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Encouraging people to live in a closer relationship with God

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LATEST DATE for copy for the Summer edition – June 30th 2009

We welcome articles, letters and news of your Renewal events.

Please send to me at: Blaenpentre, Rhos-y-Garth, Llanilar, Aberystwyth SY23 4SE



by
Steve Waters
Chairman
ARM Wales

How do we
take
courage?

What is courage?

In Isaiah chapter 35 we read the words 'be strong do not fear', or in other words, take courage. This phrase *take courage* occurs on numerous occasions right throughout the Bible, but perhaps the best known occasion of its use is when Jesus is walking on the water towards his disciples who are in a boat. When they see him they think it is a ghost and they are afraid. Jesus says to them, "take courage, it is I."

But what is courage? How do we take courage? The dictionary describes *courage* as the ability to overcome our fear, and that sums it up as far as we are concerned, the ability to overcome fear. Courage is not about charging into a situation bold and unafraid, like **an all action television hero. It's not about beating your chest like Tarzan to show how tough you are and how you're not afraid of anything.** True courage is being absolutely terrified of having to do **something, but going ahead and doing it anyway even though you're shaking with fear.** True courage is having the ability to overcome that fear and go ahead and do it.

Courage and Christianity go hand in hand. The Bible is full of examples of people who have shown remarkable courage. Abraham had the courage to be prepared to sacrifice his own son, because God told him to. All the time he was climbing the mountain he **would have been very afraid, because he didn't know God was going to provide an alternative.**

Can you imagine what the people of Israel were thinking when Moses told them he was going to hold out his rod over the sea and **part the waters for them? I'm sure there must have been just a little hint of the thought that he might end up looking stupid.** But he had the courage to do it, and guess what, it worked.

Shadrack, Meshack and Abednigo had the courage to say no to the king even though they knew it would cost them their lives. They **knew that God could rescue them, but they didn't know whether he would or not, whether it was God's will that they be rescued.** Daniel ended up in the lion's den because he had the courage to **ignore the king's decree; he didn't know that God was going to save him by shutting the mouths of the lions.**

Peter had the courage to ignore the laws of nature and walk on the

As well as enabling us to do extraordinary things, courage is also about being able to overcome the small but very real fears in our lives...

water just because Jesus told him to. He started to sink when his fear started to overcome him, when his courage failed. Ananias had the courage to go to someone who was a known persecutor of Christians, **just because God told him to. He didn't know that Saul had already been converted.**

I could go on and on, the Bible is full of such stories, but I'm sure you are starting to get the picture. All of these people showed great courage, they all confronted and overcame their fears because God asked them to, but none of them would have called themselves brave or courageous. They would probably have insisted that they were just ordinary people, and that is the mark of true courage.

As well as enabling us to do extraordinary things, courage is also about being able to overcome the small but very real fears in our lives, like being afraid of looking stupid or of being embarrassed; like the fear of failing; like the fear of losing control of our own lives; like the fear of being asked to do something that will make us feel uncomfortable.

Courage is being able to put on a smiling face and give help to someone who needs it, even though inside you are hurting so badly, that all you **want to do is shout out, 'what about me, I'm hurting too.'** It's about making sacrifices, being able to put others first, putting on a happy caring face to the world, and trusting God, and perhaps allowing one close friend to secretly help you with your own pain and problems.

Courage is about telling the world that you belong to Jesus even though you know that you will suffer humiliation and derision at the hands of your friends or even your own family. Courage is about crossing the road and telling a complete stranger that Jesus loves him, **even though you know you are going to feel stupid. It's about signing to buy a building for the mission you are setting up because God has told you to, even though your bank account is showing a balance of nil, and you've got no idea where the money is coming from.**

Courage is not about not being afraid, courage is about being afraid, **but overcoming that fear to do God's will and to put other people before you.**

My wife is one of the most courageous people I know. In the 21 years we have been married, she has sacrificed any ambition she had for a career to bring up our children. She has followed me all around Gwent, wherever my job has taken me, and she has always said that whatever I wanted to do, wherever I wanted to go, she would be right there with me.

If I said tomorrow that I wanted to sell everything and move to Africa and live in a mud hut, she would do it. She would overcome her fears of being home sick, she would overcome her fear of the unknown, she would willingly give up her familiar comfortable lifestyle for no better reason than I had asked her to.

That is real courage. That's the sort of courage that has been shown by men and women who have made a difference for God down through the ages. It's the sort of courage that is still being shown by men and women who are making a difference for God today. It's the sort of courage God wants us to show. We should be prepared to give up any ambitions we have for ourselves, to follow him. To go wherever he leads us, and to do or say whatever he tells us to. And people who have made that sacrifice have found to their surprise and delight that they have got everything that they want or need anyway.

And that's because when we make the decision to take courage and follow Jesus, our mind will become like his mind. Our thoughts will become like his thoughts, and our wishes and desires will become like his, so the more we do his will, the more we find that we are doing our will also. We will find that our ambitions will change also. No longer will we strive for success for ourselves, instead we will strive for success in spreading the good news of the gospel.

Our ambition will be to see that as many people as possible get to know that God loves them, not just because we tell them he does, but because they have felt that love for themselves, as a result of us **following God's leading in doing and saying just the right thing at the right time.** And that is where we need to show courage, because he does not like us to stay for ever in our own comfort zones.

Following God's leading will very often take us out of our comfort zones, to do things that we don't think we can do, or say things we don't think we can say. God will sometimes lead us into a situation that our human nature and our experience of life will tell us is going to cause us huge embarrassment, and we think, I can't do that, what will people think? But the reality is that when we have the courage to risk the embarrassment, we find that what we did or what we said was just the right thing at the right time, and there was no embarrassment at all.

Courage is the willingness to challenge our own fears and perceptions. It is the willingness to risk embarrassment, derision and pain for Jesus. Courage is being prepared to nail your colours to the mast, and

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actively live the life of a Christian as God sees it, not as the world sees it. Courage is loving people around you enough to put their needs before your suffering. And the reward for showing courage is that God blesses you.

You find that suddenly, your suffering is not as bad as it was. In fact, the suffering of other people now hurts more than your own suffering. You find that crossing the road to tell strangers about Jesus is not the ordeal it once was. You get used to buying things when God tells you, **even if you haven't got any idea where the money is coming from**, because you know that God will always deliver. But most of all, you **find that you don't have to be courageous in your own strength**, because when you need courage, God will always give it to you.

Be encouraged by the stories in the Bible. Abraham didn't know that God was going to give him a ram to sacrifice instead of his son. Moses didn't know for sure that the sea really would part when he held his rod out, he only had God's word for it. Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego, didn't know for sure whether God was going to save them or not. Daniel didn't know that God was going to shut the mouths of the lions. And Peter only had Jesus' word for it that he wouldn't sink when he stepped out on to the water. And so it is that when we do what God asks us to do, the outcome of our actions will probably not be the outcome we expect.

Remember that being courageous is not taking things head on, boldly and unafraid, being courageous is confronting our fears and conceptions, and doing something that God wants us to do even though we might not want to do it, and even though we may be afraid.

So let's all be courageous. We all have it in us to be courageous; the big question we must ask ourselves is, do we want to be courageous and earn God's blessing, or are we quite content to stay in our comfort zones and leave being courageous to everyone else?

Do we want to make a difference for God, or are we quite content to stay in the comfort of our own church, our own little club, and leave making a difference to someone else. Do we want to help as many people as possible come to God and get eternal life, or are we quite content with making sure that we have got eternal life.

We all know God because someone brought us to him. We all owe our salvation not only to the courage Jesus showed in sacrificing himself for us, but to the courage that someone else showed in introducing us

to God, and there are a lot of people whose salvation will depend on our willingness to be courageous and take Jesus to them, not only by what we say to them, but by how we are seen to live.

I'm sure you have all seen people wearing tee shirts, and sporting bumper stickers that say 'born to be wild', well perhaps it's time we started sporting tee shirts and bumper stickers that say 'born to be courageous.'

Marks of a Healthy Church

This article is based on a talk given at a Renewal Day held at Llandiloes Church Hall on Saturday 29th November 2008

No matter whether the Church is in the country or the town, small or **large, busy or relaxed, old or young in years, lively and 'Spirit filled' or lukewarm** as Laodicea (Revelation 3:15-16), it will not be *entirely* healthy. All churches suffer from the same disadvantage. They contain fallen human beings who, just like our ancestral parents of the biblical creation story, tend to choose what is to our advantage rather than to obey God (Genesis 3:6-7).

In the letter to the Galatians Paul identifies this as following our **'sinful nature'**. He notes a list of **'acts of the sinful nature'** (Galatians 5:19f) which can follow as a result and he makes the point that the way to combat this is to **'live by the Spirit'** (Galatians 5:25) thus producing **'fruit of the Spirit'** against which there is no law. (Galatians 5:22f). He shows that Christian life and practice begins when those who have **'crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires'** are also those who **'keep in step with the Spirit'** (Galatians 5:25). Being a Spirit filled Christian is not just about being overwhelmed by the Spirit, but is also about continuing to be guided by Him.



by
Paul Thompson

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In Acts 2 we see something of the birth of the Church and how it initially developed. We discover that Jesus had left behind a community

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of about 120 members (Acts 1:15) which included 11 leaders. These leaders had been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry. We know this because when it came to replacing Judas Iscariot certain qualifications were required for the position. They must have **'been with Jesus the whole time...from John's baptism to the time Jesus was taken up from us.'** (Acts 1:21-22) They had to have spent time with Jesus. We must not underestimate the significance of this. Just as the first Christian leaders had to have spent physical time with Jesus, so leaders in subsequent generations must be people who have spent, and continue to spend, spiritual time with Jesus in prayer, scripture, worship and fellowship with other Christians. Nothing else can replace this necessary qualification. It is a principal that applies to every level of leadership in the Church who must model it to the rest of the church.

At Pentecost this small group of believers **'were all together in one place'** (Acts 2:1) and **'all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit'** (Acts 2:4). From the start, the Church was a Holy Spirit filled community. This arrival of the Holy Spirit, with a sound that **'filled the whole house'** (Acts 2:2) and with **'what seemed to be tongues of fire that...came to rest on each of them'** (Acts 2:3,) is such a powerful event that all present immediately **'began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them'** (Acts 2:4). The crowd that gathers as a result come **'together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language'**, and they are **'utterly amazed'** (Acts 2:6f). People from all over the known world hear **'the wonders of God in [their] own tongues!'** (Acts 2:11) They are confused by this (Acts 2:12) and even presume that the disciples are drunk (Acts 2:13). This causes Peter to preach (Acts 2:14), and the crowd to respond, so that **'three thousand were added to their number that day'** (Acts 2:41).

Next to the resurrection of Jesus, this is the most exciting and significant event in the whole of the New Testament. It inspires and motivates all Christians, and especially those who are involved in Holy Spirit or Charismatic renewal. However there is a danger that this event can be taken as the goal of mature Christian life; a danger that we can become content with lively worship, good preaching and successful outreach. Yet this is just the beginning of the story. Towards the end of Acts 2 we discover the values which mark the growing maturity and confidence of the church. **'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer'** (Acts 2:42). We might characterise these marks as; the Bible,

our primary source for the Apostle's teaching; the Church, the main centre of our fellowship with other Christians; Worship and especially Holy Communion; and prayer, both with the church fellowship and in personal prayer.

The greatest danger for the early church was that it would falter and splinter as a result of false or mistaken doctrine. Most of the New Testament was written to guard the teaching handed to the Apostles. It consistently uses the Old Testament as a source of teaching, especially in respect of the fulfilment of prophecies in the life of Jesus. For example, Isaiah accurately foretells the birth and death of Jesus (e.g. Isaiah 9:6 & 53:1-12). Paul, in his letter to Romans, uses Abraham to argue that we are all one in Christ and that we are justified by faith (Romans 4:9-17). The author of the letter to Hebrews also uses Abraham to illustrate teaching on faith (Hebrews 11). Throughout the New Testament we see that faith is about choosing the promises of God regardless of how the world tries to undermine them (Romans 4:18-end).

From the beginning the fellowship and protection of the church was of key importance, especially in times of persecution. The mark of this fellowship is love. In the New Testament John explains this most clearly. **'Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.'** (1 John 4:7-8). Paul, in a letter to the Corinthians, describes the qualities of this love as patience, kindness; absence of envy, boastfulness, pride, rudeness, self-seeking and anger; not ready to go over old wrongs nor enjoy evil but to choose truth; always protecting, trusting, hoping, persevering and never failing (1 Corinthians 13). The author of the letter to Hebrews suggests that the way to avoid a **'sinful, unbelieving heart'** is to encourage **'one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness'** (Hebrews 3:13)

Psalms 95 says that we were created to worship God. **'Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care'** (Psalm 95:6). We are most completely ourselves when we discover that our whole life is to be lived kneeling **'before the Lord our Maker'**.

The **'breaking of bread'** (Acts 2:42) is a powerful reminder of our need to worship, to **'do this in remembrance of me'** (1 Corinthians 11:24). By eating bread and drinking wine we take Jesus into our hearts and

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confess Him as Lord. We commit ourselves to a life wholly given to God through the saving power of Jesus.

Paul tells us to **'pray continually'** (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and to **'pray in the Spirit on all occasions'** (Ephesians 6:18). In Acts the early Christian community often pray as a group (1:14, 2:42 etc). Individual prayer was also common (e.g. Acts 10:9). The disciples asked Jesus to teach them **to pray and so were taught the 'the Lord's prayer'** (Luke 11:1-4). They had seen Jesus spend time in prayer and wanted to do the same (Mark 14:23, Luke 6:12 etc.).

This discipline also produced practical outcomes in that they **'had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God...'** (Acts 2:44-47)

Holding **'everything in common'** is an act of generosity to others. It offers a context within which to reach out to others. It has to do with how you view your possessions. Speaking to the church in Corinth, and encouraging them to be generous, Paul says **'Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.'** (2 Corinthians 9:6). Once we recognise the work that God has done for us in Jesus, we are moved by the Spirit to exercise that generosity in our own lives by being generous to others.

This generosity led many to sell **'their possessions and goods'** in acts of sacrificial love. Powerful actions like this cause others to ask questions about their own relationship with God. In his sermon on the mount Jesus said **'let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven'**.

Giving 'to anyone as he had need' is serving that reflects the life of Jesus. Jesus said that **'even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'** (Mark 10:45). Generous sacrificial love is always about serving others and when we look at Jesus we see a model of this love in action that inspires us to service.

Therefore, the New Testament model of healthy church includes leaders who had spent time with Jesus and who modelled the values of scripture, fellowship, worship and prayer. These ingredients produced a way of behaving towards possessions and each other that was just as radical then as it is now. They gave themselves, and their possessions, to the cause of Christ. They did not hold back but spent themselves

and their possessions for the love of Jesus. This is what really healthy church looks like. There will always be problems with church as long as there are flawed human beings but when Christians give themselves (and what they own) away, without complaint or resentment, knowing that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will look after them, you have a healthy church. It might look odd in the eyes of a materialistic world, but in the Kingdom of God saints and angels rejoice.

Hope in the Valley

by Penelope Bourdillon, 2008, (ISBN 978-0-9535856-1-8) *This booklet is being sold for £5 in aid of the Christian Centre for Rural Wales. Contact Marcia Gibson-Watt on 01597 822874 to order a copy.*

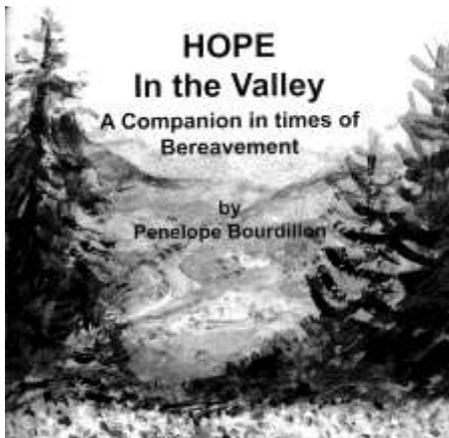
This little booklet is subtitled *A Companion in Times of Bereavement* and the author hopes it will help people through

bereavement, loneliness and suffering. It is a collection of poems, quotes, prayers, Bible readings, illustrations (by Marcia Gibson-Watt) **and Penelope's thoughts** about bereavement based on her experiences following the death of her husband.

The booklet narrates a very personal journey but also keeps a wider perspective so

that general aspects of bereavement are also covered. And some of the content certainly addresses wider issues of suffering. I was struck by **Penelope's insight that, 'The most important lesson to learn is to praise God in the furnace and to look for Him in everything.'** Not easy, but it pays great dividends and applies to so much of the little and large things that go wrong in our lives.

This booklet might not be a great help to everyone, but I'm sure there is something in it for everyone. It would be a good choice to give to someone you know is suffering, because of bereavement or other issues, at the moment.



A book review
by
Malcolm Dye

'The most important lesson to learn is to praise God in the furnace and to look for Him in everything.'

by
Tudor Griffiths

The Holy Spirit in John's Gospel

This article is based on a talk given at the ARM (Wales) AGM on Saturday 15th November 2008 at Llanidloes Church Hall.



Let's begin at the... end, with John 20:21-23. The Risen Jesus appears to his disciples, breathes on them and says, literally, *receive Holy Spirit (there's no 'the')*, and then he affirms their mission to declare the forgiveness of sins. Incidentally although this passage is used at the ordination of priests, there is no hint in John that this applies only to some specific disciples rather than all of

them together. But perhaps we ought not to be too subversive – yet! Jesus is here not empowering the disciples to do anything new. After all forgiving sins is what Jesus has been doing – he is empowering them to continue his work.

In John 7:37-39 we see that during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, it was not possible for the disciples to be filled with the Spirit. This would happen when Jesus was 'glorified' to use one of John's favourite words. And we know our gospel well enough that when Jesus talked about *the hour of his glory* he was looking forward to the cross and beyond that to the resurrection. Look at John 19:30 and we find that John uses a very unusual statement to tell us that Jesus died; in the NRSV it is 'he gave up his spirit'. But it could equally be translated, 'he handed over the Spirit'. We could have here a symbolic reference to the Spirit's bestowal through the death of Jesus.

But we can look back even further to the story of Jesus' baptism in 1:32-33. The key thing here is the word 'remain'. Many times in the Old Testament we find stories of the Spirit coming to people, to prophets particularly, but even to Samson who was given the spiritual gift of tearing young lions apart! Paul forgot that one in his lists. But the Spirit came and went again. But with Jesus it was different. Jesus' whole ministry was in the power of the Spirit. But whereas the other Gospels

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focus on Jesus as the Spirit-filled man, John is more interested in Jesus as the one through whom the Spirit comes.

Now my two lads, David and Andrew, have got me into Fantasy Football this year and they've set up a league, and with typical Griffith's grace, they are leading it. Now it's a real nerd's activity but if you want to do well, you have to work through the detailed statistics on each player and carefully choose accordingly. So look at the detail. Go back to John 20:22 and look at the detail. Jesus breathed on them; what does that remind you of? Look at Genesis 2:7, God breathed the breath of life into Adam. That theme of the creative spirit is echoed in Job 33:4. **Let's bring in John 3:5-6**, being born again through the Spirit, brought into the new creation in Christ. **That's one set of connections.**

It also connects in with the gift of the spirit of prophecy. Consider Deuteronomy 34:9 where Moses passes on his spirit to Joshua. We also find this with Elijah and Elisha in II Kings 2:9. In Ezekiel 2:2, the spirit of prophecy comes directly from God. Now in Ezekiel 37:1-14 (the valley of dry bones) we find the streams of creation and prophecy **flowing together. The power of Ezekiel's announcement and the power of the new creation both come from the Spirit.**

So where are we going with this? John 20:22 indicates that those who are re-created or born again through the Spirit are thereby commissioned and equipped for a prophetic ministry. The Spirit is given **so we can speak out the word of the Lord for today's generation. But I want to go further than this because I believe John's Gospel teaches us very clearly that the Holy Spirit is God's missionary spirit to equip us all to be powerful missionaries.**

You may be wondering why we have been looking at the Holy Spirit in **John's Gospel but as yet we've not looked at the Farewell Discourses** or chapters 14-16 where Jesus is teaching his disciples to prepare them for life when he will be no longer with them. There are five passages where we learn about the Holy Spirit. The term we find there, as you know, is *Paracletos* which I had to add to my spell-checker which suggested that I meant Parakeets! There is no one satisfactory English **word to translate this. My Bible (NRSV) has advocate, but I'll use Paraclete.** The first text is 14:16-17. Here Jesus emphasises the continuity between Jesus and the Spirit. The Spirit is *another* Paraclete; the implication is that Jesus is the first. Here we find a parallel in the area of truth. Because Jesus is the true and living way (14:6), so the Spirit is the one who communicates truth in and through the disciples.

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John's Gospel teaches us very clearly that the Holy Spirit is God's missionary spirit ...

The truth that the Spirit is present within the body of the church and within each individual believer gives us a wonderful balance.

The Spirit is *with you* or *among you*, that's the presence of the Spirit in the church and the Spirit *in you*; present in individual Christians. It is so important to keep both these, because the Spirit is not the possession of any elite within the Christian community, nor is he, if I can put it this way, institutionalised. The truth that the Spirit is present within the body of the church and within each individual believer gives us a wonderful balance. Rampant individualism and oppressive authoritarianism, which is the greater peril today? I suspect the former.

The second passage (14:26) and the fifth (16:13-15) can be brought together because they both deal with the same subject: how do we interpret Jesus in the ongoing Christian community? As the church developed through the first century people became increasingly aware of their distance from the historical figure of Jesus. And as the Gospel spread in the ancient world into different areas and to people of different cultures and time passed, there grew something of a tension **between the conviction that God's decisive revelation was Jesus and the need to interpret this in different contexts.** Here then the Paraclete **is the authoritative interpreter. As Jesus came 'in the name of the Father' (5:43), so the Paraclete comes, says Jesus, in my name.** This is all about continuity.

How do we evaluate a claim that the Spirit has revealed something to **someone or some group? This is a very live question in today's church.** The answer has to do with continuity with Jesus. Any interpretation of Jesus must be demonstrably compatible with the person of Jesus as known and acknowledged. The person of Jesus is the truth for all times and in all circumstances. He is the measure of truth. The Spirit of truth (16:13) reveals the one who is the true way to God (14:6). Prof James Dunn put it this way:

The role of the Paraclete is never simply repeating the original teaching as first given nor that of revealing new truth wholly unrelated to the old, but that of reinterpreting the old to give it contemporary significance and that of revealing the new in a way consistent with the old.

Sometimes we hear voices in the church telling us that the Spirit is saying that there are now lots of different ways to God, or that the Spirit is teaching us new things about sexual morality. Or at a more **personal level, haven't we all heard people say, I think the Spirit is telling me... when we think, I don't. Where do we go from that point? It isn't** the magic bullet to answer all these questions, but it is a good first step **to ask, 'how compatible is this with what we know of Jesus?'**

The third Paraclete passage is John 15:26-27. The theme here is the witness of the Paraclete to Jesus. The Paraclete is sent from the Father to witness to Jesus. This is stated very carefully, so as to avoid any impression that the Spirit might bear any witness that is not related to Jesus. But the Spirit does not witness in a vacuum; his witness is borne by the disciples and, by extension, by all Christians. We are not additional or secondary witnesses but the Paraclete communicates the truth of Jesus to and through all who know and love him. We receive the witness of the Paraclete and then we are called to bear that witness to others. The whole context of this passage is the opposition that the **disciples will face for Jesus' sake. Faced with opposition they must witness not in their own power but in the power of the Spirit.**

The fourth and last Paraclete passage we find in 16: 7-11, and here we **read about the Paraclete's work in convicting and exposing sin in the world. We have seen already that the Paraclete's coming was dependent upon Jesus completing his work (16:7). Jesus was physically limited by the incarnation. But after his resurrection and ascension his presence with the disciples was mediated by the Paraclete. But this passage does not focus on the Paraclete's presence within the Christian community, but on his work of exposing sin, righteousness and judgment. What's the prime sin here? It's the failure to believe in Jesus. The Paraclete also exposes people's failure to recognise Jesus as the way to God and their failure to see that he has condemned and conquered evil. Have you noticed that people who are convicted of sin are drawn to Jesus? The two go together. And people who are convicted can either reject that or accept it in faith. The work of the Spirit can either be judgment to someone or assurance. It's no more and no less than what we see in Jesus (6:66); his ministry divided people and so the Paraclete's witness to Jesus provokes diametrically opposed responses.**

Now let's try and sum up what we find in these five passages regarding the Paraclete. He is the one who mediates the presence of Jesus to believers, both individually and in the church community. He is the one who contextualises Jesus, who brings Jesus into every new cultural and historical context, but every time it is recognisably the same Jesus. The Paraclete is the one who is the power of our Christian witness to Jesus and who goes before us to prepare the way. And when we catch up and share the story of Jesus the Paraclete provokes the same response of faith in some cases and rejection in other cases that Jesus

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... the functions of the Paraclete corresponds remarkably at an appropriate human level with the functions of a missionary.

by
John Scott
and
Barbara Tonkin

experienced.

Now when we put it like that, I get very excited because this description of the functions of the Paraclete corresponds remarkably at an appropriate human level with the functions of a missionary. A missionary is someone who presents Christ not in any abstract sense but in the sense of going out almost to be Christ to others. A missionary presents a personal witness to Christ and of Christ. A missionary is willing to confront and name sin and expose its nature and offence before God, not in the sense of going around condemning this or that, but in the sense of bringing a distinct holiness to bear. Of course at times a more direct verbal challenge is needed. Then a missionary is deeply concerned with the whole issue of contextualisation and translation of the gospel message – both in terms of evangelism and then in integrating the life of the Christian **community within the culture. Finally the missionary's task is to teach** about Jesus Christ and to do so with a transparent integrity. The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, is the missionary Spirit. The French Roman Catholic scholar, Yves Congar said,

The Spirit is active in the whole of the process that leads to faith; he enables men to confess faith and to live by it.

And then back to the passage with which we began – John 20:22 – if the Holy Spirit is the missionary Spirit and if Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on you, then you and I are summoned to be missionaries in our parish and patch.

Outreach at the Royal Welsh Show

During the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001 a group of Christians gathered in the Montgomery Pavilion on the day that the Royal Welsh show should have opened. Television cameras broadcast that although the show was cancelled Christians cared enough to pray.

From that gathering a group met to pray each year at this major 4 day event in the life of the nation. Over 240,000 people converge at this central gathering point in Mid Wales from all walks of life. What an opportunity to share Jesus. It is the most prestigious event in the agricultural community, for gaining a rosette here is the highest accolade in Europe equivalent to an Olympic Gold medal.

We connected with a group from All Nations Church in Leicester who run Christian Rural Network, and together we served giving

refreshments from a marquee in one of the aisles. They have now handed over full responsibility for the marquee to us in Wales.

We are at the show for 4 days serving free tea, coffee, squash, a friendly smile and prayer. We talk, we listen, we offer prayer, counsel and free booklets. It is very demanding but so rewarding. Now that we are a well established part of the scene there, we are looking to attend other events held at the showground for the agricultural community. The farmers are a forgotten part of our society and need our prayers and help, and need to know Jesus.

Testimonies at the Royal Welsh Show July 2008

The Christian Rural Network motto is “Connected for Life” and a connection for life for Ian, a team member, was in him meeting a lady called Lynne from North Wales. He had a general chat with her for a few minutes before being asked to pray for a minister and his wife who had just entered the tent. He excused himself but felt a little uncomfortable that he had left Lynne alone at the table and he knew he had his back to her while chatting and praying. After about 10 mins, he turned around to see that she was still there and rejoined her. She had read the Smiley tract in Welsh and her first comment to him was the prayer on the back of the tract was a beautiful one. He asked whether she had ever prayed that prayer in her life and she replied “Not until now”. She had responded to God in his absence and he was able to explain to her the next steps, prayed with her and gave her a “Pam Iesu” booklet to take away with her. She was in touch with a local minister and Ian trusts that she will get the help to grow in her faith.

A lady from a nearby tent was prayed for the previous year. This year she came in at the end of the show to state that she had not drunk any alcohol since and she asked for prayer for herself and family to follow Jesus.

A man came in with a pint of beer bringing all his family. A team member offered prayer to his wife who had a bad back. She refused but her husband asked for prayer to be released from alcoholism.

During the session of team prayer on the last morning Moira brought **what Christine Glossop (Chief Defra vet) had shared: ‘That farmers need to be on their knees’. We went on our knees for the farmers and repented and wept.** Lying in front of John Scott was a silver thread which he sensed was symbolic and gave to Moira as a sign.

Chris had sensed that the Lord was asking her to crochet a shawl for a

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baby. It was a miracle that she crocheted it in an extremely short space of time. Then went to buy ribbon for it and the shop gave her the ribbon. She decided that there was not enough ribbon but sensed the Lord telling her that there would be enough, for this baby would always have provision. At the end of our time at the show a lady came in who was pregnant and was given the shawl with the message that this child would always have enough and that God would always provide.

This work costs in time, effort and finance. We need £1500 just for the hire on the showground and God has always provided. We also hope to pay the entrance fee for the team who help.

If you can help in any way through prayer, support, help for even a day, or finance, please contact Christian Rural Network (Wales). Rev John Scott tel 01639 720405, email jhs46@aol.com or Barbara Tonkin tel 01874 690325 email r.tonkin@zetnet.co.uk. We are also developing a web-site at www.christianrural.net and would value suggestions as to what we could include on this.

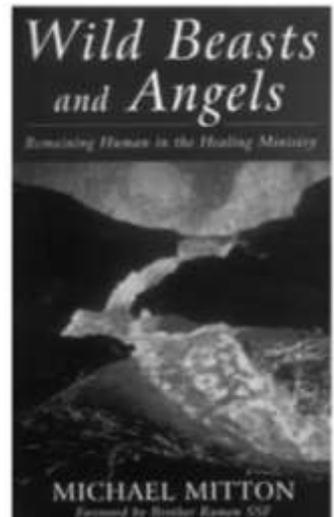
A book review by Mary Newsom

Wild Beasts and Angels by Michael Mitton

(Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000, ISBN 0-232-52341-X)

Recently a friend brought this book to me and asked my opinion because it was different from most books she had read on the difficult subject of Christian Healing.

Healing has been of interest to me ever since I found a booklet on Healing **Prayer amongst my mother's things** when she died in 1957. I have been to many talks/courses and read many books on the subject but recent **events, both before and since Brian's death**, have confirmed in me that we cannot dictate to God and we cannot claim victories until we clearly hear God speak in that particular case. I have always felt, that when there is to **be a healing 'someone' knows. I have** seen a number of examples of this and have sometimes been amazed at the words given when we pray for



someone. There is an authority that doesn't come from the person who is actually praying.

Michael Mitton has had years of experience in the healing ministry. He was once the Director of A.R.M. in England and also worked alongside Russ Parker at the Acorn Foundation, but here in this book he is wrestling with the mystery of a God who sometimes cures and sometimes does not.

He says in his first chapter that with the increased popularity and practice of healing within our churches that we ought to be getting better at it, but it is not his impression that it is the case. Why do so many that are prayed for **'not only remain sick but die an untimely death?'** He dedicated the book to a number of his friends who had died from cancer but who have faced death **'with wonderful faith, humanity, hope and humour.'**

His aim is to help those involved in the healing ministry develop a spirituality that can contain the puzzles that seem to have no solution. His starting point is the ministry of Jesus, not just curing the sick but also delivering people from the influence of demons. He looks at both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus and says,

'It is there that I find important clues about this ministry.'

The sub-title of the book is **'Remaining Human in the Healing Ministry'**. It is very much about our humanity and our relationship with those to whom we minister. He shows how the ministers are often those whose own needs are met as we seek to help and support others. He finds in us all the influence of both wild beasts and angels and we benefit greatly by recognising them.

He starts his exploration of our humanity in the differences between Jewish and Christian spirituality, we have lost something important as we have tended to consider ourselves as **'worthless sinners'**. We need to value our humanity and acknowledge the dark side and the wild beasts within.

Alongside the serious theological study there are a number of parallel stories about a **'man who thought he was wise'**. This man read about a blind girl living in a land of poverty. He also thought that he was reasonably wealthy and set out to visit her and pray for her, he had so much that he wanted to share with her.

Each chapter shows how wrong the man is in his current thinking, he learns from this young girl something fresh at each stage. When in the

The man
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last chapter he returns home he has gained so much that he didn't know he needed.

I think that can be true for us even though this book was written in 2000. Keep an eye open for it, even Amazon points to a number of used copies.

I found it consoling as I have stepped back from the healing ministry. I am so conscience of the need for healing within our churches in the whole matter of relationships and a greater understanding of our humanity would be a step in the right direction.

(Michael is currently the Mission and Ministry Development Advisor for the Diocese of Derby.)

Grail Prayer - A wakening the Spirit Within

by Revd Jonathan Robinson (ISBN 978-0-906165-68-3)

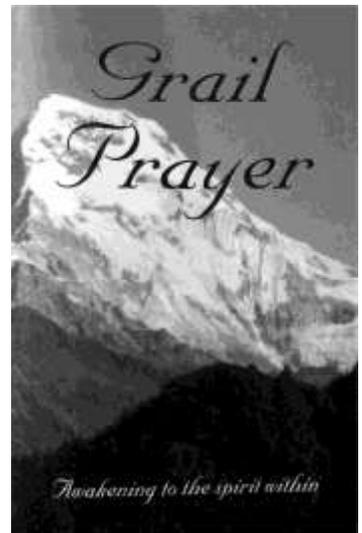
I don't know if I am qualified to write a review here, or not, because this is an *'Alternative Form of the Eucharist'*.

However on the back cover it is commended by our dear friend Archbishop Rowan who says:

"I am always keen to see new forms that really try to break out of simple translation of the traditional ideas, and this is a fine example."

Again hiding behind those with greater authority in the Church I tell you that the Foreword is written by Rt Revd John Pritchard (Oxford).

However I met Jonathan in September when he came to my home parish to deliver a Quiet Day. I went in need of spiritual **refreshment and didn't know the title of that day's presentation, *'From Darkness to Light.'*** It was actually a very good audio visual presentation that Jonathan had produced reflecting on our own journey through dark and light times. It was of course pointing to the Light which is always with us but some images distressed me at



that time and I was glad to move on to the Eucharist.

In fact the book was fresh off the press then and we were the first group to use it. It is a celebration of life and the wholeness of life. It **uses symbols to help us focus on God's world and it uses meditation to** prepare us for a different use of words which seems to encompass more than we might normally be aware of in the Eucharist. It deserves to be used - and frequently enough for us to really take it in.

Jonathan writes in the Preface:

“New forms of prayer and liturgy don't just happen. They evolve from a longing in the heart. They evolve through being shaped and tested by the experiences and insights of those that use them. They evolve through a theological and philosophical consistency appropriate to our time.”

I pray that we might give such fresh ideas a chance amongst all the other forms we use.

Copies (£4 each plus P.& P.) may be obtained from Jonathan Robinson, Grail Barn, Great Argoed, Churchstoke, Montgomery, Powys SY15

But Jonathan has more to offer. He runs the Grail Trust which is a charity that promotes the emerging spirituality of our time, and also helps needy children in South India. His centre is the Grail Barn in Great Argoed on the Mid-Wales/Shropshire Border. It is used for retreats and information is available from the address given.

He has also produced the audio-visual presentations, *A Glimpse of Glory & From Darkness to Light*.

‘The greatest cause of atheism is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door and deny him with their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.’

Brennan Manning

RETREAT **'AFTER PENTECOST'**
 led by Canon Dr Christina Baxter
 at
 Coleg Trefeca
 29th - 31st May 2009

Arrive from 12 noon Friday 29th May for lunch at 12.45pm and leave after lunch on Sunday 31st May.



Cost £103.50 to cover accommodation and the following meals:

- Tea—Friday and Saturday
- Supper—Friday and Saturday
- Breakfast—Saturday and Sunday
- Lunch—Friday, Saturday and Sunday

We can also accommodate delegates for one night Friday - Saturday if you are unable to stay for Pentecost.

- Leaving after lunch on Saturday £65
- Leaving after supper on Saturday £78

All rooms have twin beds and so we could accommodate more if single people care to come with a friend. We do not expect anyone to share with a stranger!

Bookings and enquiries to:

Mary Newsom

5 Gwelfryn

Llanymynech

Powys

SY22 6LJ

Tel: 01691 830590



Canon Dr Christina Baxter

Space is limited so please send a £50 deposit as soon as possible.
 We will operate a cancellation waiting list if the retreat is oversubscribed.



ANGLICAN RENEWAL MINISTRIES
ADNEWYDDIAD ELWYSWR CYMRU

Encouraging people to live in a closer relationship with God

We welcome all Christians to join with us in supporting our work.

Membership fees per annum (minimum):

Individuals — £10

Families — £15

Organisations — £25

Benefits of membership include receipt of the Magazine (3 issues a year), the Annual Report and voting rights at the AGM. The AGM is where you can express your opinion and elect the Executive Committee.

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Marcia Gibson-Watt

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John Meason

Mary Newsom

Kath Shenton

Rachel Smith

We trust that we may glorify God's name through our activities in Wales and we look to the prayer support of our members.

For all enquiries contact:

Dick Shenton Tel: 01656 665368 or

Email: dickandkath@btinternet.com



Datganiad A dnewyddiad E glwyswyr Cymru

- Llawenhau yn aelodaeth Eglwys Duw
- ac yn ein galwad i'r Eglwys yng Nghymru
- ac yn cyndnabod mai drwy weithgareddau'r Ysbryd Glân cawn fwynhau perthynas personol gyda'r Duw Dad a Iesu Grist.
- Rydym yn ymrwymo'n hunain mewn aelodaeth ffyddlon i'n heglwys, yn ffyddlon i'w harweiniad a'l fframwaith.
- Dymunwn ymuno â llawnder rhoddion grasol Duw i'w Eglwys, i ddangos ffrwyth yr Ysbryd Glân, ac i ymarfer doniau'r Ysbryd a roddwyd inni yn ac yn freiniol er mwyn nerthu'r Eglwys.
- Ac idyfu fel unigolion ac fel eglwys i efelychu Crist.
- Drwy ddyfalbarhad i adnewyddu, gobeithiwn fel unigolion, yn gorfforedig ac yn undebol, cawn ein harwain gan yr Ysbryd i annog yr Eglwys mewn:
 - addoliad sy'n ein harwain wyneb yn wyneb â'r bywiol Dduw
 - deisyfiad i gael ymuno yng ngwir gymundeb â'r Ysbryd Glân, i'n galluogi i roi argraff gyhoeddus o eglwys fywiol, gariadus a gweithgar.

A statement from Anglican Renewal Ministries (Wales)

- Rejoicing in our membership of God's Church
 - and our calling within the Church in Wales
 - and recognising that through the activity of the Holy Spirit we are brought into a personal relationship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,
 - we commit ourselves to be faithful members of our church, loyal to its leadership and structures.
 - We desire to enter into the fullness of all God's gracious gifts to his Church, to display the fruit of the Spirit and to exercise the gifts of the Spirit as he sovereignly and freely distributes them for the building up of the Church
 - and to grow as individuals and Church into the likeness of Christ.
 - Being dedicated to renewal we hope that individually, corporately and by open gatherings we can be led by the Holy Spirit to encourage the Church in:
 - a worship which expects to encounter the living God
 - a desire to be caught up into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the communal expression of a living, loving and serving church.
-