent issues are raised by this invitation. First, the need for the church to change. Secondly, the false assumption that people will still come. Thirdly, that the church needs to be prepared to re-negotiate terms. Each of these issues raises questions of identity. Thankfully the burden of these challenges is felt by a growing number of church leaders and members

Many individuals in the UK are disconnected from the church and other institutions, yet seem to hanker for an experience of community. As Zygmunt Bauman perceptively writes,

*"Community feels good because of the meanings the word 'community' conveys – all of them promising pleasures, and more often than not the kinds of pleasures we would like to experience but seem to miss."*<sup>11</sup>

Bauman suggests that the loss of community is fundamentally a loss of security. This is heightened by the substitution of identity (a surrogate of community) for community itself. By enthroning identity in this way, one is forced to assume responsibility for the future and to acknowledge that no-one else is in control (thus increasing anxiety). Asserting identity also serves to increase an awareness of difference and separateness. Accompanying the loss of community is the loss of a collective memory.

### 'Bridging capital'

Local church membership in an age of non-commitment is a costly option. Exploring ways of making church membership 'easier' or 'less costly' for people shows that there is some

recognition on the part of church leaders that this is so. But, such an approach fails to address the unresolvable tension by failing to take it seriously. What is true for individuals in a local community may also be true for individual churches which are part of a larger community or denomination.

Putnam describes 'bridging capital' as that social commodity that can be offered to others by voluntary organisations (including churches) which are thoroughly engaged in the wider community. A dispersed model of church engagement locates the points of engagement, and thus points of entry, in the community. The focus for such activity might be small groups of Christians accountable to each other for the way in which they engage with the wider community in a variety of projects. Accounting for membership in such a model of church is likely to challenge current membership practice.

With such a dispersed model of church, engaged, in the shared task of creating 'bridging capital' new, unexpected opportunities for worship and study might arise. This might include offering elements of the church's liturgy or worship experiences to those outside the seclusion a church sanctuary. It might mean sitting down in a foreign environment with a person or persons to offer prayer, receive confession and offer assurance of forgiveness. It might mean offering something of the mystery and presence of the Eucharist to earnest seekers after truth who are stumbling around in the alternative religious bazaars of the New Age. It might be to prepare and equip congregation members to share biblical 'ancient words of wisdom' in their workplace.

At the same time, the new churches will offer participation in 'congregations' that self-consciously demonstrate that a life lived in isolation is a spiritually and socially barren life. Participation in these new

congregations will bring the lack of resolution into sharper, more precise, focus. The task seems to be to re-articulate a fully biblical concept of individuality in the context of committed relationship with others.

There are now quite a number of experiments in establishing new Christian communities that more closely reflect the context in which they are located. It is to be hoped that the Baptist Union will find it increasingly possible to assist with funding of these experiments where this is felt to be necessary by the Union and the local leaders. It is not impossible to conceive of such communities being wholeheartedly baptistic, thoroughly dispersed in the local context, intentionally missionary in purpose, and vibrantly engaged in worship. There is no other group of people who can quite bring this last emphasis to a local area.

This need not become the sole preserve of small, dispersed groups in the towns, villages, and cities of the UK. It should not prove impossible, though it will be difficult and painful, for existing church congregations to experience a renewal of structure and purpose, focused on the creation and nurture of authentic community experience within the structures. *Five Core Values* is a valuable contribution to this process and further catalysts are required.

### Seeking synthesis

It is ironic that post-denominational critics should point to the dualisms inherent in the denominational churches yet maintain a form of it in dismissing too hastily the structures that have underpinned denominations. Criticisms that focus on polarities such as 'denominational/ post-denominational', 'institution/ movement', 'rational/ counter-rational', and, 'structural/relational', merely serve to perpetuate the dualities that underlie the dialectic between modernity and post-

modernity. A better way would be to refuse a perpetuation of the duality, seeking the synthesis offered by an integrative Christian world-view. This would affirm the 'institution' as a necessary 'agent', through and in which God's Spirit may be active. It will certainly reject the institutionalism that is life-denying and static. It would affirm the 'movement' as another, complementary, agent in which and by which God is active. It will, however, reject a movement that is world-denying, and anti-material in its supernaturalism.

Is it possible that there might be a spirituality appropriate for the institution and if so, what might it look and feel like? It is a peculiar irony of popular contemporary spirituality that tourists to our cathedral cities are increasingly availing themselves of the opportunity to visit these monumental testimonies to the presence of God dwelling in the midst the peoples of earth. Whether they seek solace, sacred space, rootedness, peace, or go to pray is not the issue. The issue is that they would not be able to go unless there was an institution keeping these buildings open. Cathedrals, as national and religious institutions, are blessed with a unique spirituality. An important aspect of this spirituality is the endurance typified by the prayers and witness of the saints in those places.

We need to ask what the increase in the numbers of baptisms and churches planted over the last five years means. Are they the first-fruits of the renewal and transformation of an institutional or denominational church or are they the first-fruits of bold, new experiments in mission and of new ways of doing church? The direction of my argument to this point may lead one to suggest that it need not be an either/or question but a case of both/and.

I am personally convinced that the future will have a denomination. As individual church leaders and as local churches we need it. The social climate is an insecure place to be. Whatever we call it - Association, Society, Denomination, or some yet-to-be-coined phrase - we cannot afford to lose the sense of baptist community that sustains our common and shared calling to worship and witness in our world. [mj]

*This article is a summary of a paper presented to the 'Baptists Doing Theology in Context' Consultation last August .*

1. Putnam, Robert *Bowling Alone* Simon & Schuster: New York 2000
2. Knight & Stokes p18
3. Knight & Stokes p10
4. Knight & Stokes p12
5. Pignatelli, Frank *The Boys' Brigade: Retention through the Teenage Years* The Boys' Brigade: Hemel Hempstead 1997 p2,3,5
6. Wilkinson, Helen *Freedom's Children: work relationship and politics for 18-34 years olds in Britain today* Demos: London 1995 p100 See also Knight & Stokes p12
7. *Independent* 9 March 1996
8. cited in Moynagh, Michael *Tomorrow: using the future to understand the present* The Tomorrow Project: Kings Lynn 2000 p39
9. Although of course, there are Baptists who would protest that Baptist ecclesiology is not principally one of voluntary association. In 1960, a Union report noted, "It is not being in the church that brings a person into Christ; rather it is being in Christ that implies that a person is in the church. A believer does not join the church as if it were a voluntary association of individuals. He recognises that being in a new relationship with Christ he is thereby in the community of all who share this relationship, he is in the church." (Champion, Barrett & West *The Doctrine of the Ministry* BUGB&I: London 1961)
10. Payne, EA *The Baptist Union - a short history* Carey Kingsgate Press: London 1959 pp11-12
11. Bauman, Zygmunt *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* Polity: Cambridge 2001 p1

# j-mail

## *Chocolat*

from David & Margaret Staple, St Albans

Dear Journal, Michael Frost's stimulating comments on "Chocolat and Church" would have been even more pertinent had he been commenting on the book rather than the film.

For reasons which completely escape me, the producer of the film saw fit to enlarge considerably the role of the Comte de Reynaud, who in the book is a minor character. The main opponent of Vianne Rocher is the priest, so that the rivalry is between church and chocolaterie. Michael Frost, or others, may like to enlarge on his article by setting it in the context of the book, rather than the film.

## The death of a baby

from Neville A Kirkwood, Queensland, Australia

Dear Journal, Catol Nolan's excellent article in the July 2001 issue echoed a number of chords first struck during my 17 years as a Hospital Chaplain with the Baptist Union of NSW. Parents grieving over the loss of a very young infant have differing responses which require sensitive perceptivity on the part of the Pastor or Pastoral Care Worker. Each grieving parent must be understood and offered appropriate ministry. The quick visit, the reading of a scripture and a prayer in such cases is rarely effective Pastoral Care. A good Pastor is God's agent to promote healing in the wounded hearts of grieving parents.

*Ed: Neville Kirkwood's fourth book 'Building Bridges - Pastoral Care to Muslims' was released in New York last November.*

# BT 2001

## BAPTIST TIMES

### The year 2001 is many things. It is:

- the 150th anniversary of the Great Exhibition.
- the first year of the new millennium (not 2000!).
- the 100th anniversary of the birth of Walt Disney.
- the year Arthur C. Clarke chose for his popular space odyssey.
- the 100th anniversary of Queen Victoria's death.
- the probable year of a General Election.
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# Book Reviews

Edited by John Houseago

**On Human Worth.** Duncan B. Forrester.  
SCM PRESS. £17.95.

There is no doubt that for (s)he who has ears to hear, there is a massive change taking place all around us. Religious concepts are to be found in so-called secular circles. The Chancellor of Germany openly calls on the Churches to be involved with him in his struggle for peace. Norway has appointed an evangelical for Prime Minister. Words as truth, reconciliation, forgiveness, peace above all community are the dominant notes in most European Parliaments. Prime Minister Blair's speeches show how deeply he draws from his theological thinking.

This valuable book is about equality - about human worth. Professor Forrester while in India met Munuswamy who was the living example of inequality and the book lays out a programme drastically to change the circumstances of all the 'Munuswamys' of this world.

The thesis of the book is that one cannot probe the concept of human equality without discovering that it rests on explicitly Christian theistic grounds. Prof Duncan Forrester leads us through a careful examination of 'Biblical Roots' - humans are created equal. The emphasis of the Prophets is on justice and equality. The New Testament proclaims the coming of the Kingdom which is plainly in the framework of the present world. The essence of the life of the Church is that it is inclusive and the political aim must be social inclusion.

The author does not seek to avoid controversies and tackles them in a scholarly way which at times makes it an uncomfortable book to read. For example,

the point is strongly made that it is not poverty which is the main cause of ill health but inequality.

The reader is encouraged to look outside the narrow limitations of Church life to the world outside. Not only September 11th but also other threatening situations call on the church to recognise that now is the time to make their distinctive contribution and to take part in the contemporary ideal speech situation.

Here is the hope and therefore the programme for the Church.

**Don Black: retired Secretary  
for Social Affairs, BUGB**

**Introducing the Reformed Faith.** Donald McKim. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. xvii + 260pp. Paperback £17.99 ISBN 0-664-25644-9

The title sums up this book. It is intended as an introduction; it is about Christian faith generally and the Reformed tradition more particularly. Each short section takes a significant tenet of Christian faith and examines it in the light of scripture, tradition and contemporary relevance. Many will recognise the hallmark of an expanded catechism. This is not an adventurous book but a calm and confident affirmation of belief, aware of the value of the ecumenical context.

The target audience is people interested and willing to explore within boundaries, so the language is plain but not patronising. It probably will appeal best to those who have some knowledge of Christian faith and are looking for a better understanding of how the bits fit together: for example, students, enquirers in the Reformed tradition, and laypeople wanting to

discover more. Ministers would find it a handy recap. The book could be used for personal reading or group discussion. Starter questions end each chapter. If readers want to delve deeper, additional resources are available in extensive endnotes, suggestions for further reading and a website ([www.reformedfaith.com](http://www.reformedfaith.com)).

Of its type (and I was reminded of Emil Brunner's *Our Faith*) this is a useful book, although I suspect that not many English Baptist ministers will buy it because of its Reformed emphasis. One target audience Donald McKim has in mind is the sort of person who finds herself worshipping at a Reformed church through friendship or convenience as much as conviction. Many Baptist ministers will recognise this person and perhaps be prompted to ask themselves: how are the distinctives of our Baptist ways of understanding church taught and learned?

**Stephen Copson, Hertfordshire  
Association Secretary**

***Healing Wounded History.*** Russ Parker. Darton, Longman and Todd. 2001. £10.95

An insightful and important book by Russ Parker, Director of the Acorn Trust, that reflects the author's own interest and engagement with issues of reconciliation and healing. He helpfully brings to light an awareness of the power of group stories and the impact they have on people's lives and the land/place in which the stories are rooted. Russ Parker enables the reader to see that we are all part of a group story, not only as present members, but connected to that story through the generations. In particular he works with four groups: family; church; community; and tribe or nation.

The material is well presented and makes connections throughout with contemporary life situations. Each chapter contains a wealth of biblical material giving direction and insight to the themes being

explored. Biblically well researched, it offers a practical guide to action in respect of the four groups he names. The chapter on the Christian Day of Atonement for example, examines principles embedded in the OT seeing how they might be applied in the Christian community today. Readers are encouraged to consider holding a Christian Day of Atonement for the renewal and reconciling of their own wounded church story. In another chapter he enables the reader to see the place of 'representational confession' in enabling Christ's healing and reconciliation to become a present reality.

The value of this book for pastoral ministry is in giving attention to the wounded stories that have shaped both individuals and groups and which often go unnamed. It is a book that holds theory and practice together and argues for careful research of ones own stories in seeking healing and reconciliation. At a number of points throughout the book reference is made to a separate workbook which contains exercises and handouts designed to enable groups to do further work and make connections with their own particular circumstances.

**Brian Howden,  
Northern Baptist College**

***The Education of Desire.*** T J Gorringe, SCM Press 2001, xii + 144pp £13.95

Such an intriguing title is accompanied by a somewhat surprising cover, at least for a theology book! We see a picture of a young man taken from Derek Jarman's film *Caravaggio*, who conveys something of the sensual and erotic, for which Caravaggio's pictures were renowned. But, although it does make an appearance, this is not a book about sex. Gorringe's vision is much wider, for his aim is to explore a theology of creation. Gorringe repeatedly rejects the dichotomy between spirit and flesh, which has so often characterised Christian

theology, and insists that the material is good. For Gorringe, the explanations of creation as a vale of soul making or as purposed for the Incarnation may contain some truth but are not sufficient. We need a theology in which creation is significant in its own right, such that we can understand the material world as an expression of the immaterial God. Instead of drawing the soul away from God, the senses are the God-given way that we can explore and celebrate what God has made. Gorringe then goes further still and suggests that God celebrates and explores the creation through us as we use the God given gifts of our senses. The body and our senses thus feature constantly through the book, and, reflecting what seems to be a particular interest, Gorringe illustrates his points on a number of occasions by reference to works of art, some of which are reproduced on plates in the book.

Sadly, Gorringe only partly succeeds. The problem with the book is that it started out as a series of lectures and the chapters do not really relate together as a whole. After a first chapter which introduces all these main points, the next four chapters each goes off in a different direction. The result is a book which tackles many important issues and has some fascinating insights, but does not flow together. Unfortunately, Gorringe does not return either to justify or illustrate the idea that God celebrates the world through us.

Chapter two explores the challenge and insight that disability brings to a theology of the senses and the goodness of creation. Chapter three considers the sins into which the sense may fall, such as pornography (thus the discussion of sex) violence and gossip. Chapter 4, which brings us the title of the whole book, proposes a new asceticism which upholds the goodness of the material but frees us from the grip of consumerism. Chapter 5 offers a fascinating interplay between the eucharist, a physical

and material expression of worship and the problems of the world economy. In a very imaginative way Gorringe relates issues such as third world debt, world trade and environmental damage to our celebration of the Lord's Supper.

This book does not offer a sustained theology of creation, and at £13.95 it is pricey for the 122 pages of actual text. But the value of the book is that it offers, often quite radical, reflection on issues that do, or ought to, affect us. If you want the opportunity to reflect spiritually on the physical nature of the world, then there is much here to inspire and challenge.

**Anthony Clarke ,  
Minister South Oxford Baptist Church**

*To Africa with Love.* Hugh G. Cross. Cross Patch Editions. 2000. xix + 143 pp. ISBN 0-9539305-0-5. £14.95

Hugh Cross' memoir about his father, Arthur Cross, was written out of love and respect for a missionary. It is about a life during colonial times devoted to demanding, hands-on rural and urban evangelism, industrial mission, church administration and visionary ecumenical endeavour initially of the South African Baptist Missionary Society.

Drawing particularly on family papers, Hugh provides an easy to read account of Arthur's dedicated approach to the development of the church in the Copperbelt region in what is now Zambia, between 1921 and his premature death in 1945. By reflecting on contemporary records that pioneering period comes alive.

The emphasis Arthur Cross placed on indigenous leadership in the mining communities, his use of opportunities provided by companies and the government and his contribution to the formation of the innovative United Missions in the Copperbelt, of which he became leader based at Mindolo, are here set in an

account of policy making, not easily done. Coping with changing roles, the difficulties associated with key decisions being taken abroad, and the maintaining of family relationships by letter, particularly with children, are challenges described that missionaries continue to face.

Today the church in Zambia is experiencing massive growth. The United Church of Zambia and the internationally known Christian training centre, the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, stand witness to those Africans and expatriates, such as Arthur Cross and his American wife Frieda, who devoted themselves at personal cost to relevant gospeling.

Although understandably less readily available, it would have been good to have had Zambian views of the period. Arthur Cross' papers had previously been in the hands of two other would-be biographers. Those of us who know of the existence of papers belonging to early 20<sup>th</sup> century missionaries should be encouraged by this book to ensure they are kept safely. BMS World Mission, the School of Africa and Oriental Studies or the Empire and Commonwealth Museum (in Bristol) are among those that will be interested to know of such archive material.

Hugh Cross tells of a man described by others as self effacing, who had a gentle faith, a capacity for leadership and a commitment to inter-church work. They are qualities I associate with the author whose own experiences included working with the United Society for Christian Literature in Zambia, and who was Ecumenical Officer for England with the British Council of Churches and then, until his retirement, was Ecumenical Moderator, Milton Keynes Christian Council.

**Gordon Holmes,  
Churches Commission on  
Mission Africa Forum**

*A Short Course in the Philosophy of*

**Religion.** George Pattison , SCM: London 2001. ISBN 0 334 028345. £16.95.

This book illuminates its subject in a most helpful way, by being a rather unusual introduction to a complex but well-worn subject. Most introductions to the Philosophy of religion have a fairly familiar look to their 'contents' page. We may have a chapter on the relation of philosophy to religion and/or theology, and then a series of sections on the classic arguments for the existence of God, the 'attributes' of God, and such questions as miracle, evil and eternal life. Pattison takes a different approach, and the book has a fresh feel to it. While he covers, at least in passing, many of the usual topics, his approach is fundamentally different.

Pattison begins by suggesting that philosophy of religion is a sort of zone of dialogue within academic debate, in which assumptions are probed and tested; perhaps he underestimates the practical (apologetic) value of his discipline for believers, and sees it too much as an elevated academic field.

He then describes several 'modern trends'. The first, history, gives him the opportunity to discuss Hegel, and reactions to his thought. Just when your average philosophy of religion primer is getting stuck into the ontological argument, and betraying its classic and Anglo-Saxon philosophical predilections, Pattison moves the discussion into a more continental context. It's this move which marks the book's distinctive character, and which will prove so helpfully complementary to those used to the more common approach.

The next chapter on 'the turn to the subject' begins with Descartes, but also delves into the 'pre-history' in Augustine, Paul and Luther. Here we also have Pascal, Kant, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. A further chapter on 'the linguistic turn' completes these 'modern

trends' by bringing us onto more familiar territory for such a primer- the logical positivists and Wittgenstein – before moving on to Heidegger, and again showing a 'continental' flavour.

A chapter follows on the nature of truth, and then one on hermeneutics – the question of interpretation. Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger often appear here, and Schleiermacher's pioneering work on hermeneutics is given a helpful treatment: again, not standard fare for such a textbook. Pattison takes a chapter to pull together some threads and themes before going into his final sequence in which he tackles a 'traditional' problem (theodicy) to show how his approach actually opens up such an area of concern.

His treatment of theodicy is again, however, fresh and 'continental'. As well as Augustine and others we get Teilhard and Jim Garrison on 'theology after Hiroshima'. The discussion moves from 'despair' to 'outrage' as possible human responses, and Pattison wants us to keep the discussion in human terms, not merely 'rational' ones. A final chapter on eternal life deals with Dostoevsky at length, and goes far beyond the familiar quotation from *Karamazov*, suggesting that the novelistic form is specially suited to exploration of the issues.

Pattison's book is occasionally a demanding read, but its approach is fresh and illuminating. Shame about the price.

**Rob Ellis, Regents Park College.**

***Through our Long Exile.*** Kenneth Leech. Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001. £15.95 ISBN 0232523347

When, many moons ago, I was a young schoolmaster teaching geography in Kingston, I took the A-Level geography set each year to visit the East End of London. By far the most memorable part of those

trips was to visit Brick Lane and show them the Mosque, which was the current usage of a building which had previously served as a Synagogue, a Methodist Chapel and before that as L'Eglise Neuve, built in 1744 as a Huguenot Church. That one building epitomised for me the story of the successive waves of immigrants into the East End. The first part of Kenneth Leech's book is the story of those waves of immigration, French, Irish, Jewish and now Bangladeshi.

The second, and more theological, part of the book is an exercise in contextual pastoral theology entitled *Doing theology in the community*'. After a brief overview of the character of urbanisation, Leech asks the questions posed by any urban theology. Amongst them are: what is a good city? What is a just immigration policy? What is community? and how can we strengthen and renew the significance of place? Rejecting an older style of doing theology as cerebral, elitist, disconnected from life, spirituality and prayer, lacking in conviction, and individualistic, Leech proposes to do theology at a local level. Consequently, from his East End perspective, he considers issues of racism and plurality, social exclusion, urban spirituality and politics. All are themes which Leech has explored in earlier works, but in this book they are integrated within the local theology context to emphasise more than anywhere else in his long writing career the importance of theology, prayer and action hanging together as an integrated whole, and all put to the service of radical Christian discipleship. If your context is, like his, urban ministry at the margins, you cannot afford to ignore this book.

**Paul Goodliff,  
Area Superintendent, Central Area.**

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