



THE READER

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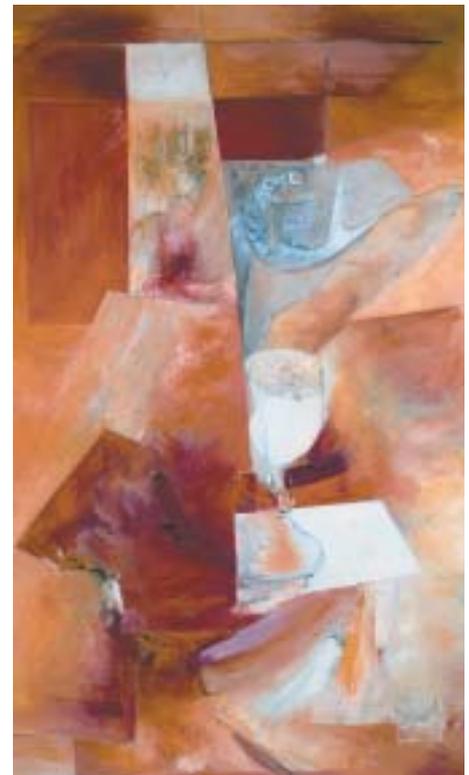
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Summer 2003 Volume 100 No.2

THE READER



This issue contains:-

A HEART AND MIND FOR A MISSION
– Revd David Deeks 2

4

**JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY
& THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**



**JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY
& THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**
– Revd Barrie Tabraham4

**GETTING IT TOGETHER -
ADVENTURES IN ECUMENICAL TRAINING**
– Peter Relf6

THE PREACHER AS BIBLICAL CRITIC
– Clive Marsh8

AN ANGLICAN-METHODIST COVENANT10



12

A WELL KEPT SECRET

A WELL KEPT SECRET
– Carolyn Wicks, Jennifer Woolley, Albert Jewell12

METHODISM'S CHILDREN
– Judy Jarvis15

18

**ANGLIAN METHODIST
RELATIONS**



ANGLIAN METHODIST RELATIONS
– Dudley Coates18

OURSELVES THROUGH METHODIST EYES
– Ian Yearsley19

A METHODIST MISCELLANY
– Clare Amos20

THE PAINFUL WORK OF AN ORDINARY READER
– Ian Yearsley21

FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF22

GAZETTE27

GLEANINGS28

THE LAST WORD
– Pat Nappin29

There is something in my past I have always felt a bit guilty over! When I was 21 I was offered a World Council of Churches scholarship to study at the Roman Catholic Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. It was a real privilege. One of the conditions of the scholarship however was that I should be prepared to return to their own country afterwards. The thought behind that was the belief that the ultimate purpose of such a scholarship was to enable people to be involved in working for ecumenism and unity in their own country. Well in my case, after that year's scholarship – I was offered another year's study by the Ecole Biblique itself... and then I was tempted by the offer of a job as Course Director at St George's College, Jerusalem where we ran short courses on the Bible for clergy and lay people. It was too good an opportunity to turn down. After I had been working there for a couple of years or so I met the Anglican chaplain in Beirut, Lebanon who had arrived for a visit – and five days later we decided to get married. So that led to nearly five years living in Beirut through some of the most difficult times of the civil war (that's a story in itself!). All in all it was almost ten years before I finally returned to England to live permanently – and could be said to have started fulfilling the condition under which I had received the original scholarship.

But one result of all this, and particularly of my experience at the Ecole Biblique is that working ecumenically has for me never been an 'optional extra'. I would gladly acknowledge that I have learned so much from the Christians of other churches whom I have studied and worked alongside. Not only Christians of the Roman Catholic tradition – although that is always a particular pleasure, when opportunities arise. One of the other Christian denominations with whom I have most to do is the Methodist Church, both through my involvement with the Cambridge Theological Federation, and as a Methodist employee during the years when I edited the ecumenical worship and learning resource *Partners in Learning*. During those years I not only deeply appreciated the integrity and grittiness of my Methodist colleagues, but came to realise the richness of the Methodist tradition – and the many resources it had to offer of which I had been ignorant before. Our cover picture, for example is a painting by Jacques Iselin, which comes from the Methodist Art Collection – one of Methodism's lesser known treasures, although we have used another painting from the same collection – the *Crucified Tree Form* - as the cover of *The Reader* once before. (Spring 2001)

17 June 2003 marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of John Wesley, Methodism's founder – though he himself remained a member of the Church of England till his dying day. The event will be celebrated with a major ecumenical service in Lincoln Cathedral which is near to Epworth Rectory where Wesley was born. With this anniversary and the current Anglican-Methodist Covenant process in mind, this issue of *The Reader* draws particularly on Methodist contributors to share with us some insights that I believe are relevant to those of us who are Anglicans, whether or not we work in specific ecumenical settings such as LEPs. We owe the Methodist tradition a great deal, not least that famous phrase of John Wesley that many Readers may well feel in tune with – 'The world is my parish'.

Clare Amos,
Honorary Editor



Revd David Deeks will be taking up a new position in September 2003 as General Secretary of the Methodist Conference. Clare Amos recently spoke to this intriguing and talented man who will have a key influence in British Methodism during the next few years.

CA: Can you explain for our readers just what this new post is?

DD: The Methodist Church prides itself on being a 'Connexion'. That is, a visible statement that we belong to one another. Basically the role will involve taking a lead in setting out our vision of what it means to be Church, helping to shape our missionary strategy, and articulating the faith in a way that enables it to be attractive in the contemporary situation. It will also involve enabling the current diverse leadership in the Church to pull together effectively.

CA: Can you explain a bit more about Methodist structures and the various forms of leadership?

DD: There are various structures that help the Methodist Church in Britain work together. There is the annual Methodist Conference held each year in June – of which the Presidency (a minister) and Vice-Presidency (a deacon or lay person) changes each year. This is a body that Methodists from all parts of the country send representatives to, and it is where major issues of policy are discussed and decided. One of my tasks will be to act as Secretary to this Conference. On the ground, throughout Britain, the Methodist Church is organised into Districts and Circuits. We have approximately 600 Circuits, grouped in 33 Districts. Each Circuit has a Superintendent, and each District has a District Chair. And then finally, as you know, we have a Team of people whose role it is to service the entire Connexion – rather like your Archbishops' Council staff – in areas such as Unity and Mission, Church Life and Social Justice and Public Life. They work under the direction of Coordinating Secretaries – six of these as from September. One of the General Secretary's new responsibilities will be to act as line manager for these Coordinating Secretaries; I shall also be the executive leader of the District Chairs and Co-ordinating Secretaries working together.

A Heart – and Mind – for Mission

CA: The \$64,000 question! What do you think is the most important thing for Anglicans to understand about Methodism?

DD: It is that we see ourselves as fundamentally a community in mission, believing that that mission is enriched by perspectives drawn from all over the world. Here in Britain – and the Methodist Church in Britain is a Church that includes Christians in Scotland and Wales as well as England – 'mission' affects everything we do. It affects our constitution, our worship, our commitment to social justice. Obviously we have to prioritise – but this commitment to mission is, I believe, at the heart of what we do. That isn't to say that the Church of England with its parochial system isn't also committed to mission throughout England. In many ways Anglicans and Methodists are natural partners. However for Methodists the particular relationship the Church of England has to the State does make a significant difference – though not, I hasten to add, in terms of our mutual understanding of mission.

CA: At the moment there is a Covenant process being explored both by the Church of England and the Methodist Church. If this Covenant is accepted by both partners where do you think will be what I call the 'ouch' points in our future relationship?

DD: I think wherever there is a partnership system the issue of relative resources can become a potential difficulty.

Clearly in most – though not all – areas the Church of England currently seems to have more resources than the Methodist Church. It will be important that mechanisms are found to enable the Methodist Church to play to its strengths. I also feel that successful partnerships require commitment to a high quality of personal relationships between the leaders of the Churches – at all

levels. This is something we have to continue working at – it is not something where we can stand back and think 'we've arrived'. We have to go on deepening such relationships to ensure that good will is sustained.

CA: An area where it seems to me that the Methodist Church has a strength that the Church of England can learn from is in its relations with the World Church. Your relations with the 'World Church' are an integral part of national Methodist structures – unlike the situation in the Church of England where such concerns are the responsibility of separate missionary agencies. I suppose that also the 'balance' and comparative strength of the Methodist and Anglican Churches feels rather different in Scotland and Wales – as compared with England. Moving on, if the Covenant goes ahead, what do you think that the Methodist Church will particularly bring to closer working with the Church of England?

DD: A tradition of flexibility and innovation, of responding to the challenges of mission in today's world. I hope that singly and together we will be challenged to support those with a vocation to do quite risky things. We certainly accept the need for a proper discipline and accountability, but feel

the need to encourage new ways of being church – such as cell churches – or to engage with sections of our society which have become unchurched.

CA: As I well know from our time as colleagues on the staff of the Cambridge Theological Federation, you yourself have worked closely with Anglicans – both in Cambridge and prior to that on the staff of Lincoln Theological College.

What can you say out of this experience?

DD: I think that joint training is fundamentally important – not simply because of resource constraints, though it is right to share resources sensibly and creatively. I found working in theological education in an ecumenical context on the whole a very positive experience. I do however also remember occasional moments when I felt that the lack of clarity in the Church of England as to where responsibility for decision-making and authority lay could be frustrating and cause difficulties.

CA: One of the things that fascinates me is that the recent Church of England report on ministerial training – it is sometimes called the Hind Report – owes quite a lot to the developments in Methodist training patterns, both for ministers and for lay people. For example the regional model – and I think also to some extent the concept of foundation training. I think we owe Methodism quite a debt for that, and I hope we are gracious enough to recognise it! Moving on, to a couple of final questions. Is there anything else you feel that it is important to say to Readers about the process of growing together through the Covenant?

DD: We have to acknowledge that there is a variety of views in Methodism on the Covenant itself. For most Methodists the position of women in ministry is non-negotiable – and while some forms of ministry within the Church of England, such as the episcopate, are not open to women, there is going to be a sense of unease. But I think it is also important that people do not assume specific ‘equivalences’ between the patterns of the two Churches – even though that may sometimes feel a natural thing to try and do. For example, Methodist District Chairs are not the same as Church of England bishops – though the link is sometimes made. Both are equally valid patterns, I believe, but they are not the same.

CA: And finally, have you any comment on the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams?

DD: I am sure that he will be very warmly received by both the Free Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in this country. During his time as Archbishop in Wales we met him at a number of conferences and ecumenical gatherings. We are looking forward to the future with him in this key role that will surely influence the life of all the Churches in this country.

CA: Thank you David. As always it is a pleasure – and a learning experience – to talk with you! I wish you every success in your own new and challenging tasks.

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JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY & THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



I am grateful to **Revd Barrie Tabraham**, a Methodist minister working in a Local Ecumenical Partnership in Worcester Park, London, for providing this interesting and accessible study of one aspect of the early history of Methodism.

2003 promises to be a significant year for those of us who are Methodists. The General Synod of the Church of England and the Methodist Conference will be voting shortly on the Covenancing Proposals which, if both bodies give their approval, will commit the two denominations to work more closely together in the future – with ‘full visible unity’ as the ultimate goal. 2003 is also the tercentenary of the birth of John Wesley.

It is, therefore, worth re-examining:

- What happened to John Wesley on 24 May 1738 – a date that has always been regarded by Methodists as being of great significance, and
- Did John Wesley and his younger brother Charles want to found a separate denomination, and what factors made separation inevitable by the end of the eighteenth century?

A flame being kindled

On Wednesday 24 May 1738 John Wesley’s heart was ‘strangely warmed’ at a meeting he attended in London’s Aldersgate Street. It has often been referred to as the date of his ‘conversion’. But what was John Wesley converted from? And what to? Certainly not from an unbeliever into a Christian; neither from a reprobate into a model citizen; nor from an Anglican into a Methodist! Indeed, the term ‘Methodist’ was used in a very loose sense to describe many evangeli-

cal Anglicans – for example, George Whitefield – and not just the followers of John and Charles Wesley.

Thirteen years earlier, when he was ordained as deacon in the Church of England, John Wesley wrote:

‘In the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts and words and actions.’

Hardly the words of an uncommitted Christian. Wesley was a decent, respectable Anglican clergyman.

Between 1725 and 1738 he was nothing less than a devout, conscientious, hard-working servant of God. In fact, if he wasn’t, then what are we to make of the faith of millions of people today who call themselves Christians? Even John Wesley himself, made remarkably little reference to his Aldersgate experience in subsequent writings, and seemed to feel that he had over-emphasized his lack of faith prior to 1738. Indeed, both he and Charles tended to write about their own spiritual state in exaggerated terms, and their mother Susanna gently (but firmly) pointed out that, in her considered opinion, it was not that the brothers were devoid of faith before May 1738, but rather their spiritual crisis had enabled them to appropriate the grace of God that was already present in their lives.

Something had been lacking, of course. What Wesley lacked – and what he longed for – was a personal assurance of the forgiving love of God for him. During the meeting at Aldersgate Street, as he afterwards wrote:

‘I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my

sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.’

He had found peace of mind at last, or – as we would say today, perhaps – ‘the penny dropped’.

Whatever one’s views of the precise nature of ‘conversion’, the fact remains that 24 May marked an important theological, as well as a psychological, turning-point in Wesley’s life. Being released from the introspection which

had characterized his earlier years, John Wesley was now able to combine the notion of personal holiness with personal faith. It was as if he now had the best of both worlds.

Wesley’s deep concern for holiness and the importance of the sacramental life was now integrated with a fervour and a simplicity of faith in the grace of God. From that point onwards, John and Charles Wesley (who had gone through a similar experience three days before that of his brother’s) were the centre of what became known as the Methodist Revival.

The early cracks

But how did the break with the Church of England happen? Was it inevitable? And to what extent did Charles share his brother’s views on the subject?

It was clear that, from the earliest days of the Methodist revival, relations with the Church of England would pose a serious question. Many Anglican clergy, especially the hierarchy, saw the early Methodist preachers as a threat. Some were jealous of the Wesleys’ success, but many had genuine (if misplaced) fears that Methodism was encouraging wild emotionalism among the common people, and that open-air preaching and the development of Methodist groups (or ‘societies’) were a



The infant John being rescued from the burning Rectory at Epworth

challenge to church order and the authority of the regular clergy.

To his life's end, John Wesley affirmed his loyalty to the Church of England – just a few years before his death he stated that 'when the Methodists leave the Church, God will leave them'. Both John and Charles Wesley had, from their childhood, been deeply immersed in the Anglican tradition. It is often forgotten that John Wesley began preaching in the open-air – 'field-preaching', as it was termed – only with the greatest reluctance. As a high churchman, he had a built-in reverence for consecrated places of worship, which in his view were the proper places to preach. The fact that open-air preaching was often without invitation or permission from other Anglican clergy increased his misgivings. However, John Wesley 'submitted to be more vile' (his own words, written in 1739) because he saw from the example of George Whitefield, that it actually worked, though he was no peddler of 'hellfire and damnation'.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that it would have been impossible for Methodism to continue as a kind of 'ginger group' within the Church of England, and John Wesley himself probably acknowledged in his heart that separation would come one day. Charles Wesley had, in many ways, a much greater attachment and commitment to the Church, and this explains why he was to disagree so strongly with his brother when the question of Methodism's separation reached crisis proportions in the 1780s. Even as early as 1744, before the very first Methodist Conference had assembled, he warned his brother that to write about the Methodists as a separate body 'would constitute us a sect; at least it would seem to allow that we are a body distinct from the national Church'.

In 1747 the Methodist Conference examined possible causes of friction and had come to the conclusion – guided, of course, by John Wesley – that in fact they were not 'guilty of making such a schism' and were being careful to abide by the rules of the Church of England. Further tensions appeared almost immediately, this time concerning the administration of Holy Communion, another area in which Charles and John did not exactly see eye to eye.

The Conference of 1755 also tack-

led the issue of separation, and Charles reported to his wife Sally that 'all agreed not to separate. So the wound is healed – slightly'. Undoubtedly, Charles was worried by his brother's shifts in attitude, and published an open letter entitled *An Epistle to the Reverend Mr John Wesley*, by Charles Wesley, Presbyterian of the Church of England, which was widely circulated and, indeed, read out aloud by Charles to large numbers of people.

Interestingly, it was written in verse and was a stout defence of his position as a loyal member of the Church of England. The following couplet, at which John must have squirmed, is sufficient to illustrate its general tone:

'Was it our aim disciples to collect,
To raise a party, or to found a sect?'

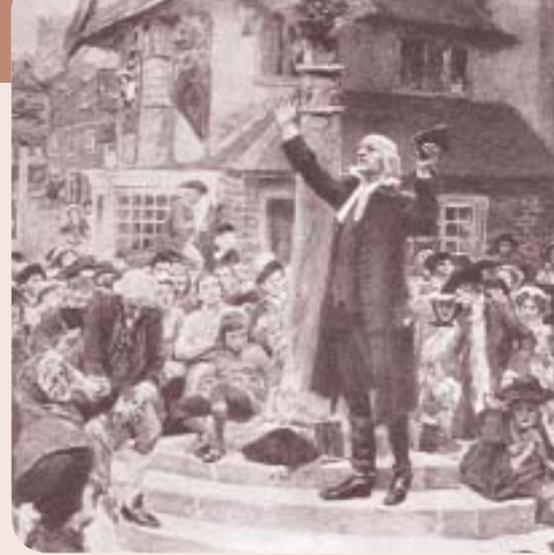
A little later, Charles confessed to a friend with remarkable candour, 'I should have broken off from the Methodists and my brother in 1752', adding that the probability of separation 'has made me tremble for years past'.

In the years that followed, however, Charles felt increasingly uneasy with some of the ways in which he perceived Methodism to be developing. Its growth as a movement, albeit within the Church of England, inevitably created problems which we can think of in terms of 'centre' and 'circumference'. As Methodism spread further and further throughout the country, inescapable tensions grew between the Conference of preachers at the centre – largely controlled by John Wesley – and the scattered societies and their members at the grass roots.

The divergence of brothers

Why did Charles Wesley not leave Methodism?

From a study of his correspondence, it becomes obvious that he felt he could do more to control the dissidents from within the movement than from outside it, even though his struggle to do so both pained and wearied him. Charles also felt torn between loyalty to his brother, who seemed to change his stance from one year to the next, and loyalty to the Established Church. In a letter to his wife Sally in 1760, a year which saw a fresh crisis over the administration of Holy Communion by unlicensed (lay) preachers and yet another clash between the Wesley brothers, Charles gave what was



perhaps the clearest summary of his position.

'My chief concern upon earth, I said, was the prosperity of the Church of England; my next, that of the Methodists; my third, that of the preachers; that if their interests should ever come in competition, I would give up the preachers for the good of the whole body of the Church of England: that nothing could ever force me to leave the Methodists but their leaving the Church.'

In 1766, John urged Methodists not to absent themselves from Anglican worship, the preachers not to end Methodist services with the Lord's Supper, and for the services to be held at a different time from the Anglican ones. However, despite the Conference passing resolutions of loyalty periodically, Charles remained unhappy and fearful.

In April 1777, when the foundation stone of New Chapel in City Road was laid, John Wesley denied any break with the Church of England. However, it was a place of worship with provision for a communion area, together with a burial ground. One cannot help feeling that many of those who were present on that occasion were aware of the inevitable trend and drew their own conclusions. By 1780 some of the preachers were beginning to put pressure on John to be ordained by him, rather than by a bishop. When John asked Charles if he would come to the Conference, Charles declined, saying that he would be able neither to influence proceedings, nor control his temper!

The eventual separation

The year 1784 saw the long-awaited crisis finally break. Three events hastened the separation which for so long Charles had feared.

The first was the signing of the Deed of Declaration in February, which constituted the Methodist



Thomas Coke

Conference – the ‘Legal Hundred’, as it was termed – as John Wesley’s successor and therefore guaranteed its continued existence as an independent body. The second event was the decision by John to ordain preachers to serve in America, where the first Methodist Society had been formed in 1766, which was a contravention of Anglican Church order and in direct opposition to the Bishop of London. Charles, needless to say, was not informed, almost certainly because John knew that he would have raised the strongest of objections. When he heard the news (two months later!) he wrote to a friend, ‘I am thunderstruck’ – and no wonder. To ordain Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vesey was certainly irregular, but the ordination of Thomas Coke was altogether different. Coke was already an ordained minister and his new title ‘superintendent’ suggested the office of bishop. Thirdly, John Wesley’s revision of the Book of Common Prayer, which was published under the title *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America, with other occasional services*, helped exacerbate worsening relations with the Church of England because,

although the book was intended to be used in America, it was but a small step to allow it to be used by British Methodists in their preaching houses – which in fact it was, in 1788.

These three factors: the Deed of Declaration, the ordinations for America and the revision of the Prayer Book, simply accelerated a process which, by the 1780s, had become virtually inevitable.

Charles’ reaction to these developments was, as we would expect, a mixture of sadness, disappointment and anger. In September 1785 John wrote to Charles, ‘I see no use of you and me disputing together; for neither of us is likely to convince the other. You say I separate from the Church; I say I do not’. The following year, writing from Manchester, he tried to appease his brother by saying, ‘I love the Church as sincerely as I ever did; and I tell our Societies everywhere, “The Methodists will not leave the Church, at least while I live”.’ Charles was not to be mollified. It was, perhaps, fortunate that he did not live to witness the further, crucial step of a preacher being ordained to serve in

England, which took place in August 1788, just four months after Charles’ death. Coke, and others who wished to make a clean break with the Church, saw the death of Charles Wesley as the removal of a major obstacle.

For his part, John Wesley continued to protest his loyalty to the Established Church until his death in 1791, but he could see the impossibility of reversing a process that had begun long before. In his heart he knew that the Church of England could no longer contain Methodism. Its development had simply gone too far.

Readers may be interested to note that this short article has been written by one who has had Methodist ministers in his family ever since 1814, who is deeply committed to ecumenism and who, at present, shares with his Anglican colleague in a joint ministry at one of the oldest Local Ecumenical Partnerships in the country. Much of the material in this article can be found in the author’s *The Making of Methodism* (Epworth Press 1995) and *Brother Charles* (Epworth Press, June 2003).

Photos:www.gbmg-umc.org



Getting it together – adventures in ecumenical training

Since September 2002 **Peter Relf** has been Connexional Secretary for Local Preachers in the Methodist Church. He is the first person to have held this role while being a Local Preacher himself. In this article he explores the new possibilities and connections that have arisen through the development of ecumenical training for Anglican Readers and Methodist Local Preachers.

Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised that a new town like Milton Keynes should have been the cradle of ecumenical training for lay people in preaching and leading worship. At a time when that town was advertising strongly for people to re-locate their offices, a number of denominations were re-locating their thinking about training. Since then in Milton Keynes, the Church of England has been working collaboratively with the United Reformed Church and with Baptists and Methodists – all of them pioneering a new approach to training. The grapevine began working so that in other parts of the country people wondered if something like the Milton Keynes venture could also be set up. In

two places, trainers listened to and learned from Milton Keynes and began a similar journey themselves. The interest is much wider, though, and we are likely to see comparable developments emerging in the next few years. This article draws on first-hand experience of joint training by Anglicans and Methodists on the Isle of Wight and in the Bristol area to explore how these new initiatives have been taken. Someone has to take the first step. Where there are already good relationships between denominations, the step is easier to take. Key people in the Portsmouth and Bristol Dioceses were the ones who made the approaches and discussions followed. Each Diocese brings its own approach to training

Readers, so there is no blueprint for success. For Portsmouth, the relative isolation of five people training to be Readers on the Isle of Wight made an ecumenical solution both pragmatic and attractive. For Bristol, the success of joint in-service training events for the continuing development of Anglican Readers and Methodist Local Preachers encouraged good links between trainers and led to exploration of joint working in initial training.

Faith and worship together

Trainers in the Portsmouth Diocese looked closely at the Methodist Church’s national course for Local Preachers: *Faith & Worship*. They accepted the basic course with its

open-learning style materials, but needed some modifications to it. The course is made up of the following Units:

Introductory Units

Unit 1 Starting out

An introduction to preaching and to the course including its content and method of study.

Unit 2 Introduction to worship and preaching

An initial look at the structure of worship, and sermon and service preparation.

Unit 3 Jesus through the eyes of Mark

An introduction to the study of the Gospels through the study of Mark's Gospel.

Section A

Unit 4 The teaching of Jesus

How the different Gospel writers present the teaching of Jesus.

Unit 5 Exploring the Bible

The variety of material, the implications of its variety and an outline of the biblical story.

Unit 6 Picturing God

How do we know God? What can we know about God?

Section B

Unit 7 Origins of Christian worship

Worship in the Old and New Testaments, the early Church and worship today

Unit 8 Praising God

A practical unit on offering praise to God through hymns, psalms, prayers and worship.

Unit 9 Picturing Jesus

An introduction to the traditional theological language describing the person of Jesus.

Unit 10 The Holy Spirit

The nature and work of the Holy Spirit through the Bible, Church and world.

Section C

Unit 11 The human condition

An exploration of what it is to be human, using biblical and other insights.

Unit 12 The work of Christ

How the work of Christ brings God and humanity together.

Unit 13 Alive in Christ

An exploration of spirituality, the devotional and social life, personal and social ethics.

Section D

Unit 14 The prophets

What prophets were, said and did, their relevance for New Testament times and for today.

Unit 15 The kingdom of God and the Church

The nature, purpose and mission of the Church and its relationship to the kingdom of God.

Unit 16 The bright succession

An overview of Church history with emphasis on the place of worship and preaching.

Unit 17 Enduring convictions

A study of St John's Gospel which explores further key themes from the course.

What of the modifications that were needed? First, its tone needed to become more ecumenical. Second, it needed three additional modules to equip Readers for their particular role. Interestingly, Local Preachers joined the first module *The role of a preacher within the life of the Church* and found it a valuable experience. The other modules are: *Pastoral dimensions of Local Preacher and Reader Preacher ministry* and *Working with groups and Teaching within the life of the Church*. The Methodists and Anglicans share tutorials together. With hindsight, assessment arrangements for each denomination should have been more explicit from the outset. This has not been helped by national changes to the Methodist Church's assessment of *Faith & Worship*.

The Bristol trainers drew on the Isle of Wight experience. Graciously, the Bristol Diocese also accepted a modified *Faith & Worship* course, but not without much fact-finding, discussion and anxiety along the way for all involved. The revised course in Bristol is called *Equipping God's People*. It, too, has additional modules planned – four of them in all, which will take the form of one-day events. The working out of a local solution has tested and in this case strengthened ecumenical relationships.

An enriching experience

The use of one course cannot (and does not seek to) hide the differences between the role of the Reader and the Local Preacher. There are other organisational differences too. However, the students and their tutors are finding that the differences enrich and enliven study and understanding.

Inevitably, there are teething troubles. That is the nature of pilot schemes. For example, students have

little opportunity to see each other between tutorials. In Bristol, they have set up a Yahoo on-line discussion group to post questions, ideas, resources, and generally keep in touch. So far, it has not been much used, but it is available. Because most of the group has Internet access, assignments can be e-mailed to tutors.

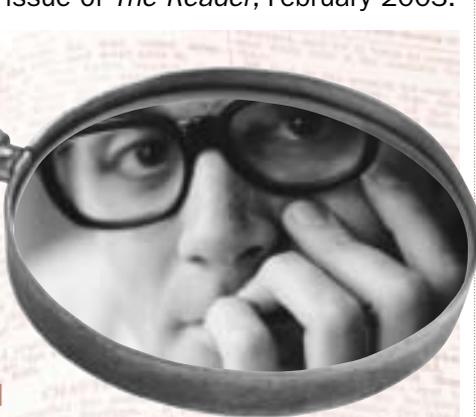
The timing of the course may cause problems. Methodists are used to flexible starting times at almost any point during the year while Anglicans have a different system which is geared to arrangements for course completion and an annual recognition service. This may cause recruitment problems. Boundaries are rarely the same. The Isle of Wight has the sea helping to define boundaries, of course, but in terms of church organisation, Methodist Districts and Church of England Dioceses tend not to coincide. The scope for ecumenical training links is not helped by this. Bristol Methodists are keen to extend the scheme across their District, but that will involve negotiations at some stage with three other Dioceses. Other boundaries blur when one denomination has a local ecumenical partnership with another. Already there are some Methodists in ecumenical training who are members of a local partnership with the United Reformed Church. Formal ecumenical discussions are under way with several denominations... and the Milton Keynes experience is starting all over again.

Sharing in ministry and mission

This article is an amalgamation of reports from Methodists involved directly in the two schemes. There is no doubt about the effort and determination required to get a scheme up and running. Until recently, I myself was involved in setting up ecumenical training on the safeguarding of children in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire by five denominations and two social services departments. I can identify with the hard slog that the two reports describe, but also with the mutual trust, respect and friendship as well as the sense of achievement. It is good that denominations are exploring closer relationships. But ecumenical ventures like these are showing how churches are already coming together in practical and significant ways that really do enrich and enliven our Christian ministry and mission.

Clive Marsh is a Local Preacher in the Rotherham Circuit of the Methodist Church, and Secretary of the Methodist Church's Faith and Order Committee. He has taught theology and biblical studies for nearly fifteen years. This article marries his roles as academic theologian and Local Preacher and follows on appropriately from John Barton's contribution *Biblical Studies Today*, which appeared in the previous issue of *The Reader*, February 2003.

The Preacher as Biblical Critic



How much of a biblical critic does a preacher need to be? It's a question I'm left asking on many Sundays. As a father of two children, with a spouse who's a Methodist Minister (and usually at a different church from the one we're at) I currently listen to many more sermons than I preach. I have been surprised over many years at how little impact biblical criticism of any kind appears to make to the way that the biblical text is being used in sermons. I'm surprised too that when I raise the question I still need to explain that 'biblical criticism' doesn't mean criticism of the Bible, but searching, creative analysis of its contents, from a variety of perspectives. There remains, in other words, a lingering sense amongst many that the kind of work on the Bible that 'scholars' or 'academics' do is not really relevant to the task of preaching. More disturbingly still, it is often held that only when scholars write 'popular' books, or turn their hand to devotional material that their work is really proving of use to the church.

In this article I want to do four things. First, I shall define 'biblical criticism' in a way that shows that a preacher cannot do without it. Second, I shall illustrate briefly some of approaches currently being adopted in the reading of biblical texts. Third, I shall suggest what this all means for discussion of the 'authority of the Bible' in the church. Fourth, I shall draw out some consequences.

A modern phenomenon?

'Biblical criticism' is often regarded as a modern phenomenon. It's talked about

as if it began with the rise of the modern version of history in the post-Enlightenment period. This is a half-truth. The Bible began to be scrutinized historically from the eighteenth century onwards. But textual and literary critical approaches of different kinds had been around before then. If the 'historical-critical approach' (as the modern version of biblical criticism is often called) was new, and seemed to be a challenge, then this was only because it threatened to displace all other ways of reading the Bible. It seemed to imply that the only way of getting the 'right' reading was to get to the 'original' meaning (probably the author's own). This would be what God wanted the reader to get from the text.

Of course, this historical way of reading never has established itself as the main way of reading the Bible, and certainly not in the church. In many respects this limited impact is to be bemoaned not rejoiced in. Even if it overreached itself, the historical-critical approach has, perhaps more than any form of reading of the biblical text, demanded the closest possible reading of a text. It has stressed a text's objectivity. No-one comes without presuppositions, but historical readings demand that the reader does her best to play prejudices down in order to let a text do its work.

Biblical criticism is not, though, to be seen as confined to historical criticism alone. The textual analysis which preceded it, and the literary readings which both preceded it and have followed it in themselves remind us that we should see biblical criticism

more broadly as the careful, detailed, creative task of working with a text which we do not own, but have a responsibility to interpret. Biblical criticism won't of itself produce a theologically-informed or spiritually profound reading of a biblical text. But it's at least possible to suggest that without some form of biblical criticism, there may not be much theology or spiritual profundity around.

The face of biblical criticism

But what does biblical criticism look like *today*? In theology, religious and biblical studies departments of universities, and in theological colleges and courses, the ways of reading the Bible are wide and varied. Historical-criticism remains alive and well. But its limits are now more clearly seen than they may have been 30 or 40 years ago. More recent forms of literary criticism have appeared focusing on *how a text works*. Whether or not we can know an author and tease out from a text what s/he may have meant, we do still have the text. It's an object which is there to be interpreted, whatever we bring to it. It has its own integrity. Clearly, some biblical texts are meant to be treated as texts (Proverbs, for example) and are not intended to be read as historical sources, however much the historical critic will want to treat them as such. Even when we *can* know more about a text's purpose and origin (a Gospel, or a Pauline letter, say), it is not simply as history that we best read them. But this does not, then, mean we should treat the texts, even as preachers, uncritically. A literary-critical reading will force us to pay attention to how a text is structured. And what's the genre of the book that a passage is from? How does that help us tease out what any given text means? If there's a storyline to the biblical book we're reading (Genesis, Ruth, John, for example), then how will narrative criticism (which helps us look at plot and characterization) help us in our reading?

Again, seeing how a text works, and the art with which it is put together, won't of itself inevitably produce a preacher's material. But a literary approach may sometimes be better than a historical approach. Teasing out a meaning from Mark's Gospel may, for example, come more easily by noting the role that opponents play in Mark's narrative than worrying about whether Mark was historically right at all points about Pharisees and Scribes.

But there are all sorts of other reading methods around at the moment too. *Canonical criticism* looks at the way in which a Christian interpreter should always be appreciating the location of a text in the canon of scripture within the task of interpretation. *Feminist criticism* invites all readers to scrutinize carefully the place of women figures within biblical texts and the contribution women readers can make to the study of the Bible. It is a form of *liberationist criticism* when it is interpretation with a purpose: clarification of why women have so often been disempowered and how women's empowerment might be enabled through interaction with the Bible's content. Liberationist criticism is broader still, though. It recognizes that respect for the results of contextualized biblical interpretation undertaken amongst and for any socially marginalized group can open up one of the main threads running through the Bible as a whole. Like all biblical interpreters, the preacher is pressed to keep on asking: what is your biblical interpretation *for*? Whom is it serving? Whose interests are driving your interpretation? And how are you involved in your interpretation?

In theory, I suppose, Methodists should be at the forefront of welcoming more reader-related meth-

ods. Often accused of 'doing' their theology (or having little theology to start with), Methodists have long known that theologically-informed biblical interpretation is a self-involving exercise. Indeed, has not Methodism modified (refined?) the appeal to scripture, tradition and reason by referring to a quadrilateral, including experience? This is true, though what is meant by 'experience' needs close checking. And 'reason' never did mean simply 'rationality'. But the location of scripture within this wider interpretative framework is worth noting. For it exposes what is actually going on when preachers (indeed, all Christians) read their Bibles. There is no escaping the life-history of the one who reads. The task is simply (!) to ensure that the interpreter does not speak only about him- or herself when using that life-history within the interpretative task.

As people under authority

These, then, are just some examples of the kinds of contemporary biblical criticism that are around. Where does this leave the question of the Bible's authority for the preacher? It should be stressed that not all of these methods are offered or practised by people sympathetic to the use of the Bible as scripture for the Christian community. I'm not, however, sure that this matters. Preachers have to evaluate whatever interpretations of texts they come across, whatever methods of reading have been used. The only mistake – it seems to me – is the assumption that these methods have nothing to do with the preacher. The authority of the Bible, though, resides, as recent studies have reminded us, as much with what the Christian community does with the text as with any intrinsic properties which the text may be held to have. Authority only counts if people actually respect it. So with regard to the authority of the Bible, the preacher's task is to demonstrate, within and out of the Christian community, that the Bible is worth acknowledging as an authoritative text, rather than merely assuming or asserting that

authority in abstract terms. If this is so, then I suggest it is essential for the preacher to be a lively biblical critic.

Neither the learned or the unlearned are saved from the trouble of thinking. All are to think. This is the way to understand the things of God. Meditate day and night. John Wesley

This will have three consequences. First, continuing interaction with a range of critical reading methods will keep the preacher's use of the biblical text *dynamic*. It will not be possible for a preacher to re-use an old sermon in any simple way. S/he is more likely to say: 'This may be the way I preached on that passage in Galatians last time, but seeing x or y's reading...'

Second, the preacher as biblical critic in the present context is likely to be a *creative* reader of texts. Creativity and historical-criticism didn't always go together easily. Varieties of reading methods, ironically, have the reverse effect: creativity overload. Preachers can be prone to want to try out the forty-three new ways of critical reading that they have just discovered, but all in the same sermon. There's a self-discipline needed here. In the same way that a sermon has to be focused, so the application of reading methods

needs to be too. To try out one new way of reading in relation to a passage being interpreted in a sermon may be enough. Another way may have to be left for next time. And it's also important to apply self-discipline to what's said. 'I've just discovered canonical criticism, and...' is not the kind of line a preacher needs to use. Preaching is not like doing long-division sums in mathematics. The working (the application of a reading method) is to be left hidden rather than exposed. At issue is always what a preacher *does* with any method in the service of offering an interpretation of a biblical text, in the form of a contemporary word *from* God, within the context of Christian worship.

Third, as a lively, creative biblical critic the preacher can also fulfil an evangelistic task. Too often we assume as preachers that we're preaching to those who've sat in pews (or chairs) for many years. The reality is often different, not only on 'special Sundays'. People are returning to church in later life. There are often 'eavesdroppers' in services, who want to remain anonymous. Parents with little Christian background find themselves in our services for all sorts of reasons because of what their children get up to. Shoddy, dated, ill-informed, childish, uninspiring, mind-numbing use of the Bible in a sermon can be the biggest turn-off, not just of church, but of the whole 'Christian thing'. By contrast, evidence of contemporary wrestling with this old, old text in a way which clearly shows why it's a classic, not just of literature, can prove one of the most persuasive forms of Christian evangelism.

I'm fond of quoting Ian Hislop's quip about his ambiguous attitude to Christianity: 'Sometimes I sit in church and think: "This is complete bollocks, all of it, and always has been," and then a month later I'd sit there thinking: "This is all there is".' The preacher's use of critical methods of reading the Bible is one good test-case, it seems to me, for whether Hislop's first response is the more likely.

Clive Marsh's most recent book is *Christianity in a Post-Atheist Age* (SCM Press 2002)





The Present Situation

At its meeting in York in July 2002, the Church of England General Synod voted by a very substantial majority to commend the proposed Anglican-Methodist Covenant to its dioceses for discussion. Anglican Diocesan synods have been asked to vote on the proposals by the end of May 2003. Members of the two churches have therefore been asked to consider the proposals both together and separately and also to engage in dialogue with their ecumenical partners. The Methodist Conference and the General Synod, both meeting in July 2003, will receive the opinions gathered from around the two Churches and will each decide whether to go forward with the Covenant. The text of the Covenant, together with the Affirmations and Commitments, is as follows:



'A Church shaped for a mission' by John Cole, Unity-in-Mission Adviser of the Council for Christian Unity, provides an interesting and helpful way for groups and individuals to explore the Covenant more deeply.

The following comments on the Covenant proposals and the process which led up towards them have been provided by Prebendary Paul Avis, General Secretary of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity.

AN ANGLICAN-METHODIST COVENANT

We the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England, on the basis of our shared history, our full agreement in the apostolic faith, our shared theological understandings of the nature and mission of the Church and of its ministry and oversight, and our agreement on the goal of full visible unity, as set out in the previous sections of our Common Statement, hereby make the following Covenant in the form of interdependent Affirmations and Commitments. We do so in a spirit of penitence for all that human sinfulness and narrowness of vision have contributed to our past divisions, believing that we have been impoverished through our separation and that our witness to the gospel has been weakened accordingly, and in a spirit of thanksgiving and joy for the convergence in faith and collaboration in mission that we have experienced in recent years.

AFFIRMATIONS

1. We affirm one another's churches as true churches belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and as truly participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God.
2. We affirm that in both our churches the word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist are duly administered and celebrated.
3. We affirm that both our churches confess in word and life the apostolic faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the ecumenical Creeds.
4. We affirm that one another's ordained and lay ministries are given by God as instruments of God's grace, to build up the people of God in faith, hope and love, for the ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care and to share in God's mission in the world.
5. We affirm that one another's ordained ministries possess both the inward call of the Holy Spirit and Christ's commission given through the Church.
6. We affirm that both our churches embody the conciliar, connexional nature of the Church and that communal, collegial and personal oversight (episkope) is exercised within them in various forms.
7. We affirm that there already exists a basis for agreement on the principles of episcopal oversight as a visible sign and instrument of the communion of the Church in time and space.

COMMITMENTS

1. We commit ourselves, as a priority, to work to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches, on the way to the full visible unity of Christ's Church. In particular, we look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible a united, interchangeable ministry.
2. We commit ourselves to realise more deeply our common life and mission and to share the distinctive contributions of our traditions, taking steps to bring about closer collaboration in all areas of witness and service in our needy world.
3. We commit ourselves to continue to welcome each other's baptised members to participate in the fellowship, worship and mission of our churches.
4. We commit ourselves to encourage forms of eucharistic sharing, including eucharistic hospitality, in accordance with the rules of our respective churches.
5. We commit ourselves to listen to each other and to take account of each other's concerns, especially in areas that affect our relationship as churches.

We commit ourselves to continue to develop structures of joint or shared communal, collegial and personal oversight, including shared consultation and decision-making, on the way to a fully united ministry of oversight.

This report is clearly not proposing imminent structural unity between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain. It is not a re-run of 1972. For some this makes it something of a non-event. But for others, both Methodist and Anglican, it seems to push things too far, too fast. So what exactly is its purpose? The Covenant report offers stepping stones to greater unity between Anglicans and Methodists. It also contains theological building blocks of mutual understanding. And, if agreed, the Covenant will cement the excellent local and regional relationships that exist between Methodists and Anglicans and will replicate them at the national level.

The Formal Conversations were set up by the General Synod and the Methodist Conference in 1997-98, following the preparatory Informal Conversations that resulted in the report *Commitment to Mission and Unity*. They ran for two and a half years and the report was published at the end of 2001. In July 2002 the General Synod and the Methodist Conference agreed to refer the report to the dioceses and districts for study and evaluation. The two bodies will decide in July this year, in the light of feedback from the grassroots, whether to enter the Covenant. If that is achieved, a body will be set up to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Covenant. The Council for Christian Unity and Methodist colleagues have developing extensive supporting material at various levels, to assist the process of study and response, particularly *A Church Shaped for Mission* by John Cole and a *Theological Study Guide* by Martin Davie, both available from the CCU at Church House, Westminster.

The method that has guided *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* is the method that underlies the Meissen Agreement and subsequent agreements at the same level that the Church of England has made (Fetter Lane with the Moravian Church and Reilly with the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches). Essentially it is the method of moving by a series of stages towards fuller visible unity. The ultimate goal is the full visible unity of Christ's Church, but this cannot be realised bilaterally. The stage represented by the Covenant is that of mutual acknowledgement and mutual commitment (ie a covenantal relationship).

Working towards an agreement

The Formal Conversations were mandated by the General Synod and the Methodist Conference to work towards a Meissen-type agreement, involving a description of the full visible unity of the Church of Christ, with special attention being paid to agreement in the apostolic faith. The other areas covered are the sacraments, the ordained ministry and oversight. On the basis of this fundamental theological agreement, the two churches will be invited to make a joint declaration in two related parts: first, mutual affirmation of the ecclesial authenticity of the two bodies, including the authenticity of their ministries of word, sacrament and pastoral oversight (*episkope*); second, mutual commitment to work together in all possible ways and to seek to overcome the remaining obstacles to fuller visible unity.

The affirmation on the part of the Church of England of the authenticity of Methodist ministries of word, sacrament and oversight is not sufficient in itself to bring about the interchangeability of ministries between the two churches. Although the report includes some vital groundwork on that issue, further work is earmarked for the next stage. An important part of the context is the fact that the Methodist Church has accepted the principle of episcopacy and is currently working on viable models for a Methodist episcopate. So the *Anglican-Methodist Covenant* does not bring about a Porvoo-type relationship and the Methodist Church does not yet become a church with which the Church of England is formally 'in communion'.

The Formal Conversations were not asked to resolve all outstanding issues between Anglicans and Methodists. For example, church, state and establishment questions were not part of their remit. Their task rather was to bring about the kind of trustful relationship within which such questions could be tackled constructively together.

The distinctiveness of the report

The report is distinctive in several ways: 1. It begins by telling the story of the chequered relationship between Anglicans and Methodists over the two and a half centuries since John Wesley (an Anglican clergyman) began his extraordinary itinerant ministry. It acknowledges the need for the healing of the relationship and the reconciliation of memories.

2. It refines the model of ecumenical agreements that the Church of England has developed in dialogue with ecumenical partners in recent years. The portrait of unity is expounded in greater depth. Attention is given to remaining differences. There is greater realism about future prospects.

3. Mission concerns run through the report like a thread. It holds mission and unity together in an indissoluble biblical and theological unity, grounded in God's mission (*missio dei*) and in the pattern of Christ's life and work.

4. The method is not only theological, but also reflects the experience of local covenantal relationships, as well as regional and national forms of collaboration. Local unity experience was well represented on the Formal Conversations.

5. The report is frank about differences of theology and practice and points out that several important issues remain to be resolved by future work if the two churches are to move closer together in a more integrated way:

- For Methodists, all senior positions of leadership are open to women as a matter of fiercely held principle, but in the Church of England women cannot at present be bishops.
- Anglicans do not accept the Methodist practice of lay eucharistic presidency (permitted in situations of eucharistic deprivation).
- The Church of England's Canons require wine to be used at Holy Communion, whereas Methodist rules insist on unfermented grape juice.
- The Methodist diaconate is essentially a pastoral ministry, whereas for Anglicans it is an assisting ministry of word and sacrament as well as of pastoral care.
- Anglicans practice or cumulative ordination (so that priests remain deacons and bishops remain deacons and priests), whereas Methodists ordain directly to the presbyterate.
- While the Methodist Church has resolved in principle that it is willing to become a church ordered in the historic episcopate, it is not yet clear when or how this will happen.

Within a new relationship of mutual affirmation and commitment these differences can be considered in a constructive spirit. Meanwhile Anglican and Methodist collaboration in mission in every area of the Church's life will receive an enormous boost if the Covenant is approved.



A well-kept secret

The Editor writes: It is sometimes said that Readers are one of the best-kept secrets of the Church of England! One of the well-kept secrets of the Methodist Church (as far as non-Methodists are concerned at least) is surely the Women's Network, and its quarterly magazine *Magnet*. I still remember the penny dropping – clang! – when I realised one day a few years ago that *Magnet* was so called because it was the MAGazine of Women's NETwork. Women's Network defines itself as aiming to encourage, enable and equip women to participate fully in the life of the Church and in society. It does this by helping them to be trained in specific skills, by conferences, by encouraging different styles of worship – and offering creative worship resources, and by focusing its members attention on specific campaigns in which women can get involved. It also encourages members of the Network to give mutual support to one another. *Magnet* is in a sense the 'public face' of Women's Network – and the articles and resources it contains enable the Network's aims and goals. *Magnet* itself is edited collaboratively and in such a way as to give those involved in the process new skills. The following selection of recent articles and resources that appeared in *Magnet* give a taster of the magazine – perhaps particularly its ecumenical breadth. I am grateful to Lindsay Peniston, the Business Manager of *Magnet*, for her assistance in putting this selection together.

The sacred ground of prayer: ourselves?

by Carolyn Wicks

Carolyn is Director of the Ammerdown Retreat and Conference Centre, and a member of the Roman Catholic community of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion.

When I blow out my prayer candle, the wisps of smoke float off into every remote corner of the house. Prayer begins for real when the light goes out – out into the dark places. – Margaret Silf¹

Prayer is our route on the mystical journey as we deepen our unique personal relationship with God, our self, others and indeed the whole of creation. Our own life stories are 'Sacred Ground'. On our journey we seek wholeness and holiness, and weave together the many strands of our life, as we struggle to integrate all our activities and relationships. There are as many ways to and with God as there are people on this earth. God is the extravagant artist who delights in all of creation, including us, and we all reflect the artist. Sometimes we miss the beauty the artist has placed both within ourselves and within others. We must also be good listeners in order to hear God. For Elijah, God was found in a still small voice. We need to listen with a compassionate and open heart.

How do we pray?

There is no right or wrong way to pray. Over the years our prayer changes and deepens. God calls us to be ourselves, to be truly authentic. God is tenacious and is not going to give up on us, even if we are tempted to give up! For many, the most difficult task is to accept the love God offers. I remember walking down a lane in North Wales one day, and suddenly the wonder of the statement that God actually loves me hit me like a bolt out of the blue. I had always known this in my head, but this was new. It was the sort of experience that makes you want to leap for joy or

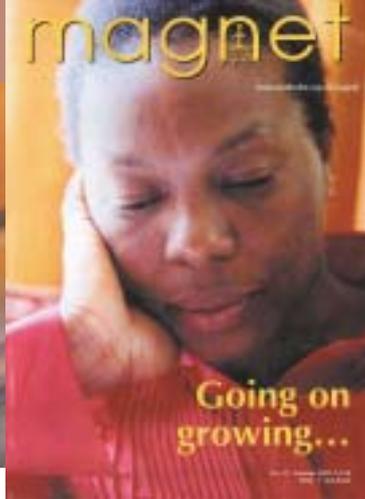
do a handstand in the middle of the field! Many of us said night prayers as children, encouraged by those around us. Now, our task is to move from 'saying prayers' to 'living prayer'. One damp November day I boarded a bus. Everyone was miserable and grumbling away for all they were worth. An elderly lady got on the bus. She smiled at the driver, and then as she travelled down the bus, she smiled at each person, looking them in the eye. The atmosphere changed immediately. That night when I reflected on where I had met God during the day, that elderly lady was at the top of the list. Love in action, a smile, a word, an affirmation, a listening ear – one to many.... Living our prayer with and in God. God's love comes to us in unexpected ways.

As we get older we may need fewer words and deeper silence. We need to discover what helps us and follow that way, while deeply respecting the way of others.

The Jesus Prayer has given life to many during difficult times. It is so simple and can be repeated very slowly over and over again. 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.' This method can be used with any words from scripture or indeed words of your own choice. Like water on a stone, slowly it impregnates the stone and makes a difference. The prayer enables us to become more aware of the presence of God and to become more God-like.

The scriptures are a wellspring of wisdom and resources, where we may drink deeply in prayer. Stay with a passage. Enter ever more profoundly into its meaning and strive to understand the people mentioned. How do they interact with Jesus, what do they tell us of God? We can begin to grasp the perfect human Jesus as he relates with ordinary people in their everyday life.

The monastic tradition, 'to work is to pray and to pray is to work,' is lived by many people, both within and without monasteries. This prayer is formal,



based on scripture and discipline, and touches the whole of life. This may not be your way, but it is life-giving to many. God has given us five senses, and the use of one or more of these in prayer is enriching. Many years ago when I was struggling with prayer my director suggested I paint. It was amazing, a real transformation. I began to rediscover myself and God. The same is true of clay, embroidery, crafts, drama and dance. One woman said to me, 'I am alive now. I pray to God with all my being, my limbs dancing and my heart singing. God is with me.'

A prayerful place

Christ frequently withdrew. He needed space. I remember a frosty, misty autumn morning when, walking in the garden, surrounded by stillness, and turning around a hedge, I looked across the orchard and knew with a certainty that God was there. This was indeed Holy Ground and in the silence God was with me. Over the years others have shared with me special similar experiences. You may have experienced this too.

Many people find it helpful to go to their prayerful place and there create a sacred space. This could be a chair, a corner of a room, a chapel, a garden. There you place a candle, a Bible, a bowl of water, a flower, an icon or object which has a deep meaning for you. A number of people I have spoken to over the years then try to 'still' themselves and bring silence into their being so that God may fill it.

We can pray in the most unlikely places – in the shower, at the bus stop, in the train, at the airport. And we are not alone. We share our journey with others. We need them as much as they need us in the journey with God.

*One single candle lights a little dark place.
Many candles light a world full of people
Desperately in need of each other's glow.
Each lone light makes us stronger
When we all stand together.*²

The pain of prayer

Prayer is not always easy. Indeed it can be excruciatingly painful. Sometimes we pray and feel absolutely nothing happens. God just seems to be on another wavelength. In the midst of our sorrow we search for the answer in the loss of a loved one, a fatal accident, physical or mental abuse, illness and disease. We ask why so many women have no voice. Often there is no answer, but we try to hang in there with God. Look at Christ's own suffering in Gethsemane. He pleaded for things to be changed. In a real relationship, anger and frustration are as much part of life as love and joy.

*Silent God,
empty, sound-less,
like the long dark nights
without life,
I wait, gently hoping,
for your touch which says,
'I am here'
But the void remains,
Unfilled,
Silent God,
Why do you hide your face
From me?*³

A wise priest I know said many years ago, 'Don't worry if distractions come. Just name them and hand them over to God. Leave them on the back burner for a time. Just rest in God. They will not disappear, but, maybe, after prayer we can see them in a new perspective.'

Prayer is such a massive subject, I feel I have hardly put my toe into the water.

The journey taken seriously means encountering the God of surprises along the way. God, our friend and lover, calls us ..., May we respond with openness, enthusiasm, joy, peace and delight.

Notes

¹ Silf, Margaret. *Daysprings*. Darton, Longman and Todd 1999 ISBN 0232 52350 9. p67

² Rupp, Joyce. *The Cosmic Dance*. Orbis

Books 2002. ISBN 1570754063. p85
³ Gateley, Edwina, *I Hear A Seed Growing*. Source Books (USA) ISBN 0 940147 07 6, 1990, rp 2002. Available in the UK and Ireland through Gracewing Publishing, Leominster.

Ding-dong merrily

by Jennifer Woolley

Jennifer Woolley is a member of Sittingbourne Methodist Church and a Senior Staff Nurse in Elderly Care at St Bartholomew's Hospital, Rochester. In the age of 50 she took up Marathon running. She regularly takes part in church organ recitals throughout the Southeast and is a keen member of Sittingbourne Orpheus Choral Society.

Look to. Treble's going. She's gone.' With that command more than 47 hundredweight of cast iron begins to swing at the end of six bell-ropes two floors above in the tower of St Mary the Virgin Church, Newington, Kent. This Sunday morning's assembly of ringers is a real assortment; a teacher, a sailor, a student learning to ring as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, a retired executive, a landscape gardener and me, a nurse who prefers campanology to rheumatology.

So how did I, a lifelong Methodist, get involved in bell ringing? After all, no Methodist church that I have known has ever had a bell tower. My interest started after a visit to a Flower Festival and Open Day at a village church near my home in Sittingbourne. The visit included a conducted tour of the bell tower and an opportunity to watch the bells being rung. Unable to resist the chance to have a go myself, I agreed to join the ringing team and over the last two years I have enjoyed every minute of the experience.

My first lesson was on a warm September evening and I climbed the narrow stone spiral staircase of the lovely flint and stone eleventh century

church, with its tower dating from about the fourteenth century, that sits amid cherry orchards and farmland. St Mary's tower houses six bells, one a mediaeval bell still in fine tune. Some churches have eight bells, bigger churches and cathedrals having anything up to fourteen. Having been warmly welcomed, I was to learn quickly that safety and complying with the tower captain's instruction was vital in a bell tower. I promptly did what I was told, as I did not relish the thought of being lifted to the rafters on a bell rope and having my hair rearranged by an oak beam. I was often reminded by the tower captain, 'If anything goes wrong, let go of the rope and stand well back. The bells are much heavier than you are and if you try to fight them they will win every time'.

The skill lies in being able to control a bell that rotates full circle using a rope attached to a wheel. Most bell-ringing sessions begin with ringing down the scale, a sequence which ringers call 'rounds'. The order in which the bells sound is then altered to give different sequences, called 'changes', and each ringer must know when his or her particular bell must sound in each change.

Nothing really prepared me for that initial, spine-tingling feeling just as six bells burst into life and the whole tower sways to and fro, causing the old faded photographs of ancient ringers on the walls of the room to nod approvingly from their picture hooks. Gradually, as the months passed, I mastered the technique of handling a church bell and managed to learn how to keep to the required sequence. It took a lot of concentration and I often found myself enjoying the glorious sound so much that I inevitably lost my place. However, someone always corrected me with a raised eyebrow or a nod of the head. It really is a matter of listening, watching and learning the various patterns in order to create a tuneful sound. Eventually I began to understand terms like 'plain hunting' and 'dodging' which, I discovered, have nothing at all to do with foxes or ducking!

After two years I consider that I am still learning, although I now ring for weddings and regular Sunday services. No one in the ringing team has ever scolded me for going wrong. We laugh at each other's mistakes and sternly resolve to try harder. I still get a thrill when I take up my bell rope, knowing

that Mrs Parsons in Church Lane will hear the bells, button up her coat, tuck her hymn book under her arm and set off for church. She and others have been summoned to Sunday worship in the same way for centuries, and being a part of that is indeed a great privilege. For me it is yet another meaningful experience combining fellowship, fulfilment and, above all, fun.

How much more?

by Albert Jewell

Until his retirement Albert was Senior Chaplain of the Methodist Care Homes.

When I retired a year ago people said the usual things about being so busy I would wonder I had had time to work... True – but what is the purpose of all our busyness? Where are we going in life? And, whatever our age, are we continually growing? To go on growing as spiritual beings throughout our lives has a sound theological and psychological basis.

According to Jesus, our God is a how-much-more God and that same how-much-more quality should mark God's people. 'If you, bad as you are, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him' (*Luke 11.13*). There is always so much more in store.

Register the astonishment at the climax of John's account of the wedding at Cana: 'Everyone else serves best wine first, and the poorer only when the guests have drunk freely; but you have kept the best till now' (*John 2.10*). William Temple writes 'As we deepen our fellowship with him', made known in Christ, at every age we may say "Thou hast kept the good wine until now". John Wesley's most distinctive contribution to Christian theology was arguably his emphasis upon the path to perfection. He describes the evolution of this doctrine of sanctification or perfect love in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* of 1767. He concludes that it is a gradual work of God in the believers that is usually completed at point of death. Appended is brother Charles's hymn 'God of all power, and truth, and grace' – all 28 verses! Spiritual growth is a lengthy, indeed an eternal, process.

According to Viktor Frankl, survivor of Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps, the greatest challenge we face as individuals is to retain



'Thou hast kept the good wine until now'.

or refashion our sense of meaning in life through times of suffering. For the very old the most fertile time of spiritual growth may well lie in discovering how frailty, dependency and death can prove the path to ultimate gain.

Older people in the care of MHA (ie Methodist Homes for the Aged) were invited to submit contributions celebrating the pluses of ageing. Poetry and prose flooded in. Whilst some remembered the past, many more rejoiced in the given-ness of God's creation and looked forward in sure hope to the yet-to-come. A publication was created entitled *Saving The Best Till Last* – always true of our how-much-more God.

The autumn of life is above all others the time for harvesting. At a special service all members of the congregation were invited to choose a colourful cardboard apple, orange or banana and write on it what they believed to be the most important fruit of their lives *so far*. Then the fruit was brought forward and placed on the branches of a 'tree' at the front of the church. They included learning patience... praying for others... retiring after 50 years service... supporting young people... grandparenthood... becoming more grateful... the wisdom of experience. What a hybrid! But what a reminder also that Christian growth has a vital corporate dimension.

The gifts and fruit of the Spirit are not intended to be individualistic but to build up and beautify the Body of Christ. Identifying and affirming such gifts is one of the cardinal principles of church growth. A praying, caring church whose members explore and engage with the varied riches of Christian spirituality will become an attractive growing church! Such is surely the calling of God's how-much-more people.

Editor's note: You can see more samples of articles from Magnet and discover how to subscribe to the magazine on their website; www.methodist.org.uk/magnet or call 01778 391 180.



Methodism's Children



Judy Jarvis is Children's Secretary of the Methodist Church. She has been elected Vice-President of the Methodist Conference and will take up this role for a year beginning in June 2003. A former headteacher, she is a Local Preacher in Buckinghamshire and the author of several worship and teaching resources. Here she explores the history of Methodist work with children.

In this tercentenary year of the birth of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, it is inevitable, and appropriate, that this article begins with him and a brief historical perspective. Wesley had strong views on the nurture and education of children, having been brought up in a very structured learning environment by his mother, Susanna. As a student he wrote to his father that it was important to 'contribute what little we are able towards having children clothed and taught to read' and to ensure that they were 'taught their catechism and short prayers for morning and evening'. Soon afterwards he began work on a Catechism for Children and, as a missionary, he experimented with the practice of catechising selected children during the service of worship, and then enlarging on the theme selected for both the benefit of the children themselves and for the adult members of the congregation. An early example of 'all age worship'!

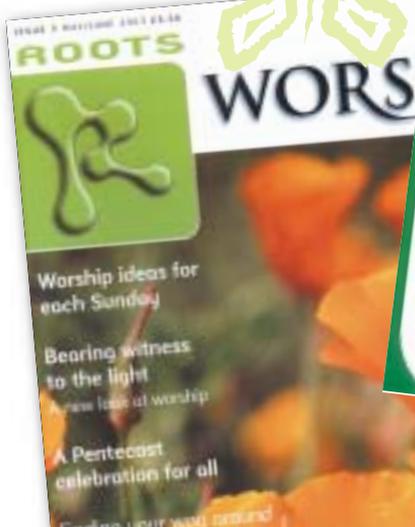
In addition to continuing to instruct children as he had opportunity, Wesley also experimented with the idea of preaching to children without using words of more than two syllables. He also recorded that when he visited Kingswood School on 2 October 1784 he found that some of the children wanted to receive Holy Communion. He talked to them about it and administered it to them the following morning.

Wesley, the Methodist societies and the Sunday Schools

Throughout his life Wesley and his Methodist societies supported the Sunday School movement. After Wesley's death the movement continued to grow. The rapidity with which Methodist Sunday Schools sprang up was one of the most predominant features of denominational history during the first twenty or thirty years of the nineteenth century. By 1838 the Sunday School Movement became more closely related to the mainstream concern for elementary education for all children. At that time the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion had 3400 Sunday Schools, with 60,000 teachers responsible for 342,000 scholars. In addition there were a considerable number of Methodist day schools, the pattern having been set by Wesley's support for the establishment of Kingswood, in Bristol, for the children of colliers. In this combination of Sunday Schools, day schools and infant schools the Authorised Version of the Bible was the basis for reading and expositions, the Wesleyan catechism was used, Wesley hymns were sung and children attended their local chapel unless their parents were members of another church.

Following the Education Act 1870, which brought universal elementary education, the Methodist position began to change. The Wesleyan Methodist Conference supported 'a Christian unsectarian school within a reasonable distance of every family'. This decision brought Wesleyans closer to the other branches of Methodism, but in following years the increasing separation of schools from the Nonconformist churches was a great cause of concern. In addition attendance at Sunday Schools of all denominations began to drop – a decline which has continued to this day. Sunday Schools were no longer necessary to the provision of basic education. A new approach was needed, though it took many years for Methodists, and other denominations, to become fully aware of the changed context in which they were working.

Methodists became part of the British Lessons Council which represented all the major Free Churches and had Anglican observers. There was a new emphasis on grading work and introducing new teaching methods in Sunday Schools to meet the needs of different age groups. In addition there was concern to close the gap between Sunday School work and the life and teaching mission of the Church itself.





The Way Ahead

In 1961 the Methodist Church produced its own report on Sunday School work *The Way Ahead* instigated by Revd Douglas Hubery, who was to play an influential part in the thinking of the Church. It includes these words:

'It is high time for all Sunday Schools to see themselves as an expression of the church's mission to children and young people. It is also high time for the Church to realistically fulfil its own obligations towards those children and young people. They are to be cared for, not because they may in time become the Church of Tomorrow, but because they are here and now the Church of Today.'

Seven years later Hubery was involved in the publication of the new British Lessons Council syllabus

Experience and Faith. This had four major emphases: the place of the Bible, the place of the Church, the place of the Christian calendar and the place of the pupil's own experience and

interests. The unique feature was that for the first time a syllabus addressed not just work with children but work with young people and adults as well. This was followed by the publication of *Partners in Learning* which continued, with major Methodist input, until 2002. *ROOTS*, its successor, an ecumenical venture, also has considerable Methodist support.

Junior Mission for All

From the time of John Wesley, Methodism has been a world-wide church and much effort has been put into supporting sister churches, both through the provision of missionaries, or mission partners as they are now called, and through financial support. Children have been involved in raising money since 1812 when Joseph Blake heard an inspiring sermon about missionary work. In his village of Wandsworth, Surrey, he started to encourage children in his Sunday School class to contribute each week. He doubled, and put in a box, any money they raised. By 1841 Juvenile Societies were set up, each child having

a collecting book for no more than eight names. The money was collected from the adults each Saturday and paid in on Sunday. In 1903 the idea of a medal was conceived. The Juvenile Missionary Collectors Distinguished Service Order (or bar) was awarded to any child collecting more than £5 a year. The Juvenile Missionary Association (JMA) was updated in the 1970s and again more recently. JMA now stands for *Junior Mission for All*, and raises over £500,000 each year to support mission, both at home and abroad.

Social needs too

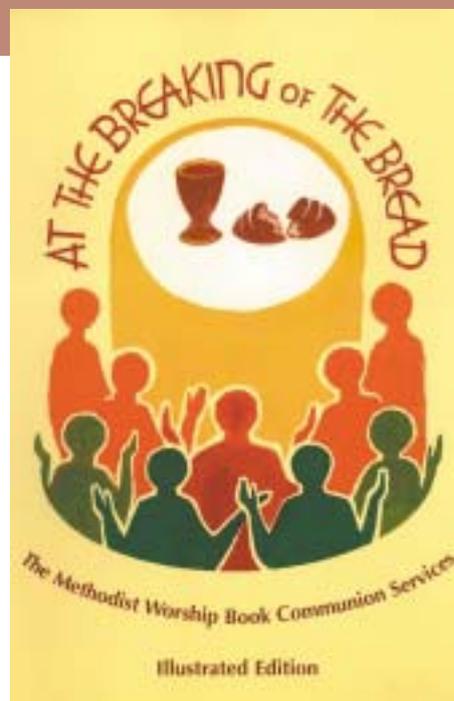
It is very clear from the historical records that much of the concern for education among children and young people expressed by John Wesley and the Methodists who followed after him was motivated by social as well as educational reasons. However, it was not until 1869 that moves were made to support children in deepest need. Revd

Thomas Bowman Stephenson, who was a minister in East London, appealed to two business men 'to join him in doing something for the ragged, shoeless, filthy, hungry children' he saw as he walked the streets of Lambeth. Premises were made available in the locality and the first group of boys came under his care. Four years later Stephenson became full-time Principal of the Children's Home, appointed by the Wesleyan Methodist

Conference. In 1908 it became the National Children's Home and Orphanage (NCHO). By this time it was established as a charity, receiving grants from the Government for its work. It had 13 branches with just over 2,000 children in residence and nearly 500 children boarded out with foster-parents. 20 years later there were 28 branches with 4,600 children in them and 800 in foster care.

NCH, as it is now known, continues to meet the needs of children and families. It supports almost 500 projects, usually in partnership with local authorities or other bodies. The

'(Children) are to be cared for, not because they may in time become the Church of Tomorrow, but because they are here and now the Church of Today.'



projects cover a wide range including family centres, counselling services and some residential care. In the quarter 1 July to September 30 2002 the charity worked with 66,100 children, young people and adults. The largest child care charity in Britain, it still reports each year to the Methodist Conference and a significant percentage of its income comes from direct Methodist giving. It is one of the jewels in the Methodist crown!

Children and Holy Communion

In 1976 *The Child in the Church* was published by the Consultative Group on Ministry among Children (CGMC), an ecumenical group in which the Methodist Church has always played a significant part. Along with many other recommendations Churches were encouraged to 'undertake a serious re-examination of their practice in nurturing children into full membership of the worshipping Christian community.' In the Methodist Church reflection on the implications of Christian initiation led to the production of the report *Children and Holy Communion* (1987). The report recommended that baptised children should be welcomed to Holy Communion and allowed to receive the elements as long as they showed 'an awareness of its significance.' The responsibility for deciding whether this should happen lay with the Church Council. Over the next ten years many Methodist churches adopted the recommendations of the report, though, inevitably, an inconsistency of practice developed, often to the detriment of children. Finally, in a second report in 2000, the anomalies were removed. It was to 'be normal practice

that all baptised children, as members of the Body of Christ, (should) participate in Holy Communion by receiving the bread and wine, irrespective of age.

Training – and safety

Training of teachers was of major importance when the Sunday School was in its heyday. Recently, in all the Churches, there has been a renewed emphasis on training. Since the early 70s the Methodist Church has required workers with children and young people to be trained and has provided training programmes. In the 1990s it became possible for all the churches to work together to produce *Kaleidoscope*, which has become the core training material for workers with children in the churches. Once again the Methodist Church was able to play a significant part, enabled particularly by its connexional (national) structure and organisation.

In recent years child protection has become a major issue for society, not least for the churches. Following the issue of the Home Office Guidelines *Safe from Harm* in 1993, the Methodist Church produced its *Safeguarding* policy (1994). Since then much work has been done to protect children and

those who have contact with them in the life of the Church. With the setting up of the Criminal Records Bureau in 2002 the Methodist Church has become the lead-agent in the Churches' Agency for Safeguarding, which works with more than a dozen denominations, acting as an umbrella body for workers with children and young people and others, who, by the nature of their work in the Church, require Disclosures (police checks).

It seems a long way from John Wesley to police checks. But it is worth quoting again from the 1961 report *The Way Ahead*. 'Whatever policies and programmes are pursued, it is still ultimately the 'caring' Church which really succeeds with its children'. Caring was at the heart of everything Wesley said or did concerning children. Caring about and for children lies at the heart of all the changes through the years. The challenge for the Methodist Church in this century is to keep on adapting: to the needs and interests of children, to the demands of the society in which we live, to a new role for the Church, and to the contribution and insights of children both inside and outside the Church.



Timetravellers' children's material with projects linked to the life of John Wesley; http://www.methodist.org.uk/information/timetravellers_resources.htm

Caring about and for children lies at the heart of all the changes through the years.



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ANGLICAN-METHODIST RELATIONS:

A personal and public perspective

Dudley Coates, formerly a senior civil servant, is a Local Preacher in the Dorchester Methodist Circuit and Chair of the Board of the Methodist Publishing House. He is the Methodist ecumenical representative on the General Synod, one of eight ecumenical representatives on Synod – who have the right to speak but not to vote.

I became a Methodist Local Preacher in 1970, whilst the then Anglican-Methodist conversations were still alive and kicking. The previous year I had married an Anglican. We had hopes that before long we would not have to make difficult choices about where and how to worship. But those hopes were dashed when the General Synod turned down the then Anglican-Methodist Conversations in 1972. We decided that both of us should stay with the church which had nurtured us and we have tried to make sense of being an ecumenical family ever since. Thirty years on and much has happened: I am still a Local Preacher but Jean has trained first as a Reader and later for the priesthood. We now live in a Rectory in a Dorset village set between the Parish Church and the Methodist Church, both of which are two minutes from our front door!

Thirty years ago whenever I presented myself to receive communion in an Anglican Church I was aware that strictly speaking I could be refused – though I never actually was! Canon B15A has largely regularised my position, though a rule-minded incumbent might see me as too regular an Anglican communicant and challenge me to seek confirmation; and a few (including the current incumbent of the parish where I grew up) still insist on episcopal confirmation. The Church Representation Rules now allow me to be on the electoral roll

without denying that I am first and foremost a Methodist (though last year I turned down an invitation to stand for election to the PCC!). Things have changed in many ways. Much of the suspicion has gone. We co-exist more happily and even cooperate at least some of the time. I have preached in Anglican Churches and even conducted Morning and Evening Prayer. But, whilst I know that some people are now both Reader and Local Preacher, I have never sought to become a Reader and the fact that I have never been episcopally confirmed would still be a stumbling block.

Where do we stand?

So where do our two traditions now stand? The formal position is in the report *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* which will come to the Methodist Conference and the General Synod this summer. I served as a Methodist member of the formal conversations and I stand by our report and by the process which it proposes. That process (not a scheme) allows for discussion to thrash out properly the issues which still divide us rather than sweeping them under the carpet (as some claimed was happening during the conversations in the 1960s and 1970s). There are theological issues which need further work: as the *Covenant* report indicates most Methodists could not swallow a Calvinist interpretation of Article XVII and some Anglicans have trouble with John Wesley's (rather inconsistent) views about Christian perfection. Ecclesologically, most Anglicans have trouble with lay presidency at the Eucharist, however limited it may be in current British Methodism, and most Methodists find the current disunited state of the Church of England over women priests, let alone women bishops, offensive. And, having listened, as the Methodist representative at the General Synod of the Church of England, to depressing debates last year about the role of the State in the appointment of bishops I have very profound doubts as to whether there is scope for agreement between us on Church/State issues.

On the ground, there are the things about which we can be thrilled and other things which can be deeply depressing. Anglicans and Methodists work together in LEPs and in less formal ways in many, many places. I have been encouraged at many of the

joint meetings which I have addressed on the *Covenant* report. But I have also met what I can only call sheer ignorance amongst many people – clergy as well as lay people – about the issues. I was asked recently by one Anglican whether Methodists celebrate the Holy Communion. In a group discussion in my hearing, an Anglican priest who had clearly not read it called the *Covenant* report 'a theology free zone'; I imagine that the theological adviser to the House of Bishops who helped write it would have something trenchant to say about that!

On the other side, many Methodists are simply unaware of changes in the Church of England, like the ecumenical canons or the huge freeing up of worship both in practice and in the way in which *Common Worship* authorises a huge variety of material, especially in Services of the Word. The truth is that we all tend to remember the negative things we learned, perhaps from our parents' memories, perhaps from our youth, perhaps at some significant point in our lives, much better than we remember positive things. People who have been refused marriage or baptism can carry huge chips on their shoulders for many years. Even faithful churchgoers can and do carry equally damaging memories. That is why one, albeit brief, chapter of the *Covenant* report is called *The Healing of Memories*. We may have to unlearn some of our memories before unity between our traditions becomes possible.

Will there be a will?

Yet all around me I sense apathy. The diocese in which I live has cancelled the Diocesan Synod at which the *Covenant* report was to be discussed. One of the bishops said to me 'But you can't vote against it'. But clearly you can. I have watched Anglicans vote against it in Deanery Synods in another diocese at which I have spoken (though there has always been a clear majority in favour). There are certainly Methodists who are voting against, often as far I can work out because they are opposed to any step towards reconciliation with the Church of England and especially with the notion of bishops – who are often described in terms which are at least a century out of date. There is, I think, a real issue in that for Anglicans the *Covenant* report requires nothing more



than they have agreed with the Evangelical Church of Germany in the Meissen agreement (and less than they have agreed with Scandinavian Churches in the Porvoo agreement). This is no accident. The mandate to the conversations from both the General Synod and the Methodist Conference specifically told us to use the Meissen report as a model.

But those agreements – and the later ones with Moravians (Fetter Lane) and the French Reformed Church (Reuilly) are essentially with churches abroad (though there are Moravian congregations in Britain). The *Covenant* proposals relate to a British church and I am not sure that many Anglicans have yet grasped that this means that their implications are much, much more direct. It is much easier to be nice to foreigners whom you will not meet very often than to be challenged to work with people you may meet in the village shop or the supermarket any day. It is clear to me that Methodists, however apathetic,

Can we not simply keep on being nice to each other as we now are?

tend to see these proposals as more significant than Anglicans. I find that worrying for the risk is that Anglicans may agree now and regret later. And, because we are a British rather than an English church, we Methodists cannot help noticing that another (very different) proposal for unity in Wales was turned down last autumn by the Governing Body of the Church in Wales after the Methodist and United Reformed Churches had, albeit with hesitations, agreed them.

Does unity matter?

Many people ask the question whether unity matters at all. Can we not simply keep on being nice to each other as we now are? Is it not good enough that we have left competition behind us? Do we need to go any further? My answer to that question is a firm ‘yes, we must go further, for the sake of the gospel’. For the primary calling of the church is not as a human institution. Our primary calling is to be the Body of Christ in the world and, as Paul dramatically

puts it ‘Has Christ been divided?’ (1 Corinthians 1.13, NRSV). In a long chapter which stresses that it is God’s mission in which we, weak and sinful human beings, are asked to share, the *Covenant* report makes the case for the indissolubility of the link between mission and unity better than I can in this article. That is why, despite times of depression, I remain convinced that we must keep working away at the issues of church unity.

Many in all our congregations are no longer died in the wool denominationalists but have ended up somewhere for entirely pragmatic reasons. In general the next generation has even less denominational identity than mine. The result is that church structures are increasingly out of line with where people actually are and that is increasingly dangerous. Whilst we must respect the traditions which come from our histories we must not become their prisoners. I do not know exactly what full visible unity will mean in terms of church structures, but I am clear that we need to find a way forward which serves the gospel in the 21st century.

Ourselves through Methodist eyes

Ian Yearsley, Reader in Southwark Diocese and a regional Moderator of Reader Training.

How would Methodist Local Preachers view the Readers’ admission and licensing service at Southwark Cathedral? What differences would they see between this and their own services of recognition?

Three Local Preachers from the Richmond and Hounslow Circuit came to the service on 28 October. Their dedication was such that to secure seats where they could see everything, they came an hour early. So they saw all the preparations for the service, and from the constant greetings they became aware how much the Readers of the diocese form a ‘family’ to one another. Methodist Local Preachers are usually ‘recognised’ individually, in one of the churches of their circuit. They receive a personal letter from the President of Conference,

which underlining that they are ministers of the wider church. But their selection and training take place at circuit level, equivalent to an Anglican deanery. So to see 19 people admitted and licensed all at once, plus two admitted for other dioceses and three welcomes from elsewhere, was something very different for them. ‘More like the ordinations that take place at Conference time,’ Methodists said.

Preaching and pastoring

They noted differences of emphasis in the service. ‘We are essentially preachers and leaders of worship. From this service it appears that Readers have more of a pastoral responsibility too.’ Local Preachers have a significant role in Methodism and in some circuits they maintain 85% of Sunday services. They usually work singly, moving from church to church according to a Preaching Plan, unlike Readers who often work with a priest and frequently in the same church, Sunday after Sunday. Another difference is that only after experience as a fully accredited Local Preacher can a candidate go forward for ordination in the Methodist Church.

They asked questions about initial

training and about preparation for funerals. But they were also intrigued by the varieties of dress at the Cathedral. Why was the crucifer’s party in albs? What was the official uniform for a Reader, and did Readers always wear it? Local preachers tend to take their style of worship with them around the circuit rather than trying to adhere to a particular local church’s tradition, and almost always wear everyday dress to take services. Methodists look for enthusiasm as well as style and content in worship. They found that at the Cathedral: would they find it in our ordinary services, Sunday by Sunday?

Recently Anglicans and Methodists have studied the *Covenant* proposals. This visit was hopefully a contribution to that process. Meanwhile Readers are recommended to attend recognition services for Local Preachers; one such service I attended at Putney was the catalyst for the visit to the Cathedral by Christine Robson from Roehampton and Mary and Martin Ludlow from Putney.

(This article first appeared in Southwark Reader, Spring 2003)



On this page I have tried to collect together references to some additional resources and references that people might find useful. First, the main website of the Methodist Church in Britain www.methodist.org.uk. This well organized site contains a section detailing the 'essentials' about Methodism – what Methodists believe and how the Church is structured. The site also contains an accessible section entitled 'Prayer and worship' – which has ideas and resources for private and public worship. At the time of writing the focus of the site was on the recent war in the Middle East, and as well as useful prayers it contains a couple of relevant and unusual modern hymns. (As one would expect from the spiritual descendants of Charles Wesley!)

The special site set up to mark the 300th anniversary of John Wesley's birth www.wesley2003.org.uk is also worth a look. It contains a timeline of events in his life, an article on the historical situation in England during Wesley's lifetime, and a diary of the various events being held around the country to celebrate the Tercentenary.

The Methodist Publishing House – the in-house publishing arm of the Methodist church – has its own website at www.mph.org.uk. As well as a catalogue of books, etc. available for sale it features an 'Epworth article' – one of the articles that has recently appeared in the Methodist publication, the *Epworth Review*. As I write the featured article on the site is *Selling the Sermon* by Graham Peacock – a helpful reflection on preaching – with a distinctly pastoral focus. One of the interesting questions Graham Peacock throws out is: 'What might be meant by engaging with the Bible "as a lover"?' What indeed!

The Methodist commitment to social justice is well expressed – in international terms – on the Methodist Relief and Development Fund site www.mrdf.org.uk. It contains news and resources about a number of campaigns promoting a fairer world – and seeking to alleviate the injustices of the present one. Any church (of any denomination) concerned about relief and development issues in the poorest countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America would find helpful tools on this site.

There are a number of other useful Methodist related website links

A Methodist Miscellany



referred to elsewhere in the magazine which I will not repeat here.

A small book *Called by Name* produced by members of the Methodist Connexional Team has been (deservedly) selling extraordinarily well. Its subtitle is 'Being a member in the Methodist Church' – and that is exactly what it is seeking to help people to discover how to be. Exquisitely produced, it is attempting to share in an accessible way the distinctive aspects of the Methodist heritage. It is interesting to ponder if a similar kind of book could be produced for Anglicans – someone recently asked me that very question. I suspect that for a variety of reasons it would be considerably more difficult. *Called by Name* can be obtained for £3.50 (plus p&p) from Methodist Publishing House – Tel 01733 325002, or via their website.

I regret that we haven't included as much as I would have liked about Methodist spirituality, worship – and of course hymns – in *The Reader*. But at least I want to include that particular treasure of Methodist spirituality – the Covenant prayer. Here it is – lovely to read, challenging to pray:

*I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,*

*Rank me with whom you will,
Put me to doing,
Put me suffering,
Let me be employed for you,
Or laid aside for you,
Exalted for you,
Or brought low for you,
Let me be full,
Let me be empty,
Let me have all things,
Let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly
yield all things*

*To your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
You are mine and I am yours.*

So be it.

*And the covenant now made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.*

And from the sublime to the humorous – this story of John and Charles' parents:

'The revolution of 1688 threatened to disturb the early married life of Samuel Wesley and his spouse. The husband wrote a pamphlet in which he defended revolution principles, but the wife secretly adhered to the old cause; nor was it until a year before Dutch William's death that the rector made the discovery that the wife of his bosom, who had sworn to obey him and regard him as her overlord, was not in the habit of saying 'Amen' to his fervent prayers on behalf of his suffering sovereign. An explanation was demanded and the truth extracted, namely, that in the opinion of the rector's wife her true king lived over the water. The rector at once refused to live with Mrs Wesley any longer until she recanted. This she refused to do, and for a twelvemonth the couple dwelt apart, when William III having the good sense to die, a reconciliation became possible. If John Wesley was occasionally a little pig-headed, need one wonder?' (from Augustine Birrell's 'Appreciation of the Journal' in *The Heart of Wesley's Journal*)

Clare Amos



The Painful Work of an Ordinary Reader



These interesting observations by **Ian Yearsley** of Southwark Diocese complement our ecumenical focus.

Readers ministry died out in much of England at the time of the Reformation, and although it was briefly revived by Archbishop Parker in 1561 to meet an expected shortage of clergy, it soon died out again and was revived again only in 1866. This is the view that most writers who bother even to mention Readers seem to take, and they differ largely on the question of whether the canon of 1571 was meant to restrict Readers or to prevent puritan clergy employing unlicensed people to take services. JH Moorman in his *History of the Church in England* simply says that Readers were revived, 'but did not last very long.'

More recent research, however, shows that almost throughout the period when no new Readers were licensed in the Church of England, its bishops were busy licensing 'lecteurs' or Readers, for the French Huguenot Protestant churches in England. In his book *Huguenot Heritage*, Dr Robin Gwynn, himself a former Reader in Southwark Diocese, shows that not only were these French-speaking Readers licensed by English bishops, but from 1600 onwards many of the French churches became 'conformist', using the French version of the Book of Common Prayer originally intended for the Channel Islands.

An appeal from John de Champs of the French conformist church of the Savoy to the Bishop of London in 1758 says that the three ministers 'should not have to do constantly the painful work of an ordinary Reader', and requests that the Bishop will licence Sieur Massy, already a reader at the French Church of Leicesterfields. He would not, set up for a preacher; he was already too busy as a schoolmaster.

French protestants began to settle in England in 1535 and the earliest mention of an organised French congregation in England was in 1548. French and Dutch churches were founded in London in 1550. All had royal approval, and Robin Gwynn has commented that Edward VI or his ministers may have viewed them as a possible model for the emerging Church of England. They followed a Calvinist pattern of worship, and the 'lecteurs' not only read the scriptures but chanted the psalms, often for an hour before the minister took over with the sermon. In some of the conformist churches, the lecteur read the Anglican Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, then left the minister to preach the Calvinist sermon for the next hour or more.

Further waves of refugees from persecution in France arrived following the St Bartholemew's Day massacre in 1572 and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, and in all some 40,000-50,000 French people came to this country, bringing many trade skills such as weaving. Not until 1787 were Huguenots tolerated again in France. Over the years Huguenot descendents more and more adopted the English language and the 20 churches in London in 1731 declined to eight by 1800 and three by 1900.

From all this it would appear, however, that throughout the period from Elizabethan times to the mid-Victorian years when Reader ministry was largely absent from the

Plaque of the French hospital, Rochester, an almshouse for elderly people of Huguenot descent.

Church of England, the English bishops were licensing Readers or lecteurs for the French Huguenot churches. Was this experience in the minds of those who proposed the revival of Church of England Reader ministry in 1866?

Huguenot Heritage by Robin Gwynn was published in 2001 by Sussex Academic Press. Robin Gwynn was admitted as a Reader in Southwark in the mid-1960s and served at St Paul, Wimbledon Park until the late 1970s, when he moved to New Zealand.

THE READER MISSIONARY STUDENTSHIP ASSOCIATION

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The Revd Professor Owen Chadwick OM

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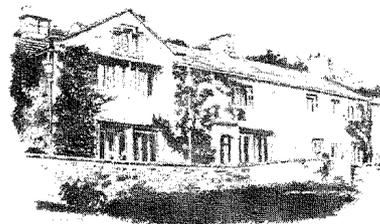
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For your bookshelf



B

John

Mark A Matson

Westminster John Knox

£5.99 pbk.

0 664 22580 2

This is a clear and helpful exposition of medium length (128 pages) of the Fourth Gospel. It does not attempt to give as much information as a commentary but it faces the difficulties and indicates solutions to them. It is intended for use by study groups and a leader's guide provides suggestions for running a group, but the only suggestions specific to this Gospel are four questions after each of the ten units. This format is imposed on the series of books and in this Gospel a unit covers too much for a single session. This book will be useful for group or individual study.

JOHN TAYLOR

B

Paul for everyone: the prison letters

NT Wright

SPCK £6.99 pbk.

0 340 75697 7

Although the bishop-elect of Durham is a scholar he writes in a plain, enthusiastic and accessible style. His translation of the text is refreshingly clear and direct, as appropriate for 21st century readers as were Moffat or JB Phillips for the early and mid-20th century. Excellent not only for those new to the scriptures but also for those more familiar

with the text but for whom it may have lost its first excitement. The author uses illustrations well, linking the big picture to the smaller incidents. The glossary is also useful. Each short passage of text is followed by a readable discourse including background information. This volume covering Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon will make an excellent addition to the library of any Reader.

DEREK REDMAN

B

New Testament exegesis

Gordon D Fee

Westminster John Knox

£12.99 pbk.

0 664 22316 8

This book is a step by step, how-to-do-it, guide to moving from New Testament text to the fullest and most accurate account of its meaning in English. Very thorough and rather intricate, it is not really designed for cover to cover reading. Knowledge of Greek would be an advantage although the author is keen to give the Bible student without Greek the maximum amount of help. Full exegesis requires 15 main steps and a serious time commitment. Readers might find more useful a 22 page chapter entitled *Short guide to sermon exegesis* with six main steps. This takes a little under five hours to reach the point at which one actually starts to write the sermon!

JOHN MUNNS

B H

In the beginning

Alister McGrath

Hodder and Stoughton

£7.99 pbk.

0 340 78585 3

In the Middle Ages literacy was largely confined to the clergy. The Renaissance renewed European culture,

owning books raised one's status and the demand soared. Printing had interesting possibilities. Gutenberg produced the first printed Bible in Latin in 1456. The English people wanted a Bible in their own language, which they could read for themselves instead of the clergy reading it to them. The clergy disagreed. In the early 14th century only Latin was used in church and it was illegal to produce an English Bible so a struggle ensued. In 1526 at Worms, William Tyndale produced a version of the Bible in English, copies of which were smuggled into England. When James I became king in 1603 he authorized a new translation of the Bible, which appeared in 1611. This was the King James Bible based substantially on Tyndale's version. Alister McGrath explains the difficulties which had to be overcome. His comparison of different English translations is an interesting feature. This is an excellent history running to 340 pages which any Reader will enjoy.

ANGELA TIPPETTS



H S

Who are the Celtic saints?

Kathleen Jones

Canterbury £16.99 pbk.

1 85311 493 6

The lives of the Celtic saints are wreathed in folklore. What records have survived are scanty. Kathleen Jones has attempted to disentangle the truth from the web of legend and has succeeded in painting a vivid portrait of their yearning for

solitude, their dedication and love of learning. She provides a compelling account not only of the better known among them – David, Patrick and Columba – but of the little known as well. Few Readers, I suspect, will be familiar with Erc, Tysilio or Congar! The revival of interest in Celtic spirituality in recent years has called for a comprehensive account of its origins and character as well as for a scholarly approach to the men and women who shaped it. This book fulfils that need and for Readers who wish to know more about the origins of Christianity in the Celtic fringes of Britain, it can be warmly recommended.

ROBERT BEVAN

T H E

The Church that could be

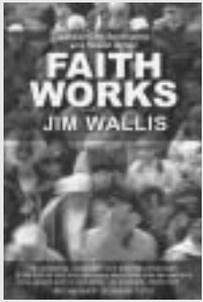
David L Edwards

SPCK £10.99 pbk.

0 281 05455 x

This is a difficult book to describe and not quite what you expect from the title. Dr David Edwards draws on the experiences of his life at Oxford, Cambridge, and as Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Cathedral Dean in Norwich and Southwark, to describe movements of faith and uncertainty and to draw out the hopes and possibilities from the challenges of science, the Gospel accounts, the confrontation with government and catholic and evangelical impulses. The last chapter centres on the needs of the people of China as a paradigm of how the Church might meet the needs of the world today and tomorrow. There is much of interest in these chapters but it would have been good to have more of David Edwards' views on the Church of tomorrow.

AUDREY BAYLEY



J S P

Faith works

Jim Wallis
SPCK £12.99 pbk.
0 281 05525 4

If you believe that the church should keep out of politics this book is not for you. If you are comfortable sitting within four walls do not read this book. I write this because the author is challenging us to get out of the house, and do something. The majority of examples are from America. The book is challenging us all to get involved in doing something to combat the awful fact of poverty. The author is not writing only about the poverty in undeveloped countries but poverty much closer to home. He tells us how people are responding in America, how people are getting over their mutual distrust and striving to work effectively to challenge the system and to promote change for the better. Putting it simply the message is that Christians, from whatever background they come, can and should work together for the benefit of those who have little or nothing. He poses the question, 'What would Jesus do?'

CHRIS GREGORY

S P

The Road Home

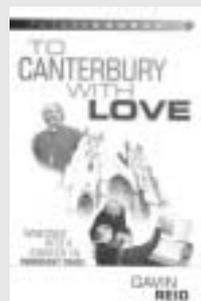
Sara Covin Juengst
Westminster John Knox
£9.99 pbk.
0 664 22426 1

Subtitled *Images for the Spiritual Journey*, this very readable book enlarges on reasons why many words

associated with journeys are used to describe spiritual life. It brings together a wealth of scriptural and secular information about roads as it explores ideas of travel. From the first chapter it makes fascinating reading. Dealing with reasons for and ways of travel, we are taken on the stages from leaving home; moving around; solitary journeys to arrival at crossroads. Then comes an in-depth exploration of the *way* and the implications for those who are following it, with some geographical, moral, behavioural and theological examples. Finally we arrive at a discussion of *home* and some connotations linked with that, including the heavenly one. There are four pages of biblical references and a useful bibliography. For me, the inclusion of so many non-biblical quotes and the author's personal illustrations add to the excellence of this volume. At the end of each chapter there are *Guideposts* intended for personal reflection and encouragement. These thought-provoking sections make the whole a very suitable resource for Reader training or home groups.

Its skilful presentation commends this book to all serious followers of 'The Way'.

CYNTHIA WHITTLE



P

To Canterbury with love

Gavin Reid
Kingsway Communications
pbk.
1 84291 066 3

Gavin Reid's aim is to share a lifetime's experience as a committed Christian serving the Church of England in many roles, from Sunday school boy to bishop who often deputized for the Archbishop of Canterbury. He is avowedly an evangelical but not aggressively so. He loves his Church and rejoices in its best aspects but has eyes wide open to its warts and he makes sensible and practical suggestions for eliminating some of them. He also recognizes that some warts are deep rooted and that we may have to live with them. Above all he sees the future lying with today's children and that present day structures and traditions do not impress them nor most of their parents. He speaks plainly and wisely on some of the most controversial of current issues. All this he illustrates with amusing stories taken from his own experience. Altogether a good read from which much can be learnt.

LYNN FERRABY

T

Nature, human nature and God

Ian Barbour
SPCK £12.99 pbk.
0 281 05545 9

A very great deal is packed into this short volume which lucidly discusses the ever more complex relationship between science and religion. The problem today is to find a natural theology which really does justice to the developments across the spectrum of scientific enquiry and yet retains the integrity of theological discourse. One way forward and one which Barbour develops in his own way is that of process theology. Process theology takes science seriously but it doesn't fall into the simplistic trap of saying 'science asks how and religion asks why'.

For there to be a model which works, God and the universe have to be seen to depend on each other. That means that theology has to take seriously the scientific models which account for the open-ended dynamic of nature. One such model which scientists favour is an idea that matter somehow 'communicates information' through its complexity. This provides a point where science and religion can work in partnership. If God is envisaged as the 'top down' cause giving the cosmos its organizational potentials, then it can also draw attention to the inner spiritual dimension of nature which science only dimly perceives. This is not a book for beginners but it covers such a wide range of topics including evolution, genetic engineering/cloning, artificial intelligence and environmental ethics, that it is worth reading many times, even if you are not an advocate of process theology.

MICHAEL WILCOCKSON



E P

Understanding my Muslim Neighbour

Michael Nazir Ali
Canterbury £5.99 pbk.
1-85311-506-1

One strength of this short book (about 100 pages) is that it should cause no offence. Bishop Michael, answering questions from Christopher Stone, manages to convey the complexity of Islam in a rounded and sympathetic manner. He disarms many of the petty prejudices of the West by



writing with charity as well as clarity. I was surprised by the ease with which he put across the breadth of Islamic tradition and teaching, and I was pleased to find 9/11 put into a balanced perspective. This sympathy can be also a weakness. The author is not always forthcoming enough about the less attractive traits of Islam – the treatment of women, for instance. However, in his final chapters he becomes more robust about such matters and he certainly pulls no punches about the need to maintain an evangelistic approach.

Overall, this is an excellent brief summary of Islamic thought and practice, as perceived by a thoughtful, charitable and evangelistic Christian. Appropriate for the inquiring young as well as for the entrenched older members!

ED WICKE



T H P

The calling of a cuckoo

David Jenkins
Continuum £18.99 hbk.
0 8264 4991 3

David Jenkins was surprised when, in 1984, already in his 60th year, he was called from his professorship of theology at Leeds University to become bishop of Durham. Within a few weeks he had become 'the controversial bishop of Durham' and remained so until his retirement ten years later. The title of what he calls 'not quite an autobiography' is taken from a remark made by Mrs

Thatcher about 'cuckoos' amongst clerics and bishops, which he took to refer to himself. David Jenkins' views on the literal truth of Gospel miracles including the Virgin Birth and the empty tomb are commonplace in university departments of theology and are well known to clergy who have trained in them. They are however still deemed by many clergy as too complex and unsettling to be taught to lay churchgoers or included in sermons. Some at least feel that such views could be held and taught by a university teacher but not by a bishop. To David Jenkins 'truth is indivisible' – 'I found the suggestion that I should keep quiet about truths I had discovered through a life of academic study ... when I was preaching and teaching ... frankly blasphemous'. This is a passionate and eloquent book. David Jenkins asserts

that the behaviour of the church over this and other matters – for example the ordination of women and same sex relationships – drove him to see 'that the case for atheism is very strong'. 'The present quarrelsome and institutionally obsolete state of the C of E.' renders it 'not fit or able to serve the Christian gospel of the future'. Despite his pessimism about the C of E, he remains a passionate believer convinced in the final words of his book of 'the hope, the risk and the wonder of going on'.

PETER WATKINS

E T P

Christianity in a post-atheistic age

Clive Marsh
SCM £9.95 pbk.
0 334 02869 8

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Enlightenment and we stopped going. Clive Marsh calls this the Atheistic Age. Now he sees a rise in spirituality and he calls this the Post-atheistic Age. People are hungry for belief, but do not actually know this. He believes Christians need to meet this spiritual hunger and recommends we adopt a liberal Protestant style to do it. He recommends also taking appropriate insights from other faiths and he takes a good swipe at consumerism on the way. All Christians should share in this work and we will need less formal church structures to achieve our aims. Marsh propounds 95 topics for discussion after the manner of Luther's theses and suggests we could group these to make a six-session discussion group programme, but the groups I know would probably prefer an easier writing style for their textbook.

PETER THORNTON

HTW

Christian thought – a brief history

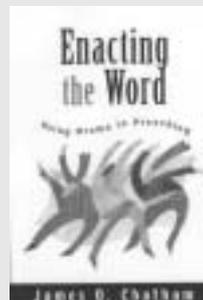
Edited Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, and Hugh Pyper
OUP

£5.99 pbk.
0 192 802 1

This book was a joy to read. The chapters are derived from the *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* published in 2000, [reviewed in *The Reader Vol.98 No.1 Spring 2001*], so this book is a digest of the larger parent volume. Church history is worked through chronologically in chapters in the two sections each of which is written by scholars of repute in the various eras. The first section is *Christian Thought in the East* and includes Greek, Syriac, Byzantine, Eastern Orthodox and Armenian theology and tradition. Each chapter gives

a splendid overview of church history and all are written by people who know that tradition well. The second section, *Christian Thought in the West*, is divided up into centuries, the final chapter being a heartening overview of the 20th century by Adrian Hastings, where he says, *Christian theology may well be in a healthier state, more internally coherent and less schismatic than has been the case for many centuries. A very useful book for preachers!*

CHRISTINE McMULLEN



BW

Enacting the word

James O Chatham
Westminster John Knox
£6.99 pbk.
0 664 22570 5

Sermons are not often illustrated by drama with actors but this book invites you to try the idea and gives scripts for Jonah, Psalm 107 and creation, Rahab, prayer, God's calling, light and darkness and the Resurrection. It is aimed at a dialogue between preacher and actors in a sermon. When this is done well it can be effective and gain the attention of the congregation. The script of Jonah includes two songs. The preacher also has a script to follow as if he or she were one of the actors. Will it work? I think it will but I did wonder if some of the preacher's words were difficult for minds not attuned to them. No doubt the user could adapt the text or devise other dramas along similar lines.

CHRIS PORTEOUS



TP

Creation and last things

Gregory Cootsona
Geneva £7.99 pbk.
0 664 50160 5

This is one of a series of 12 books on *The Foundations of the Christian Faith* produced by the Presbyterian church of USA – the author ministers in a New York city Presbyterian church. The subtitle is *The intersection of theology and science*. The author ranges over many of the collision points between Christianity and science in a CS Lewis sort of style: evolution, the nature of humanness, providence, evil and the fall, determinism, eschatology etc. His treatment could provide ammunition for preacher or teacher. The book does not pretend to be work of profound scholarship but it has a clear, positive and scriptural approach which would provide a good basis for a house or youth group discussion. It would be useful for anybody bemused by Richard Dawkins, TV docudramas and the like.

SAM BERRY

P

Healing death's wounds

Michael Mitton and Russ Parker
Arcadia £8.99 pbk
0 86347 468 3

This is a revised version of *Requiem healing* written following 9/11, which seeks to address issues of grief following bereavement, particularly sudden death. The co-authors each write separate chapters and one of

their main aims is to confront the point of view of the traditional evangelical Christian who views with suspicion prayer for the dead. In tackling this subject the book includes what was for me an uneasy mix of personal stories of contact with the dead, theological reflection and scriptural references that may point towards understanding what happens to people when they die. There is a chapter on *Remembering and releasing* with prayers for those who have died, including children who die before birth and prayers for 'the unquiet dead'.

WENDY AIRD

SW

The wine danced

Angela Ashwin
Eagle £7.99 pbk.
0 86347 472 1

This book contains a series of meditations on the Eucharist, divided into four sections. The first series is on the Cup of Life with meditations on the various ways in which Christ pours out his love for us; the next is on the Cup of Suffering where we follow the patterns of suffering from Christ's anguish in the garden to our own sufferings. Next comes the Cup of Openness examining how we respond to God's love for us. Finally comes a series of meditations based on eucharistic liturgy with particular reference to Common Worship. These meditations will help to stimulate new ways of thinking about the meaning of the Eucharist either for our own use or in our teaching ministry.

RALPH H CRAMPORN

**W P****Talking to the neighbours***Ronald Blythe*

Canterbury £16.99 hbk.

1 85311 478 2

The location of Ronald Blythe's ministry as a Reader is in three parishes on the Essex side of the river Stour. The 35 items in this collection are a cross between sermons and conversations – (should there be too much difference?) – and are a delight to read. The author is a distinguished writer, a poet and a countryman, whose insights into the Christian faith show depth and understanding of the part played by ancient churches with their centuries of worship in the hearts and minds of those who live in the countryside which surrounds them. In these pages nobody could fail to find sympathy and warmth.

GEORGE MACKNELLY

P**Counting sheep***Paddy Benson and John Roberts*Grove £2.50 pbk.incl.p.&cp.
1 85174 517 3

This important and stimulating Grove Book is based on a survey of church attendance in the Wirral North deanery in the diocese of Chester. We are used to news of steadily declining church attendance and the authors see no reason to question this. They do however argue that the picture is rather more complex than most published statistics suggest. They divide church goers into four categories according to frequency of attendance: core attenders – 6-8 attendances in 8 weeks (14%); mobile core 4/5 out of 8 (12%); casual attenders 2/3 out of 8 (49%), and worshipping fringe 1 out of 8 (25%). The size of the last two categories is particularly significant. The book is concerned however not with bald statistics but with the pastoral and organizational consequences. How for example do we communicate parish news and activities to the last two categories? Are these last two

categories people on their way in or on their way out? What are the consequences for preaching and teaching – no use starting a sermon with 'Last week we considered Romans 1 so I shall this morning begin on Romans 2!' Does reduced church going mean diminished belief? The book ends with practical suggestions for clergy, Readers and PCC and advice on how to set up a similar survey in your parish or deanery. Altogether a thought provoking book – strongly recommended.

PETER WATKINS

H**Launcelot Fleming***Giles Hunt*

Canterbury £19.99 pbk

1 85311 523 1

In its 75 years' existence the Portsmouth diocese has had eight bishops. The fourth, appointed in 1949, was at the age of 42 the youngest, the least qualified and yet perhaps the most loved. Launcelot Fleming's sole previous clerical appointments were Chaplain and Dean of Trinity Hall, Cambridge and wartime naval chaplain. He had never served in a parish, even as a curate. His early enthusiasm was polar exploration. He had a natural gift for friendship and was the least pompous of men. As a bishop he preferred not to travel first class, did not wish to accept the Lambeth DD then conferred on diocesan bishops and did not like wearing the gaiters required by Archbishop Fisher. After ten years in Portsmouth he was translated to Norwich, a wide rural diocese where he introduced the first group ministry at Hilborough. Norwich brought contacts with the Queen and when his health required a less onerous post he accepted the Deanery of St George's Chapel, Windsor. It was his least

happy appointment. He was inhibited by reactionary canons, determined to resist change. Launcelot Fleming was active in many other spheres: he was a founder of VSO, he chaired the C of E Youth Council, and was involved in the founding of the University of East Anglia. Giles Hunt, the author of this portrait, was Fleming's chaplain at Portsmouth and Norwich. It is a good read though there are in my view rather too many quotations from undistinguished speeches and sermons and the book is highly priced – £20 is a great deal for a 270 page paperback.

PETER WATKINS

And finally....

The Canterbury Press publishes a revised edition of *So the Vicar's leaving...* subtitled *The good interregnum guide* (£5.99 pbk. 1 85311 505 3) SPCK publishes *The Funeral Handbook* (Giles Legood and Ian Markham £8.99 0 281 05413 4). Three Grove books in addition to the one reviewed above are likely to be of interest to Readers. *Wisdom, the Spirit's gift* (Christopher Cocksworth 1 85174 521 1); *When is war justified?* (Andrew Goddard 1 85174 520 3) and *The new perspective on Paul* (Michael B Thompson 1 85174 511 1). They are available from Grove Books, Ridley Hall Road, Cambridge CB3 9HU and cost £2.50 each including postage and packing.

College of Readers

An independent membership organisation providing fellowship and support to those Readers of the Anglian Communion in the British Isles who affirm (1) the authority of holy Scripture; (2) the grace of the sacraments; and (3) the traditional understanding of the ordained ministry of Bishop, priest and deacon.

Membership costs £10 a year and benefits include a quarterly periodical, Blue Scarf, the beginnings of a network of circles and chaplains, an events programme and a developing range of publications and distance learning opportunities. The College of Readers ("CoR") aims to supplement and complement the official Provincial and Diocesan provision for Readers.

For a prospectus and a membership form please contact:

**The Registrar CoR, The Vicarage, London Road,
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Gazette of newly admitted and licensed Readers

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Debra Dyson, St. Paul, Hamstead
Bobbie Frere, St Stephen and St Wulstan, Selly Park
Gillian Gough, Christ the King in Shirley Team Ministry
Pauline Griffiths, St. Leonard, Marston Green
David Grist, St. Boniface, Quinton
Alan Hopkins, The Whitacres and Shustoke
Vanico James, St Peter and St Paul, Aston
John Kennedy, St. Peter, Harborne
Jeannie Lynch, St. Philip and St James, Hodge Hill
Licensed
Mary Edwards, Birmingham Diocesan Director of Education

CHICHESTER

22 SEPTEMBER 2002

Admitted and Licensed

Patricia Deasy, Fairlight. Guestling and Pett
Timothy Dumps, St Phillip Hove and St Leonard Aldrington
Roland Ell, Pagham
Linda Holmes, Copthorne
Robert Lowes, St Andrew, Burgess Hill
Elizabeth Peart, Clymping, Yapton and Ford
John Sherlock, Rudgwick
Rodney Shotter, St Luke, Prestonville
John Stirland, Clymping, Yapton and Ford
Richard Thirkell, Groombridge
Licensed
Samuel Pearce, St Andrew Burgess Hill
Janette Smith, St Peter, Bexhill
Hilary Terry, Uckfield, Isfield and Horsted Parva
John White, East Preston with Kingston

EXETER

2002-2003

Admitted and licensed

Margaret Andrews, North Devon Coast Team Ministry
Andrew Bourne, Okehampton Team Ministry
Keith Butler, St Paul, Wolborough
Christine Chandler, Little Dart Team Ministry
Rose Clark, Yealmpton and Brixton
Penny Elsom, Sid Valley Team Ministry
Sue Gay, Kingsteignton, St Michael
Peter Hadden, Plymouth, St Jude
Jenny Harris, Stoke Fleming
Catherine Jenkins, Silverton, Butterleigh, Bickleigh and Cadeleigh
Marion Sanders, Barnstaple Team Ministry

Isolde Summers, Crediton, Shobrooke and Sandford with Upton Hellions

Mike Taylor, North Devon Coast Team Ministry

Licensed

Jenny Davis, Culm Valley Team Ministry

David Hortop, Hemyock with Culm Davey, Clayhidon and Culmstock

Anne Marshall, Otter Vale Team Ministry

Michael Piper, Britannia Naval College, Dartmouth

Roena Wraighte, Little Dart Team Ministry

HEREFORD

2002

Admitted and licensed

Philip Core, Worfield

Rosemary Havard, Holmer

Carilyn Simkin, Coalbrookdale

Licensed

Melvyn Evans, Highley

Tony South, Leominster

LICHFIELD

11 JANUARY 2003

Admitted and licensed

Paul Benton, Shifnal

Alison Carp, Leek and Meerbrook

Andrew Carp, Leek and Meerbrook

Sally Day, Shifnal

Mary Edwards, Aldridge

Keith Eaton, St John the Baptist, Stafford

Benson Ewbank, Audley

Margaret Foxall, Lapley with Wheaton Aston

Roger Hodgkinson, Shifnal

Mary Jephcott, Alstonfield

Michael Moffatt, Milton

Laurence Myatt, Wilnecote

Peter Phillips, St Chad, Burton upon Trent

Jill Richards, Cheddleton

Richard Sainsbury, St Martin, Walsall

David Southerton, Harlescote

Susan Taylor, Leek and Meerbrook

Erica Thomas, St Martin, Walsall

Tony Townsend, Weston Under Lizard

Shayne Trinder, Audley

Richard Walker-Hill, Wrockwardine Wood

Ann Wright, Lapley with Wheaton Aston

ST ALBANS

1 MARCH 2003

Admitted and licensed

Allan Budgen, St Mary, Ashwell

Ann Edwards, St Margaret and St Mary, Stanstead Abbots

Patricia Fry, St Mary, Little Wymondley

Joyce Galliers, St James, High Wych

Wendy Hughes, St Mary, Carlton

Margaret Inegbedion, St Owen, Bromham

Vivien Marlow, St John the Evangelist, Hatfield

Valerie McIntosh, St Nicholas, Elstree

Angela Newton, Dunstable Parish Team

Katharine Roper, St James the Great, Thorley

Merle Thompson, St Saviour, St Albans

John Wood, All Saints, Riseley



In Memoriam

The deaths of the following Readers have been notified to us:

Birmingham

Victor Head-Wrapson
Geoffrey Sanders MBE
Arthur Spencer

Bradford

Peter Kennedy

Chelmsford

Moyna Henderson
Ron Keeble
Ian Rogers

Chester

John Heath

Chichester

Reginald Day
Marjorie Osborn

Durham

Eddie Bennett

Exeter

Margaret Vickery

Guildford

Bill Alcock
Sr Christine Alice SSB

Hereford

Dr Douglas Chandler
Joe Taylor

Leicester

Muriel King

Lincoln

Harry Stanhope

London

Michael Levete

Manchester

Allen Booth

Norwich

Kenneth Durant

Oxford

Carol Neilson

Peterborough

Pat Finnegan
Lyn Prout

Portsmouth

Michael Gladwell
David Hampshire
Colin Linington
Alan Obin

Rochester

Alfred Coveney
Leslie Rogers
Peter Walsh

St Albans

Robert Fry
Hugh Lawson-Johnson
Gerry Mortimer

York

Ron Sykes
Harry Widdas

Monmouth

Frederick Phillips

We give thanks for their work and witness and remember those who grieve.

Markings

Hardinge Pritchard marked his retirement after 51 years as a Reader in Southwark Diocese with a party held in his honour in February 2003.

Lisle Sharp was installed as an Honorary Lay Canon of Coventry Cathedral in June 2001. He has been a Reader for 43 years at Alveston St James, and is currently Honorary Moderator for Reader Training in Coventry Diocese and Chair of the West Midlands Moderators Group.

Arthur Spikins will celebrate his golden jubilee as a Reader on 10 July 2003, having been admitted at St Paul's Cathedral in 1953. He has spent the whole of his ministry at St John the Baptist, Isleworth. In his secular life he worked as a teacher, becoming headteacher at four different church schools.

Please feel free to send brief notes 'marking' memorable moments for individual Readers for inclusion in this new section.

Gleanings

Archibald Patterson

Following on Bishop Graham Dow's article in the February 2003 issue of *The Reader* about how a Reader founded the Anglican Church of Angola, I received a letter containing the following information. 'Archibald Patterson (the Reader mentioned in that article) was my "Uncle Archie." He married my father's sister, Alice Rankin in 1946... we are mulling over the germ of an idea to suggest to our local church the possibility of supporting the Angolan Church. Alan Rankin (Reader Emeritus in the Parish of Hagley, Diocese of Worcester)'

Training then and now

David Bowen, a Reader in Salisbury Diocese comments after the article on training in the last issue, 'In November 1965, Bishop Mortimer of Exeter admitted me as a "Reader in the Church of God", as he wrote in my New Testament. I was nineteen years old, a student at St Luke's learning to be a teacher of RE. Equipped with the confidence of youth, an ability to speak in public and little more, I had told my Personal Tutor at college that I wanted to be a Reader. I had no idea about age limits, selection criteria or training requirements. All he said was, "I suppose you want me to write to the Bishop to get you exempted from the examinations." Naturally I agreed.

I presume he did so because the next I heard was an invitation to meet the Warden of Readers in the beautiful church at Bradninch near Exeter for what turned out to be my selection. The whole process was brief. A short interview was followed by my being required to read a lesson while the Warden stood at the back of the church. He could hear me and so I was acceptable. My admission and licensing took place after Evensong one weekday in the Lady Chapel of Exeter Cathedral.'

David goes on to reflect on his years of Reader ministry since then and comments that he 'cringes' to remember some of his early sermons – he is sure that he would have been a better Reader if he had received the training now provided.

Questionnaire

Thank you for all the completed copies of the Questionnaire we have already received. There is still time – till 31 May – to send in your form, which is also available on the website. We will share the results of the Questionnaire in our next (August 2003) issue.

Request for designer

The Reader needs to look for a new designer, to be paid commercial rates. Contact Pat Nappin at Church House (see inside front cover for contact details) if you are interested.



The Last Word – from Church House

I am very pleased to be able to welcome a number of Readers in the Diocese in Europe as new subscribers to the magazine. It's a particular pleasure to welcome one Reader in training in Moscow! I hope that they will find the magazine a useful resource in their ministry and we hope to be able to meet more of them at the national conferences and other Reader events. We are now also sending the magazine to Readers in the Diocese of Trinidad and Tobago where resources are few and the Diocese finds it difficult to provide for both islands.

I write this just after the Annual General Meeting. It was good to be able to welcome our Chair, the Bishop of Carlisle to his first annual meeting and we look forward to our partnership together as ministers of the gospel. We were delighted that William Fittall, the new Secretary-General to the Archbishops' Council and the General Synod and himself a Reader, came to speak of his work. There was, inevitably, business to transact. The Warden of Readers for the Diocese of Blackburn was elected to the vacancy on the Executive Committee and the annual reports and accounts were agreed.

During the morning each section ie Wardens, Secretaries and Representatives met together to discuss matters of concern. Among other issues, they discussed the way in which Holy Communion by Extension is being used in the

dioceses, the recruitment of Readers under 40, the provision of CME (continuing ministerial education), and whether there should be an upper age limit for those wishing to commence training.

In the midst of it all...

Of course, those who came to the meeting were aware of the fact that the weekend also saw another anti-war demonstration in London and saw that the grass in the centre of Parliament Square was covered with flowers in memory of those whose lives have been lost.

Events change rapidly and the war in Iraq is over and the work of reconstruction and the provision of aid well under way. It is sobering to recall on Palm Sunday that Jesus rode into a city on that day, in peace and joy and yet a few days later the crowd called for his death. Events and people change so quickly. In the last issue I wrote of the threat of war and that war has come to pass and brought suffering to so many innocent people. I am reminded of the *Thought for the Day* of Bishop Jim Thompson on 12 September 2001 when he said, quoting from Psalm 46: 'God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will we not fear though the earth be moved' and he went on to say 'The earth has moved. Please God help us'.

Pat Nappin, *Honorary Secretary*

Getting away is one thing, but what about a place where you can relax and be spiritually lifted?

Community to welcome and minister to you.

Programme to meet your needs, or just space to do your own thing!

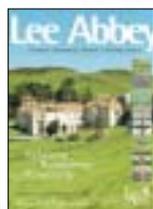
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If you are preaching on Sea Sunday, which is normally the second Sunday in July but can be celebrated at any time, will you help us by talking about the Church's ministry to seafarers through The Mission to Seafarers? A pack of material is available to help you, including sermon notes, a fact sheet and teaching materials for children. If you would like a Sea Sunday resources pack, please complete the coupon below.



The Mission to Seafarers, St Michael Paternoster Royal, College Hill, London EC4R 2RL Tel: 020 7248 5202
Fax: 020 7248 4761 Email: pr@missiontoseafarers.org Website: www.missiontoseafarers.org

To Kathy Baldwin, The Mission to Seafarers, St Michael Paternoster Royal, College Hill, London EC4R 2RL
Tel: 020 7248 5202 Fax: 020 7248 4761 Email: pr@missiontoseafarers.org
Please send me a Sea Sunday information pack

Name _____

Address _____



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