

newdirections

March 2008
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serving Evangelicals and Catholics seeking to renew the Church in the historic faith

Synod reports

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Future ownership of parish parsonages

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The next issue of **newdirections** is published on 4 April

It was one of the oddities of publishing that *Pears Cyclopaedia* was prepared to go into print for nearly a decade confidently predicting the arrival of women bishops in the Church of England in 2008. Even as late as 2005, the prediction still stood. Even within the church it was reckoned that Dr Williams would surely need to go to the Lambeth Conference with at least the promise of a woman bishop on his arm. Until quite recently.

As we know, other problems have intervened, and the timetable is a longer one than most people suppose, as the Bishop of Manchester himself recently acknowledged. Those well-informed about synodical processes will know all this, but a quick summary of the earliest possible date might be instructive for those who do not.

If the Manchester Report is debated in General Synod in July (as is intended) then the first consideration of Draft Legislation would be in February 2009, with the revision stage completed a year later. Committed to the dioceses at the next Synod, in July 2010, it would be considered and perhaps debated with responses given back by the end of 2011, with a report coming to Synod in February 2012. Final approval could therefore be possible in July 2012.

If the Parliamentary consideration and the Royal Assent took up most of 2013, the Promulgation of the Canons could take place at the Synod of February 2014; with the consecration of the first woman bishop, one could suppose, in 2015. All this is assuming that the legislation proceeds without a hitch at every stage, and that the Synod elections of 2010 do not change the profile of its membership.

We have never advocated delaying the culmination of what was begun in November 1992. We have always taken the counsel of Jesus himself, when he said, 'That thou doest, do quickly.' However, if the Church of England is beginning, tentatively and almost unconsciously, to draw back from its earlier enthusiasm, as are other provinces within the Anglican Communion, then we must be generous to those with whom we disagree.

The final division within the Church of England, with a possible 'Great Ejection' or even a new province, would be a traumatic event. If it must come then, by the grace of God, we shall be ready, but it is not for us to hasten that day, if there is any prospect that it will not come. Many of our clergy and congregations (and an ordinand in these pages) have grown tired of the phoney war, and would like women bishops if they must come to come as quickly as possible, so that we might begin

binding up the wound, and taking up the greater challenges.

It may, however, be that the ground is shifting and that this receding of the horizon is more significant than it appears. It is our duty, therefore, while we can, to work with others for the unity of that fractured body, the Church of England, and not to hasten its demise.



Following the tabloid torrent that engulfed the Archbishop after his shariah law lecture and interview many were quick to leap to his defence. Several diocesan bishops released their own statements in support of Dr Williams, and the Bishop of Hulme appeared post-haste on Radio 4 complaining of the mindless attacks on 'this holy man' one of the 'finest brains in Britain – if not Europe.'

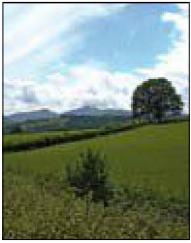
There is no doubt that Dr Williams has many fine qualities and the Church is blessed to have a leader who has a peerless command of such a range of subjects, ranging from Arianism, through Karl Barth to the mystical theology of the Orthodox Church. Wherever he has been, in university or diocese, he has won great respect, deep affection and unswerving loyalty. No one has ever broken ranks, but all have guarded him like some delicate treasure.

But given his well known dove-like innocence, where are the serpents to watch and guide him? An ecclesiastical serpent of average ability could have guessed that the media pack would rip him to bits. A wise serpent would have posed a gentle question as to the possible effects on the Anglican church where shariah law is a daily threat and danger? Or again, is this the best time to tangle with this particular octopus?

We must thank God for the Archbishop's intelligence, integrity and courage but we should pray that he surrounds himself with men and women who will give him the political advice he needs.



The ecumenically aware will have noticed that the Orthodox Church has just begun Lent. This year Orthodox Easter (excepting the old calendarists) is on 27 April. This to anyone's mind, particularly to someone looking in from outside the Church, is faintly ridiculous. For the whole Church to celebrate Easter on the same date would be a significant witness. It must be worth working and praying for a single date for Christ's Church to proclaim his Resurrection. **ND**



Anti-Roman remnants

Thomas Seville CR, Synod religious member, recounts the less than encouraging debate but ultimately safe outcome of the debate on international Anglican and Roman Catholic relations

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The sessions of Synod in February showed the Synod capable of maturity, of good sense; sadly it also showed its inveterate tendency, when the scent of Rome enters the church, to do a 'Linus' (remember *Peanuts*?). It grabs the comfort blanket, withdrawing into the safe and warm environment of 'not doing that'.

This happened when the Synod welcomed the report from the International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*. Originally, the plan had been to discuss this report in these sessions as well as *Mary, Grace and Hope*. The latter report has been delayed to a later session of Synod, not least because of disagreements among the House of Bishops over how to respond. Whatever the nature of the disagreements, it did seem a good idea to separate what are two very different documents, from two different bodies.

The IARCCUM document, intended at the first as something like a 'common declaration', is proposed as an agreed statement on Anglican–Roman Catholic relations. It notices agreements and differences, but, on the basis of what has been agreed, proposes a series of practical measures on which the two churches can embark if they are to make the agreements their own and to further the process of reconciliation.

In his introduction to the debate, John Hind, Bishop of Chichester, painted a sombre background to the state of relations between the two communions. He gave Anglicans a good wiggling. The work of IARCCUM had been derailed by events in the Anglican Communion and that meant that Anglican–RC relations were at a 'standstill' – this was a quotation from Kasper. The Bishop did note that the fault was not all ours, but it was an observation the purport of which was that, although fault might also lie with Peter and Paul, we needed to be aware of the greater measure of blame which fell to Augustine (my words). It is worth noting that Roman utterances with respect to ecumenism are often inconsistent with earlier utterances.

The measure of agreement is considerable, on Eucharist and ministry in particular, but also areas of the doctrine of the Church, authority, morals and the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was good to see the recording of agreement on most of these areas and the welcome this received; there was little dissent voiced, although there were areas which were signalled as needing attention.

These were signalled in the amendment which made reference to the Faith and Order Advisory Group paper (GS1673) with which the debate was resourced. This document noted that there was little reference to justification in the IARCCUM document and that it tended to assume that *Mary, Grace and Hope* had already been received. The former is certainly a puzzle – there has never been the same intricacy of dissent between the churches as obtained between the

Catholic Church and Lutheranism. *Salvation and the Church* (1985), on justification, has been welcomed by the Lambeth Conference (1988) and commended for study across the Anglican Communion, and was discussed in some Church of England dioceses. As a result of the amendment, documents of ARCIC II will – at last – come to Synod. Howsoever, no member of Synod, no observer can repose confidence in its capacity to deal with teaching with due sensitivity.

Although the vote of welcome was overwhelming, the debate was less than warm. As far as the content of contributions was concerned, those made by Mgr Andrew Faley and by Paul Fiddes, the RC and Baptist representatives respectively, were among the finest. Mgr Faley spoke, gently disagreeing with John Hind, of how things were alive as never before among parishes and the laity, and that Baptist among Baptists spoke with appreciation of the teaching agreed about Christian initiation. A laywoman spoke movingly and hopefully from her experience in a mixed marriage. What I missed was any sign of that desire for repentance and conversion among us which must attend the experience of the fissures of Christ's Body – it is a scandal that we should be content to remain estranged from those who are in Christ, whether Roman or Baptist.

To accept the idea that it is all right to remain in a variety of colours, not really matching, in patches which are neither capable of stretching nor of mending, is to be lukewarm. Sadly, there was little welcome for some of the lesser riches of the report, e.g. that effective preaching is indispensable to feeding the church, or that war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There was little about the second section, though commended in the motion as passed, on things to do. Yet what was depressing, and what is from our side shameful, was a lack of generosity and hope, a nursing of prejudice and an avoidance of depth, which it would be unfair to attribute to the Evangelical source of the amendment, nor even to the failure of the chair to call a single Anglo-Catholic to speak. We forget that for centuries the Church of England has treated RCs with intolerance and with worse, which no suffering on the part of the Marian martyrs can attenuate.

Evangelicals are of course right to voice their concerns. It is worth noting that many Evangelicals were enthusiastic about the ARCIC II statement on *Salvation and the Church*, but this is not a matter concerning just Evangelicals. All Anglicans have much to do in repenting of their prejudice about Roman Catholics. It is strange that we can be ever so warm with the Eastern Orthodox, on the other side of the building, whose teachings and practices concerning salvation and the Mother of God do not differ hugely from those of Rome; but when we meet someone in the next room, then how easy we find it to blow hot and cold. **ND**

House grab foiled

Gerry O'Brien, lay Synod member from Rochester Diocese recounts the defeat of the dioceses in their attempt to gain ownership of the parish parsonages at the February Synod

The General Synod struck a blow for subsidiarity during the February Sessions at Church House, Westminster. The juggernaut of centralization sank into the sand and was left to the mercy of the incoming tide.

With hindsight, it was hardly surprising. Separate meetings of the House of Clergy and the House of Laity on the previous day had shown a significant degree of disquiet. Briefing papers had been circulated and the internet had been working overtime. So after the cut and thrust of a morning's debate and the tense moments while over three hundred Synod members clicked the keys on their new voting terminals, there was a palpable sense of awe as the voting results were announced.

The question of the day was the ownership of parsonage houses. Long ago the draft Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure had emerged from some think tank. It originally sought powers for dioceses to acquire title to churches, churchyards and parsonage houses. Freeholds would be extinguished, corporation sole would become a thing of the past, and dioceses would be empowered to manage clergy and deploy them according to the dictates of a five-year plan formulated by the diocesan office. Needless to say, there has been smouldering opposition to a proposal for such sweeping nationalization.

Quite early on in the process, Synod removed churches and churchyards from the scope of the proposals. Undaunted, the juggernaut rolled on, determined to gain control of the portfolio of parsonage houses, which have a book value of £2.3 billion but are probably worth something approaching £4 billion.

Some creative arguments were deployed to suggest that little was to be changed. The parson's ownership of his house was described as 'vestigial' and 'not ownership in the sense understood by most of us'. Given that proceeds of any sale end up in diocesan accounts and that the diocese was responsible for maintenance and insurance, it was argued that the diocese was regarded in law as carrying both the benefits and the obligations of ownership.

It was, of course, conveniently forgotten that the money the diocese used to discharge its obligations was raised from the parishes. There was also the question of who had paid for the parsonage in the first place. In many cases local benefactors were responsible, and in some cases local subscription, but generally speaking it was local money. The apparatchiks were quick to point out that once money is given, the donor cannot retain control of it. 'What sort of a church are we, if we don't trust one another?' they asked.

It appeared that in the eyes of the centrists nothing much would change, so why bother, one might ask? Their answer was that we didn't want to perpetuate the present 'muddle and unfairness' and in any case

'no understanding of ordained ministry can properly be expressed in the language of property rights'. Well, try telling that to an archdeacon.

The interesting bit was the machinery to hold this property portfolio, which would be broadly comparable to the assets of the Church Commissioners. Forty-four diocesan parsonage boards were to be set up. The Archbishops' Council thought the running costs would be £176,000 per year, but the Bishop of Dover's briefing note estimated £220,000. All they seemed able to agree on was that the answer ran to at least six figures and that it would all be charged to parish share.

At this point we got into murky legal territory. If a diocese is forced into bankruptcy, all its assets could be vulnerable to seizure by bailiffs, which would include parsonage houses vested in the Diocesan Board of Finance. It was argued that if parsonage houses were held in a separate charity from the Diocesan Board of Finance, they would escape the clutches of creditors, until someone pointed out that such arrangements entered into in order to thwart creditors probably wouldn't stand up in court; Synod was persuaded that the Church of England ought not to engage in dubious practice to evade its legal responsibilities. Corporation sole had stood the test of time for a thousand years and the voices saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' found a groundswell of support.

And so the legislation began the next stage of its ponderous progress through Synod. Unsuccessful attempts were made to remove freehold office holders from the spectre of common tenure. It was argued that many felt common tenure offered inferior terms and conditions to the freeholder, but that if common tenure worked well in practice, freeholders might choose to opt in. However, Synod was minded that while existing freeholders might retain their present terms and conditions so long as they remained in their current posts, all new livings should be offered on common tenure terms.

When we came to parsonages, it was the Revd Simon Killwick from Manchester who brought matters to a head. He proposed an amendment to remove the two sub-clauses that would have vested parsonage houses in diocesan parsonage boards.

Despite the 'Stop Killwick' campaigners calling for a vote by houses, the amendment was passed by the bishops (14-9), the clergy (100-57) and the laity (84-79). The platform had clearly misread the mood of the church and promptly withdrew their proposals to set up diocesan parsonage boards.

When the measure emerges from further revision in July, it will be far slimmer and offer little more than common tenure, an improvement for priests-in-charge and curates, but a downgrading of terms and conditions for future incumbents. What will the future hold? **ND**

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Lambeth children

The Rt Revd Alastair Redfern gives a brief rationale of the scriptural preparations for the Conference

The scriptural foundation for the Lambeth Conference will be the great 'I AM' sayings of our Lord, echoing a moment of supreme revelation in Exodus. The key factor in each saying is God's self-disclosure in the present tense (albeit a present pregnant with the potential we receive as God's future).

Bishops will come with a bewildering variety of views, hopes and fears, to be joined in worship and in the study of these texts, in the present tense. Like good liturgy, study of scripture provides a moment to know God more deeply, perceive Jesus as Christ more clearly, and be moved with an outflow of love which brings all that we have been into God's greater, more holy communion. In the present tense of worship and of breaking the word, new life is given and received.

This is the moment when children stand most self-consciously in the presence of the Father, seeking shaping by the Son, embraced by one Holy Spirit. This placing of separated selves in the present

tense of God's 'I AM' provides a perspective on the past and a faith for the future. Both elements will retain all the diversity of a fallen, wilful world scarred by selfishness and sin – but each of these powerful tendencies can be redeemed and refined by moments of communion. No neat answers, just common faith in the Father.

The art of leadership in the church involves giving priority to the moments of worship and study of scripture that place us together in God's present tense: and the insisting that the gift of such communion can give confidence for robust exploration of different integrities and insights. The first moment requires us to give precedence to God's 'I AM'; the second requires us to respond in our different contexts always chiefly conscious of the communion God ever offers. The dynamic between the moments provides the syllabus for episcopate, and for discipleship. The painful agendas of diversity are held and resourced by a prior engagement with the genesis and reference

points of our life – God who is – in Jesus as risen and present, source of communion for sinners.

As for every parish priest, the issue is one of priorities. We tend to aim for pastoral perfection – wholesome relationships between ourselves. The reality is that God's life emerges from fraction, within us, between us, embracing us in the crucified one. Bishops worshipping and studying scripture together will never be a recipe for pastoral perfection, nor for prophetic precision: these moments provide common ground before the cross, owning our culpability and lack of charity, seeking forgiveness, restoration and new directions rooted in the historic faith. We will be sent out bearing this branding and this bonding, to explore further the challenging diversity of God's abundant creation and call to eternity.

The Lambeth Conference will model something central to the life of every Anglican church the priority of worship and the study of scripture; resource for children called into communion with the Father; brokenness made whole in Jesus; empowerment by the spirit of love. This present tense moment provides courage for engagement beyond, new directions, diversity confident of a common core and call.

I AM: we are: from, and to, put into perspective. **ND**

Using the Prayer Book Order for Holy Communion during Lent has been a chastening experience. In many respects the contemporary language liturgy is friendlier – it has an open, even relaxed structure, in which to be and pray. In the Prayer Book liturgy, language of piercing intensity penetrates the mind and imagination. There is no hiding place for the half-hearted. I suspect this is one of the reasons for its widespread and tragic demise – it goes 'too far and too deep'.

There is a directness about the language of the Prayer Book that communicates the Lord's presence in the Eucharist in such a way as to strip off the finer nuances of Eucharistic devotion. The exhortation at the time of Holy Communion warns that if we do not come to the Lord recognizing our own sinfulness in penitence and faith, we cannot be 'meet partakers of those holy mysteries'. If we 'receive the same unworthily, not considering the Lord's body, we kindle God's wrath against us; we provoke him to plague us with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death.' There is, of course, an echo here in contemporary liturgy: 'Lord, I am not worthy to receive you but only say the

Ghostly Counsel Communion

*Andy Hawes is Warden of
Edenham Regional Retreat House*

word and I shall be healed.' But that does sound a little half-hearted.

What is missing from modern liturgy is any clear statement that Holy Communion is a physical encounter with God. For parishes that pray the prayer of humble access, there is the prayer 'that our sinful bodies made be made clean by his body', but in some way the Lord's presence in the Eucharistic elements is now elevated to the realms of spiritual mystery. In the Prayer Book, Christ's Body can and will have a real physical effect on the communicant. It is a simple but stark fact.

Until the advent of the Parish Communion movement in the Church of England, around the time of the Second World War, the widespread custom

was for communicants to make their communion at 8 o'clock in the morning, unless illness or age made this difficult, in which case Holy Communion followed Morning Prayer. The main reason for this practice was to permit a total fast before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. The real presence of the Lord in Holy Communion was felt even at the breakfast table. Would that it were now! If we do not discern the Lord's body we bring judgement on ourselves; if as individuals or as Eucharistic communities we play 'hide and seek' with God in our preparation for Holy Communion, the health and fabric of our life in Christ will certainly be touched by 'divers diseases and sundry kinds of death'. God knows there is a desperate need for us all to seek him afresh in penitence and faith if we are to be 'meet partakers'.

In a worthy attempt to make the Eucharist inclusive and accessible, something has been lost. It is the call to holiness. What is missing is the loving service of total self-giving of body, mind and spirit which the Book of Common Prayer expects from each communicant. May the Lord have mercy on all of us who presume to come to his table.

Battle for the Bible

Can it really be the case that Christians give too much authority to the Bible?

George Austin takes issue with Canon Jonathan Draper's recent lecture, in which he suggested that the Bible is just one of many resources for the faith

The retired clergy of the diocese of York meet three times a year for a lecture by a distinguished speaker – a category of which the city has no shortage. In November it was the turn of Canon Jonathan Draper, Canon Theologian at York Minster, who began by promising to disturb our retirement. He would, he warned, 'suggest that we've given the Bible too much authority and not allowed ourselves – and generations of Christians – to grow into any form of Christian faith.'

Use and misuse

He did just that, using 2 Tim. 3.16–4.4 in the NSRV translation as the basis, rejecting its claim that 'all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.' Rejecting the idea that the Bible is inspired by God, it was, he said, a passage that 'contains all that is necessary to destroy Christian unity.'

He went on to say that the verses later which claim that 'the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine or teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths' is one in which he 'can hear preaching voice of Christians everywhere.'

I suspect on the contrary that many others, myself included, will find this an apt description of a Church which seems now to be bent on self-destruction. If the Bible is not 'inspired by God' then of course you can pick-and-mix, choosing the bits that fit in with your own lifestyle and discarding the rest. And to believe the Bible is 'inspired by God' is not to believe it was dictated by God, for of course its content is bound to be influenced by the culture and understanding of those who transcribed that 'inspiration' from God.

Used as a stick

Draper goes further: if indeed the Bible is used for the reproof and correction of others, it means that it is 'often little more than a stick used to beat those with whom you disagree.' He attended the 1998 Lambeth Conference, at which, in his view,

there was 'a lamentable approach to the Bible' and 'no one paid any attention to meaning, context or interpretation.'

He went on to add that nothing he had seen 'in the public debates of our Anglican Primates, our own house of Bishops or anywhere else for that matter has shown any more intelligence in the use of the Bible, no matter how pious their posturing might be.'

Unfortunately for his argument, he used his own reductionist view as little more than a stick to beat those with whom *he* disagreed. These of course

if the Bible is not 'inspired by God', then of course you can pick-and-mix choosing the bits that fit

included those with theological objections to the ordination of women (who, in his prejudiced reality, simply 'think women ought to be subordinate to men in all things'), those who see certain kinds of homosexual behaviour as sinful, those who oppose abortion – in other words, anyone who rejects the liberal agenda on biblical grounds. Any intellectual attempt to examine the true basis for their views was abandoned before it began.

Scientific knowledge

Over the centuries, there has been great progress in understanding both the universe and the complexities of our human scientific make-up and sometimes these have seemed to clash with the Christian revelation. Yet even in the matter of creation the extraordinary fact is not that the Bible got it wrong because it was not, in Draper's words, 'created the other day by God', but that even without modern knowledge, Genesis had first the chaos, then the waters, the first animals in the waters and coming to the land, and so on until finally the first of the human beings.

And now we have DNA with 'its understanding that every human being is made up of a combination of a mother and a father, and not of some unspecified thing called humanity. (But is he aware

that genetics suggest that all men are descended from a single male, 'Adam', and a single female, 'Eve'?) Are we, he asked, 'prepared to jettison elements of our traditional understanding [of the origins of Jesus] in order to accommodate this new knowledge?' Although he did not say so in as many words, this presumably means both his virgin birth and his divinity.

'And if we do,' he continued, 'are we prepared for the ways that will knock-on into other bits of the Christian faith?' Goodbye to the bodily resurrection, then? No more Christmas or Easter at York Minster?

In his view, Christians need to 'sort out an approach to the Bible before it destroys the credibility of the Christian faith in the eyes of the world.' What was it that St Paul said about not conforming to this world? Ah well, it's only St Paul and it's only the Bible.

'No intrinsic authority'

When the Church talks of growing in faith, it is in Draper's view in terms of 'having less of a mind of your own and more of what is called the mind of Christ' – that is to say, 'being conformed to whatever line the Church is peddling.' (The lecture was peppered with this kind of offensive sneer.) 'Instead we must see the Bible as 'one of the resources – I don't even say sources – for the Christian faith, but not the only one.' All our doctrinal formulations and ethical judgements are 'revisable'.

Indeed, Draper believes we are kept in an 'infantile state in our faith because we give the Bible too much authority', so that God becomes little more than a judge, Christ little more than a sort of glorified barrister, and the Christian faith little more than a celestial Highway Code.

He summed it up in a telling phrase: 'In some sense I'm arguing that the Bible has no intrinsic authority for the Christian, if we are thinking of authority as the sense of having the power to tell us what to believe. I believe the Bible has plenty of what we might call the authority of wisdom, of experience and of profound revelation, but no kind of power to tell us what to do or to believe. The Bible only has the authority we give it.'

If this is what our Church is becoming, what hope is there? **ND**

Geographical polity

Stephen Marsden discovers the logic of the Anglican Communion



Now, let me see if I've got this straight. America is that enormous land mass the other side of the pond. Starting at the top, or the north, as I think it's often called, you have Canada or, as the Anglican Communion calls it, The Anglican Church of Canada. So far, so good. Now let's move south.

Next, you have the United States of America, all of which, apart from a bit of California centred on the city of Fresno, is in The Episcopal Church. I know that there's a bit of the United States and TEC called Alaska which looks as if it ought to be part of Canada, but let's not go there. Let's keep going south – to Mexico next, or *La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico*, as it's known at Lambeth Palace.

So far, so pedestrian: three sovereign states, three autonomous provinces of the Anglican Communion. Let us move south again, into what is generally known as Central America. First up is Belize. Belize, a former British Colony, is in the Province of the West Indies, and who can blame it? To the south and west of Belize

is Guatemala, which is in a new province, *Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America*. Moving on, there is Honduras – which is, logically (*sic*) enough, in The Episcopal Church (ECUSA as was). Next to Honduras is El Salvador which takes us back into *Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America*, as do the next three: Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

By now, you may have got out an atlas in order to try and keep up. If so, you'll be wondering what on earth Honduras is doing in TEC. Don't. For there is more. Let's move on to South America.

Mainland South America comprises thirteen countries and it will help us if we dispose of three of them first. Brazil, the largest, is in its own province of the Communion – *Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil*. Given what has gone before, this might seem almost eccentric, but more eccentric is the position of French Guiana and Surinam, both of which seem not to be in any province of the Anglican Communion at all (how on earth do they cope?). Next to Surinam is Guyana which,

probably for the same reason as Belize, is in the Province of the West Indies. West of Guyana is Venezuela which, being a sovereign state in South America, is of course a diocese of The Episcopal Church. West of Venezuela is Colombia; it adjoins Panama in *Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America* so naturally it is also a part of The Episcopal Church, as is its neighbour, Ecuador.

South of Ecuador, we find Peru, and we enter the Province of the Southern Cone. From here on, it's all quite straightforward: Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile, not forgetting San Joaquin, that bit of California centred on the city of Fresno, which Mrs Jefferts Schori insists cannot be anywhere other than in The Episcopal Church. And she's got a point. After all, the Province of the Southern Cone being in California would be as ridiculous as the Diocese of Taiwan (you know, that island off the coast of China which we all used to call Formosa) being in The Episcopal Church. Which, needless to say, it is. **ND**

Two good ladies

Francis Gardom considers two other members of his mythical congregation, worthy and wrong

In his book *Sins of the Saints* Fr Rosenthal claimed that the Greek word *eu-peristatos* in Hebrews 12.2, often rendered 'the sin which doth so easily beset us' should be translated 'the sin which is admired by many'. Not those sins like murder and adultery which everyone knows are wrong, but thoughts, words and deeds which have been corrupted into something less worthy, but which nonetheless are 'admired by many'.

Let us continue our tour of St Grizelda's folk with Mrs Martha Driver. She is a widow, and someone who gets things done. Before her retirement she was Sister-Tutor at the hospital, and previously, Matron at a boy's boarding school. Now, with time on her hands, and a single-minded commitment to St Grizelda's, she spends her waking life in its service.

As Tutor, Martha learnt that unless someone is 'in charge', standards quickly plummet. As Matron she realized that

grown men remain schoolboys throughout their lives. Their

self-discipline, as she says, always needs 'affirming'. Which means keeping her watchful eye on what they are doing or, more probably, failing to do.

Martha's an admirable example of commitment; but her skills are only *part* of what St Grizelda's needs. Some women find her breezy manner off-putting, so she's ended up by running practically everything herself: Mother's Union, Young Wives, Stewardship, Flowers, Guides, Brownies, Cubs.

As for criticism: 'If that's how you feel then you'd better find someone else.' So criticisms are made *sotto voce*. Others, who might lend a hand, long ago ceased volunteering their services, leaving the handful of helpers who rather enjoy being bossed about by Martha Driver!

Mary Neale resembles her in one respect: both share a total commitment to the well-being of St Grizelda's. But whilst Mrs Driver is concerned with what she calls 'practical

solutions', Miss Neale when troubles come says 'I think we should all *pray* about it.'

And what, you ask, is wrong with that? Well, nothing is wrong with it – but there are certain problems where no amount of praying will substitute for the honest elbow-grease which Mrs Driver provides in such generous quantities.

For example: cleaning the Lady Chapel. When Mrs Driver first asked Miss Neale if she would like to be responsible for this, she responded enthusiastically. But now she spends more time in the chapel praying for St Grizelda's and its people (including Martha Driver) than actually cleaning it. Recently, I'm told, a colony of mice were found to have taken up residence under the altar.

Neither of these good ladies has got it entirely wrong – but they haven't got it quite *right* either. Each is doing a 'permitted thing', but because Mrs Driver seldom prays and Miss Neale's cleaning leaves so much undone, their admirable virtues conspire to make both of them 'fall short of the glory of God'.

Household of faith

*Past evangelistic successes often came about through social institutions rather than evangelists, but, as **Digby Anderson** points out, the destruction of these institutions has made future attempts at evangelism more difficult*

NEW DIRECTIONS has recently carried calls for Anglican Catholics to evangelize. Who could dissent? We all know the dominical command to go and baptize all, etc. There are, of course, problems in obeying the command with much success in this pagan society.

But I am not sure the nature of the problems has been thought about enough. Most discussions of evangelistic problems fail to mention the ghost. They talk as if evangelism consisted of two parties, the evangelist and the person to be evangelized. But often, in the past, at successful attempts to bring individuals to Christ, there has been a third person. We might call him the ghost precisely because today he is not noticed. There are in fact several ghosts.

Passing on the faith

The most succinct biblical instance of an evangelistic ghost is found in St John's Gospel [4.53]. A certain nobleman had a sick son. Our Lord tells him his son lives and when the nobleman learns of his son's recovery and that it occurred when Our Lord said 'thy son liveth', the nobleman believed, 'and his whole house'. The whole house, we might assume, consisted of his wife, parents, other children, perhaps in-laws and, certainly, servants. They believed, they were evangelized and the evangelist was Our Lord himself. The third party was the nobleman. They believed because he did. A similar sort of ghost is found in histories such as Bede's, when evangelists convert kings and as a result of the king's conversion, all his subjects convert.

Yet another can be found in a charming picture of bishops sailing around a Russian lake in little boats baptizing the dripping masses after successful conversion of a local figure of authority. Authority is the key word in this sort of evangelism. The father in John's Gospel was a nobleman.

Related to the authority ghost is the family as ghost. We tend to assume today that in more successful evangelistic eras it was the Church, either priest or church laity, who did evangelistic work. But once adults were themselves Christians, it was they who did this work, as parents who brought their children to baptism and subsequently taught them their prayers and brought them to Mass.

The faith was passed from generation to generation not by the Church but by the family. And there is a biblical version of this in the disciples bringing their brothers and cousins to Our Lord.

Collusion with the State

The third ghost is the friend. We all know people – some of us are people – who have come to the faith through a friend who was of the faith. Perhaps the friend explained something of the faith to his friend. More often, someone outside the church came into it because of his respect for someone already in it. 'Anything that means so much to my friend must have something good in it.' It is impossible to read the lives of nineteenth-century figures such as Newman and not be aware of the role of friendship in bringing men to faith. A fourth sort of evangelistic ghost is the profession.

A Christian doctor, schoolmaster or lawyer, by example or explanation, influences the patient, pupil, student or client

towards the Church. There are other ghosts too.

All these ghosts are people, but they are people who are members of social institutions, the political structure, the particular cultural form of the family, the way friendship or a profession is practised in this or that society. In the past the Church could rely on these social institutions.

It can no longer do so. The most prominent power, the State, is, understandably, eager to be free of the Church. The Church, unforgivably, has colluded with it. The modern church all too often does not want England to be a Christian society in which laws, customs and privileges reflect Christian values but a society in which Christianity is one of many faiths.

It has colluded also by omission and tepidity in the disestablishment of Christian marriage, the de-stigmatization of illegitimacy and extra-marital sex and the growth of divorce. How can there be trans-generational transmission of faith if the main institution that promoted it is itself broken?

The church has not actually subverted friendship and the professions but shows little interest in them. In short, the political-social stance of the church over the last half-century has lost it its crucial partners in evangelization and the maintenance of Christian society.

Destroying its allies

It sometimes seems the church is actually embarrassed by the ghosts. It has so bought into rationalist reductionism that it believes the only true way to faith is for each individual rationally to assess the whole of Christianity's claims and practices for himself.

Wiser ages knew there was nothing wrong in doing something good because of mild coercion, example, family or peer pressure or through that currently misunderstood and maligned social force, prejudice. What a silly society it is that wants everyone to discover the value of everything for himself 'for another first time'.

Having helped destroy its allies in evangelism, the church is left isolated and estranged. Its liberal sectarianism leaves the poor parish priest and his people with the almost impossible task of banging on the doors of total strangers, people who know nothing about Christianity and are not inclined towards it by the pressure or example of those close to them or whose authority they respect or fear.

One might sum it up by saying that the old evangelism was a social process involving many social institutions. It is now reduced to one stranger trying to cajole another. How ironic that the Church which is so caustic about 'mere' individualism and those who do not respect 'society' should itself be content to individualize evangelism.

It is surely true that those who do not follow the dominical call to evangelize will have to answer for their disobedience. But the disobedient Christians are not the parish priest standing in the rain outside a front door which remains firmly shut, but those in the church hierarchy who have destroyed the institutions that might have persuaded the householder to open the door and welcome him in. **ND**

Serving all my days

Two years on, **an ordinand** offers another personal reflection on the current situation in the Church, finding much to be hopeful about, but also highlighting areas needing improvement and the importance of maintaining unity

It is over two years since I wrote under the above title of my hopes for the future and my hopes for a free province. Sitting down to write it then I was awaiting a trip to the Bishop's Advisory Panel; and nervously wrote of how I thought we might all work towards a new province that would set us free. Well, I went before the Panel, was selected and am now in my final year at theological college, looking forward to getting on with the business of being a curate.

Much has happened since I last put pen to paper: but where are we now? Certainly I have the same hopes and desires to be allowed to get on with the work to which I believe God is calling me. I suspect I am more concerned now than I was then to see the end of the so-called phoney war over women bishops.

I rather wish the powers that be would get on with it, so that we might be able to get on with the job in hand in a new province.

Those who have gone

There are of course those who have decided their journey is not with us, those who have felt called into communion with the Holy See and those who have decided to accept the ordination of women.

Each departure from our fold is met with sadness, especially when someone who was once a staunch defender of the faith decides that they can accept the ordination of women. Often, sadly, these are people whose loyalty to the Catholic faith has been an example to us all, and who have now obtained high office in the Church.

Writing as I do on the anniversary of the death of Father Mackonochie, one cannot help but reflect on the sacrifices of the fifteen years since the ordination of women and on the sacrifices to come. But there is much to be hopeful about: as a people we are in better spirits than ever before.

Active and growing

Bishop Edwin Barnes once commented that we as a constituency truly look like a church when we gather together. You only have to look at the diaries of our parishes and of our bishops to see just how busy life is. Indeed on several Saturdays in this past month, I could have been at three

different events organized by parishes and societies of our constituency.

But yet there is much more. Our parishes are getting on with the business of evangelizing our towns and cities. There is amazing work going on in parishes such as St Luke's, Grimethorpe, whose annual mission was a celebration of all that is good about the Catholic faith. A lot of people are crying out for the love and support of God and finding it through the ministries of Catholic people celebrating the Catholic faith. In this we should rejoice – it is this work that we will do when we are finally granted a free province.

we may have our differences, but yet we are united in our faith

What is more, in the fifteen years since the decision to ordain women, our numbers have not fallen and the number of those men offering themselves for the sacred ministry is growing. Ordinands from our constituency in general are younger than the average ordinand. It would be easy to sit back and say all is well, but there is still so much we can do.

Goals for the future

A recent Liturgical Commission report, *Transforming Worship*, spoke of creating centres of excellence in worship. Our parishes must become such centres, offering a wide variety of worship styles. There is room for those who want to do things in a more traditional way, as well as for those keen to explore the ideas offered by the fresh expressions movement.

We must also remember that many in our constituency remain loyal to the Book of Common Prayer. Indeed, in our cathedrals, the best-attended service is often Evensong.

But our excellence must not stop there. We must not forget that the Oxford Movement had its origins in academia and learning. As Anglo-Catholics, we are of course concerned with education, but perhaps where we fail is in our encouragement of academic study by our clergy and lay people.

We should encourage good, sound, Anglo-Catholic theologians, both lay and ordained to offer themselves in this valuable field, in which men and women from our movement once excelled. There is much good work being done by Anglo-Catholic ordinands and clergy in many academic fields and this should be encouraged.

We must all support the work of academic societies such as the Anglo-Catholic History Society as well as the study days run by the PEVs. Our opponents may think they have a monopoly on academic study and theology; we must prove them wrong.

Fresh dedication

If a new province is to succeed, we must ensure that we are a united body of Catholic Christians. We may have our differences: one may prefer one style of worship or music, one may use *Common Worship* and another the Roman Missal or hold slightly differing views, but yet we are united in our faith: the faith of our fathers.

In order to do this, some things may need to change. The Catholic societies and trusts will need to work more closely together, from sharing information about when things are happening to ensuring that work does not overlap.

We will have to get better at sharing our resources and funds as well as learning to support one another. We must not leave it up to someone else; we must get out and support our parishes and our institutions, whether it be going to a parish patronal festival or the Caister retreat or indeed the National Assembly. In this way we can hope to shape a new provincial structure, one that will be strong enough to survive and to look forward ecumenically.

We await then the birth of this new province, where we can continue to grow. There is much good work being carried out by the Regional Deans and their working parties.

Let us all dedicate ourselves afresh to the work of those Oxford Movement Fathers and strive for the 'conversion of England' and the propagation of the Catholic faith. A new province is coming into being and we all have a part to play in its life. **ND**

devotional

Children of Mary

Fr John Gribben *CR*

I am an unashamed fan of the Harry Potter books and I have gained particular enjoyment from the final volume. The theme of a mother's sacrificial and redemptive love runs through all seven books. Harry's mother dies protecting him. Throughout the story this sacrificial love helps the young hero as he faces danger, temptation and death.

We are used to the pictures of Our Lady, calm and serene as she accepts the will of God. That Mary was 'greatly troubled' sounds so English – a bit like saying 'but I haven't anything to wear'. It probably means that she was terrified, and if we look at the Scriptures, we see that she has cause to be worried:

A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

Amidst all the weird language, John is saying that the birth of the Saviour is of such cosmic significance that the powers of darkness move heaven and earth in an

attempt to prevent it, and that it is not just the Saviour but the Lady who bore him whom the dragon tries to destroy.

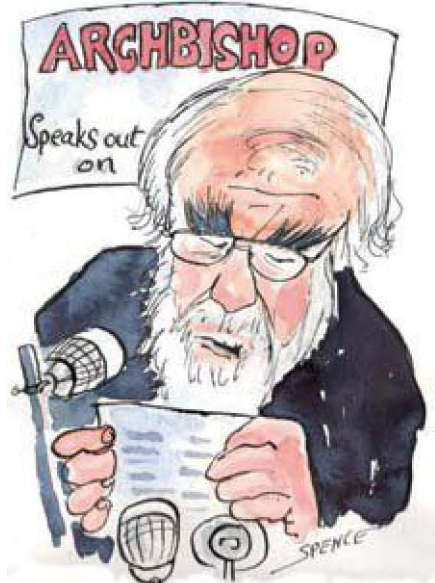
The 'powers of this world' want to destroy Jesus because his presence is a judgement on their political and religious systems. So Mary sings a war song on behalf of the poor and against the powers who have usurped God's Kingdom. 'Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.'

We are Mary's offspring, 'those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus'. Remember that the reaction of the dragon was to pour cold water on the woman. Apathy, despair, depression – these are the weapons of the deceiver.

Has our love grown cold? Can we still sing 'My Soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit exults in God my Saviour'? Do you stand in the footsteps of the lowly handmaiden, willing to face danger for love of God's Son?

Is anyone in need? Is anyone lonely? Is anyone being bullied or ostracized? Am I doing anything about it? What of my own behaviour: am I being unfair or unjust to anyone; is there someone to whom I am not speaking or against whom I am bearing a grudge? Putting down the mighty may mean standing up to the bully and the bossy and against those who use racist or offensive language against any of God's children.

Rejoice that we are children of Mary, love and adore her Son and laugh at the dragon: for the accuser of our people, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. Alleluia! **ND**



'Members of the press may like to know that I will be speaking with my usual degree of clarity'

Gloomy verse

Seeking to extend my poetic repertoire beyond AFC Wimbledon's 'When Dave went up, To lift the FA Cup, I was there, I was there', I dropped in at a verse reading at the local Arts Centre. 'Arts' should have been a warning that it wouldn't be an occasion when Betjeman was on the bill, but 'hope springs eternal' (another of Pope's verses on the lips of every Wimbledon fan).

Hopes faded faster than at lottery checking time as the performers appeared, their sombre black matching the misery of the poems they mumbled. Free verse was the medium for their message, presumably because there are a limited number of rhymes for 'death', 'depression' and 'oppression'. After all, the last two cancel each other out.

The only way of discovering when a dirge had finished was by an extra long pause. I was reminded of waiting to see whether an intercessions leader had finished or merely dropped the script. The parallel was completed by the cries of ecstasy from poets in the audience – 'meaningful' – akin to the 'Amen, brothers!' at an old-time Gospel meeting.

A modern Anglican note emerged when a poet howled to the moon about the dangerous excitement of 'gay love'. However, the *via media* was restored when a poetess, obviously a season ticket holder for *The Vagina Monologues*, decided that her thoughts on male oppression required a decalogue rather than a monologue.

I've never had an especial regard for the late Hermann Goering, but as the evening wore on – and wearing it was – I began to have sympathy with Hermann's desire to reach for his revolver when 'culture' was mentioned. However, I decided that trying to see how many verses I could remember of *Eskimo Nell* was a better alternative. Could I remember as many verses as there were folk in the tiny audience?

If it is the case that people don't whistle tunes any more because there aren't any good tunes today, surely the reason why poetry doesn't gain audiences nowadays is because modern poets talk to themselves rather than to the world. Another parallel with today's church?

Alan Edwards

Planting the word

Following positive and negative personal experiences of church plants Julian Mann investigates this controversial issue, and finds that the criticisms levelled at church planters contain lessons for all of us

Into the calm convoy of our apparent conservative evangelical consensus on church planting has come the Benton broadside. Dr John Benton, editor of *Evangelicals Now*, published his 'Against Church Plants' editorial in November 2007:

'New groups come to an area where there already exists a gospel church in decline. Often no attempt is made to get alongside that struggling church and help that witness. The new group simply ignores them, with the rationale that it is easier to start something fresh and new than to try to restore, repair and rebuild what is old and perhaps set in its ways.'

He acknowledged that small churches can be resistant to change: 'But there is a case to be made that reviving small churches ought to be our priority and that church planting in such circumstances ought to be a last resort.'

Later on came his most devastating Exocet: 'When we church plant while ignoring an existing small church, the message being given is not that Christ is the answer, but that our particular brand of church is the answer. This smacks more of our own empire-building than God's kingdom' (see the full editorial at <www.e-n.org.uk/4014-The-Commentary.htm>). As the vicar of a small parish church in South Yorkshire, my own experience of church plants has been both positive and negative.

Mixed experiences

We have benefited from the ministry of Christ Church Durham, a fresh expression of church, meeting in a community college (see <www.christchurchdurham.org>). A young woman, whose parents live in our village, came to Christian faith at Durham University and has been nurtured by Christ Church. She joined us one Sunday during a university vacation and has provided real encouragement, helping with children's parties during the holidays and faithfully praying for us. By God's grace, she is a credit to Christ Church Durham.

Our experience of a church plant locally has not been so positive. I invited its minister in 2005 to bring a team to a parish mission. Following this, they started meeting with a lady from our parish working in the city (who had initially contacted them wanting to get in

touch with the diocesan missionary). They invited her to a baptism service at their church. Mercifully, she did not transfer, but it was a near miss.

I wanted to explore some of the issues raised by John Benton and my own experience with a church planter out in the field. The Revd Mike Cain is minister of Emmanuel Bristol (see <www.emmanuel-bristol.org.uk>), a church plant from Christ Church Clifton in March 2007. Under its evangelical bishop, Mike Hill, a culture has developed in Bristol Diocese that wants to encourage fresh expressions (see its Church Planting Policy at <www.bristol.anglican.org/resources>).

empire-building is a more common sin in ministry than I had previously thought

Mike Cain is licensed as curate of Christ Church Clifton with special responsibility for the Emmanuel mission initiative, which meets in a school in the parish of Holy Trinity, Westbury-on-Trym. His licence has just been renewed.

A planter's response

Holy Trinity is supportive of Emmanuel, which it sees as having a special brief to reach the unchurched. Vicar Andre Hart says: 'They are a fresh expression in existence under the auspices of the PCC here at Holy Trinity. We have regular reports from them. I meet regularly with Mike Cain to look at prayer needs. It's on a one-year experiment and the PCC will appraise it as to how it's working for the kingdom of God.'

What does Mr Cain think of John Benton's view that reviving small churches should be the priority and church planting a last resort? 'The question we should be all asking ourselves is how we can grow the kingdom of God. In certain circumstances that means getting alongside an existing church and providing it with the resources that will help it to grow. But in other circumstances, particularly in cities such as Bristol, it means planting new churches.'

'Established churches that have got small do need to ask themselves the

question: 'Why are we small?' Is it just that they are under-resourced or is there something toxic deep-rooted in the culture? The fact is that even if every established church building in Bristol were bursting at the seams there would still be many people to reach for Christ, so new churches are needed.'

Dangers to be avoided

During the Mission-Shaped Church debate at General Synod in 2004, the Archdeacon of Sheffield, Richard Blackburn, warned of unaccountable, even bullying, leadership in some church plants. Mike Cain: 'That is a danger for all of us who are in leadership. We can be shaped by the world's view of leadership as a power thing. Unaccountable, bullying leadership exists in church plants and it exists in established churches. What I would say to the ecclesiastical establishment is that if you get a leader with a vision for doing something new and you thwart him, then that can exacerbate the problem of his hot-headedness. So why not back him and make sure you build in structures of accountability?'

What about the charge of empire-building by church planters? Mike Cain: 'It is a danger to which we are all prone. Those who plant are susceptible to it as well as those in established churches who say, 'Not in my backyard.' One of the great things about being in a new church is that it is easier to change things when we get it wrong. For example, we started off having discussions around tables in our meetings. But we soon realized that was intimidating to newcomers, so we stopped doing it. It was seen as acceptable to make the change for the sake of growing the kingdom of God. Being part of a new church thus helps to keep you flexible and reviewing the way you do things, so that you keep your focus on building the kingdom of God, rather than enlarging your own empire and its culture and customs.'

Godly servant-hearted church planters like Mike Cain are a great credit to Christ's mission. But my exploratory journey into church planting has left me with a sense that empire-building is a more common sin in ministry than I had previously thought. Parish plodder though I am, I would be unwise to think I am immune. **ND**

Renewing the parish

*In a third extract from the Working Party report, **Philip North** identifies ways in which the church is insufficiently prepared for the challenges of mission, and makes recommendations for addressing these problems*

If lay renewal is to be effective, we believe that some initial work needs to be done with priests in an atmosphere of trust, looking at the issues involved and gently challenging some deep-seated attitudes. Fear will be near the surface, but what actually takes place when a priest lets go and empowers the laity is that his spiritual authority increases among the community he serves. Ultimately he will find he is released to be more authentically a priest. We would hope that the recommendations below would allow for a task force of priests and laypeople, voluntary and stipendiary, who could act as consultants to other clergy and parishes and so enable local churches to develop a shared vision for ministry and mission.

Lack of resources

The working party (many of whom are or have been training incumbents) expressed some concern about the unpreparedness of many ordinands for the challenges of mission and ministry in the modern age. Many seem to seem to emerge from colleges or courses trained solely for a pastoral ministry, and with little understanding of the implications of the evangelistic dimension of priesthood. We would urge those preparing ordinands for ministry to make *evangelistic method* a central part of the syllabus.

A constant theme for the working party was the lack of well-written, well-designed and well-marketed resources to enable the renewal of ardour. Many had turned to resources from the Church Pastoral Aid Society or the Scripture Union. While extremely useful and well produced, these lack the sacramental approach that we would desire. We strongly recommend, therefore, that the Catholic Societies work together to form something akin to a home mission agency along the lines of CPAS. In particular, we would challenge the Additional Curates Society or the Church Union to restructure itself along these lines.

The role of such an agency would be to draw alongside parishes to support them in mission and evangelism. This would be achieved by having a team of evangelists available to work with a parish over a period of time to explore issues of leadership, vision, lay development, personal

renewal and outreach; and with the provision of good quality written and electronic resources for catechesis and youth and children's ministry. The minimum staffing requirement would be a director, two evangelists and a youth and children's worker. The resources for such an agency already exist.

New methods

In their report to the Catholic bishops, *Evangelization in England and Wales*, Philip Knights and Andrea Murray write, 'Each age of evangelization has found



appropriate techniques with which to express and share the Gospel. As people ask new questions, new ways of engaging with their faith journey must be found. New circumstances demand new forms of evangelization. This may well force us into uncomfortable areas. We may have to take risks with things that prove imperfect or unproductive.'

Once there is a new ardour to evangelize, the new methods for achieving that evangelization will flow. It is important to establish that it is in that order that things will happen. Often priests rush in to implement new evangelistic techniques which get them nowhere. The problem is that the methods have preceded the ardour. We must start with renewal and in particular with lay formation. Then the methods will emerge.

Under the new methods, we might identify two complementary broad approaches. The first is what *Fresh Expressions* enthusiasts rather sniffily call 'Doing traditional church well'. That means putting strategies into place in order to run an effective, growing parish. The second entails far greater risk. It involves exploring different types of church life and new forms of Christian community.

It may entail church-planting, youth congregations or cell church. It means exploring the 'uncomfortable areas' to which Knights and Murray refer.

Practical suggestions

Once there is a new ardour, the new methods will not be hard to find. There are many simple, practical steps that can be taken in a parish to encourage growth. There are also many books and resources which enable parishes to do this in far greater detail than we can here. Nonetheless, the following steps are the most important:

Liturgical renewal: The starting point for most parishes should be Sunday morning. It will mean ensuring that the worship is good, the preaching clear, the welcome warm, the childcare adequate, the literature well produced, the coffee drinkable.

Nurture courses: One of the most effective new methods of the past twenty years has been the introduction of courses such as Alpha and Emmaus. A course like that should be within the capacity of every parish to run. It will work as a maternity ward, a place where new Christians can be born. Ideally the course will be run at least once per year.

Developing the fringe: Churches grow when they are connected to the communities which they serve. Parishes need to consider ways in which they are in touch with the wider community and work there. These points of contact will be specific to each local context, but may be occasional offices, community ministry, schools, lunch clubs, mother and toddler groups, uniformed organizations, etc.

Making use of national resources and initiatives: Catholics must resist that form of apartheid which means that national evangelistic initiatives are missed. Many parishes have benefited greatly from initiatives such as 'Back to Church Sunday' and Alpha, as it has enabled them to capitalize on other people's advertising and PR. Another strategy which has been of immense benefit is the course *Leading Your Church into Growth*, which is run each year at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham and at other venues. This explores renewal and leadership and suggests many practical steps to help traditional parishes to grow. **ND**

Cheap shot

There are of course two kinds of bishops: those who read *NEW DIRECTIONS* and are happy to own up to the fact, and those who read *NEW DIRECTIONS* but claim to bin it each month without opening it.

Or, to put it another way, those bishops who are credible and those who are incredible. 30DAYS is delighted, for the second month running, to salute the Right Reverend (and Very Credible) David James, Bishop of Bradford, who is quoted on his Diocesan website as follows:

'I am horrified how much I spend on heating and lighting at Bishopscoft. Although New Directions, the Forward in Faith magazine gave me the 'wooden crozier award' as the cheapest diocesan bishop in England, I am the 15th most expensive when it comes to my fuel bills! This Lent is a good time to stop and think and to go on a carbon fast and remove a few light bulbs, enough to notice the difference and to remember that the people who will suffer most from global warming are those in the poorest countries who cause it least.'

However, our advice to Bishop James – if he wishes to maintain his credibility – is that he should stop calling himself 'the cheapest diocesan bishop' and opt instead for 'the least expensive'!



Has Ruth Gledhill gone bonkers?

There was a time when a Religion Correspondent working for *The Times* probably wouldn't have used the word 'bonkers' in the same sentence as the words 'Archbishop of Canterbury', but we live in interesting times – which may be why the current incumbent of the post felt able last month publicly to ask 'Has the Archbishop gone bonkers?'

Ruth Gledhill – the Media Strumpet, as she occasionally calls herself – was writing on her blog about *that* lecture, of course, and, needless to say, her provocative headline soon brought in the punters. Within less than a week, 250 odd (very odd, most of them) folk had posted comments ranging from the downright offensive ('A religious parasite

wanting to feather the nests of other religious parasites'), through the infantile ('bearded twit') to the pig ignorant ('The Queen should fire Williams'). Bonkers? Given that she posted 22 stories on her blog during the entire month of January which attracted on average just 26 comments each, one might argue that she has proved herself to be anything but!



Liturgy by Homebase

Jason and Tracy Engel's *San Juan Capistrano home* hadn't been blessed before Epiphany Sunday but on January 6 they moved from room to room with a do-it-yourself kit from their church,' reports Episcopal Life Online. 'For 10-year-old Sarah, who lingered a few additional seconds over Sparkle Jr, Marie and Martha, her fish, taking charge of the bright blue vial of holy water was especially fun but also very serious,' the report goes on.

Canon Robert Edwards, Rector of St Margaret of Scotland's Episcopal Church, said, 'the interactive, intergenerational liturgy was designed to empower parish families to develop spiritual practices. The Episcopal Church has the brightest, most creative and thoughtful people in Western Christendom and they can figure out how to conduct a meaningful ceremony in the confines of their home.'

Ah! An interactive, intergenerational liturgy! And there you were thinking that it was a DIY house blessing because the Rector couldn't be arsed to go round and do it properly for them! Shame on you!



Bad behaviour

'It would be easier to let US conservatives secede to join another Anglican province without a fight, but I don't think that's a faithful thing to do. Episcopal leaders are stewards of church property and assets, protecting past generations' legacies and passing them on to future Episcopalians. Allowing congregations to walk away with church property condones bad behaviour. In a sense, it's related to the old ecclesiastical behaviour toward child abuse, when priests essentially looked the other way. Bad behaviour must be confronted.'

Thus the Presiding Bishop of the ever-wonderful Episcopal Church, speaking to Religion News Service on 16 January. (Comment would be superfluous and probably impossible without lapsing into profanity!)



Education, education, education

We are grateful to <www.ekklesia.co.uk> for this gem:

'Members of the Church of England's General Synod have been told that it is 'highly unlikely' that a vote on whether to allow women to become bishops will be taken before 2010... The statement shocked a large number of Synod members, who met and expressed their outrage at the length of time the process was taking. The Revd Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, one of the youngest members of Synod, said she only learned in theological college that women still couldn't be bishops.'

According to *Crockford*, Ms Threlfall-Holmes graduated from Cambridge in 1995, soon after the first women priests were ordained. She then moved to Durham, where she knocked off a Master's and a Doctorate, before fetching up at Theological College in 2000. Her Doctoral study formed the basis of her book, *Monks and Markets: Durham Cathedral Priory 1460-1520*, published in 2005 (OUP, a snip at £62) and she is now Chaplain and Fellow at University College, Durham. Elected to General Synod in 2007 at the tender age of 34, she is quite clearly not without ability.

So, one is bound to ask, how in the name of all that is sacred did she manage to come to her faith, discern her vocation, offer herself for ordination, attend a Selection Conference, be sponsored for ordination – all presumably whilst collecting her impressive list of academic qualifications – and still manage to arrive at Cranmer Hall, Durham towards the end of 2000 without realizing that she was a member of a church which did not ordain women as bishops? Answers on a postcard, please!

Copy for 30 DAYS should reach FiF office by the 10th day of the month:

30days@forwardinfaith.com

Life and the bishop

J. Alan Smith offers a pro-life commentary on the Bishop Harries' recent article in support of the Human Fertility and Embryology Bill taking issue with him over his perception of the early embryo

Richard, the Rt Revd Lord Harries of Pentregarth, former Bishop of Oxford, wrote an article in the *Church Times* on 8 February 2008, 'Why Christians should back the Bill', in support of the Human Fertility and Embryology Bill. This article comments on his views from a pro-life perspective. Direct quotations from the article are prefixed 'RH'.

Fourteen-day principle

RH: After this first child conceived using in vitro fertilisation was born [Louise Brown], the Government set up a commission, chaired by Mary, now Baroness Warnock, to regulate this whole area. Its recommendation was that the early embryo should be accorded a degree of respect, and given a legal protection that reflects this. It is this fundamental principle that underlies all the law on the subject. In short, the early embryo does not have the rights of an adult or baby. On the other hand, as a potential child, it is not just tissue.

Although this principle has official support in most countries, a significant number of people subscribe to the pro-life position that an innocent, individual human life should be protected from its very beginning until natural death.

The use of the term 'potential child' avoids the fact that we are all partly actual and partly potential. A human embryo does not start as a potential human and become an actual human 'in the twinkling of an eye', but continually actualizes his potential in the sight of him who is pure act.

The respect accorded the early embryo stretches the meaning of the word to breaking point. Since he accepts that the early embryo may be the subject of destructive experiments, the degree of respect he accords the early embryo is very similar to the degree of respect the Walrus and the Carpenter accorded the Oysters.

Fertility treatment and research

RH: The Roman Catholic position, which is shared by many Evangelicals and some Anglicans, is that 'Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception.' The implication of this view must be fully faced. It means ruling out IVF altogether; for this treatment involves taking

a number of eggs from the woman, fertilising them, and implanting in the womb the two that are most likely to flourish. Those that are not frozen for further use (either because the first treatment failed, or to produce siblings) are destroyed.

Quite so. A process that, of necessity, produces large numbers of humans destined for destruction is unacceptable. The excuse of the nurse in *Mr Midshipman Easy*, 'If you please, ma'am, it was a very little one', does not work here either.

RH: The implication of the RC view is very serious for the large number of women who now need fertility treatment. People are marrying later and having children later, when chances of conceiving are less, and there is an increase in conditions such as obesity, which again diminish the chances of fertility.

This is a utilitarian argument to justify IVF. No consideration seems to have been given either to education programmes to point out to women who want children the advantages of marrying earlier and seeking to conceive earlier or to economic changes that would assist such women.

RH: Fertility treatment is vital for a growing number of women.

This is a slipshod use of language: infertility is a painful burden for sufferers but it is not life-threatening; treatment for someone with total failure of both kidneys is vital. Nevertheless, I agree that fertility treatment is a good, but it must be provided ethically: it would be utilitarian and unacceptable if such a good were sought through unethical means.

RH: ...research on early embryos is necessary to try to bring help to people suffering from a range of serious diseases. Whether or not research on early embryos would bring help to people suffering from a range of serious diseases, the fundamental objection remains: it would be wrong to perform destructive experiments on Brown in order to benefit Jones.

RH: There is another implication of the Roman Catholic position. It rules out using pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). This involves taking some cells from the dividing embryo and testing them for certain inherited diseases. It means that a healthy rather than diseased embryo can be implanted in the womb. It enables children to be born without crippling, death-dealing diseases such as cystic fibrosis. Do we really want preg-

nant mothers either to seek an abortion later, or to bear a child who is subject to great suffering when they have a real choice to bring into being a healthy one?

The principled pro-life objection to IVF that it produces large numbers of humans destined for destruction applies even if they suffer from inherited diseases. PGD would enable children to be born without 'crippling, death-dealing diseases' only if all human life started with IVF. The logic of the argument would lead to the banning of natural conceptions. Aldous Huxley described such a society in *Brave New World*. Furthermore, the subliminal message he is sending to those suffering from 'crippling, death-dealing diseases' is: 'You should not be here.'

Opposition to abortion

RH: I take a gradualist approach towards the moral status of the early embryo and developing foetus. One reason is that this gradualist approach is reflected in the main tradition of the Western Church from the fourth to the nineteenth centuries. Abortion has always been regarded as a serious sin, but, for 1500 years, the Church made a distinction in the penalties, depending on whether it was an early or late abortion. It was only in 1869 that Pope Pius rejected the distinction, and brought about the present position of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is not unreasonable for the Church's teaching on abortion to evolve as the medical knowledge of pregnancy developed. Would the leaders of the Church in the fourth century have taken the same view of abortion had they known that, from the first moment of its existence, a human embryo is a member of the species, *homo sapiens*? Suppose Pope Pius and his successors had *not* 'rejected the distinction'; just imagine what criticism would be levelled at them.

RH: A second consideration is what happens at about 14 days after fertilization. At this point, a dark line can be identified in the developing embryo, which is the beginning of the nervous system. After this point, we have a single human individual. Before this, we have a tiny bundle of multiplying cells, the majority of which go to form the placenta and umbilical cord, and which may result in two or more embryos being implanted