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# The Baptist Ministers' Journal

October 2006

Vol 296  
ISSN 0968 - 2406

Editor: HAZEL SHERMAN

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the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship.

Details of the fellowship can be found  
on the inside back cover.

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reflect those of the Editor or the Editorial Board'

# Editorial

It is tempting to blame the late arrival of this Journal on the upheaval of a house move. Tempting, but knowing that a number of you have recently done the same, it is hardly a good reason why I should be more disorganised than anyone else.

But disorganisation brings both threat and unexpected promise. A copy of the Big Issue rests alongside a commentary on the book of Job; lists, and ordering, and the aspiration to a tidy mind leap out of the window as the computer and stationery and boxes of books are piled high in different corners.

Surrounded by technology which promises to help us organise our work and our leisure, we sometimes mistake organisation for creativity. The old habits of making a list and sitting back as if the tasks were done is always waiting to trip us up.

As ever, there is a theological issue lurking within these easily spotted traits of human behaviour. It is conveyed in text and story in the first chapter of Genesis where the collected Scriptures commence with a deliberate ordering of God's path and purpose for the created world. But it is immediately followed by a strong hint that this clarity is a little more messy than it seems, in a story about God who craves company and risks bestowing on humankind the freedom to respond to life in appropriate and inappropriate ways. It seems that God's capacity to create is not simply the will to order, and our need and capacity to order does not contain or resolve all the continuing questions of our lives.

The church to which I have recently moved is in the process of producing an Ecology Fayre: grappling with the subtle differences between 'ordering' and 'tending' the created world seems to me to reflect something significant about the way we work at all our relationships. Those which are tended well surprise us by the newness which emerges, those which are simply ordered are kept in their place but lack the space to grow. Just a thought.

We are grateful to the Keenan brothers Stuart and Chris as they take over the printing of this Journal from John Kemmett after his retirement.

Due to a change to 'camera ready copy' there may be errors in this issue - they are entirely the responsibility of the Editor!

## God, gender and worship (After Hampson – Part 2)

**Neil Brighton & Beth Allison.** In the last issue Neil Brighton (Poynton but until recently Keyworth) revisited the challenges posed by Daphne Hampson's book *After Christianity*: that the Christian faith is unbelievable and that the Christian conception of God is unethical because it derives from a masculinist mindset. He suggested that, in the light of an appreciation of Trinitarian theology, Hampson's reasons for rejecting Christianity are unfounded. In this issue Beth Allison (a member at Keyworth now a first year student reading theology at St Andrews) joins the debate and suggests that, within the local church, we have a long way to go<sup>1</sup>.

### **Beth:**

You say that sexist language is wrong and that feminine language for God is helpful but, unless I've missed something, the songs we sing in church and the words you preach don't show much evidence of your belief?

### **Neil:**

We need to distinguish between language used to speak of people and language used to speak of God. For some years I have only used inclusive language translations in reading Scripture and preaching. I also try not to use songs that have exclusive language. That isn't entirely straightforward; with older hymns the difficulty is that language has changed. 'Mankind' used to be inclusive of both male and female in a way that it isn't now. What I find inexcusable is the way modern songwriters use exclusive language when they could easily use inclusive language.

### **Beth:**

Such language, even in old hymns, is barely excusable; we would not allow racist texts to be used today on the account that they were written in the

past. But the problem is deeper than that. It is not just inclusive language, it is the mindset that marginalizes the feminine or treats women as second best. Look at the song "men of faith rise up and sing"<sup>2</sup> - its first verse is about men being strong in faith, the second is about women with broken hearts who know God's healing and it is typical of the stereotypes that the church has of men and women. Recently in the notices someone suggested that women who were at home could volunteer with something - it is so ingrained often people don't see it!

### **Neil:**

I've no doubt we have a long way to go in grappling with this but I hope that recognising the problem will make us pay attention to it. But I want to retain the language of Father, Son and Spirit when referring to God. This is not to suggest that God is male but is to recognise the manner of God's self revelation. God is not some great unknown but rather the one who is known by revelation. We understand who God is from the relationship between the Father and

the Son and their relationship with the Spirit. Perhaps we should think of it this way: that God is the Father, but is not father, God is the Son but is not son, God is the Spirit but is also Spirit. In naming God as 'the Father' or 'the Son' we are naming the persons of the Godhead who are constituted by their mutual relations and not analogically from human fatherhood or sonship. While language may be metaphorical, 'Father' 'Son' 'Spirit' refer to a specific God whose self revelation in history is seen as the Father of the Son. So, in the context of worship, addressing God as 'Father' is not the same as a more figurative use of father or mother to describe God's care for humanity or creation. When talking more descriptively of God's activity it is entirely appropriate that a range of terms is employed; indeed this appears to be what happens in Scripture. I am certainly not arguing that we should only ever call God 'Father'.

### **Beth:**

The question then is what was God revealing? I suggest that, for Israel, understanding a monotheistic God in the midst of pantheistic cultures was of greater importance than the gender implications implicit in naming God. The use of male pronouns such as 'he' would therefore be an obvious choice in a language that did not contain a polite, gender-neutral 'it'. But the linguistic game you play with what Father means is unrealistic. All language has conscious and subconscious links and there is no way a gender neutral understanding of Father can ever be fully grasped because you cannot get

away from the effect that words have on people. You differentiate between calling God the Father as a person in the trinity and talking about God as being like a father to humanity. However very few would understand that there is a difference here when worshipping and will confuse the two. What is more, understanding God to be Father as revealed in relation to the Son is really saying there is a father-son bond between the two. This suggests a father-son relationship is a reflection of God and *ergo* better than a mother-son relationship, a father-daughter relationship or a mother-daughter relationship. The result is a church that sees fatherhood as somehow sacred but not motherhood; fathers somehow being more in the image of God than mothers. This directly contradicts Genesis 1:27 that both male and female were made in the image of God and suggests that Hampson is right. There are other implications in what you say regarding how God's self has been revealed. If our understanding of God the Father is based entirely on the other persons of the Godhead, how was God revealed to Israel in a time before Jesus' incarnation? The problem is that naming and understanding God in this way has only happened since. Instead of who God the Father was to God the Son, the issue then was who God was to Israel. God is referred to in the Old Testament in a multitude of ways that showed this was how God was revealed to them. That we can find some, even if not many, descriptions of God as feminine in Scripture written in a society far more patriarchal than

ours, surely shows us the extent to which such feminine language must be needed today? Even Aquinas agreed that Scripture attributes to God what in our world would be attributed to both mother and father; even if his reasons for thinking it wrong to speak of God as Mother may be the result of poor biology. As the Father God of the Bible is described in mothering terms, calling God Mother would be true to the Bible's revelation. There is no reason to disallow this interchange unless there is some 'other' character revealed in Father but not in Mother - which would only be masculinity. However whether or not you accept this, when discussing whether we can use feminine language for the Godhead I believe it is vitally important to bear in mind that the manner of God's revelation to humanity has changed throughout history.

**Neil:**

The difficulty is that all language is in some respects provisional, meaning is defined in terms of language's users and their contexts, all of which play a role in the way we understand what particular words signify. So we need be careful in our use of words and seek to ensure that people understand what we are seeking to say. This has always been true; in its early years the church struggled with the Arian heresy that understood fatherhood in sexual and paternal ways. In the case of the use of father today there are two false assumptions that lie in the background. The first is the elevating of the masculine which owes something to the way that masculine behaviour

is, on occasion, projected onto God. The second is the presumption of hierarchy. Within the western tradition there has been a tendency to see the Father as being over the Son, often with the Spirit displaced and not essentially connected to the other two. This hierarchical understanding of God has fed into notions of hierarchy in the church and the wider world. If we pay more attention to the significance of relationality and mutuality within the Godhead we might discern both inclusiveness towards the other and a complete undermining of hierarchy.

**Beth:**

That's sounds OK – but what does it actually mean in practice? You are still refusing to use feminine language for God, which is inequality in and of itself, and has regrettable consequences. When it comes to preaching and church leadership people still think of men first and women second because of the language, and sometimes illustrations, used. Recently you baptised a teenage girl and in your sermon you never once referred to God using male pronouns. There you understood the need for this but you choose not to do that all the time, why not?

**Neil:**

As I preacher I try to use examples and illustrations that illuminate the world view I want to promote. Sometimes I deliberately seek to use things that refer to maternal images in God. While I don't draw attention to this I hope that gradually people's perceptions will change and that sometimes the way

I say things might provoke thought and reflection. In worship the words we use are a testimony to God and we ought to seek to speak accurately about God in order that God's glory might be seen in the things that we say and do. The words and concepts that we use are not primarily to enable us to project what we believe about God but should be based on what God has made known. I struggle to be sensitive to people, in particular to the way that the words mother and father can resonate differently for men and women, but the only God that I can point people to is the one revealed to us through Jesus.

**Beth:**

But the average person in the congregation won't realise you have used maternal imagery! If you don't draw attention to what you are doing people pass over it and don't notice. I think that you are too scared to point out exactly what you mean. If you are worried about God's glory not being fully reflected in feminine language why not include more about God as an omniscient, transcendent God who is outside human understanding? Why is it that you are afraid of God's glory not being revealed through personal language? It is you who so often states that God being ineffable, omniscient and transcendent, whilst true, is too heavily based on a Greek notion of God, and misses out points such as God's self revelation when used as a sole definition. Also, you are stating that feminine language is not good enough for God! Or, as exclusive use of male language means that

those aspects of God that are more associated with femininity are ignored, it is as if the feminine aspects of God are not good enough to worship.

**Neil:**

I'm careful because I want to encourage people on a journey not alienate them, though I accept this may be interpreted by some as cowardice. I'm also hopeful for the future because the preachers and ministers that will come from today's young people won't have the same hang ups as their parents. The attention over the last 100 years on the person and work of the Holy Spirit is also a hopeful sign. I know that charismatic renewal hasn't been at the forefront of this debate but any serious reflection on the Spirit will, in time, lead to a re-evaluation of the way that we do church. The focus on relationships, on wholeness, on intimacy and on experiencing faith at a practical level rather than an as an abstract concept will change the church. It is within the Spiritual traditions of the church, that women have played a more prominent role (consider the contributions made by Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila for example) and as the church finds the need to explore more non-institutional ways of living these writers will be seen as role models. In addition, while I understand the reluctance of some female theologians to conceive of the Holy Spirit using feminine language I suspect that these aspects of the Spirit's work will result in a greater appreciation of those aspects of God's nature that are often understood as feminine.<sup>3</sup>

## **Beth:**

I'm also reluctant to use feminine language for the Spirit exclusively because it risks sectioning off one third of God to be female and also implies male dominance. Whether or not hierarchy in the Trinity should exist, small things such as the order of the terminology of 'Father, Son, Spirit' will create the impression of a divine handmaiden to a God otherwise named in seemingly masculine terms. This will not have a liberating, but rather a detrimental effect on women. For many, Mother would be a more natural name for God, especially when considering the role God plays as creator and carer. If gender is not an issue in naming the persons of the Godhead, as you argue with Father, then why should it be problematic to use a term which calls upon the same person and refers to the same relationship of parental love? Julian of Norwich called Christ Mother and you have no issues with using feminine terms for the Spirit, so why can we not do the same for the remaining person of the Godhead? Rather than being alienated by language, should we not allow people to name God with what many consider to be the greatest term of respect? A major part of the problem of naming God is the inadequacy of language. If 'the Father' does not mean male and if the gender of 'the Son' does not reflect on the rest of the Godhead, then God is not male in either a strictly biological, behavioural or socially conceived way. The only way that the frequently acknowledged attributes of God are not undermined is if God is named by using male

and female terms to reflect different aspects of God's whole.

## **Conclusion**

Our discussions about the extent to which feminine language can be used have lasted many hours and will continue for many more. While we differ in our conclusions, we agree wholeheartedly that these thoughts touch on vital issues for church life today. We would therefore like to invite you and your church to consider the following questions:

- Is it acceptable to interchange 'feminine' and 'masculine' terms for God?
- How does our use of either male and female or male only terms affect people's relationship with God?
- Is there a link between our choice of language for God and the equality that women have in church life?
- How could your church congregation work to ensure that worship and preaching are inclusive?

1 Theologically the context of Keyworth Baptist Church could be described as evangelical and fluffy charismatic.

2 'Men of faith' by Martin Smith copyright 1995 Curious? Music UK / Adm. by Kingsway Thankyou Music

3 That this might encourage a debate about how men feel in churches which are predominately female and whose styles of worship seem alien to them highlights our blindness to the way our current patterns can alienate women.



# A Biblical Basis for Affirming Women in Ministry Part 1

Simon Woodman, South Wales Baptist College

## Introduction

My first thought on coming to prepare this paper was, 'what right do I have to pass judgement on whether women can minister in Christ's church?' I am a white, (aspiring) middle-class male, and as such have not faced the frustration of having my own ministry rejected through reasons I can do nothing about. However, what I believe I can do is to provide a biblical basis for my own opinion on this controversial subject. I am an evangelical, a Baptist minister, and wholly committed to the Bible as holy scripture. I also have a strong concern for issues of justice, righteousness, and liberation, and it seems to me that where injustice and oppression are present, there the gospel is distorted. It has never struck me as a reasonable argument to suggest that one's gender should provide a suitable means for determining one's suitability for ministry. The Bible is quite clear on the qualities that are required for Christian ministry,<sup>1</sup> and provided an individual, of whatever gender, satisfies these requirements it is my belief that they are suitable to minister in the church. As a colleague of mine remarked when I asked his opinion on whether women should be ministers: 'It depends on the woman.'

## Biblical Support for Women in Ministry

*Galatians 3:26-29*

Galatians 3:28 reads, 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.'<sup>2</sup> Paul's grand statement to the Galatian church of the value-base of the new community of Christ's people is a natural starting point for this discussion of women in ministry. Paul has just outlined his doctrine of justification by faith,<sup>3</sup> and has explained Christian freedom from the law.<sup>4</sup> He then goes on to spell out the implications for Christian believers of their being justified by faith and not by the law. He says that those who are 'in

Christ',<sup>5</sup> those who have been 'baptised into Christ',<sup>6</sup> have been brought into a series of new relationships.<sup>7</sup> They have new relationships spiritually,<sup>8</sup> racially,<sup>9</sup> socially, economically,<sup>10</sup> and sexually.<sup>11</sup>

For Paul the old, law-based, divisions in humanity have been rendered inapplicable to those who are in Christ.<sup>12</sup> Paul envisages a new humanity coming into being through Christ, in which all persons are equal in the sight of God.<sup>13</sup> Hence, it is inappropriate within the Christian community to distinguish one person from another using divisions based on race, class, or gender. In this way, Paul is setting out his ideal for Christian relationships and behaviour, and it is the position of this author that

Paul's ideal holds as true within the contemporary Christian church as it did in the embryonic one.

However, as Paul is well aware, this new humanity of those who are in Christ still has to live in the midst of the old humanity comprised of those who are under the law. He recognises that his ideal is not yet fully achievable. Hence, just a few paragraphs later in his letter to the Galatians, Paul is able to say, 'you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.'<sup>14</sup> In Christ there is neither slave nor free, yet those who are in Christ must become slaves to one another. Paul does not shy away from asking Christians to sacrifice the freedoms that are theirs in Christ, for the sake of the unity and public witness of the church.

We will be looking shortly at three notorious instances where Paul asks the women of the Christian community to sacrifice their freedom in Christ, in order that the unity and witness of the church be preserved. But before turning to these passages, we will first look at some biblical examples of women ministering in the community of Christ's people.

### **Women ministering in the Bible**

The Old Testament contains a number of examples of women fulfilling significant leadership roles. Miriam the Prophetess is listed alongside Aaron and Moses as one sent to lead

Israel;<sup>15</sup> Deborah is described as a judge of Israel, and her military and spiritual authority are clear to see;<sup>16</sup> and Huldah the prophetess provided divine instruction to Josiah, the king of Judah.<sup>17</sup>

In the gospels, Jesus is seen as accepting and affirming women,<sup>18</sup> teaching them and including them among his disciples.<sup>19</sup> Women also participated in the proclamation of the gospel,<sup>20</sup> and many are specifically named.<sup>21</sup> Too much significance should not be attached to the fact that women are not named among the twelve disciples, as it would have been culturally impossible to have women as part of such an intimate group of men.<sup>22</sup> What is significant and remarkable in the gospels is the extent to which women were included in the life and ministry of Jesus, and the roles they are given at key points in the story. This pattern continues in Luke's second volume, the book of Acts, where he includes miraculous stories about women,<sup>23</sup> and portrays women as patrons,<sup>24</sup> church hosts,<sup>25</sup> and prophets.<sup>26</sup>

In Paul's life and ministry as recorded in the New Testament, twelve women are named as Paul's co-workers in ministry.<sup>27</sup> It needs to be remembered that Paul's context is one where most people were functionally illiterate, and that those with sufficient education to teach and lead were almost always men.<sup>28</sup> Hence, to have this number of women working alongside him marks Paul as highly progressive in terms of the standards of his day.

In Romans 16:1-2, Paul commends Phoebe, the bearer of his letter and a deacon of the church in Cenchreae, as someone the Romans may trust to explain the letter to them.<sup>29</sup> Later in the same passage Paul also mentions Prisca,<sup>30</sup> who ministered alongside her husband,<sup>31</sup> Tryphaena and Tryphosa who are described as workers in the Lord,<sup>32</sup> and Junia who he includes as one of the apostles.<sup>33</sup> In his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul speaks of Euodia and Syntyche as his co-workers.<sup>34</sup> Paul also expects that women will fulfil the role of prophet,<sup>35</sup> which he ranks second only to the role of apostle.<sup>36</sup> It appears that Paul took seriously his statement of Galatians 3:28, that in Christ there is no longer male and female, and that he welcomed the ministry of women in the normal course of his pastoral practise.

### The Difficult Passages

There are three key difficult passages that need consideration in any biblically-based discussion of women in ministry. Within the scope of this paper, it will not be possible to do a full exegesis of each of these, so greater attention will be given to 1 Cor 11:2-16, which is the primary text. Comments will then be made about the other passages, to indicate ways in which they may also be interpreted.<sup>37</sup>

#### 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Central to any debate about this passage is the conclusion reached concerning Paul's use of the word

'head' in verse 3.<sup>38</sup> In modern usage, 'head' implies a sense of authority, as is seen in the sentence: 'He was promoted to become the head of the company.' However, in Paul's time 'head' did not automatically imply a sense of authority. Anatomically, people were not understood as thinking with their heads – rather, conscious and emotive thought were understood to originate in the breast or the stomach.<sup>39</sup> The head was the place through which nourishment entered the body<sup>40</sup> and from which speech flowed, and in this way it was frequently seen as the *source* or *origin* of life and relationship.<sup>41</sup> Therefore the head was not seen as directing the body in the way in which we would understand it today, and we need to be careful not to impose our modern perspective upon Paul's usage.

So, if it is unlikely that Paul was intending his use of 'head' to indicate a relationship of authority, what did he mean when he said that, 'Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ'? Paul appears to have in mind the understanding of 'head' as *source* and *origin*, something which becomes clearer in verses 8 and 12 where he speaks twice more of man as the source of woman. Paul is obviously here drawing on the story of creation, where woman originated from man, just as Paul would see the Son originating from the Father, and all creation originating from the Son.<sup>42</sup> Paul is putting forward here, not an argument for authority, but a series of three analogous relationships to try

and explain to the Corinthian church that man and woman relate to each other as the head relates to the body, as the Father relates to the Son, and as the Son relates to humanity. His point is that just as humanity found its source in Christ, and Christ found his source in God, so woman finds her source in man, as is evidenced in the order of creation.<sup>43</sup> Paul is not here suggesting an ordering based on dominating authority, with superior and subordinate. Rather, he is likening the relationship of man and woman, with that of Christ and humanity, and of God and Christ. The relationship between the Father and the Son functions, in Paul's mind, as an image for the way in which Christ and humanity, and man and woman, relate to each other. This relationship is not one of subordination, but is rather a relationship of interdependence and unity.

Some have argued that there is an inherent subordination in the relationship between the Father and the Son, and that this provides a model for a relationship of subordination between man and woman. This is not a new argument, as discussions on the power relationships within the Trinity occupied the minds of many of the early church fathers. The orthodox position<sup>44</sup> was that the Son and the Father are coequal, rather than superior and subordinate. Scriptural backing for this position can be found in a number of key texts,<sup>45</sup> and John Chrysostom (Archbishop of Constantinople AD 398-404) used the word 'heretic' to describe those who

would seek to understand 'head' in terms of authority, preferring instead to see headship as denoting origin and source.<sup>46</sup> If, therefore, it is not appropriate to try and understand the Father-Son relationship in terms of a divinely ordained hierarchy, neither is it appropriate to extrapolate from this to see unequal submission as part of the natural order of male-female relationships.<sup>47</sup>

The broader context of 11:3 is a passage which is primarily concerned with hairstyles and propriety in worship, and an obvious link can be seen between Paul's discussion of head-coverings and hairstyles, and the relationship of 'head'-ship that he has proposed between Christ, man, woman, and God. To understand Paul's logic here, it is necessary to realise that Paul was writing to a specific situation, and was therefore using the arguments which he thought would best convince the intended recipients of his letter.<sup>48</sup> His logic may seem convoluted to the modern reader, because we are reading his words in a context far removed from that of the original recipients. It is important to note that Paul refrains from giving instructions as to how women should dress, and neither does he argue that woman is subordinate to man. Rather, he draws supporting arguments from creation and nature<sup>49</sup> to convince the Corinthian Christians that, for the sake of propriety, certain head-coverings were appropriate in worship and some were not. In Jewish custom, a woman's head covering was indicative of her commitment to her husband,

and in Roman culture, women would cover their heads for worship, whereas Greek women would not.<sup>50</sup> Women's hairstyles could also make both social and sexual statements, and in the cosmopolitan city of Corinth, where class conflict and sexual politics were rife, it is easy to see why Paul was concerned that this should not become a controversial issue in the church.<sup>51</sup> However, as is clear from verse 16, Paul is not here seeking to make a grand theological point. Rather, he is concerned to avoid controversy and preserve propriety.

Overall, then, 1 Cor 11:2-16 does not lend itself to an understanding of male authority. It recognises that the male-female relationship parallels those between God and Christ, and between Christ and humanity, in terms of interdependence and unity. Paul is using this parallel to make an intensely pastoral point about propriety in public worship, and his intention in writing was not to deal with gender issues, but to provide pastoral instruction in a specific context. Paul's priorities were love, unity and good witness,<sup>52</sup> and whilst the freedom of Galatians 3:28 may be his ideal, this freedom didn't mean that the believers were free to throw off all customs to the detriment of the church's unity and public witness.

In the next issue, we will be looking more briefly at 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15 before drawing some conclusions.

- 1 Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 1 Pet 5:1-4.
- 2 All Bible references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise specified.
- 3 Gal 3:1-14.
- 4 Gal 3:15-25. See Caird, *Paul and Women's Liberty*, 1972, 271.
- 5 Gal 3:26.
- 6 Gal 3:27.
- 7 Longenecker, *Galatians*, 1990, 159.
- 8 As 'children of God' Gal 3:26, and as those who have been clothed with Christ Gal 3:27.
- 9 Gal 3:28, 'there is no longer Jew or Greek'.
- 10 Gal 3:28, 'there is no longer slave or free'.
- 11 Gal 3:28, 'there is no longer male and female'. Jesus' comments about resurrected humans being like angels, and not given in marriage, are of relevance here. Jesus does not say that the resurrected are without sexual identity, but rather that identity is transformed and presumably finds expression in other ways. See Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34-35.
- 12 For further examples of Paul's radical revising of human boundaries, see 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 2:14-15; and Col 3:11.
- 13 Eph 2:15.
- 14 Gal 5:13.
- 15 Exodus 15:20-21; Micah 6:4.
- 16 Judges 4:4-10.
- 17 2 Kings 22:14-20.
- 18 See, for example, Matt 8:14-15; 9:18-26; Luke 13:11-17. Scholer, *Women*, 1992, 881.
- 19 See Matt 27:55-56; Luke 8:1-3; 10:38-42; Acts 1:14. Scholer, *Women*, 1992, 882.
- 20 See the roles played by Elizabeth; Mary, and Anna in Luke 1:5-2:40. See also John 4:39; Matt 28:1-10. Scholer, *Women*, 1992, 883.
- 21 There are seventeen named women in the gospels. Scholer, *Women*, 1992, 884-885.
- 22 Scholer, *Women*, 1992, 886.
- 23 Acts 9:32-42; 16:16-18. Keener, *Woman and Man*, 1997, 1206.
- 24 See Tabitha in Acts 9:36, 39 who supported widows, and Lydia in Acts 16:15. Keener, *Woman and Man*, 1997, 1206.

- 25 Acts 12:12.
- 26 Acts 2:17, 18; 21:9.
- 27 See Acts 16:14-15, 40; Rom 16:1-16; 1 Cor 1:11; Phil 4:2-3; Col 4:15. Scholer, *Women*, 1992, 886.
- 28 Keener, *Man and Woman*, 1993, 589.
- 29 Keener, *Man and Woman*, 1993, 589.
- 30 Rom 16:3.
- 31 See also their joint ministry in Acts 18:26, where they are together instructing Apollos. See also 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19.
- 32 Rom 16:12.
- 33 Rom 16:7. Scholars are generally agreed that Junia is a female name. Keener, *Man and Woman*, 1993, 589. Richard Bauckham intriguingly suggests that she may be synonymous with the Joanna of Luke 8:1-3. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 2002, 109-202.
- 34 Phil 4:2-3.
- 35 1 Cor 11:5.
- 36 1 Cor 12:28. Keener, *Man and Woman*, 1993, 590.
- 37 The three passages covered in this paper are those which have typically been used to justify restricting the ministry of women in the church. There are other difficult passages concerning the role of women within the household which are beyond the scope of this paper. These would include Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-4:1; 1 Tim 5:14; Titus 2:1-14; 1 Peter 3:1-7. It is worth noting that it is the view of this author that these passages have been similarly misunderstood, and that it is inappropriate to argue on the basis of them for anything other than absolute equality within male-female relationships.
- 38 I am particularly grateful to Liz Woodman for allowing me to draw on her unpublished research on this passage.
- 39 See Gen 6:5 and Gen 43:30 (KJV) for examples of this.
- 40 See Eph 4:15-16; Col 2:19 for examples of Paul using 'head' in this way.
- 41 Kroeger, *Head*, 1993, 375.
- 42 See Col 2:15-18 for a passage where Paul spells out clearly his understanding of Christ as the source of creation, and as the head, or source, of the church.
- 43 Gen 2:21-23. This passage needs to be read alongside Gen 1:26-27, where male and female are both created in the image of God. To argue on the basis of the Genesis 2 creation account that woman is an inferior helper to man would be to take it out of context: Woman is created in the image of God just as man is.
- 44 As argued by Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Basil, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Eusebius. Kroeger, *Head*, 1993, 377.
- 45 John 1:1-3; 10:30; 14:9, 11; 16:15; 17:11, 21.
- 46 Kroeger, *Head*, 1993, 377.
- 47 Paul speaks of mutual submission as integral to his understanding of Christian marriage. Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18.
- 48 Keener, *Man and Woman*, 1993, 585.
- 49 Paul's statement in verse 10, 'because of the angels' most likely refers to the angels who will be judged by the believers (1 Cor 6:3). If this is the case, then Paul's concern here is that propriety not be breached in such a serious matter. Keener, *Man and Woman*, 1993, 586.
- 50 Keener, *Man and Woman*, 1993, 585.
- 51 See 1 Cor 11:21-22 for an example of how Paul is concerned about class conflict in the church. Keener, *Man and Woman*, 1993, 585.
- 52 See 1 Cor 10:32-33; 14:40.

# BMF Matters

## Jim Clarke - more than just a treasurer...

... although for those of us less numerate than others, "just a treasurer" is still something aspirational! At the certain risk of embarrassing him, though, we would want to record our thanks and appreciation to Jim for the enormous amount of work which he has put into the Fellowship and its organisation, with an alert pastoral sense and practical skill. The Benevolent Fund, the management of subscriptions and the distribution of the Journal have been amongst his duties. It speaks volumes that on his retirement some of his tasks have had to be separated in order to find able and willing volunteers to take them on.

He recently reflected on some of the changes over the years, particularly in the distribution of the Journal:

"I first came on to the BMF Committee in 1971 as the representative of the Central Area and took over the production and distribution of the "Fraternal" at the beginning of 1977. Until that time the magazine had been produced free of charge by the family printing firm of the Revd Sidney Morris, one of the founders of the BMF, and for many years its secretary. For this reason the annual subscription, (normally collected by the local ministers' meetings) was only 50p a year or 25p for retired ministers. However, during 1976 the BMF Committee was informed that the Saffron Walden company would be closing down, and that from January 1977 we would need to make other arrangements. The subscription barely covered the postage of the magazines, and the Fellowship was likely to cease producing a journal. At that point I volunteered to try to find another printer and work out an economical way to continue the "Fraternal". In the first instance this was by using the simplest method of type-setting and printing, with everything else being done "in-house" - the collating, folding, stapling, trimming and the enveloping being done by the Clarke children - receiving 1p for each completed magazine! In the first year we were able to produce four editions for a total of £500. Gradually a more realistic subscription enabled us to build up the funds sufficiently to have all of the work done professionally, and the vastly improved technology now results in a very well produced magazine in a much shorter turn-round time.

Back in 1977 many of the magazines were distributed through the local Ministers' meetings, who regarded this as a way of keeping in touch especially with those unable to attend the meetings regularly. Today no magazines are sent out in parcels, except to the Colleges, Didcot and some of the BMF Officers. Although, interestingly three of the Australian States now receive their "Journals" en bloc and distribute them locally."

The Journal which you receive every quarter has always been something of a cottage industry production, and in order to continue it will remain so.

So, thank-you Jim - and Eileen alongside you - for the example and faithful service you have shared with us. And thanks in anticipation to Neils Waugh who succeeds him as Treasurer next year, and to the volunteers who will help with the distribution of the Journal.

## **From the BMF ANNUAL REPORT 2006**

Our thanks are expressed to Geoff Colmer our Chairman. We have greatly valued his contribution to the life of the Fellowship alongside his considerable responsibilities as Regional Minister in the Central Association.

During the last twelve months the Committee has been involved in discussions, some ongoing, relating to a wide range of issues which currently affect and support our ministry. Among these have been:

- Employment Rights and Disciplinary Procedures
- Code of Ethics (initiated by the Colleges)
- CRB Enhanced Disclosures for ministers
- Inland Revenue Tax Status for Ministers in Training
- Locally Recognised Ministers
- Adoption of New Constitution
- Local Ministers Fellowship Groups
- Issues relating to "Manse Life"
- Ethnic Minority Churches – recognition and offers of fellowship support
- Church Administration and ministers
- Meeting with BUGB Senior Management Team relating to ministry matters
- Continuing production of the Journal
- The Benevolent Fund
- Active links with
  - Retired Baptist Ministers' Housing Society
  - The Pension Fund
  - Connexion (Married to Baptists in Ministry and Mission)

In July 2005 we hosted a Buffet Reception for ministers at the Baptist World Centenary Congress in the Banqueting Suite in the Birmingham Council House. It was a memorable occasion providing for about 400 to attend from every continent.

The members of the Committee are glad to be part of the support of those in ministry in these days. They especially value the Fellowship's commitment to pray for each other every Sunday morning.

Derek J Keenan, April 2006

## **Pastoral Exchange Offer New South Wales, Australia**

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# 'Keep Sunday special' - the contemporary relevance of the 'day of the Lord'.

Hetty and Pieter Lalleman, Spurgeon's College

New Testament Christians confess that, although not binding in the way they were for the people of Israel, the Ten Commandments are still relevant for us today. Commandments such as the acknowledgement of only one God, respect for parents and the prohibitions of murder and fornication are moral guidelines for our life and ministry. But what is the abiding significance of the command to observe a weekly day of rest? This article is offered as a reflection for the benefit of colleagues, personally as well as in their teaching and proclamation.<sup>1</sup> It is in three parts which deal with the biblical, social and practical aspects of the topic respectively.

## 1. Biblical notes

### Creation

Let's first of all note that the sabbath goes back further in history than the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20, Deut 5). The institution of the sabbath is already part of the account of creation which emphasises that God worked for six days and made the seventh into a day of rest. This thought from the early chapters of Genesis is repeated in Exodus (20:8-11).

According to Judaism and Christianity, the week of seven days with one day of rest is part of the order of creation as it existed long before the covenant with Israel and this pattern still forms the foundation for human life. It is an inherent part of the work of grace which is creation and it is for all humans to enjoy. The fact that law and covenant were added later, to be fulfilled in Christ, still leaves this foundational institution in place.

### Liberation

Scripture also contains references to the hard times the people of Israel endured in Egypt and to the exodus which liberated them (Deut 5:15). This suggests that the sabbath is a sign of God's liberating work in this world. It is therefore not a negative rule, no prohibition, but a positive opportunity to celebrate freedom from enslaving labour. More on this below; suffice to say here that whereas historical-critical thinking might want to ask questions such as which is earlier or more original, the connection with creation or with the exodus, narrative-canonical approaches urge us to accept both motives as mutually affirmative. The idea of the weekly rest has roots in both Genesis and Exodus, in creation and in redemption.

### Pars pro toto

The Latin *pars pro toto* denotes the idea that part of a whole can stand as representative for that whole. In biblical theology the concept of *pars pro toto*

occurs when the LORD would have required something in its entirety but is satisfied to receive part of it. Thus he makes it clear to his people Israel that he is entitled to make all of them or all their firstborn his servants, but that he was satisfied to take just the tribe of Levi as representatives and to make them priests and levites in his service (Num 3:12; 8:14-17). Likewise God had a claim on all animals but he was happy just to receive the firstborn (Ex 22:29-30). Again, he could have asked for 100% of each person's possessions and income but he contented himself with tithes (Deut 14:22-29). Thus he also holds a claim on the full attention and time of human beings but he was happy to settle for one day per week. This day as *pars pro toto* represents all, so that that one day symbolises our entire lives and provides guidance for the other days.

Seen in this light the LORD's Day means that God has a claim on all our time and energy, on our full and undivided attention. It enables us to reflect on whether we are spending the rest of the week in the way God would like us to and to gain strength for six days of labour. The fact that the Sunday<sup>2</sup> is "the day of the LORD" in no way implies that other days are not also days of the LORD. Of all days one has been set apart as a kind of tithe.

### **Daniel**

Other concepts and stories from the Old Testament support "keeping Sunday special". Here we will only discuss two, the first of which specifically mentions the sabbath. During the wilderness journey to the promised land the people

depended on God's provision of manna. They were worried that the obligatory rest would bring them into trouble but God taught them to trust. On the sixth day there was manna for two days. Those who went to look for some on the seventh day did not find any, and whereas manna would normally only last a day, the manna gathered on the sixth day also lasted another day (Ex 16:13-30).

The second story relates to Daniel. According to Daniel 1:8-16, he and his friends avoided pagan food and lived on a *kosher* diet. At the end of a ten-day trial period it turned out they were healthier than the other young men at court. Observing a disciplined regime turned out, under the blessing of God, to be a beneficial way of life. In the same way contemporary believers would not be worse off if they abstained from their regular activities for a day in order to focus on God. God would surely bless whatever was done out of love and respect for his statutes.

### **The New Testament**

In Judaism at the time of Jesus the sabbath had given rise to a whole system of detailed regulations which for many people turned the sabbath into a burden rather than a blessing. This is the background against which we read the New Testament stories about how Jesus approached the issue. Jesus healed people on sabbath and in doing so incited opposition from certain groups. He declared himself to be superior to the sabbath:

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath. So the

Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27-28).

Yet Jesus did respect the idea of the sabbath: he attended synagogue on that day. In his teaching he emphasised that he had not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it. He used the sabbath to do good things for people and to save them.

The apostle Paul told Christians not to condemn each other over issues such as the observation of the sabbath (Col 2:16). Discussions about special days were to be avoided (Rom 14:5, 6; Gal 4:10). Acts 20:7 tells us that the Christian community met on the first day of the week and was addressed by Paul. Of the churches in Galatia and Corinth Paul asks that they will lay some money aside for the church in Jerusalem on every first day of the week (1 Cor 16:2).

All this shows that Christianity stuck to the idea of the weekly day of the LORD without its legalistic side-effects. It also shows that gentile Christians moved from the seventh day, the sabbath, to the first day of the week, the Sunday, whereas Jewish Christians continued to meet on the sabbath – but this process is not well documented and irrelevant for our present purpose. Some Christians continue to rest and worship on the Saturday, among whom are Seventh Day Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists.

We would suggest that the above provides us with enough incentives to "keep Sunday special" as the day which the LORD gave to his children. By this we mean that we avoid work as much as possible and instead take time for God,

our neighbours and ourselves. In what follows we will add some other reasons for doing this which we see as valid arguments in reflecting on a Christian lifestyle. We will use the words sabbath and Sunday as interchangeable.

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A Jewish legend says that God told the people of Israel at Sinai: "Children, if you accept the Torah and follow its requirements, I will give you a priceless gift." "What kind of gift would that be?" the Israelites asked. "The future world!" "Tell us how the future world will be", the children of Israel urged. But God replied: "I have already given you the sabbath. The sabbath tastes like the future world."

## **2. Human motives**

### **The family**

Despite the fact that we work shorter weeks than our ancestors and despite the invention of tools and apparatuses, we are busier and more stressed than we would like. One of the first victims of this busyness is our family, despite the fact that families are God's good gift to us. Educationalists tell us that children profit enormously from the attention of their parents. The sabbath gives us ample opportunities to spend time with our children, to undertake things together, to listen to them and to talk to them.

What is said about children also applies to other relatives such as parents, and even to friends. For contacts with all such people the sabbath was created and we ignore it to our peril.

...p.20

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## PUTTING A VALUE ON PROTECTING YOUR CHURCH ...

Last year we celebrated our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary representing a remarkable achievement and underlining our enduring partnership with the Baptist Community. Today we insure the majority of the UK's Baptist churches, which number around 3000. Many problems suffered by churches today which result in claims, such as arson and malicious damage, are symptomatic of our changing society and were not issues in 1905 when the BIC first started. In terms of maintaining churches too, while many are modern structures are easier to look after; a significant number of churches are older buildings, which inevitably suffer the effects of time and weather. Keeping them in good working order is challenging enough, but as well as this, legislation presents an added burden for the church officials.

### A Wider Role

While no one would disagree that it is essential to create secure environments and keep people safe, the statutory obligations for churches have become more onerous. As the Baptist community's principal insurer, the role of the BIC too, has in turn become broader. The raft of legislation in respect of health and safety, child protection and physical disablement, means that as never before, the BIC surveyor needs to be fully versed in Health and Safety legislation. This is in addition to the expertise needed to establish the correct level of insurance cover.

### The BIC Surveyor

Carrying out anywhere between 2 and 4 surveys a day, our Surveyor must have a critical eye and take a methodical approach. Not only in determining the value of the church and its contents, but in looking at areas of the buildings or grounds that may present a threat to security or safety. The observations a Surveyor makes may be on the potential danger of fire presented by an electrical junction box, or one concerning access to the building. With many churches now serving as 'community complexes', the number of people using the church and its buildings will be many and vary enormously. The Surveyor takes an objective view based on experience. Keeping tabs for example, on points of entry to the building is common sense but a risk may not always be so apparent to those who use the buildings regularly, particularly outside user groups.

### Free Survey

Our team of Surveyors are the face of the Baptist Insurance Company. A full church survey is carried out either on request or as part of a regular programme and is free of charge. A report will be provided to the church giving guidance on valuation and drawing attention to statutory obligations, such as health and safety, provision for disabled people and child protection policy recommendations. Ultimately, however, it is the decision and responsibility of the church to decide whether or not to act upon the information given.

Help on all of the areas covered in a church survey is published by the BIC and available on request. This material gives guidance on insuring your church and fulfilling statutory obligations. If you have a specific concern about your church insurance, or would like to arrange a review of your insurance, a survey, or receive information please call the Baptist Insurance Company on **0845 070 2223**.

Yours Sincerely

Alf Green ACII ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

## Limited or free?

Sometimes Sunday is experienced as a day of limitations instead of as a day of opportunities. So many things were not allowed.... On proper reflection, there are scores of things which are allowed on that day. The great thing is that we have time available because we don't have to go to work or to school. We can do good and pleasant things: celebrate the mighty deeds of God, preferably together with our Christian brothers and sisters. Celebrate the victory of Jesus over death. Reflect and meditate on God to gain strength for the working week which waits. Meet people we love or are concerned about. Relax. Have time for a proper meal and the fellowship it offers. Do something for a neighbour. That is entirely in line with the example Jesus gave us.

Sunday therefore is a day to fill in a positive way. Doing this will put all our ordinary work in a different light. We begin the new week with a special day. (Our diaries which begin the week with Monday are wrong as is our word 'weekend' when used with reference to both Saturday and Sunday.) Life appears in a special light through the presence of God and his day can form a picture of what life is meant to be. All this makes us realise that in the end our dependence is on him and not on work, money or whatever.

## General public interest

The Old Testament commandment extends beyond the individual. In the somewhat patriarchal words of Deuteronomy 5:14 which are slightly more elaborate than those of Exodus 20:10:

On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do.

This shows us that sabbath was just as much a blessing for the children, the servants, the animals and the foreigners as it was for the free adults. In our terms, it was not just for the middle class but for all of society. As such it is a social institution: a day off for everybody. The horses and camels are to enjoy a rest just as much as their taskmasters. Israel understood how this was meant to work through the reference to its period in Egypt. As former slaves they could imagine what a day off would mean for their workers.

Consequently, the sabbath made one's position in society irrelevant: rich and poor, master and servant, they all enjoyed the same day off. Their ordinary activities which distinguished them came to a standstill as they were all meant to be free. In that sense the slave was not a slave on that day! His boss could not ask him to serve him in the usual way.

When Christians meet on the Sunday, the equality should also show. On that day they can sit side by side praising God, the company director and the manual labourer. All seats are free, the rich have no special places. What people do or don't do on Mondays makes no difference to our worship. In the church other things count. A community of faith is fundamentally different from a social ladder.

The interruption of normal social life on the sabbath also implies that on this day it does not matter so much whether one be rich or poor. We are set free from our money because we are not supposed to earn or to spend any. Whereas the god of money would want us to slave seven days a week, the God of grace grants a day off.

### **Climax**

The Jewish author Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972) argues that sabbath is the climax of life. It is celebrated with hands, tongue and soul. The celebration of sabbath is expressed in how you dress, in your food, and in your activities. Humankind can enjoy harmony and rest. The achievements of modern society can be enjoyed but there is no pressure to do so. In turning your back to them you can show for a day that they have not yet enslaved you. Only then you are truly free. In fact it turns out that you can cope quite well without many of the so-called blessings of society, liberated from money and possessions. Insights such as those of Heschel enrich our lives and help us to see Sunday as the antidote against the treadmill of consumerism.

### **Not a circle**

The biblical view of time is not that of a circle in which everything is endlessly repeated, but of a line and of progress. The idea of the circle was found among the nations surrounding Israel and it still dominates Hinduism and Buddhism. According to the Bible God is on the move, life has a destination and we live towards God's future. This implies that no two days are identical. There is no need to fall into a routine. Each week

begins with a Sunday to commemorate the most decisive moment in history which is behind us, and this day sets the tone of the week. All we do takes place in the light of what we confessed on Sunday.

### **Testimony**

A simple reason why Sunday is neglected is the absence of good examples and the influence of other examples. People simply imitate each other without sufficient critical reflection. Yet sloppy thinking and parrot behaviour are never to be recommended. All Christians together celebrating the Sunday could still make quite an impact. After all, despite secularisation the churches still draw larger crowds than football or any other sport. Together we might show the vitality of Christianity.

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'The sabbath is the visible sign that humankind lives by grace and not by works. The human who is degraded to a machine needs rest in order to clarify his thinking, to purify his feelings and to reorient his will.' (Bonhoeffer)

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### **3. Practicalities**

We are keeping this section on how exactly to practise the Sunday short. It would be wrong to legislate for others, and people's situations are endlessly diverse. Our aim here is no more than to remove some possible misunderstandings and to make some suggestions.

The Sunday as the day of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus cannot simply be equated with the sabbath. Sunday has not just replaced the

sabbath. Before the recognition of the church by the state almost everybody had to go to work on the Sunday so that meetings would take place before or after hours. Only much later the idea arose that Sunday is a Christian version of the sabbath, which never found much adherence. Article 21 of the Westminster Confession represents a minority position.

We are allowed to celebrate the Sunday. On that day we do not kill the time but we fill it with real life. So... do we know what that real life is?

The element of rest, the abstinence from work, is not an aim in itself but a means to an end.

Sunday gives us the space to worship God and to relax. We have time for God and for each other. We can do what is good for ourselves and for others.

There are of course many professions in which people need to work on Sundays. If at all possible those affected should try to compensate by setting aside some other time during the week. Celebration in one form or another could be a deliberate part of it.

As a rule of thumb we could all seek to avoid making other people work for us. They have a right to a good life as well. In view of what we said about the power of money in our lives, it would be good to avoid doing shopping on Sunday. With current shop opening times during the week, there can hardly be any need to schedule shopping trips on Sundays. Pastors should not be exempt from the benefits of the sabbath. We are obviously aware that for many colleagues it is hard to set aside a day per week for

relaxation. The determinative factor would seem to be the cooperation of the church and its leaders. They should be aware not only of the blessings of the sabbath but also of the fact that no pastor is beyond human needs. In accordance with the thinking in the BU Ministry Department, Spurgeon's College now teaches students to be proactive in assuring a weekly day off; the general impression is that it can work if people are upfront about the issue. After all, even the animals were allowed to enjoy the peace of the sabbath...

'If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honourable, and if you honour it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.' (Isaiah 58:13-14)

1 The inspiration to develop and publish our thoughts came from hearing the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, during the celebration of 150 years of Spurgeon's College in June 2006.

2 See below for a discussion of the issue of sabbath – Sunday.

# Sharing the Gospel in a sexually permissive society: contemporary Baptist mission in the Western world

**Laurie Guy**, New Zealand. Lecturer in Church History, Carey Baptist College and School of Theology at the University of Auckland, NZ. From a paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Baptist Studies, Nova Scotia.

In 1890 Charles Birch, successor minister to Thomas Spurgeon at the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle, stirred up a hornets' nest of controversy. Relationships with significant sections of his congregation and with most of his church officers became so bad that his ministry lasted barely sixteen months before he was forced to resign. At one point, Birch, a pugnacious man, wrote to Charles Haddon Spurgeon who had recommended him to the Auckland church, complaining that two of Birch's Tabernacle officers were 'cantankerous as men are whose bowels move only once a week'.<sup>1</sup>

There were wider issues at stake in Birch's unhappy time at the Tabernacle beyond temperamental and relational factors. The Tabernacle's officers tended not to take too kindly to Birch's involvement in industrial issues, largely on the side of the workers. The trigger for acute controversy, however, was Birch's stance over holiness. Whether Birch believed in sinless perfection may be a matter for debate. What is very clear, however, is that he was a forthright advocate of daily holiness and adamantly opposed to the notion that ongoing sin was inevitable for a Christian. Birch launched into an extreme statement on this issue at a public meeting, denouncing a visiting evangelist, Henry Varley, in doing so. The address was so inflammatory that four or five of his own Tabernacle officers rose to interject, one of them according to Birch, 'foaming at the mouth'.<sup>2</sup> A report of the meeting noted running comments taking place in the pews: 'One man got up and stated how long he had been without sin. An auditor quietly said: "All right, 'old

man'; but you had me for 17 per cent in that business transaction, all the same."<sup>3</sup>

Within Birch's concern for holiness, there was clearly concern for sexual sin. Birch asserted that Varley was teaching that the adulterer, as well as various other sinners, could continue to 'live their wicked lives and be saved'.<sup>4</sup> Six weeks later, when he wrote to C.H. Spurgeon giving his version of the controversy he described the populace in the following terms:

As a rule, the Auckland City people are crude, low in moral tone, and infected with the spirit of gambling. In this small city I am told that there are about 600 prostitutes, and that most of the traders have failed in business – many two or three times. My teaching therefore that he only is a true Christian who is righteous in all his ways has cut the Aucklanders 'on the raw'.<sup>5</sup>

One thing we can note from the Birch saga is a clear concern in relation to



sexual sin. In fact, for Baptists of that era, it was one of the big three, along with alcohol and gambling.<sup>6</sup> Sexual sin was a no-no for Christians from the moment of their conversion.

The church was not seen as extreme in adhering to such a stance. For a long time church and the public values of society were fairly much in lockstep in terms of sexual moral values. Let three examples from the mid-twentieth century confirm this:

- In 1937 the Chief Justice of New Zealand spoke out against 'the alarming extent of the promiscuity of sexual intercourse that apparently exists amongst unmarried persons'.<sup>7</sup>
- In 1954 the public was shocked to learn of extensive under-age sexual activity in Lower Hutt. The government response was to rush the setting up of a special committee to report on moral delinquency. The chair of the committee was a Baptist, Oswald Mazengarb, Queen's Counsel. The resulting report declared sexual immorality a 'clandestine vice'. It opposed any social acceptance of premarital and de facto relationships as being 'opposed to all the ideas of chastity which are inherent in our morality'.<sup>8</sup> The media largely viewed the report positively, the *Auckland Star*, for example, calling it a 'helpful report on moral delinquency'.<sup>9</sup> The high standing of the Mazengarb Report can be seen in the fact that the Government had it printed and distributed free to

each of New Zealand's families.<sup>10</sup>

- In 1955 Department of Health material asserted, 'Sex can be a very beautiful thing, but it is very easily spoilt. It is only in the sanctity of marriage that it can be enjoyed freely, unashamedly, and with the sanction of society.'<sup>11</sup>

Pre-1960s evangelists could assume broad acceptance of sexual right-and-wrong standards. Hence Welsh evangelist Ivor Powell could write scathingly of the New Zealand town of Tokoroa after his mission there in 1956: 'The timber town . . . is a place where sin is open and unashamed. Broken homes; people living in unashamed adultery; drunkenness; beer parties, and damnable lust are everyday affairs. Conscience is apparently something non-existent'.<sup>12</sup>

However, huge shifts of outlook and practice took place in the second half of the twentieth century. Initially the change was one of viewpoint, an ushering in, and a public acceptance of, sexual permissiveness.<sup>13</sup> In the words of University of Waikato psychology professor James Ritchie: 'We got with sex in the sixties'.<sup>14</sup> While the initial change was probably more attitudinal than behavioural (more a revolution in the head than in the bed),<sup>15</sup> radical shift took place later in terms of marriage and sexual behaviour. Consenting sexual behaviour largely ceased to be a moral issue and came to be regarded as 'just another body activity like wearing clothes or eating'.<sup>16</sup> In 1962 the percentage of babies born out of wedlock in New Zealand was 8%. By

2003 that percentage had increased to 44%.<sup>17</sup> An allied statistic is that by 2001 about three in ten men and women aged 15 to 44 were living in a de facto partnership.<sup>18</sup> These trends are reflective of change throughout most of the Western world which is likely to continue further in a more liberal direction. Recently a young teenager posed the question, 'How old is old enough to start having sex?' in New Zealand's leading daily newspaper. The 'agony-aunt' responder suggested that one be over sixteen (the minimum legal age) and be guided by one's feelings: 'Keep in mind that when you are sure, you will definitely know it, rather than needing someone to tell you the right time.'<sup>19</sup> If we continue to adhere to traditional understandings of the relationship between sex and marriage (something which is my own position), then clearly our Christian stance on this point will be radically at variance with the understandings and behaviours of society.

One question then is, what implication does this have for evangelism and mission? While an evangelist a century earlier might readily assume (as society itself would) that any non-marital sex would cease at conversion, is this still the case? One New Zealand pastor with an evangelistic gift, Gary Colville, noted in the 1990s that most of his adult converts were in irregular relationships at the time of their conversion and complained that one of his problems was to get well-meaning Christians off their backs about this in the first weeks after their commitment to Christ.<sup>20</sup> Such an approach views

repentance and conversion as much more of a process than does most 'decision-for-Christ' evangelism.

What this does is invite us to reflect again on the whole process of Christian initiation. Many Baptists have been wedded to a crisis model, with conversion being largely viewed as a point-in-time decision to embrace a committed Christian faith. In that model, subsequent baptism is viewed simply as an affirmation of that earlier decision/conversion. How biblical is that model? And how much does it mesh with people's felt reality? We need to reflect again on the nature of conversion and the role of baptism.

With regard to repentance we often assume that repentance is primarily changed behaviour. Repentance certainly does involve changed behaviour. Perhaps, however, its primary meaning is changed thinking. The etymology of the word, *metanoia*, points in that direction.<sup>21</sup> Change of thinking, change of worldview, takes time. This may point to conversion being much more an educational process, a process in time (noting that the 'great commission' in Matthew 28.19 is to 'make disciples'). Reference to Roman Christians being entrusted to apostolic teaching (Rom 6.17), and the Jerusalem converts continuing in the apostles' teaching (Acts 2.42), also suggests this.

We assume that baptism comes after conversion. What if conversion is a mind-set change, typically linked with discipleship teaching, and

expressed in changing behaviour? And what if baptism itself is an aspect of conversion? What if baptism is the culmination of the conversion process? Many texts point in this direction: Rom 6.1-4; Gal 3.27; Col 2.13; 1 Peter 3.21. This should pose no theological problem – it does not claim that the mere application of water saves. It is rather to say that baptism is to be understood as part of a theological initiation cluster, which also includes repentance, faith, the reception of the Spirit and incorporation into the Christian community. In that understanding, baptism can be viewed as both the locus and the culminating point of Christian initiation.

A parallel may be drawn to marriage. In western marriage at least, people know that the wedding ceremony is not to be understood in isolation. It is the culmination of a growing love. At the same time it marks a difference, a decisive public start to the loving relationship. It is the locus of an unending love-commitment. Baptism likewise is the completing act of an ongoing repentance and commitment and the public marker of the commencement of a new life in Christ.

Bringing this all together, I am suggesting that our society has shifted in such a markedly different direction with such radically different values in relation to sexuality that sexuality issues cannot be dealt with in a sudden fashion through evangelism seeking immediate response. Nor should it be. To attempt to deal with sexuality

issues in this manner would simply create a confusing and unnecessary barrier to the reception of the gospel. The time for addressing the issue of sexual behaviour is after initial response to Christ. It ought to be seen as part of a wider educative process to be explored at the pace of the Holy Spirit and according to the readiness of the recipient. In the meantime the church should not pretend the process of conversion is complete. It should hold off offering baptism until sexual and other major issues are worked through in the understanding and life of the apprentice-disciple.

In this we can learn from the early church as to how we should live in an increasingly pagan or non-Christian society. In the early church, there was a formal catechetical process interposed between initial response to Christ and baptism. In one period at least, that intermediate catechetical period of instruction was three years.<sup>22</sup> Within that sort of framework, baptism was by no means automatic after initial faith response. The early church had, in particular, to face the difficulties of living in a sexually loose society. Its leaders were realistic about the temptations that this involved. Thus Tertullian, in urging adult baptism at the end of the second century, over against the baptising of infants that was now starting to emerge, actually encouraged marital-age baptism: the unmarried should not be baptised 'until they either marry or else be more fully strengthened for continence'.<sup>23</sup> In Tertullian's view we should not fear delayed baptism; rather should we fear premature baptism.

We ought to follow the early church and create an in-between time, a time between initial response and baptism. In that in-between time, the implications of being a Christian, including its implications for sexual values and sexual behaviour, can be duly processed by the new follower of Jesus. Having such an in-between time enables realistic change to occur. In that in-between time the faith-commitment of the new believer is shaped and tested. Then baptism can occur, with a great sense of confidence that conversion has indeed taken place.

The Catholic Church in my city of Auckland now baptises a number of adults – all at Easter time. Any person seeking baptism must have applied for this by 1 September in the preceding year. They will then undergo ninety minutes instruction and ninety minutes homework each week for the next six months or so. And after the baptism itself they will then have seven further weeks of *mystagogia* instruction on distinctive aspects of Catholic faith and practice. In adopting this discipling approach the Catholics are truer to the spirit and example of the early church than we Baptists. Why should we lag behind?

This paper began with pugnacious William Birch. It has moved a long way from Birch. So has the 2006 world - we are now in another world. The issue of clash between Christianity and dominant worldview is not one of sexuality alone. However, sexuality is a markedly obvious issue of challenge in relation to conversion and ethics

from our radically changing society. We need, therefore, to rethink evangelism, to rethink conversion, and to introduce a significant catechetical process between initial response and subsequent baptism. Within that period we can much more realistically and thoroughly address issues of Christian behaviour, including sexual behaviour. In so doing, we will act much more appropriately for our contemporary situation; we will be much more in tune with the whole range of scripture; and we will find ourselves with a great sense of having a kindred spirit with the catechetical and baptismal practices of the early church.

1 Letter Birch to C.H. Spurgeon 23 June 1890, reproduced in Martin Sutherland, "Downgrade with a Vengeance": New Light on a Tabernacle Controversy', *New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research*, 2, 1997, 79-96 at 85.

2 See Thomas Spurgeon's scrapbook labelled 'Newscuttings', 80-85, especially Birch's letter to C.H. Spurgeon 19 May 1890 at 83: New Zealand Baptist Archive (NZBA), Accession number 1180; also Sutherland, 85.

3 *NZ Herald*, 12 April 1890, in Spurgeon's 'Newscuttings', 81.

4 *Auckland Evening Star*, 8 April 1890, in Spurgeon's 'Newscuttings', 80.

5 Letter William Birch to C.H. Spurgeon, 19 May 1890, located in Spurgeon's 'Newscuttings', 83.

6 See later ongoing reference to 'the three vices' in *NZ Baptist*, November 1940, 336. Also *NZ Baptist*, April 1942, 98.

- 7 *Evening Post*, 17 February 1937, 10; also my *Worlds in Collision: the Gay Debate in New Zealand 1960-1986*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2002, 29.
- 8 *Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents* (The Mazengarb Report), AJHR, 1954, IV, H-47, 1-78 at 48; also Guy, 31.
- 9 *Auckland Star*, 'Helpful Report on Moral Delinquency', 22 September 1954.
- 10 S.G.M. Glazebrook, 'The Mazengarb Report, 1954: Impotent Victorianism', MA research essay in history, University of Auckland, 1978, 3; 'Juvenile Report for Parents', *Evening Post*, 23 September 1954, 20.
- 11 New Zealand Department of Health, *Sex and the Adolescent Boy*, Wellington, n.d. [1955], p.5; also New Zealand Department of Health, *Sex and the Parent*, Wellington, n.d. [1955], p.5.
- 12 Ivor Powell Campaign Report number 18: NZBA: MA 60, B 17/3.
- 13 J.E. Ritchie, 'Morals and Social Habits: N.Z. in the Sixties', *NZ Listener*, 16 January 1970, 6.
- 'See also M.H. Holcroft, 'After Liberation', *NZ Listener*, 16 July 1973, 5.
- 14 Ritchie, 'Morals', 6.
- 15 The idea of change primarily being attitudinal was a major emphasis of the thesis of Danielle Moreau. It rebutted views of people like Linda Grant that a sexual revolution would not have occurred without the availability of the contraceptive pill. See D.C. Moreau, 'Living with the Pill: Oral Contraceptive Use in New Zealand, 1960-1975', MA thesis, University of Auckland, pp.120-1; L. Grant, *Sexing the Millenium*, London: Grove, 1994, pp.18, 60.
- 16 *Sunday Times*, editorial, 6 September 1970.
- 17 <http://www.stats.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/8995E5D4-3395-4E7D-BCF4-A197E7A33BE7/0/DemTrends2003.pdf>, accessed 9 March 2006.
- 18 <http://www.stats.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/F39351A1-B469-402D-A65A-D921318BF20F/0/DemTrends2004.pdf> accessed 31 August 2005. For similar data from Britain see article, 'Majority of births will soon be out of wedlock', by Jonathan Petre in *Daily Telegraph* 21 February 2006. Accessed by internet report from <http://www.christian-research.org.uk/pa210206.htm> on 9 June 2006. On this see also *NZ Herald* 22 February 2006, B2.
- 19 *NZ Herald*, 'Canvas' section, 20 May 2006, 5.
- 20 Stated at a New Zealand Baptist assembly in the late 1990s and confirmed in an email attachment, Gary Colville to Laurie Guy, 5 March 2003.
- 21 The Bauer, Danker and Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon picks this up in giving the first meaning of *metanoia* as 'a change of mind'.
- 22 *Apostolic Tradition* 17.1.
- 23 Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 18.

It helps now and then,

To step back and take a long view.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No programme accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

That is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.

This enables us to do something, and do it very well.

It may be incomplete, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,

But that is the difference between the master builder and the workers.

(Oscar Romero)

## Book Reviews - October 2006

*Edited by Michael Docker*

*The Prophetic Imagination*, **Walter Brueggemann**, Fortress Press, 1978, Second Edition, 2001 ISBN 0-8006-3287-7 £9.99

Brueggemann's concern in this book is to define the prophetic and prophetic ministry.

To do so, he focuses on significant Old Testament characters, firstly Moses as the paradigmatic prophet who sets the scene, followed by Solomon (as perhaps an anti-prophet), Jeremiah, Isaiah and ultimately Jesus.

He insists that a study of the prophetic must try to take into account both the evidence of the Old Testament and the contemporary situation of the church. In particular he understands the contemporary church as being "so enculturated by the ethos of consumerism that it has little power to believe or act". This critique of the church, which is sustained throughout the book, is insightful, disturbing and challenging. It is often implicit within the commentary on Biblical narrative but in places Brueggemann makes explicit comment on the church in contemporary Western culture.

The book begins with an exciting exegesis of the Exodus story. It establishes Moses as the prophet through whom God established an 'alternative' consciousness by delivering a marginalised slave people from the Imperial Empire.

This 'alternative' consciousness is the beginning of prophetic ministry; prophecy is born precisely at the point where there is a break from the imperial reality (in this case of Egypt) and a new social political reality is established. In other words, according to Brueggemann, prophecy starts with the imagination; to imagine something which is outside the structure and provision of the empire is to immediately destabilise its gods and its power structures.

Having established 'imagination' and 'radical alternative' as central to prophetic ministry, the discussion moves to the reign of Solomon and the problems of maintaining the revolutionary movement of Moses. The rise of Solomon is seen as the 'paganisation' of Israel and a return to the religious and political presuppositions of the pre-Mosaic imperial situation. Put another way, Imperial Empire that existed in Egypt has now been re-established through Solomon.

One of the central features of the Solomonic system was incredible wealth. The counter-culture of Moses lived in a world of incredible scarcity; all it took to counter that consciousness was satiation. It is difficult to keep a revolution of freedom and justice under way when there is satiation. Brueggemann's contrast between the dynamic prophetic movement of Moses and the static imperial

establishment of Solomon is the basis of a number of very incisive challenges to the UK church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is a fundamental challenge about even the possibility of the prophetic voice in a society where cultures of consumerism and management dominate. It provokes questions about how such a voice can be recovered or from where it could be heard. It asks about what the church should expect – simple social change; a level of repentance within established society or a Mosaic style revolution that deconstructs the empire.

Understanding of the prophetic is further refined by defining the tasks of prophetic criticising and prophetic energising, both characteristics of Moses' ministry. Prophetic criticising is now explored through the ministry of Jeremiah who acted within Imperial Israel to show that the dominant royal consciousness was coming to an end. Prophetic energising is explored through the ministry of second Isaiah who brings energy to a situation of despair by speaking hope.

The book concludes by considering the ministry of Jesus in the light of this pattern of prophetic ministry based on criticism and energising. Brueggemann uses the Old Testament patterns of prophetic ministry to bring fresh insight to the gospel narratives. Jesus is neither a 'liberal' social reformer, nor is he a 'conservative' evangelist concerned with the salvation of souls. Rather he is a radical prophet (and more than a prophet) who through his ministry declares an 'alternative'; a kingdom which stands over and against the imperial establishment and energises people through the hope of a new reality.

I have found this both thoroughly disturbing and exciting. It provokes a re-reading of both Old and New Testaments. It strongly invites the reader to review their own ministry and lifestyle. It leads to fresh thinking about the practice and significance of the ministry of the local church. It is a must-read!

**Mike Pears, Bristol**

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*English Baptist History and Heritage* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), **Roger Hayden** Baptist Union of Great Britain 2005 pp xv, 286 ISBN 0 901472 79 4

Another Baptist history? Not exactly. Some will already have met Roger Hayden's text in its original (1990) edition as a BU Christian Training manual. Now revised and enlivened with many attractive illustrations it deserves a much wider readership among and beyond Baptists. Of course

we are not short of Baptist historical studies, with the now complete series of century-by-century volumes produced by the Baptist Historical Society (BHS), not to mention the wealth of more specialised monographs, biographies and editions of church records that have appeared in the last two decades. But for the sake of being able to see the wood as well as the trees there will always be a place for an account within the covers of a single volume and from a single author. Nearly sixty



years after the last such attempt by A.C. Underwood, Roger Hayden has placed us well and truly in his debt. As would be expected from one who is a historian in his own right as well as serving for many years as secretary of the BHS the work is solidly based on a wide range of recent scholarship and written in an engaged and lively style. And as befits a former area superintendent, it displays a notable capacity to empathize with the most diverse manifestations of the unruly Baptist spirit.

There are several outstanding merits to this work. First, it brings into high relief certain long-running features that overran the boundaries of centuries. Especially, justice is done to the distinctiveness of the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists, and their changing interrelationships, from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> right into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Second, there is a major corrective to earlier received views, based mainly on incomplete scholarship, that for much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Baptist life (General or Particular) was generally moribund. This might have been true of London but elsewhere there was much vitality at both local church and association level. Third, Roger grapples well with the prime difficulty of writing a history of a religious tradition where, almost by definition, so much of the real action is at the local level while not losing hold of the overall story and the wider historical context. So I liked the broad scanning of trends and movements alternating with a zoom into particular congregations, pastors and other individuals who epitomized what was going on. I especially appreciated the

cameos of such diverse (but today probably less well known) figures as Charles Williams, Henry Howarth, Douglas Brown and Inqli James. (Speaking of the last-named, while this is an "English" Baptist history, so many of the leading figures in it are Welsh in origin. Has the English Baptist debt to Wales ever really been duly noted and reflected upon? ) If I have a complaint, it is that the post-World War II account tends to a citation of successive BU reports on this and that. But maybe that simply reflects the reality. . .

The title refers to "heritage" as well as "history": in other words, an evaluation is invited. Roger does not push his own evaluation, so I found myself indulging in a kind of party-game by asking myself: "If you had the choice of being an English Baptist in a period other than the one you're actually living in, which would it be?" My answer: not the 17<sup>th</sup> century (too dangerous), nor the 19<sup>th</sup> (progressively too hyperactive), nor the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> (too dully denominational), but rather the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. That was when the dissenting academies often rivalled Oxbridge in the quality of their teaching, when Sutcliffe and Fuller were exploring a new theology that could make Calvinism truly evangelical, when Carey was opening eyes to the wider world, and when the young Robert Hall was thinking, writing and preaching a gospel that both converted souls and challenged the social and political order. For me, Baptists were never more *alive* than then.

**Keith Clements, Bristol**