



The Baptist Ministers' Journal

October 2002

Vol 280
ISSN 0968 - 2406

Editor: GETHIN ABRAHAM-WILLIAMS

Contents

Editorial: From Ystradgynlais to Canterbury 2

Pink ballet shoes Sally Nelson 3

'Tell that to the Missis' Bob Paul 7

Release from Ministry: a pre-retirement liturgy 11

Who pushes the buttons? Simon Woodman 13

j-mail Dennis Ottaway 19

'on the far side of revenge' Seamus Heaney 19

Review Section John Houseago 20

Of Interest to You Gwynne Edwards 27

Cheers! 29

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

From Ystradgynlais to Canterbury

One of the issues of particular – but not exclusive – interest to Baptists in the current ecumenical climate is where the new Archbishop of Canterbury is coming from? Is he so much of an Anglo-Catholic that his Protestant roots are unlikely to count for much? He was, after all, brought up in Ystradgynlais in the Calvinistic Methodist tradition (now known as the Presbyterian Church of Wales) before joining the parish church in Oystermouth, Swansea Bay, at eleven when his parents moved home.

Dr Theo Hobson, author of 'The Rhetorical Word' argues that the bias towards Catholicism rather than Protestantism within Anglicanism has been vindicated by the appointment of Rowan Williams. The only hope left to those who would challenge the intellectual dominance of the Anglo-Catholics in our national life, according to Hobson, is 'a new sort of Protestant theology, unafraid of modernity and postmodernity; a theology which resists the love of fundamentalism and refuses to hide in sentimentality. It will prefer the mental hardness of Luther and Calvin to the wet little hymns of the hand-wavers.'

Hobson's is an interesting scenario. I am not so sure, however, that this is where the battle ground of faith is to be located in the next ten to fifteen years. I believe that the code words of the past and their intellectual force no longer carry conviction, and the spirituality this generation seeks can no longer be met in neat Catholic or Protestant boxes.

Since he returned to Wales in 1992 to become Bishop of Monmouth I've seen and heard Rowan at close quarters by dint of my role, first as General Secretary of the Anglican/Free Church Welsh Covenant, and latterly as General Secretary of CYTŪN: Churches Together in Wales. And what I have seen and heard is someone who transcends categories.

capturing the imagination

One could argue that his intellectual honesty draws on his Protestant past, and his spirituality on his Catholic insights. And there would be some truth in it. But he is much more than that. In my view, he is something refreshingly new in the

contemporary Christian firmament – a Faith Leader with an intuitive ability to connect with people of all kinds in a way that defies definition, and whose primary interest is in the mystery of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and how and why that God chooses to interact with the life of human beings.

Writing in this *Journal* five years ago, he recommended a book by the Congregationalist B L Manning called *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts*. 'It remains one of my favourite books,' he confessed. What Manning 'made me see,' Rowan went on to explain, 'was the way in which the Reformed world at its best cleared away a good deal of froth so as to see the outlines of what needed saying about the nature and action of God.'

Rowan Williams, is definitely someone with whom Baptists can do business, not least because he shares our passion for evangelism. As he explained at the press conference on the occasion of his appointment last July: 'If there is one thing I long for above all else, it's that the years to come may see Christianity in this country able again to capture the imagination of our culture, to draw the strongest energies of our thinking and feeling into the exploration of what our creeds put before us.'

He has been a blessing to us in Wales for the last ten years. Now he is to belong to a larger world. As we pray for our Church Leaders, let us not forget to include from time to time Rowan, the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury. **bmj**

Pink ballet shoes and the worship of God

Sally Nelson explains something of what it's like to have a child with special needs, in the hope that it may open windows for others wanting to provide pastoral care to special needs families.

After years of functioning at the caring end of the pastoral spectrum – in children's and youth work, as a deacon, and as an ordained minister – I one day found myself as the parent of a child with special needs and in need of care myself. Our pretty little girl has to wear hearing aids, glasses, an eye patch (for some time each day), and splints, and every day, as I apply these gadgets, I feel that I am sticking Band Aid on her life. But she is absolutely gorgeous and we're so proud of her.

The journey from 'OK' to 'not OK' was rapid. When our daughter was born my husband and I never suspected that she had any problems. By the age of 18-20 months we were anxious. By 24 months we were at the start of a punishing schedule of referrals, therapy sessions and medical investigations: in the year 2001 we kept 90 appointments for her. We regularly see a teacher of the deaf, an audiologist, a physiotherapist, a speech therapist, an orthoptist and an occupational therapist; occasionally we see various paediatricians. Looking back, I am glad I couldn't see what lay ahead.

What is life like?

After the initial sense of shock, as it sank in that this was not a hideous mistake, we experienced an overwhelming sense of feeling lost. The normal childhood markers suddenly lost their meaning. A child with special needs will not necessarily walk, talk, and develop as s/he should. Milestones are successively uprooted and then pop up in peculiar places. The journey is chaotic and without signposts. Some families, of course, know from an early stage that their child's journey will be very limited indeed.

Contributing to the feeling of being lost is a sense that you are no longer in control. Our daughter's needs are described as 'complex' – in other words, there are several separate problems, which do not

add up to a conveniently diagnosable syndrome or a prognosis. We crawl forwards (thankfully) on a largely empirical basis towards the 'outcome'. We have seen many, many professionals, and there is a sense of fragmentation about the whole process.

As a special needs family, we have also found it quite hard to field the comments and particularly the judgements of others. Every parent knows that they will receive plenty of advice and assessment during the process of bringing up baby – often from unqualified sources! I suppose we just get the logical extension into special needs territory, but of course there is a lot of sensitivity around.

For example, people are initially curious about the origin of the problem – is it genetic?/did you get sick when you were pregnant?/was it the MMR vaccine?/you should have given up work sooner/etc. Then comes advice about how to handle things. Several fold have suggested that we spend too *much* time trying to help our daughter – if we had more children, we'd get her into perspective. Or why don't we encourage her to become 'normal' – why not stick her at one end of a car park and go away, to force her to walk better? Alternatively, once special needs are mentioned, she falls into the category of 'them'. Apparently 'they' are often very happy little souls! 'They' can be sent away

to special schools, and live in special houses later on. 'They' get lots of help these days. This is all a bit painful.

Finally, we are tired! Children never switch off, and their special needs don't either.

Theology in motion

Easily the question I have been asked most often since we discovered our daughter's needs is: 'But what has it done to your faith?' I have been astonished at the number of Christians who have asked this question, as if our faith is indeed a delicate plant. We have responded with the conviction that this is what our faith is for: to make sense of life.

I found faith in Christ in my early 20s partly as a result of reflecting on a friend's suffering, and I have since always been interested in the theology of suffering and our Christian belief in a God of providence. This interest has stood me in good stead in the past couple of years! Whilst in pastorate I preached on the subject of suffering and disappointment regularly, and members of the congregation often told me that it had been helpful. However, the same people now ask questions of the 'why do bad things happen to 'good' people?' variety, because of what happened to us.

What would your response as a pastor be? For me it rings all sorts of warning bells about our cultural reaction to suffering and our feelings about having to adjust our expectations when life changes course. However often and effectively we might preach about Christian hope and endurance, we are competing against a world philosophy that is quite different and which is reinforced daily through the media. We simply do not expect things to 'go wrong'. I would however, be interested to investigate the effect of standard of living on this expectation.

In Gethsemane, Jesus himself wrestled

with the knowledge that he had to suffer and die, and although he did not relish it, he accepted it. As his disciples, is it wrong to wonder whether we should not simply accept but almost expect to experience suffering in various ways – as well as healing, of course, in the working out of our lives? I am sure many Christians would readily agree – yet our personal experience has been that since trouble has come, people expect us to lose our faith. Why?

I think we have lost confidence in our doctrine. In a consumer culture we feel the need to offer good stuff that passes the consumer test – and sin, suffering and disasters do not. In a search for a response I have looked back to Genesis 3, and asked myself whether I really expected to live out the consequences of the fall: maybe many of us Western Christians still need to undergo a *metanoia* regarding suffering. Of course it is impossible to provide a three-point answer on a single Sunday morning. But praise God for stories (biblical and otherwise), and anecdotes, and personal experience! There is a wealth of 'stuff' that we can use to teach about suffering, and stories touch the hurting heart better than undiluted doctrinal propositions.

Another question that arises is of course what it means to be human – made in God's image. Sadly we do see our daughter experiencing rejection because she is different. We have now visited many schools to find a suitable placement, and were impressed with a particular oral school for the deaf, which happens also to be a Christian foundation. There she would receive the specialist help she needs (funding from the LEA permitting), but more than that, there was a sense that at some deep level all the staff regarded the children as made in God's image. There she would not be a burden or a problem.

What exactly do we value in one another? Achievement? Beauty? Ability? Success? When our daughter was born,

someone gave me a bag of lovely clothes that her child had outgrown, barely used. In the bag was a tiny pair of pink ballet shoes. I looked forward to the time when she would wear these shoes and go to dancing classes. She is pretty, dainty, delicately proportioned – an ideal dancer. Except of course that her legs don't work properly. I often think of those shoes and wonder if they represent my sorrow or my disappointment. Probably both. We can't help being affected by our culture, but we can help not even thinking about it and questioning our heart's true desire.

Some people take the view that she should be miraculously healed. We have not foregone any opportunity for prayer and we know that many, many friends in the churches we know have prayed for her. We believe we have seen a huge improvement as a result – but she has not yet taken up her mat and walked off into the sunset. I often think of the blind man in John 9.1-3, where Jesus says that his affliction is not because of sin, but to show God's glory in his life. We hope that our daughter will show God's glory in her life – whether through being healed, or through living in a Christlike way with her disabilities. After all, man's chief end is to worship God, not to be able to wear pink ballet shoes – but of course the pragmatics of life in a postmodern, post-Christian culture are about whether you can afford a mortgage and a pension, and I do worry for her.

I would also like to pose the delicate question of whether the church can really cope with being counterculture for those who are disadvantaged by society. What can our churches offer to someone with disabilities? How will that person fit into our Alpha groups? Can s/he serve on the diaconate, or is that for 'whole' persons only (and which of us is truly whole)? Do our structures absorb that person or simply collude with the world outside in demarcating the differences? What does

that contribute to the relationships vs meetings debate about church life?

Everyone would probably agree that the church is exactly the place where people should fit and be accepted with all their difficulties. Is it true? Much has been written about the consumer culture invading the church with respect to styles of worship, teaching and youth provision. In other words, people will attend if the church meets their needs/requirements. For those with special needs, however the question may be, 'Do they want me?' rather than 'Do I want them?'.

The parents of a special needs child may be inadvertently excluded for a different reason – because they simply don't have the energy for a home group or prayer group and therefore never really 'bond' with the infrastructure of the church. I want to ask some deep questions about the nature of the people we usually describe as 'fringe', because being fringe may have nothing to do with faith but everything to do with circumstances. Are we making church difficult for people because we so much expect them to accommodate our programme, rather than existing *pro nobis*?

These are not comfortable questions. I would probably not have asked them when I was standing on the other side of the fence. Shame on me. Shame on all of us when we forget that the one we worship 'had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him; nothing in his appearance that we should desire him; he was despised and rejected of men'.

How can the church help?

What can you do if a family with a special needs child arrives one Sunday, or if someone in the congregation has a new baby but finds that the child has special needs of some sort? Here are just a few brief ideas.

Find out real facts. It is easy (with the best of intentions) to make assumptions

about a child's needs and abilities, and people in churches do jump to conclusions, just as they do in other places! Soon the word has spread and the assumptions (true or false) become rooted in the folklore of the church – the parents are usually the last to know. So seek out the facts and correct the fictions, within the boundaries of confidence of course. Some parents find it hard to talk, but we have found that we have been asked for information by so many people that we are not sensitive about giving it any more. However, we are sensitive to people making on the spot diagnoses and offering endless suggestions! Your non-judgmental supportive acceptance is worth millions.

Offer practical help. Are there people in your congregation who will never lead Alpha or sing solo, but are caring and kind? Maybe they can help the family. Sometimes having an adult to talk to during the day would be welcome. A wonderful person in our church babysits for us monthly, with no strings attached – we do not have to worry about returning the favour. Alternatively, have information about local help groups – Home-Start¹ is a nationwide organisation that offers voluntary support to parents with young children. Volunteers are trained, police-checked, and are all parents themselves, and usually offer a regular 2-3 hours per week. Another area where help might be needed is filling in forms for the DSS.

wonderful support

Spiritual issues. There may be many issues around coming to terms with special needs in one's child, but especially in the early days when the shock is new. Exhaustion and depression, loneliness because of the social isolation that comes with busy schedules of appointments and not being 'normal'; coping with critical and discriminating attitudes; and also the 'why'

question. There may be a lot of guilt around – the sense that if something had been different, the child would be OK. These matters may require time and love. It is very hard from the outside to understand the extra pressures of a child with special needs because all (particularly young) children are demanding, but the problems may not be obvious. For example, back pain is now part of my life: simple things like lifting our child into her car seat are difficult now she weighs one third of my adult weight. We can never let go of her hand when out, in case she falls over. She cannot dress herself because she cannot balance. Daily life adds up to a big logistical exercise.

Supporting the whole family. Sometimes partners and siblings get left out. The dynamics of family life change with disability; there may be less money as well as less time. Can anyone at church help?

Plan and communicate. Special needs children can present a challenge to Sunday Schools. Here particularly the advice about making assumptions comes into play. Ask the family what extra help is required, if any. Plan ahead (for example, when the child is due to move up to a new group). Communicate. If the church simply cannot accommodate that child, then *tell* the parents – don't just hope that something will turn up, because it probably won't. Parents can cope with real problems, but not with being ignored.

I should end by making it clear that we have had wonderful support from Christian friends. Calls, letters, visits have proved to us what it means to be part of the body of Christ – a recent e-mail from a Romanian friend assured us that although we haven't met for four years, we are together in Christ and 'we pray for she'. **bmj**

¹ Home-Start UK can be contacted on 0116-233-9955, either for help or to volunteer.

'Tell that to the Missis'

Robert Paul, a chaplain in the steel industry in South Wales for twelve years, explains the effects of globalisation on local communities.

Steel used to be supplied largely by domestic producers. British Steel supplied well over half the home market. Unfavourable exchange rates and other factors reduced UK demand for steel considerably. People buy goods produced overseas and home manufacturing diminishes. Exchange rates that make imported finished goods attractive also make imported steel competitive. British Steel had a reducing share of a reducing home market, and became more dependant upon exports to keep plant fully-loaded. Unfortunately an exchange rate that made imports attractive also made exports unprofitable. That and transport costs made steel exports from Britain decreasingly worthwhile. The problem was compounded by increasing productivity. A plant which used to produce about two million tonnes of steel per annum with about 10,000 workers became capable of producing over three million tonnes with a workforce of less than 3,000.

Global competition increased as more plant was brought on stream until global steel-making capacity exceeded demand. Some works are state-owned and subsidised. Some companies enjoy cheap power and raw materials. Some plant is inefficient compared with British works. In some nations employees are relatively poorly paid and there is less concern about the environment. And whenever home markets decline, steel-makers increase exports to keep plant fully loaded. All that means more cheap steel coming into Britain.

A first response was to increase productivity in British plants by reducing the workforce, making people redundant, introducing team-working and reducing layers of management. But even with manpower productivity among the best in the world the company still struggled. A second response was a transnational merger. British Steel and the Dutch producer Hoogovens merged to form Corus. The new company was third largest in the world, allowing economies of scale. It had works on the European mainland, reducing exchange rate effects and transport costs. Despite these advantages

the new company also made losses. The value of sterling, and costs of energy, transport and environmental protection all played a part. Other companies were merging and improving productivity, global capacity was still increasing and manufacturing was in recession, so there was a lot of cheap steel about.

Another feature of globalisation is that company ownership becomes multinational. In the current climate of hard capitalism shareholders, both corporate and individual, expect dividends in bad times as well as good. This is difficult for companies manufacturing a commodity for which demand is cyclical. British Steel kept strong cash reserves to meet this expectation, but these were used to finance the merger. The new company relies on bank loans to finance operations and cannot pay dividends in lean years. Bankers, of course, also demand interest come what may. The rest of the story is a tale of how risk has been transferred from bankers and shareholders to employees; from people and institutions receiving interest on capital to people working to earn a living wage.

Impact on Works and People

It seems there was pressure from banks and shareholders to cut British capacity to match domestic demand. The chief executives resisted, believing that when the market improved the company would be profitable as it was. The chairman sacked them and set up a working party to rationalise production capacities. The result in South Wales was to be the end of steel-making at Llanwern and the closure of Ebbw Vale and Bryngwyn works. There were to be other closures and job-losses across England and Wales. Llanwern mills and coating line would be fed with slab from Port Talbot and Teesside. Although this had long been predicted and feared, it came as a shock and provoked great fear and anger.

The unions at Llanwern devised a plan to keep the heavy end. They thought it could be profitable but directors dismissed it as not viable. Local unions then set about negotiating redundancy terms for employees losing their jobs. They secured a good financial package for people leaving. Those with many years service fared best, but those with only short service did quite well. Fortunately the pension scheme allowed people made redundant to leave with a reduced pension from the age of 50 years or with a complete pension from 55. They would not have to wait for a deferred pension at 65. Again, this benefited most those with long service. People over 50 were given opportunity to learn what their redundancy package and pension would be if they left. Most decided to go, assuming that they would have enough to live on or could supplement their pension with a small job. This took care of many of those who were losing their jobs. It also created vacancies in other parts of Llanwern and in other works into which people losing their jobs could be cross-matched. People nearing their 50th birthday or other personal milestone were

offered places within the closure/regeneration team until they reached an age at which they could sensibly leave.

A job-centre was set up on site with boards of vacancies and access to the national computer network. Careers, enterprise and training advice were available, and help with application forms, CVs, telephone manner and interviews. People near the M4 could commute a fair distance for jobs. A number under the age of 50 managed to secure jobs outside. This was easiest for craftsmen, engineers and managers. It was harder for production workers, with skills and qualifications specific to the steel industry and not obviously transferable. Some had trades from earlier times to which they could turn. Others took the opportunity to train for new jobs or set up in business. In the end, out of 1300 people who lost their jobs, less than 200 below the age of 50 were forced out without a job to go to.

Effects on People who left and on the Community

That does not sound too bad but it is not the whole story. That summer there was considerable anxiety amongst employees and their families. Men said to managers trying to reassure them, 'Go home and tell that to the missis, she won't believe me'. Most jobs that people went to are not as satisfactory as the ones they left. Although the physical environment in the heavy end of a steelworks could be hostile, in many ways the jobs were good. The social environment was good. Workers looked out for one another in dangerous situations. They had freedom and autonomy in their work and were generally happy. There was more camaraderie between managers and men than in many industries. Pay was good, reflecting dangerous conditions and unsociable hours. In the new jobs pay is often much lower. People are closely supervised or paced by a production line. Sense of

community is weaker. Many had to move house or commute. So families, friendships and local community suffer. Some managers also find their new jobs less rewarding.

The problems are worse in Ebbw Vale, in which the steelworks and associated industries were the only major employers. There are few jobs available locally. Commuting is less attractive with a 40 minute drive to the M4. Most employees were local people used to living and working in the same community. They do not want to commute or move house. Some found jobs in other Corus plants and accepted the need to move or commute. The Baptist Church reports that several families have already moved away, weakening their fellowship. Others may not find jobs until local regeneration projects take off.

Some employers have created low-paid part-time jobs that will appeal to people who have retired early with small pensions. I know some who left and are now working part-time in local garage, supermarket and DIY shed. That is fine for them but it may mean fewer reasonably paid full-time jobs for those who need them.

It is not only Corus employees who are affected by closures. Firms of contractors have people working on the Llanwern site and both contractors and suppliers provide goods and services from off site. A number of these companies have laid people off. At least one engineering contractor ceased to trade and was bought up by another. Employees from both companies were made redundant. Other businesses in Newport have been affected. So far Newport has not suffered as badly as was predicted but we may not know the full extent of the damage for some time.

Although people whose jobs were made redundant may have retired happily or

found alternative employment, those jobs are lost. Children often followed parents and grandparents into a works, but now there are fewer jobs for school-leavers and graduates in the area. The Welsh Assembly, local councils and development agencies are seeking to address this with various regeneration projects.

The Llanwern workforce is drawn from a wide area and when people have left we may not know what happens to them. We know some have had a succession of poor quality, poorly paid jobs. We know of a few families with severe financial problems and serious marital problems. The problems may have begun before the main wage-earners were made redundant, but have become worse since. I suspect that there are many others and that problems may increase with time.

Capitalism and the Economy

It is often said that in capitalism when one institution leaves an area, another takes its place, as employers move in to exploit spare space and labour. This may be true, but it is not the whole truth. To help rebuild the economy of Wales, following the demise of coal and loss of jobs in steel, the Welsh Development Agency encouraged inward investment. A main attraction for companies, alongside access to Europe and grants, seems to be the low pay possible in Wales. Quality and pay of new jobs are often inferior to those of the old ones. Most new jobs are semiskilled, assembly or call-centre work. These jobs chase the lowest rates of pay and currently we are losing jobs to East European countries. When markets are poor or exchange rates unfavourable, companies close these plants first. When the computer chip market dipped, LG Semicon did not even commission their brand-new highly-subsidised state-of-the-art semiconductor factory at Newport. It still lies empty.

We are told that, to maintain our high material standard of living in this country, we must stop trying to compete with developing nations on commodities and mature manufactured goods and develop more sophisticated products on which they cannot compete. This seems more promising than concentrating on services, but how realistic is it? We need not only to manufacture goods that we can sell profitably on the global market, but also to provide a range of jobs for people of normal working age and varied gifts. Do we expect a higher standard of living in this country than we can justify either morally or economically?

Experts say that there are too many retired people in the nation for the working population to support, because people are living longer. That may be so but it does not necessarily mean that we should raise retirement age, as some suggest. At 64 I am one of the few people working at Llanwern who is over 60 and there are not many of us over 55 or even 50. The problem is not that the state retirement age is too low, but that there are not enough jobs for people below it.

Impact on People left in the Works

So closures and redundancies affect local communities directly. They also have effects on what remains of the works and the people still working there. These in turn may affect the wider community. The people left do not trust the senior management who decided on the cuts. They then may not trust local management either. So morale is poor and people feel insecure. They have done this once, they may do it again! How much longer have we got? Uncertainty and anxiety spread into the rest of life. I want a new car, but can I keep up payments if I lose my job? We want to move, but dare we increase the mortgage? Other people become fatalistic. They worried themselves sick in the past, now they don't think about the

future and live for today.

With fewer employees, each has more to do and they get weary. Some were asked to work rest days and holidays and objected saying, 'We are due rest days and holidays, we need them, and covering jobs made redundant with overtime is wrong.' Some who have been redeployed are happy in their new jobs. Others are not - they do not like the new job or they do not like having to commute. They feel trapped by the need to remain in a good pension scheme.

Making it easy for those over 50 to retire early enables younger people to keep their jobs but causes serious loss of experienced people. Managers may lack experience of managing people or process. When things go wrong engineers and craftsmen may not have seen the problem before. Personnel managers may be less experienced at dealing with trouble. On the other hand a younger workforce may be more open to new ways.

Those left in the works often miss people upon whom they depended for work-related or personal advice. They miss good friends whom they met in office, on shift or at lunch. Although when people are redeployed earnings are protected for a time, a number suffer financially and some have taken to moonlighting to make up the loss.

The Ambiguities of Globalisation

Last autumn Port Talbot suffered an explosion in a blast furnace and could not supply so many slabs to Llanwern. Teesside could not make up the shortfall, so slabs were sourced globally and have been coming into Llanwern from around the world, as well as Port Talbot and Teesside. This is great for Llanwern but Port Talbot and Teesside fear that sometime their steel-making could be closed and all slabs rolled in Britain be imported. This might be good for the environment but not for jobs.

There are two sides to globalisation.

The USA has imposed tariffs upon steel imports to protect its own producers. Experts say that many large US plants are old, inefficient and overburdened by obligations to ex-employees; also that their main competition is now not from abroad, but from US minimills. Few products from Corus UK works are affected directly. But

steel from elsewhere originally destined for America could end up here and affect British works. We are inconsistent about globalisation and free-trade. We want free markets for our exports but are not so happy when they mean that imports threaten our own industries. **bmj**

An Act of Thanksgiving for and Release from Christian Ministry

The following is a form of liturgy marking the conclusion of a ministry leading into retirement.

Leader Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.

Congregation We praise God for Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, and for fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

All Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

Congregation We praise God for the ministry he has entrusted to his Church, of proclaiming the Gospel, of serving in love and of reconciliation.

Minister I praise God for Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour, and for God's call to be a minister of Word and Sacraments.

All Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

Leader O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

Congregation We thank God for all the blessings he pours upon us in the Church, and for the ministry of N.

Minister I thank God for all the blessings he has poured upon me, especially through his people in [pastorates by name], where I have been privileged to serve as pastor.

All O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

Leader Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you... and let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds.

Congregation N, we thank you for your ministry among us: your friendship, the things you have taught us and the ways in which you have worked alongside us and helped us.

Minister My friends, I thank you for the way you have received me, the encouragement you have given to me; the things you have taught me, the way you have cared for me [and, where appropriate, my family] and partnership in gospel life.

Congregation [where appropriate, to spouse by name], we thank you too for your devoted support to N, and your friendship, love, and service among us.

All Let mutual love continue.

Leader If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.

Minister My friends, I am aware that I am an unworthy and imperfect servant of Jesus. I ask your forgiveness for any hurts I have done you, through neglect, carelessness, ignorance, or deliberate sinfulness.

Congregation We forgive you in the name of Jesus, and will continue to pray for you. We ask your forgiveness for any hurts we have done you or your family, through neglect, carelessness, ignorance, or deliberate sinfulness.

Minister I forgive you in the name of Jesus, and will continue to pray for you.

All If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Leader For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven; a time for planting and a time for pulling up... a time for sorrow and a time for joy ... a time for finding and a time for losing.

Congregation We represent the Church of Jesus Christ which called you and set you apart for Ministry. In his name, we now release you from your responsibility as Minister, and pray God's blessing on the new chapter in your life [and - if appropriate, spouse's name] which is just beginning.

Minister My friends, I accept that release, and pray for God's blessing on the future ministry of [this, by name] Church, and on every Church represented here.

All Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. **bmj**

BT 2001

B A P T I S T T I M E S

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.
- the 100th anniversary of the patenting of the Gillette safety razor.
- and the year when you could - and should - find all you need to know each week about the life and witness of Baptists and other Christians in Britain and the rest of the world by subscribing to the **Baptist Times** - an aid to understanding and a stimulus to prayer.

Let us have your name and address and we'll send you the paper FREE for the next four weeks. That way you can make up your own mind.

But hurry. 2001 only happens once!

Baptist Times, PO Box 54, 129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon OX11 8XB

Tel: 01235 517670; Fax: 01235 517678; E-mail: btadmin@bluecom.net

Who pushes the buttons?

Simon Woodman, Associate Pastor Counterslip Baptist Church Bristol, offers the following advice to the uninitiated on the use of computer technology in church worship.

My childhood and teenage years coincided with the coming of age of computerised technology. The church I grew up in had an old pipe organ, which dominated the front of the sanctuary, set up on high in its own gallery, complete with front-facing seats for the choir. This old organ lasted a hundred years before it started developing major problems. The computerised organ which replaced it was redundant in a tenth of that time. Don't get me wrong, the new organ still works, it'll still do the job it was designed for, it's just that technology has moved on. Now, if an organ sound is required, it comes at the push of a button from a MIDI keyboard.

This is the nature of modern technology - things are obsolete long before they wear out. And this in turn has implications for how much we spend, and also on our attitude towards the technology we own. Just because something is technologically "obsolete" doesn't mean it won't still do the job we bought it for. What changes, of course, is our expectations of what we want it to do.

The same logic applies to computers. My first computer, bought in my early teens, was a "Dragon 32" (remember them? No, I didn't expect you to!) When it eventually went in the wheely bin, it was every bit as functional as the day I had spent my hard-saved money on it. What had changed, and what had made it disposable, was my expectation of what a computer should do for me.

The philosophy of buying

So what have these reminiscences of a twenty-something technophile got to do with the use of computer technology in church? Merely this: they have led to the formulation of my rules for the purchasing of computer-based technology, whether for home or church use: First work out what you actually want to achieve. Ask yourself the question: What are my expectations for the technology I will be purchasing? Then take advice (preferably

not from a salesman) as to what is the minimum specification of equipment that will adequately do the job. Then buy that equipment as cheaply as possible. Do not be seduced by those (usually salesman, but sometimes well-meaning geeks) who will try to tell you what your expectations will be in five years time, and then attempt to persuade you to buy the most expensive gear available because it is "future proof." This is simply a salesman's marketing-line. No technology is ever "future proof" if by this is meant that it will meet your expectations of technology in the future. It won't. What it probably will do is carry on doing what you bought it for, long after you've thrown it away because you now want a machine that will do something completely different.

Consider the following: Today's £500 computer is last year's £1000 computer, and the top of the range £1500 computer from the year before that. So if you need to buy a computer today, you can budget anything from £500-£1500. My guess is that anyone buying a £1500 computer is going to want to get their money's worth, and use it for a good five years. The trouble is, it will be obsolete in three! Much more sensible to spend £500 today, and knowingly buy a computer which, although bordering on obsolete, will in all probability do what you want it to until you change

your expectations. Then, in three years time, spend another £500 and buy the computer you could have bought today for £1500. This way, you now have 2 computers and still have £500 left over (give it to Home Mission...!)

Well, that's enough for now about the *buying* of computerised technology. What about the *use* of it?

Skills to be tapped

One of the worries when acquiring new technology is the rather daunting question of *who* is actually going to operate it? In some churches this will be a real problem, and may be a good reason for spending the money elsewhere. However, many jobs these days require some level of IT (Information Technology) use, and school children are all taught IT as part of the National Curriculum. So there may well be those sitting in the congregation who have the skills in operating such equipment, and are simply awaiting the opportunity to be asked. In addition to this, most local authorities offer either free or very cheap courses in basic IT use. It may well be that the purchasing of some new equipment is the ideal opportunity to involve a couple of people who at the moment don't feel able to contribute to church life in a practical way.

But my church is too small for all this...

It is a common perception that computer technology is only a viable option in large churches with big budgets, and it is true that the high price of computer projectors puts them beyond the budget of many churches. However, most schools now have a projector, and your local school may well be prepared to lend theirs to your church on an occasional basis for special events, family services, and the like.

However, there is one particular use of computers in church which is specific to small churches. Many churches struggle to

find a regular musician, and this is where a cheap second-hand computer can come into its own. Computers have the ability to record a pianist playing a MIDI keyboard, and then to re-play this back through your church PA system at the touch of a button. In this way you can have a list of songs on the computer, and play any of them back whenever you wish. Hymns can come out on an "organ" setting, songs on a "piano", or indeed any of the hundred or so instrument sounds a computer can generate. As long as the original pianist is prepared to waive his or her performing rights and royalties, and you own a music book with the songs in, copyright will be covered by the Christian Copyright Licence which your church probably already owns. The computer is simply standing in place of your organist! There are two churches in Bristol where we have installed this system, and both have found it very cheap and useful.

From OHP to DPU

It cannot have escaped your attention that acronyms rule in the world of techno-speak. So, to give this section its full title: From Over Head Projector to Data Projection Unit (or "projector", for short!).

Almost all churches will have made use of an OHP at some point. Some churches use them regularly to display the words of their songs, some preachers use them to put up slides to illustrate sermons, some worship leaders use them to display images as an aid to worship. The uses of an OHP are many and diverse. A projector, a computer, and a video player will do all this and much more!

The projection of songs is best handled by a specialist piece of song-projection software. We use a program called Presentation Manager, which is particularly clever, because it allows almost instantaneous display of any verse of any song. It also allows verses from scripture to

be displayed at the touch of a button. There are other (cheaper) programs around that do a similar job, but this is the one we have found to be the easiest and most comprehensive. If you want to explore Presentation Manager further, take a look at the following websites: <http://www.presentationmgr.com/> and <http://www.sunrise-software.com/>. Its retail price is £275.

While Presentation Manager (or its equivalent) is ideal for displaying songs and bible verses, another program that will be very useful is Microsoft PowerPoint. This is a piece of software that allows you to display words and pictures in a pre-determined order. Its most common use in church will probably be for displaying sermon points, prayer points, and church notices before and after the service. A more imaginative use of PowerPoint is the displaying of images set to music. Either a CD/tape or live music can provide a powerful combination with carefully chosen images around a particular theme. We have found this particularly effective in seeker-sensitive contexts, where it allows us to engage with the audio-visual senses in a way that creatively reinforces the message of the service. RUN (Reaching the Unchurched Network) provide a useful database of high quality PowerPoint presentations which have been used in different churches in the UK. If you are thinking of using computer technology in this way, they are worth joining. See <http://www.run.org.uk/>

Desktop or Laptop

It is a common misconception, imported from the business environment, that in order to use a projector you must also buy an expensive laptop computer. This is simply not the case. The question of whether to buy an expensive laptop or a cheaper desktop is determined entirely by the use the machine will be getting. If you have a compelling need to have the

computer and projector portable, then by all means buy a laptop. But in many churches, the projector will be permanently mounted (or even hung from the ceiling) and the computer will always live in the same place. Under these circumstances, a desktop computer is a much better option. Desktop computers are cheaper to buy, cheaper to repair, and easier to secure against theft. Laptop computers are very clever if you absolutely need to move them around a lot, but they cost more to buy, they are extremely difficult and expensive to repair once their warranty has expired, and they are very easy to steal. Think twice about spending a lot of money on a laptop when a desktop would do the job. Getting computer equipment is no excuse for unnecessary expenditure and bad stewardship.

Moving pictures

A humble VHS video player will be an invaluable addition to your computer and projector. Projectors have the ability to display moving pictures, as well as static ones coming from the computer. Well chosen video clips can be a great aid to all forms of worship. A two-minute video clip of the headlines from the Sunday morning news can provide a powerful introduction to an intercessory prayer time. The main points of the news bulletin could then be reinforced by being typed into a PowerPoint presentation to be displayed during the prayer time. Family services can benefit from a few well-chosen video clips. *The Lion King*, and *A Bug's Life*, (both by Disney) have some very useful parts which can easily be used to help children understand concepts such as sacrifice, community, and spirituality. Similarly, video clips can be effective in seeker-sensitive services. The trick is to not over-use video clips, and to ensure that those which are used are directly relevant to the theme of the service. There is a new copyright licence available which covers

the use of film clips, and this is worth obtaining.

If you have access to a camcorder, the live output can be relayed through the projector. This is particularly useful in our church because the baptismal pool is down one side, and it is impossible for the whole congregation to see a baptism. So we are able to encourage friends and family to gather round the pool, while the rest of the congregation can watch the baptism live on the big screen. However, there are also lighter uses for a camcorder, particularly in the area of drama. Sketches utilising a "live outside broadcast" are possible and very effective. A further use of a camcorder is the putting together of "vox-pop" clips. This is where an interviewer asks strangers in the street for their opinion on a particular issue. The best clips can then be strung together and shown to the congregation.

The editing of video using a computer is very useful, particularly for putting together sequences of video clips, or compiling a vox-pop series. It may not be necessary to purchase a computer with the facility to do this, as there may be those in the congregation who have this facility on their home-computer already. If they have, the chances are they have spent a small fortune acquiring it, and will often bend over backwards to use it for the church. For one-off compilations, it may be worth contacting your local college media-studies course.

Several churches hit the headlines earlier this year by displaying the England games from the world cup on their big screens. This is easy to achieve, simply by mounting a TV aerial and buying a TV licence. As long as you don't operate for profit, simply displaying a TV picture is fine on a normal licence. The use of the "sanctuary" for displaying sports will bring a certain amount of controversy – we have had accusations of idolatry for daring to

show football matches! However, showing sporting fixtures and inviting congregation members who are interested to bring their friends can be an excellent bridge-building opportunity with the local community.

So is it worth it?

I have attempted to share the benefit of my experiences over the last few years in introducing the use of computer technology into church worship. In answering the question of whether it was worth it – I would have to say... "probably". Although we have tried to be as economical as possible, nonetheless such equipment costs money which could have been spent elsewhere. I remain slightly uneasy about churches spending vast sums of money on themselves and on "enhancing the worship experience".

This said, if we are to effectively communicate the message of the gospel with a generation that is unused to church-speak and very used to multimedia, the onus is on us to use language that will be understood. Recent falls in price have placed this equipment within the reach of many churches, and with care it can be used very effectively as a tool to enhance the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. My suspicion is that in the long run ignoring such methods of communication will be akin to ignoring the invention of the printing press. However, we are not at that stage yet, and many churches function perfectly adequately without any computer technology at all.

Certainly the purchasing and use of such equipment is not a prerequisite necessity for a worshipping, witnessing church. However, if it can be acquired, it has the potential to benefit the local church in diverse ways. Our focus in worship must always remain on God, revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit, and we must resist the temptation to restrict worship to certain forms or styles. Previous generations did it

THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY PLC.

19/21 Billiter Street, London EC3M 2RY

Telephone Number: 020 7481-8072

To the readers of the Baptist Ministers' Journal

"Lamps, Feet and Traps" Psalm 119, v105, and Psalm 140, v5.

I feel sure that many of our ministers will have used these words from within the book of Psalms as a basis for their Sunday address. Although perhaps not in the same context they are nevertheless very relevant to the day to day problem churches have with safety issues on their premises. One of my Church Surveyors recently related the following to me:-

I was listening to a visiting preacher give the morning address at our church recently, who took his text from Psalm 119, v105, and Psalm 140, v5. "Lamps, Feet and Traps"

I have to admit that my mind wandered a little from these opening words, as I was picturing a newly built church hall car park I had seen recently, in a very rural/remote village.

At this church, the Deacon proudly explained how this facility would allow more evening meetings to be held at the church hall, particularly by other local groups/organisations (the members of which would be mostly older/retired and some of whom probably less steady on their feet).

The car park was a fine, level surfaced area, surrounded by low kerb stones, behind which was quite a significant drop to fairly rough ground covered with building materials, rocks and other debris. Also the path from the car park was level, well surfaced, but narrow, with a deep gully on each side.

All quite safe one would think. However being a rural area, at night, there was very little ambient light. Although everyone can see the footpath edges and car park boundary in the daytime, at night it is a ready made series of traps! One misplaced foot in the dark and almost inevitably an unsuspecting person will suffer injury and pain with consequent worry and trouble ensuing for that church.

A floodlight, fitted with a control switch to turn it on automatically when daylight falls to a low level, mounted on the side of the overlooking church wall would minimise the danger.

I feel sure that this lesson can similarly apply to numerous situations around the church environment and action now will save concern later.

"Lamps, feet and traps". The same today as written over a thousand years ago in the Psalms.

Yours Sincerely

ALF GREEN ACII
ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

Desperate for hope



Working in partnership is the key to Spurgeon's success, whether it's co-operating

with agencies and local authorities or on a one to one level with a person in need. These personal relationships at all levels have brought about a deeper understanding and although we may think our contribution is just a drop in the ocean - as Mother Theresa said "An ocean is made up of many drops." With all our support, this work can continue, whether we make a donation or offer help as a volunteer. Providing we have faith & commitment in all we do, each and every one of us can play our part.

Louise Jordan

Dame Louise Jordan

Spurgeon's Child Care

100, The Grange, 11, Upper
St. Giles, London WC2E 9JF

020 7252 6000

www.spurgeons.org.uk

© Spurgeon's Child Care 2002

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Registered Charity No. 1088587

Give us your support

YES I want to give to the work of Spurgeon's Child Care.
I enclose my gift of:

£250 £100 £50 £25 £10 Other £ _____

Please make cheques payable to Spurgeon's Child Care

I am a UK taxpayer and wish Spurgeon's Child Care to claim back the tax on my gift. My tax will be paid off the next time my gift

Please debit my: Mastercard Visa Account American Express

Card No. Expiry date:

Name Signature

Address

Postcode

Please return to: SPURGEON'S CHILD CARE, FREEPOST 146229, Bushby, Leicestershire LE12 9BB

011 22888

to the pipe organ, many in the current generation have done it to the music group, and many in the future will do it to computerised technology. So a word of warning to finish: If you can get it and use it well in the service of the gospel, great. But don't let the medium become more important than the message! **bmj**

j-mail

Two for the price of one

from Dennis Ottaway

Dear Journal, I have just received the July edition of the Baptist Ministers' Journal. Since the magazine for lay preachers has been axed, I have taken up the offer of the BMJ two years' sub for the price of one. Thank you for the stimulating articles.

Vivienne Lasseter's piece about Tim La Haye's 'Left Behind' novels is useful as I have a young chap in my home group who is an avid reader of the books. I guess I should dip into the first book so I can have a more informed view. Thanks too for "When God vanishes". Age and experience have brought me to see that things are not quite so cut and dried as they once seemed to be. Philip Yancey's book 'What's So Amazing About Grace' confirmed a lot of my thinking over recent years.

ARTICLES

The *Journal* publishes articles which will be of interest to its readers: ministers and missionaries. The *Journal* invites original contributions of no more than 2,500 words, which are accessible to a broad section of readers. MSS for consideration will be read by members of the Editorial Board, and should be submitted in hard copy and electronically. Letters for j-mail should be no longer than 500 words. The Editor reserves the right to edit as necessary. **bmj**

'on the far side of revenge'

(Seamus Heaney)

Drawing on twenty years thinking and reflection, the latest publication of the Irish Inter-Church Group on Faith and Politics was produced this summer. Entitled, 'A Time to Heal: Perspectives on Reconciliation', one of its particular concerns is dealing with the past. The following is an extract. The full text is available from Inter-Church Centre, 48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6AZ @ £2.50 (+ p&p). The poem at the end is by Una O'Higgins O'Malley, a former member of the Group, whose father, Kevin O'Higgins, the Irish Free State's Minister for Justice and External Affairs, was murdered in 1927, and her grandfather before that.

'As Christians we were aware that Christian faith challenges all exclusive claims of tribe, tradition and political commitment. The Gospel invites us into the space created by Christ and to find there those who were previously our enemies. It therefore seeks to break down the enmity between us: enmity caused by different traditions, and national, political and religious loyalties. The Gospel opens up for us a view of wholeness, justice and living in right relations which sees the whole world as potential brothers and sisters; a nourishing and fulfilment of the human. This is a vision of a new humanity reconciled in Christ and living together in a new community.

'At the same time we knew that churches are part of communities and nations; they cannot be other. They are chaplains, reflectors, consciences, restrainers, discerners, givers of wisdom, custodians of memory and places of community belonging. Churches bring 'their' community before God. They are places where the 'specialness' and stories of

communities and nations can be celebrated. Much of this is necessary and good, but there is another side. 'Specialness' can lead to exclusivity and a sense of superiority. Churches can be places where we are told -implicitly and explicitly - who does not belong to our community: by who is prayed for and who is not, by the contents of sermons, and by the symbols displayed or not displayed.

'The Church is a home for the community or the nation. And at the same time it lives by a story of a Jesus who died outside the camp (Heb 13:13) and who, while completely a Jew, did not belong to his world (John 17:14) and was driven out of it by those who did not want to be disturbed by another way. All our 'homes' - personal, communal, national - are radically decentered by Jesus: "For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come" (Heb 13:14). And the Church is a community where Jew and Greek, bond and free, belong (1 Cor 12:13).

accomplices

'The Church lives in a tension: in the world, but not of it (cf John 18:36). The danger is that in situations of communal conflict the tension collapses and as the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf says "...Churches often find themselves accomplices in war rather than agents of peace. We find it difficult to distance ourselves from our own culture so we echo its reigning opinions and mimic its practices. "

'This was our experience in Northern Ireland. Religion and politics had become so tangled up that politics had taken on some of the dimensions of a religious crusade; political positions had been absolutised and exclusive commitments had been demanded of people. Political loyalties and exclusive traditions had been put above the God who will have no other god before him. Idolatry had led to conflict and violence. Christian faith had been compromised; two communities had called upon their religious traditions to sanctify political and cultural traditions to a greater or lesser extent. Faith had been deformed in the process. Theologies of enmity, superiority and distorted recognition of others had gained pre-eminence. Northern Ireland, in our opinion, was a place under judgement and judgement begins in the household of God (1 Peter 4:17). We were also all too aware that churches who were unable to achieve reconciliation among themselves were not well placed to preach reconciliation to politicians and others. We lived in a world of painful contradiction between a faith vision and reality. **bmj**

FORGIVENESS

"So there he stood upon the shore
with everything in waiting.
The fire was going well,
fresh fish were grilling
and they would bring some more
(this would confirm their own importance).
And at that Easter breakfast
he would hear from Peter
just how much he loved him.
No decommissioning of the past
nor rank betrayals would be mentioned
simply 'Bring more fish' and 'Do you love me?'

Today as mists clear from the Agreement,
hammered in Belfast last Good Friday
evening,
a voice speaks from far South Africa
of truth and reconciliation
and puts a definition on forgiveness:
'It is', the bishop says,
'a way of dealing with the past
so as to plan the future'.
Poor Peter's past had been disastrous
but he was asked to bring along his gifts
of fish and loving.

Book Reviews

Edited by John Houseago

The Synoptic Gospels: An Introduction.
Keith F Nickle. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. £12.99 ISBN 0 664 22349 4

This introduction to the Synoptic Gospels is a revised and expanded edition of the volume that first appeared in 1981. The preface to the second edition admits that in the intervening years 'a number of fascinating advances and discoveries have been made', thus the desire to update the original book to encompass this development in scholarship. This second edition now has six chapters. The first attempts to trace the development of the oral tradition in the preaching of the Early Church to the written testimonies of the Gospels. The second, an entirely new chapter, offers a description of the historical background, the diversity of Judaism in the first century C.E. and the influence of Hellenistic thinking. The following three chapters tackle the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, respectively, following the priority of Mark and the independent use of Mark and Q by both Matthew and Luke. The final chapter briefly discusses the use of the Gospels in the early Church, the historical reliability of the Gospels, the development of the canon of the New Testament, and, finally, issues of authority and inspiration.

The book offers a very standard introduction to the issues of the first three Gospels. Nickle has set out to provide an easily readable guide to mainstream scholarship, which he generally achieves, and so attempts to offer little new thinking himself. The particular emphasis from which he writes, however, is that of form criticism, and this provides the dominant framework for interpreting the Gospels. Considering the scope of the book, the

opening chapter describes the separation of the Gospels into 'forms' in great detail. Although he admits in the final chapter that this approach deals with probabilities and conjectures and not certainties, there are occasions when Nickle presents assumptions as certain, for example, that both Matthew and Luke highly valued the traditions within Q but did not agree with its theological views, so attempted to conform this deviant theological perspective (p. 102).

The majority of the five original chapters have received little revision. The new sections, which are actually very brief, address the issues of gospel as 'story', and introduce some narrative criticism. Despite this, and some interesting particular observations, there is a lingering impression that this is still a 20 year-old introduction to the Gospels which does not represent the new and varying approaches to New Testament study today.

Anthony Clarke, South Oxford

With the Grain of the Universe, **Stanley Hauerwas,** SCM press, 2001; £13.95 ISBN 0-334-02864-7, 249 pp.

Those who know and enjoy the writings of Stanley Hauerwas will not be disappointed by this latest and greatest work. The book comprises the Gifford Lectures of 2000-2001 given by Hauerwas in the University of St Andrews.

The Gifford Lectures were founded in the nineteenth century in an attempt to make natural theology a subject analogous to the natural sciences, which were flourishing at that time. They represented an attempt to establish the truth of Christian propositions independently of any appeal

or reliance upon special, exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation. Hauerwas' contribution to this venture is to question the entire project on the basis that natural theology divorced from a full doctrine of God cannot but distort the character of God and, accordingly, the world in which we live.

Hauerwas develops his argument in dialogue with previous contributions to the Gifford Lectures, notably that of William James (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*), Reinhold Niebuhr (*The Nature and Destiny of Man*) and Karl Barth (*The Knowledge of God and the Service of God* according to the Teaching of the Reformation). Other scholars with whom he engages include Alasdair MacIntyre, John Howard Yoder & Pope John Paul II.

In William James Hauerwas recognises the quintessential Gifford lecturer, and Reinhold Niebuhr is the theologian of the twentieth century for many people. However, both of these great scholars believed that Christianity's central claims were incapable of rational justification and therefore transposed Christianity into a thinly disguised humanism concerned with hope to sustain human endeavour and ethics, respectively.

Barth is the hero of this book because he staged a full frontal attack on some of the most cherished conceits of modernity. Barth, in contrast to James and Niebuhr, begins not with human reason or religious experience, but God, insisting that God is the proper subject of theology. Barth taught us what it might mean not only to think but also to live when God is acknowledged as the beginning and end of our existence.

In the final chapter Hauerwas attempts to construct a foundation for the rational justification of Christian belief. He advocates a pragmatic thesis: successful practice on the part of the Christian

community and its members helps to justify the community's central claims. So, Christianity is unintelligible without witnesses, that is, without people whose practices exhibit their committed assent to a particular way of structuring the whole [of reality].

Hauerwas makes no apology for the fact that this is a complex book and it will require more than one reading to grasp all that the author has to say. But if you want to understand where Christianity stands in the current intellectual climate and how the church can not only survive but fight back there is much to be had from this outstanding series of lectures.

Ian Birch, St Helens.

Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition.
Andrew Purves

Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky 2001 ISBN 0-664-22241-2 (pp. 137) £12.99

The place of theology in much contemporary pastoral practice has been usurped by psychotherapeutic theories and by the quest for human self-fulfilment and self-realisation. Swimming against this tide, Purves strives to reconstruct the fundamental connection between the Christian doctrines of God, redemption and hope, and the pastoral ministry of the church. By drawing upon ancient sources, he argues for a truly (and purely) theological understanding of pastoral care, where the primary carer is God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, and where the pastor is not a "counsellor" in the modern sense, but the instrument of the ministering activity of God.

To support his thesis, Purves turns to history, and to five theologians who have exerted a seminal influence upon the minds and practices of pastors: Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, Martin Bucer and Richard Baxter.

He offers a brief biography of each, and then proceeds to examine their theology insofar as it impacts upon the meaning of pastoral care.

Purves' study ranges wide in both a temporal and an ecclesiological sense; from two Greek Fathers of the fourth century, to a sixth century Latin Father, to a reformer of the sixteenth century, and finally, to a Puritan of the seventeenth century. Although some may question whether, in a technical sense, "tradition" is a legitimate designation, (there being more to the use of this term in theological study than mere commonality), the writer's conviction that the past provides a model for pastoral theology rooted unambiguously in thought about God, offers a lifeline to those who today are confronted with the task of pastoral care and who are confused and lacking in confidence over what they are actually doing. Herein resides both the strength and the usefulness of this book. If, however, the reader expects from this study a template that can be laid over contemporary practice, he or she will be disappointed. Offered instead is a challenge to stand with these ancient witnesses, sharing their "rooted-ness in scripture, their theological perspicuity, their soteriological insistence, their sense of spiritual preparedness for ministry, their understanding of the complexities and demands of the pastoral office, and their awareness of God at work through the pastor in the lives of God's people."

John Elliston
Grange Road Baptist Church,
Darlington

When we Gather: A Book of Prayers for Worship. **James G. Kirk** Geneva Press, Louisville, Kentucky ISBN 0-664-50114-1 (pp387 + x) £25.00

The worship within very few Baptist Churches is entirely governed by the lectionary, so that a volume which covers

all the Sundays in the lectionary cycle A, B and C is most likely to be sampled rather than swallowed whole. This fact, however, should not be allowed to detract attention from what is a very useful resource for those concerned with the preparation of worship. For each Sunday of the year a responsive call to worship based upon the psalm of the day leads into a prayer of praise and adoration. This is generally followed by a prayer of confession or affirmation shaped by the epistle, and a prayer of dedication shaped by the contents of the gospel. The prayers for each Sunday end with a prayer of thanksgiving that both explores the themes present in the Old Testament reading of the day, and recapitulates the themes of the gospel and epistle.

The prayers offered in this volume are well crafted, combining straightforward, unembellished, linguistic expression with thematic integrity. They are earthed in the routine of pastoral ministry, and exhibit the sensitivity appropriate to this calling. The implicit theology of the prayers is firmly rooted in the centre ground of Christian confession, and is therefore overtly Trinitarian. Indeed, many of the intercessory prayers are structured around the threefold name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The usefulness of this volume is enhanced by a scriptural index that makes it possible for those unfamiliar with the lectionary to identify prayers based upon particular passages of scripture. For those preparing worship Sunday by Sunday, this book could prove a very useful tool; I commend it to you.

John Elliston
Grange Road Baptist Church,
Darlington

The Bible Makes sense (revised edition)

Walter Brueggemann. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, x + 102pp. £9.99

The text is the same as the original edition (1989) with a new (two page) introduction and Brueggemann acknowledges that there have been revolutionary changes in biblical studies since the book was first published. Nonetheless, it still fulfils his aim of making 'the theological claims of the Bible accessible and credible to people who care for their faith but have little opportunity for sustained study' (vii).

The title is deliberately duplicitous in that it is intended to reassure readers who lack expertise but who want to understand the Bible that it is understandable, and also intended to assert that the Bible makes sense of life, as against 'television in its vacuousness, the market in its aggressiveness, and sports in its exhibitionism' which are 'all offers of sense that turn out to be nonsensical' (viii).

The author intends the book 'to mediate and witness to the biblical testimony of God's holiness as the faithful power of transformation' (ix). God is one in whom we may have hope for the future because of what he has done in the past.

For Brueggemann this necessitates our nurturing of a historical imagination. That may sound like a contradiction in terms but 'historical without imagination tends to be arid...Imagination without historicity tends to turn to undisciplined fantasy' (15). Indeed the process of the Bible itself is a process of historical imagining, exercised on stories like that of the Exodus.

The Bible is strange to us in all kinds of ways but, for the author, the strangest thing about it is 'God', and God's strangeness is that God is with people and for people.

There is much here to stimulate sermons (though no 'ready-to-serve' ones) and also

to provide material for Bible study groups. There are thought-provoking statements, some neat turns of phrase like 'Zacchaeus was up a tree in more ways than one' (83) and the occasional unusual statement, such as 'it is probable that Mark's gospel represents the special tradition of Paul's theology' (46).

Each chapter ends with questions for reflection and discussion, scripture passages for meditation and a brief comment related to them. The fact that the index of scriptural references takes two three-columned pages shows the extent of the ground covered - and all in less than a hundred pages. Recommended.

John Matthews.

Tile House Street, Hitchin

Finding the Church. **Daniel Hardy** : (SCM Press, 2001, x + 298pp. £16.95)

This book of essays, addresses and sermons, which can be read in any order, is a curious mixture. It is sub-titled 'The Dynamic Truth of Anglicanism' and Hardy is persuaded that Anglicanism is at a critical juncture in its history with the opportunity to move forward coupled with the need for a common understanding of its calling. (No doubt, a task for the next Archbishop of Canterbury and, coincidentally, this review is being written on the day that the name of Rowan Williams has been announced.)

Parts Three and Four of the book (a third of the text) do contain some very specifically Anglican pieces, but the rest covers subjects of interest to non-Anglicans. This includes Part Five, which is headed 'Life in the Anglican Way'. If there is anything uniquely Anglican about the address and three sermons it contains your reviewer missed it! But he did notice, with approval, the author speaking of God as one who 'meets us in our fear and distrust - as one who invites, accompanies, probes, pursues, sacrifices himself and moves us

beyond them' (231).

For Hardy the most significant issues facing the Church are those of how its quality can be improved, nationally and locally, which means taking risks rather than the natural tendency to play safe. 'Christianity comes to be measured by the vitality of church-centred activities' (252) but we need to think far more widely.

The ground he covers includes worship, mission, grace and goodness but also less explored areas like a theology of money. 'What we need is a theology of money that is intelligently and practically Christian while also fully immersed in the explanation and use of money' (117).

It is a welcome change to find a book that contains suggestions for further reading, and indices of names, subjects and biblical references.

Baptist ministers may feel that £17 could be better spent but there is much food for thought here, as well as some stimulating material for ministers' meetings, study groups and sermons.

John Matthews
Tilehouse Street, Hitchin

Wilderness Wanderings, by **Stanley M Hauerwas** SCM Press 2001, ISBN: 0 334 028590, pp242, £14.95

Should reading theology be this much fun? Hauerwas is an ethicist, he should know. I confess that when I first opened this book and examined the content I was deeply underwhelmed. A series of separate essays, each on Hauerwas' relationship to a different writer or writers, and not all of them well known. It just goes to show. Here as elsewhere reading Hauerwas is like going for a bracing walk on a cliff top with the wind buffeting and foam spraying. It's exhilarating and fun (though you may not want to do it very often or for too long).

In part one Stanley Hauerwas defines his own position and concerns in these essays by taking issue with those he disagrees with fundamentally. These include John Cobb, who Hauerwas thinks claims to know too much about God (and of whose God, Hauerwas says, "she is just too damn nice"!). There are two chapters dealing with Reinhold Niebuhr, who Hauerwas believes made too many compromises with American Liberalism, and had a flawed concept of sin. Indeed Liberalism is very much in Hauerwas' sights, and his turn of phrase sometimes made me chuckle out loud. Paul Ramsey and James Gustafson also feature in this first part, and Hauerwas complains that too often theologians have either misunderstood their starting point or have been too concerned to establish its validity. If there is a slight contradiction here (no let's call it a paradox and give him the benefit of the doubt) its one of several on offer. Not the least of these is Hauerwas' continual rejection of 'theological method' in a book almost entirely *about* theological method. In line with this Hauerwas repeatedly refuses to give a theory of epistemology (saying he used to think it important to know how he knew, but now he knows that isn't so!). He also refuses to indicate any starting point for Christian theology (though at one point he suggests we might start at the 'end' with eschatology – still a starting point, it seems to me, but there you go).

The central, pivotal essay is about Paul Holmer, one of Hauerwas' teachers. Here we see the influence of Wittgensteinian thinking on Hauerwas ("the theologian should be trained as an adequate, skilful speaker of a language", p3). Essays follow on Iris Murdoch, Jim McClendon (whose Baptist identity Hauerwas discusses at some length), John Millbank, Oliver O'Donovan and Martin Luther King Jr. The essays here, as in the first part, are less 'about' any of these people than they are dialogues with

aspects of their thinking that allow Hauerwas to attempt a clarification of his own position. And that's one where 'conviction' is a term preferred to the weaker 'belief', and where theology is done without apology – a discipline less about making Christianity make sense to the outside world (how can it if we speak a different language?) than it is about the Church making sense of the world and its own discipleship. There is something winsome about Hauerwas, though I am left not quite convinced by his view that we should not attempt to make ourselves understood, and by his assumption that the Church and its theology is somehow 'beyond' the secular culture over against which we define ourselves with our non-violence and Christ-like-ness.

Barth complained that his forbears never understood that good Dogmatics was good apologetics, and that they gave much too much away in an effort to be understood by their culture. Hauerwas wants to argue that good discipleship is the only apologetics, and his is a voice which must be listened to very carefully even if it does not finally convince.

**Rob Ellis,
Regents Park College**

The Provocative Church. **Graham Tomlinson.** SPCK £9.99.

The only thing "provocative" about this book is the grossly understated argument; such a matter of fact, down to earth thesis evokes the response "Well isn't that obvious?". Our problem is that the obvious is not a reality in many churches. For example, this blindingly obvious statement "This means that churches have to work hard at keeping Jesus at the centre, and the doors wide open." is followed by wonderful word pictures of churches where this obvious essential is not a reality. This makes one cringe with how far we are from what God may desire.

The book is about evangelism, but against the incisive critique of many evangelistic approaches, Tomlinson shows how evangelism will naturally follow if individuals and church communities simply live the reality of the lordship of Christ. The church will then become a reflection of Kingdom Life. It will not be perfect but will give a tantalising glimpse of that reality which is relevant today. This kind of church will be PROVOCATIVE. As Tomlinson says "Churches need to become provocative, arresting places which make the searcher, the casual visitor, want to come back for more."

This excellent book with a clearly laid out argument, derived from very user friendly theology, proposes a changed mindset and outworking of faith, backed up by a deep personal and corporate relationship with God. This ultimately cannot fail to make people who encounter the church question why and "come back for more.". Read it, get your elders and deacons to read it, also your evangelism team, social action team, pastoral care team, etc., etc. But beware, this is another book with a challenge to change. But in the midst of the change, I think you may find that your church becomes a living witness to the reality of the coming Kingdom.

Philip Mader-Grayston

HOLIDAYS 2003

The January issue of the *Journal* will feature the usual list of holiday accommodation.

Notices for inclusion in this feature need to be in the Editor's hands by mid-October:
hazel@stick57.fsnet.co.uk