

**loyalism:**  
CONFRONTING  
THE TRUTH



# lion & lamb



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**down to basics:**

Malachi O'Doherty wants to paint the town red



**18:**  
**scapegoating:**

The ancient art of shifting blame



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Norman Hamilton - has politics really failed?



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The first of three studies in Luke by David Porter

Yes, this is lion & lamb. But as you can see we have made a few changes. The most obvious change is in the look and feel of the magazine. Our hope is that this redesign will make the magazine more 'user friendly'. A second change relates to the content of the magazine. Instead of receiving a separate ECONI News, reports on our work and information on what is coming up will now be included within lion & lamb. A third change is that there will now be three issues per year instead of four. Finally, there has been a change of personnel. We have said goodbye to Ruth Hutchinson, our previous Assistant Editor, and in her place we welcome Anna Rankin, ECONI's recently appointed Resource Co-ordinator. Derek Poole, the previous editor, is still with us but has handed over the blue pencil to Alwyn Thomson.

One thing we have not changed though is the content – our aim remains to bring together thoughtful and intelligent reflections on the challenges facing us as a society in Northern Ireland, and to reflect biblically on the challenges facing the Christian community seeking to live out faith in this place.

In this issue of lion & lamb we have brought together a broad range of writers to discuss the shape of 'loyalism'. In particular our writers look at the nature of loyalism, the challenges facing loyalism at this time and at the challenge loyalism presents to the Christian community.

As this new edition of lion & lamb looks forward we also take time to look back. It is almost fifteen years since ECONI published For God and His Glory Alone, but the biblical principles set out in that work remain at the core of all we do. Over the next year we will be reprinting each of the ten biblical principles presented in that work. In this issue we start with Love and Forgiveness – two themes no less necessary and no less difficult now than in 1988.

All of this and more. We hope you find the new look lion & lamb stimulating, challenging, encouraging and perhaps even a little irritating at times. If you do, we would love to hear from you. You know where to find us.

Alwyn Thomson

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# comment: Failed Politics?

NORMAN HAMILTON

'POLITICS HAS FAILED'. The distressing words of a moderate community leader in North Belfast to me recently. What did he mean? In three pungent words he was expressing the feeling amongst so many in the loyalist and unionist community, that the dividends that could properly be expected from having a local administration simply were not there for the taking in North Belfast. The reasons may be many and complex, but the implications do not augur well for the future.

Few would doubt that loyalist communities are in almost permanent crisis. My own experience of Ardoyne and the aftermath of the Holy Cross dispute does nothing to reassure me that the crisis will simply go away. The crisis reflects the widening gap between the way 'big picture' politics is done, and the way 'street politics' operates. Few leaders show much ability to bridge the gap, and so other groups and forces fill the space vacated by the democratic process. It is fashionable to wring hands and lament the role and influence of paramilitaries, but when people feel that 'politics has failed' should society be surprised at the consequences?

This raises an acute dilemma for evangelical Christians. Recently I received an email in which a colleague suggested that 'far too many evangelical Christians hide behind Romans 13'. If the 'governing authorities' will not or cannot fulfil their God given responsibility to ensure that they 'hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong', does the Scripture actually back a view that ordinary citizens should simply keep silent and acquiesce with what is happening?

Many things that are happening on our urban streets – and increasingly on the streets of our provincial towns – are often profoundly evil. Sectarianism is rampant; drug dealing is commonplace with a blind eye often being turned to it; violence is commonplace with apparently inadequate resources to deal with it; And there often seems to be so little said or done by those of us who are evangelicals in response. Could it possibly be that it is not only loyalism that is in crisis, but the moral conscience of evangelicalism as well? Would it be fair to say that we are largely undisturbed about evil, except when it is in our own back yard? Do we expect our

politicians to deal with issues of the human heart, when that is a matter for us to tackle?

There is surely an irony that it is Belfast City Council which has grabbed the headlines in wanting to address sectarianism, rather than the people of God being the public vanguard. And if we pray, do we pray with grace and for grace, with courage and for courage, with faith and for faith?

It is the job of leaders to lead, and if they fail to do so, then others will seek to fill their shoes. It is the calling and privilege of ordinary Christian people to stand against evil as Ephesians 6 guides us to do, and if we don't do it, then others will try to do so with a rather different world view. Maybe part of the reason why people say that 'politics has failed' is that Christian people haven't really been much concerned to make it work – when was the last time your church prayed for all your local politicians?

There is surely an irony that it is Belfast City Council which has grabbed the headlines in wanting to address sectarianism, rather than the people of God being the public vanguard.

NORMAN HAMILTON is minister of Ballysillan Presbyterian Church on the Crumlin Road and is a member of ECONI.

from the director:

# Words and Deeds

DAVID W PORTER

IN WELCOMING the Loyalist ceasefire of October 1994 the members of ECONI along with many in our community saw signs of hope. We were encouraged that abject and true remorse was expressed to the 'loved ones of all innocent victims'. Eight years on from that hopeful autumn the difficulty of turning remorse and regret into trust and confidence is all too evident. Saying sorry, it seems, is not enough.

The recent response to the offer of 'apologies to non-combatants' families' by the IRA agonisingly demonstrates this. Eoghan Harris writing in the Sunday Independent conjures up the imagery of John Gray's populist book on relationships, *Mars and Venus*, aptly concluding that:

'The nub of the matter is that Northern Martians [Protestants] believe a sincere apology must be supported by an amended life, that words must be backed by deeds.'

Furthermore, most Northern Protestants demand this not only of the IRA but an hundredfold of the Loyalist paramilitaries. And then some.

While many Christians are unequivocal in their rejection of working relationships with unrepentant terrorists, many more are torn in discerning how God would have them bear witness to the foundation truth of our faith – God is LOVE. It is this amazing revelation of the character of God that sets the context for everything. Grace, Truth, Justice, Mercy, Righteousness, Forgiveness – all find their bearings from this core value.

Leave it to the movies to peddle the myth of 'Love means never having to say you're sorry' – just ask anyone maintaining a long term relationship! Love does mean a sacrificial commitment to the wellbeing of others – 'God's love was revealed to us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.' (1 John 4)

Let's face it, all our apologies, remorse, regrets and attempts at repentance are often conditional, shrouded in excuses and subject to our persistent relapse to the old ways. Measured against God's commitment to us, our struggle on the journey of faith in the full knowledge of what God has done for us is a constant cycle of less than satisfactory sorries, far from amended lives and deeds which are way short of righteous.

Possibly a forgotten 'sorry' the Protestant churches need to say is to the Loyalist communities we have left to their fate. We need to acknowledge that it is our own worst prejudices and fears that they often articulate. And we need to be willing to take the risks of re-engagement for the sake of the love of God.

For churchgoing Protestants, engaging with Loyalism is often a harder challenge than reaching across the divide to Republicans. It can expose for many their own denial of responsibility to serve the grassroots communities from which they came. In this issue of lion & lamb others write of their perspectives on this challenge, but I remain convinced that we cannot expect

people to hear the kingdom call to repent without the incarnational reality of belonging to the context in which we minister. Most of us accept this for those serving overseas. Yet it remains our calling in whatever community we are placed to bear witness.

The question haunts: following on from the hard work of Archbishop Eames and Rev Roy Magee among others, what could have been achieved if the church had been more robust in engaging with Loyalism following its tentative, yet sincere remorse? Dare we continue to make the same mistake when faced with IRA apologies and Loyalist admission of involvement in recent violence?

There is a real need to respond with grace, yet not naivete; to accept the sincerity of apologies, without giving credence or legitimacy to paramilitary violence; to develop the process of healing, while taking note of the political realities.

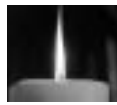
The process of forgiveness is a difficult path, all the more so when set in the context of violent community conflict. It requires honesty and change if relationships are to be truly healed. Any statement that acknowledges and takes responsibility for the hurt caused is a significant step.

Many find Loyalist and Republican understanding of their actions less than honest. It is difficult to believe that bombing crowded shopping streets and bus stations was an action in which those carrying it out were not fully aware of the risk to ordinary civilians. Or that the indiscriminate murder of Catholics was defending the Union. Because of our experience of living through this conflict most of us need more than words to convince us that a real change is taking place from violence to peace. Saying sorry is a good start. Yet, it still needs to result in change of behaviour if the process of forgiveness is to result in the healing of broken relationships.

Change is evident and there are hopeful signs, although the continued violence at interfaces, punishment beatings, targeting and all that goes in to maintaining paramilitary organisations means that many remain doubtful. Is regretting that violence was necessary, or even the honest expression of remorse for the pain caused - while a good start - a sufficient fulfilment of what the Bible indicates God requires in confessing the sin of our hatred and violence?

Repent is the word the Bible uses to express the need to change course, to turn away from the past. And for all of us it requires acknowledging before God and our neighbour that much in our past relationships was wrong and a denial of God's values in our community.

...the difficulty of turning remorse and regret into trust and confidence is all too evident. Saying sorry, it seems, is not enough.



CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS and offering opportunities for personal growth, that's what the Transformation Summer School is all about, through biblical reflection, seminars and discussion, field trips to parades and the field, to monastic sites and ancient churches and even Belfast City Cemetery. In a relaxed context and beautiful surroundings there was ample opportunity both for conversation and silent meditation, and a chance to unleash our creativity as we tried batik, writing poetry, drama, juggling and games.

Read all about it on page 25

# glimpses of Summer School 2002

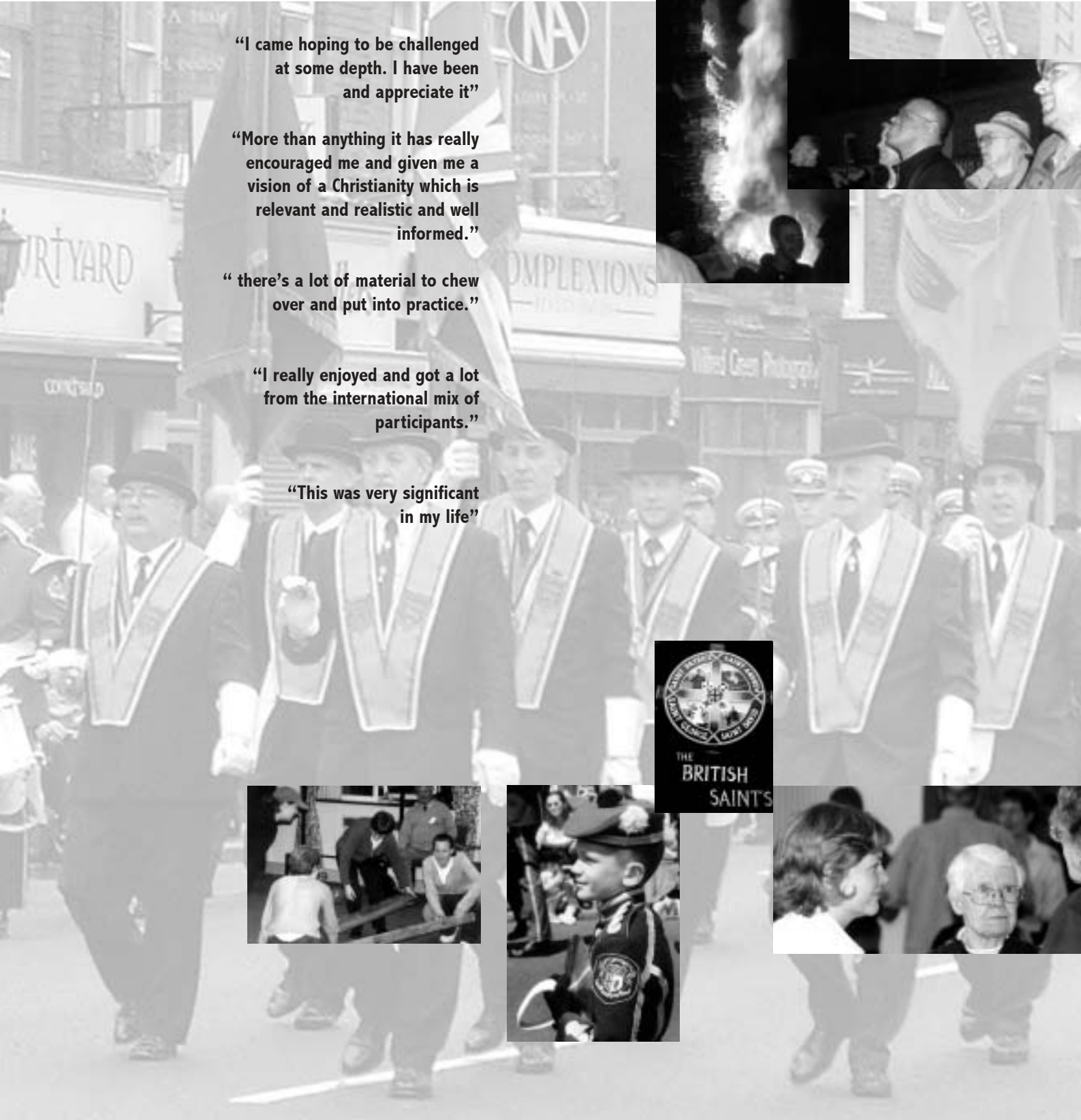
**"I came hoping to be challenged at some depth. I have been and appreciate it"**

**"More than anything it has really encouraged me and given me a vision of a Christianity which is relevant and realistic and well informed."**

**"there's a lot of material to chew over and put into practice."**

**"I really enjoyed and got a lot from the international mix of participants."**

**"This was very significant in my life"**



## HOW TO DO DRUGS IN CHURCH

Are you involved in children's work, youth work, teaching or church leadership?

Are you wondering about how to respond as a Christian to the growing problem of drug abuse in Northern Ireland?

Evangelical Alliance invite you to join David Partington (ISAAC) and Jo Daykin (NI Drug and Alcohol Strategy Co-ordinator) along with a team of local experts to consider the reality of the province's drug problem and the potential for an effective faith-based contribution.

**Date:** 25 October 2002  
**Time:** 9.30am - 3pm  
**Venue:** NICVA, Duncairn Gardens, BELFAST  
**Cost:** £15 per delegate, including lunch.  
**Contact 028 9029 2266 for details of group bookings and a limited number of subsidised places.**

Yes, I want to attend HOW TO DO DRUGS and I enclose my payment for the event (please make cheques payable to *Evangelical Alliance*). Completed forms should be sent to 218 York Street, BELFAST, BT15 1GY.

Name:

Address:

Contact Number:

# loyalism

and me

Loyalist.  
 Scum. Violent. Evil. Mad. Bastards...  
 Me.

Hard to be thought of in that way. Difficult to often have people unwilling to even talk with me. Simply by assumption, which may or may not be true, and association, I don't deserve a place or a space.

I've always known I was Protestant, a Loyalist. Always. No one ever told me I was. When others in my family had to ask what they were, I already knew. Born middle class, private education, big fancy house in North Down. I don't ever remember being 'brought up' anything in particular. I was given the safe space to grow and to become who I was. I was always taught to challenge everything, to try to find out why and take nothing for granted.

Mix that 'safe' middle class world with the Shankill Road, the Ravenhill Road, the Braniel, Linfield FC, band parades, burning buses, soldiers and police, shootings, stories, attacking Catholics, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, bombs.

My life changed dramatically at ten years of age when my whole family, one after another and all in different places, became Christians. Although I still have a faith in God and believe in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, I most certainly would not call myself a 'Christian' now. I couldn't stomach church for a start. And anyway, I'm a Loyalist and everyone knows Loyalists can't be Christians.

But what is a Loyalist then, if not a murderer, violent, a bastard...? Well we're people for a start, something often missed among the mad-dogs, jackals and king rats. While I could say what Loyalism is for me, I certainly can't define it in some fancy way that suits people, which tells them exactly what every Loyalist is loyal to. I think that Loyalism has grown and evolved in a way that many other identifications in Northern Ireland have not, now encompassing a wide range of people and ideals. It's just as likely for one Loyalist to express loyalty to Queen and country, while another wills an independent Northern Ireland.

Although there are a number of reasons why I would define myself as Loyalist, one of the most important is that I find it the most honest place in the world for me to be. An honest, but very often a hard place to be.

It's painful to live in a world of apparent contradiction and conflict. While I believe completely in equality for everyone, I have to say that I am prejudiced. I'm honest enough, with myself and others, to admit that this prejudice is part of who I am. Pretty much every time I see a Republic of Ireland flag I feel uneasy. Every time I see a Celtic shirt or hear the name Ciaran, I label people. And when I see Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness,



“It’s painful to live in a world of apparent contradiction and conflict. While I believe completely in equality for everyone, I have to say that I’m prejudiced.”

among others, I want to throw something in their general direction, and much more besides.

Even as a person who has grown up his whole life in the ‘Troubles’, it’s not easy to wake up in the morning and feel uncomfortable with how I think and feel. Have you ever woken up and known you hate people, known you could hurt people? Known that you want to hurt people and that within you is the possibility to take life. Known you are angry, frustrated and angry? Ever woken up and just wished life would stop, even just for a day? Among my friends from the Loyalist community my turmoil is both acknowledged and understood.

But I am also challenged. In my experience Loyalists are aware of their actions, feelings and thoughts in a way that begins to ask the question ‘Why?’ and to begin to deal with the cause. When I am among other Loyalists we may openly and honestly challenge each other’s thoughts and feelings but almost never in a way that is judgmental.

This however has not been my experience with Christians or in the Church. Christians have for too long wanted to be among the ‘great and the good’, the middle classes doing Church their way and continually distancing themselves from those that don’t ‘fit’. Too often Christians have made me feel judged, inferior, that somehow it is ‘wrong’ to think and feel the way I do. Instead of trying to consider the reasons for and causes of who I am, I simply feel criticised and judged by Christians for the manifestations of living in Northern Ireland. I may be honest and open about the person Northern Ireland has made me, but the Church and Christians respond with condemnation and distance themselves from people like me, a sinner.

I find such a response odd when I consider it alongside the life of Jesus. I often wonder how many of Jesus’ disciples were Zealots, the paramilitaries of the day? Murderer, scum, violent, bigot, sectarian, heartless, in the same way that these terms are readily applied to Loyalists, I think they would have been applied to Jesus’ closest companions and followers, and probably also to Saul, the religious fanatic who went around stoning anyone who disagreed with him.

Jesus spent much of his time with the excluded, something that he did not have to do. Why not be associated with the Pharisees or even the conquering Romans, after all they were just as much sinners as anyone else? I think Jesus was with the thieves, prostitutes and paramilitaries because he was most comfortable with people who were honest about their sin and who struggled with it. Jesus may have been sinless but I have no doubt that he struggled alongside the sinner. Jesus engaged with people who knew they sinned, developing relationships with them and supporting them through life.

I think if Jesus was alive today you might find a Loyalist or

two among his closest friends. I could just see him heading into Churches in Northern Ireland and throwing over tables, kicking anything and everyone that got in his way. Jesus is often portrayed as the peacemaker, who is all love and sweetness and light, but I find it much easier to identify with the Jesus who was angry and publicly challenged the establishment of the day... more Che Guevara than Gandhi in my opinion...

As a Loyalist I feel confident in admitting that things are not always black and white and that I am not always ‘comfortable’ with my inner self. Sadly the Church never gave me that space or confidence to deal with that reality. I’m passionate, perhaps even angry, and being Loyalist gives me the opportunity to live with it. With my Loyalist friends I can be myself. I can be open to challenge and questions but I am never made to feel inferior.

In my experience, Christians living in Northern Ireland struggle with the same anger and pain that I struggle with but, more often than not, these struggles are kept below the surface in an effort to be ‘nice’. That means not admitting to the struggles of living in Northern Ireland, the sectarianism, the ‘them and us’ mentality.

I long for the day when everyone in Northern Ireland, Catholic and Protestant, working class, middle class and upper class, young and old, male and female, has a place and a space here. Equally and safely. I hope some day we may all call ourselves Northern Irish and be proud of it.

But it’s not easy to just forget 27 years of ‘them and us’. Maybe I’m not able or ready to just yet. I, along with many others, am still on that journey. I will push myself and stretch myself, engage with anybody – and have done. But, for now, it’s still them and me – in lots of ways.

Unionist and me. Nationalist and me. Republican and me. Female and me. Old and me. Middle class and me. Working class and me. Christian and me.

Sometimes even Loyalist and me.

PHILLIP RANKIN works in conflict-management and community and youth work. He is currently engaged in research on young people’s attitudes to spirituality based at Sarum College, Salisbury.



DAVID CAMPTON

# real life

There is a scene which appears in many guises in a number of slapstick comedy films, from the silent era onwards. In it a character is standing on two moving vehicles, on land or on water, at the same time, and they are moving apart, resulting in the person having to do the splits... In cartoon versions the individual involved is able to contort themselves in all sorts of bizarre ways, sometimes even splitting themselves in two... But in live action versions the individual has to rely on the two vehicles coming back together in order to avoid disaster...

I sometimes feel as if I am standing on two vehicles simultaneously... Sometimes more than two, in a high speed game of "Twister"... Trying not to be split in two or to fall on my face... Only it's not funny in real life.

Let me explain... I'm a Methodist minister. And I'm a Methodist minister with two churches to look after... hence I'm torn in two... And one of my churches has a large community project attached to it, and almost by default I am the chair of that project... Another conflict of commitment: Church and Community... But then that church straddles the peaceline between the Protestant and Catholic West Belfast, and the community project works on a cross-community basis, and in order to work effectively we have to maintain good relationships with the communities on each side of the wall... And that wall has just got 30 feet higher.

I can live with the tensions of having two churches... It isn't ideal but, given the current shortage of Methodist ministers, it isn't going to change in the near future. I can also live with the church/community tension... Indeed, the only way to resolve such a tension is to concentrate on one or the other and I personally believe that that approach is not biblical... but this is not the place to go into that.

It is the third tension that is most painful however... A tension that shows itself in the belief that if you do something to help one community you are opposed to the other. A tension that produces a feeling that if you try to express the perspective of "the other side" then you are "the other side." A tension that produces the feeling that if you talk to them then we won't talk to you. Someone once described Methodists as "the friends of all and the enemies of none." In my situation you can quickly become the friend of none and the enemy of all, especially where you might have difficult things to say on one side or the other.

In my particular area, the tension is largely between the nationalist/Catholic community and the loyalist/Protestant community, but I have experienced it between the different loyalist factions and between both loyalists and republicans and the RUC/PSNI. It is vital to my role to keep avenues of potential communication open, not in order to mediate disputes, I leave that to those much more experienced and skilled than I, but simply to understand how people are thinking and feeling at any particular time and respond effectively to that situation. But it isn't always possible.

Assumptions are made. If you are, as I am, a Protestant, republicans usually presume that you are a unionist... If you are, as I am, a Methodist, loyalists usually presume that you are an ecumenical sell-out. Whether either of those presumptions are true of me is for me to know and others to guess at. However, they are a reality in my relationships with both communities. Those presumptions and doubts have always been there within the republican community and naturally so, given the history of hostility between the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches in the past (and the Methodist Church was not guiltless in that). Currently there is extreme confusion as to why Protestant clergy are not unequivocally condemning recent loyalist attacks. Meanwhile, within loyalism, scepticism regarding the role of the church in working-class Protestant communities has been growing. Within the church we tend to presume that such communities have turned their backs

on the church, but within those communities many feel that the church has actually turned its back on them. It isn't speaking their language, dealing with the issues they feel need dealt with, it isn't addressing their feelings, their hurts, hopes and fears. Some within that community see the church as yet another body out to get them, and that isn't wholly due to paranoia. That is even more so where the church involves itself in community relations work, which has always been seen as Protestant-bashing in loyalist circles; telling Protestants that they are inherently sectarian and that Irish history is full of Protestants doing bad things to Catholics. The sad thing is that some community relations work has contained an element of that in the past.

So how do you resolve the tension? Well, some people opt for one side or the other. Identify with one community or the other, hopefully still maintaining the ability to engage critically with that community and not simply act as spiritual apologists for it. That is what the clergy intimately involved with the Loyalist Commission have to do. Their identification with and engagement with the loyalist community has to be unambiguous.

Others maintain a certain detachment, engaging with both communities at a consultative level, but operate at a safe distance, choosing when to engage and when not to. To a certain extent this is how ECONI operates, and has to operate in order to do the type of work it is doing. However, there is a danger that we might opt for these "safer" projects, operating by remote control, rather than projects working in contentious areas, promoting continued contact and dialogue.

Which brings me back to my own situation, with one foot on either side of the Springfield Road peaceline. It isn't easy to maintain such a precarious stance, and at times our weight has been more on one foot than the other... And generally when we have leaned one way rather than the other it has been towards the nationalist community, who have, as I have already stated, been generally more accepting of community relations work. But for there to be improved community relations in our area there needs to be an engagement with both sides, and a lot of hard work has been done in our area to do just that, both at a local level through ourselves and a newly established community group on the Protestant side of the interface, and more strategically through the work of Springfield Inter Community Development Project. The fact that there has been relatively little interface violence in our area over the past 18 months when other interfaces have been ablaze is testimony to the success of that engagement.

So we will continue to try to keep straddling that peaceline and invite others to join us in the black comedy we call peacebuilding... It may be a somewhat uncomfortable position, but then again, the Saviour we follow assumed a much more uncomfortable position to make peace between us and God.

DAVID CAMPTON is minister of Sandy Row and Springfield Methodist Churches and is a member of ECONI.

## Annual Catherwood Lecture in Public Theology

### WORLD CHRISTIANITY AND THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS



**David Smith**

Co-Director of the Whitefield Institute in Oxford

Faced with growing secularisation in the West, with the resurgence of religion throughout the world, and with the 'clash of civilisations' perhaps it is time for those of us in the West to recognise the immense significance and growing importance of the churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

**24 October 2002 8.00 - 9.00 pm**  
**Ramada Hotel, Shaw's Bridge,**  
**Belfast**



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For further details please contact the office.



## ECONI Sunday 2002

**3rd November 2002**

ECONI Sunday 2002 will consider the themes of: journeying in faith, new beginnings, authentic belonging and welcoming strangers. These pertinent issues have particular resonance in the context of the hurt and division which continue to define community relationships in Northern Ireland and they raise many challenges for the Church as it seeks to live Christianly in a sectarian society.

For more information contact the ECONI office.



**ECONI** Thinking Biblically - Building Peace



Sam Pollock is Chief Executive in the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. He has been married for 32 years, has a family of seven and two grandchildren. Brought up in the south Derry area, he has been based in Northern Ireland for most of his career but spent almost 10 years in Scotland and Wales prior to taking up his current post in April 2001.

# POLICING MATTERS

## **Tell us briefly about your work, your career, and any sense of vocation you might have.**

I graduated in Social Administration but had also qualified as a teacher so I contemplated that profession but at the beginning of the seventies, with the civil situation here being as it was, I felt a strong pull towards criminal justice. I remember doing an undergraduate placement in Ballymena Courthouse in 1969 and I could not get away from a deep sense of the deficiencies in criminal justice. I went into this work firstly in Magilligan Camp as a Welfare Officer. The Camp had been an internment camp and was being transformed into a prison. Two years later I trained as a Prison Governor and worked in Long Kesh or the Maze as it became known. In 1979 I moved from prisons into community justice, again with the probation service, for a further 12 years, finishing up as an Assistant Chief Probation Officer. In 1991 I was appointed Principal Inspector in Strathclyde. I was involved in overseeing the inspection of some criminal justice establishments such as secure units and offender hostels, but the experience of inspecting residential care for the elderly, children in care and disability projects was really interesting and quite different. I also enjoyed getting away from Ireland for a time. I returned to criminal justice as the Chief Probation Officer in Mid-Glamorgan in South Wales for seven years, before coming back here and taking up this job last April.

A sense of vocation? I suppose it has centred on justice and mercy. As a professional person I have always wanted to deal firmly but fairly with those who put themselves on the margins of society. Some individuals are difficult to accept or tolerate because of what they do to other people but we must deal with them as human beings with rights and responsibilities. And as a Christian it is the same calling or vocation; not to tolerate the conduct or evil which might drive or motivate us in some situations but yet never letting go of the eternal value God places on us as people he created and who are capable of redemption and reformation.

## **How do you see the relationship between justice on the one hand and mercy on the other?**

Justice with no mercy is not far away from tyranny. Mercy with no justice will eventually lead to anarchy. The two imperatives need to be carefully balanced at all times, whether in an individual's life, in a family, within an institution or within a state. I was not legally trained so my understanding of justice is shaped by how I have experienced it in the system for over 3 decades. I tend to think of it primarily as holding a person to account against a stated law or yardstick. That emanates from Moses conveying the commandments of God to a people who, like ourselves, needed boundaries. People think of justice often as punishment, I think of it more as a system of penalties and a way of 'bringing to book', sorting the matter in the eyes of the law and then moving on. Many of the early penalties to be used when the law was broken were about repaying or making matters right. There should be a restorative element to justice or else it fails the 'victim'. I do not see justice as deterrence, though some penalties can be a deterrent. The worst justice I have observed over the years has been where the court has tried to punish a person more harshly than it would otherwise do simply to deter someone else.

Mercy is not about being soft or being let off. Some justice seems to be about 'an eye for an eye' or 'just deserts' but mercy holds back from us what we deserve. If my child was murdered, I know exactly how I would feel and what I would like to do to the person who did it. But mercy within the law stops me, it protects me from myself and stops us as a society from being debased

# POLICING MATTERS

and dehumanised. Mercy in our legal system is about ensuring that criminals are dealt with fairly and humanely, not because they deserve it, but because it maintains our dignity and civilisation. I think it is the same with God and us. He could and should deal with man as he deserves and punish us for everything we have done to his creation yet instead he inflicted the punishment on Christ and has shown us mercy. Justice and mercy are two great pillars in my book.

**You currently have a demanding job, which has implications not just for policing, but for the wider society in Northern Ireland. What are the values and vision that undergird your work here?**

My particular job is to help run this Office as a public body and to support the Police Ombudsman in the exercise of her duties. What motivates me is the belief that this is a vital part of the public service and it is vital to the principles which undergird the rule of law and the maintenance of good order in society. Effective complaints systems are important to all public services but an effective police complaints system is so much more important to us. The capacity for a police officer to abuse the power and authority entrusted to him or her by society is just so much greater than that of, say, a teacher or nurse. I have contempt for any view that says that you can uphold the law by breaking it. If a member of the public has a genuine need to make a complaint against a police officer, that complaint must be dealt with fairly and independently. It is also vital to the police officer that he or she knows that the matter will be dealt with fairly and independently. Values of being fair, open, not acting with fear or favour, etc. do not come easy at times, but I am proud to be part of a new organisation which is seeking to act in this way.

On a slightly wider front, the maturity of a democracy I think is reflected in the professional maturity of those institutions which maintain law and order. The worst democracies, or the worst tyrannies, will also have corrupt police forces, institutions and prisons. The great strength of our democracy in this part of Europe is that we have a court system, a prison system and a policing framework, which – for all the faults and weaknesses – are good in terms of upholding and enforcing the law but also protecting the right of the citizen. Having an effective complaints system is one more part of building professionalism, integrity and maturity into our institutions and making them the best in the world. And that drives me. At the end of my career it's just nice to be part of something that is so central to a more just and fair society.

**What about the sectarianism within Northern Ireland society – do you see yourself as having a role in challenging sectarianism?**

On a personal level, of course I see myself as having a role in challenging sectarianism in every situation where it raises its ugly head. If you mean in my work role, yes, again there is a responsibility on all of us to challenge institutional sectarianism in Northern Ireland. It is still systemic in so much of our public life. I

would have to say that I don't look to the police force to eradicate sectarianism; I don't have that expectation of the police, though they have a vital contribution to it. I look to people in terms of their individual accountability and responsibility; I look to families in terms of how they rear their children; I look to politicians, too many of whom manipulate and play on sectarian fears; I look to the public institutions to promote the right to live free of sectarian oppression and I look to Christian believers to be unequivocal in their condemnation of sectarianism. We can never police sectarian bigotry or hatred out of a person's mind or their community but all public servants - teachers, police, prison officers, politicians, judges, magistrates must give a strong, strong lead and act in a way that is exemplary.

**Do you belong to a local church and what role does the church play in your life?**

Since coming back to Northern Ireland I have not yet taken up church membership, though I probably will in the near future. All my life I have been active in church life. If you need to put me in a denomination box it would be Presbyterian, but it is enough for me to say I believe in God and his redemption and have done since I was a child of 10 – well over 40 years ago. My faith has been well tested but it gets stronger as time goes on. Church for me is not a denomination or building, it is where God meets with believers and it has played a massive part in my life. I always see myself in terms of three dimensions: mind, body and soul. I see God only within the context of the Trinity: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. My faith is the most important thing to me in life, my wife and family are the second and my career or service to other people is the third and very important dimension.

**Do you see religion as having a positive or negative effect on society in Northern Ireland in general?**

Well, there aren't many societies where religion is not a major issue. I see very few people and very few societies that can live just on the basis of mind and matter. Often I think that through the darkest days in the history of this country, when politicians and terrorists took us right to the brink of civil war, it was only the grace of God and the prayer of God-fearing people that stopped us going over the precipice. I used to argue that religion had nothing to do with the troubles here in Northern Ireland but now, regrettably, I think that is wrong. I feel alarmed at the extent to which religion seems to have been a focus of negative influence in this society. Politicians have remorselessly used the religious and Christian identity of people here to legitimise, promote and harden some of their dogma which, without the respectability of the Christian faith, would be shallow nonsense. And yes, some leaders in our churches have wrapped their politics in the vestments of their church.

**How important do you think that the role of the church is in developing community relations; do you think the churches have a positive role to play?**

“I look to the public institutions to promote the right to live free of sectarian oppression and I look to Christian believers to be unequivocal in their condemnation of sectarianism”.



I think at this point in time they can't and they shouldn't, and perhaps they should get out of it.

#### **Out of politics altogether?**

Yes. I know that there is a strong view that Christians should get involved in politics and be the salt – but no, at this point in time it's nearly impossible for churches in Northern Ireland to get involved in structural reconciliation without actually contributing to the political quagmire that exists around them. The essence of politics is disagreement and diversity of view, which in most societies adds to the strength and integrity of a democracy. But here the political process has generated division, conflict, killing, bombing, assassination and everything that has torn us apart. I think the church has one primary role to fulfil which is to demonstrate that there is an alternative, and it cannot do that by trying to play amateur politics. I do respect the good work that is done by so many churches and some politicians in building bridges and working for better community relations, but so many of the bridges are between people who are already peace-loving and well meaning. The deep hatred of those who terrorise our society needs to be tackled and that requires the church to stand up to those people and say, in the name of Christ, that they are accountable before God for their actions, they need to acknowledge what they have done to thousands of people and then acknowledge the grace and mercy of God in putting things right. I am not asking them to give up their political objective or identity, just say sorry and try to put things right with those they have harmed. That will bring lasting reconciliation. I know a lot of people would take a different view, but that's how I see it.

**So you think the churches must first of all extract themselves from being bound up with any type of political identity in**

#### **order to rearticulate a sense of who they are, in a language which leaves politics behind?**

Yes. I don't think the churches can ever build some artificial, nice, acceptable political identity or compromise that doesn't offend anyone. And yes, absolutely, the church, Protestant or Catholic, must extract itself or cease to be party to any political identity that flies in the face of God's imperatives on us as believers and as neighbours, identities which are built on division, sectarianism and so on. Speaking personally, for most of my life I have been a Presbyterian and from a very evangelical background. I value highly the many good things that represents for me. I also come from a strongly Unionist and Orange background and again, I understand how all that shapes my sense of identity. But my faith and my destiny as a person are not determined or bound by any political or national allegiance. As a believer I am part of a universal church and kingdom. How I vote at an election is an important social responsibility but it should never separate or cause conflict between myself and another believer in the community next to me, or in another part of this little island, who may vote in a very different way to me. You cannot mix and match obligations to Caesar and obligations to Christ; otherwise you mix and match garbage and gold.

#### **Do you think that the churches have a role in challenging sectarianism? What about the values that you mentioned earlier - justice and mercy: aren't these gospel values?**

The individual Christian or a Christian church should be saying that sectarianism and racism are evil, hate is hate, violence is violence, killing is killing – no ifs or buts, no spurious justifications or rationalisation, no weighing of politics and morality in the balance. The statement of the church must be unequivocal. I won't criticise other churches, I will only throw a stone in my own glasshouse.

← [continued on page 15]



“Those of us within Loyalism are frustrated with established Unionism’s reluctance to take Sinn Fein on politically...

EDDIE KINNER

# the crisis within

...it is all the more frustrating that they are preventing us from developing Loyalism to take on the task which Unionism is shying away from.”

AS A LOYALIST I would challenge the view that Loyalism is in crisis and argue that the crisis lies within Unionism because of lack of strategic leadership. Loyalists have always looked to Unionism for leadership and guidance: leadership and guidance that Loyalists have been conditioned to depend on but which has frequently failed them and their constituency.

Unionism could not provide security and defence of working class Loyalist communities through the security forces in 1969 when the conflict erupted into intercommunal violent confrontation. This led the Loyalist community to give birth to the current Loyalist paramilitaries who themselves supplied the security and defended the community against Republican aggression. While the Unionist leadership publicly condemned Loyalist actions, they privately congratulated them and encouraged their activities.

In October 1969 the first police officer was killed on the Shankill Road when Loyalists rioted with police and security forces over the disbandment of the B Specials and proposals to disarm the police. My father was arrested and charged with being a riot ringleader. He was found not guilty of the charge, and was subsequently released. However, during the period my father was held on remand, the family minister produced a massive food parcel, the like of which we had never seen, and likely wouldn’t ever have seen, had my father not been arrested. To me at that point in time, the signal from that action was not one of supporting a destitute family, but one of tacitly supporting what my father was being held in prison for, and was privately encouraging the actions of Loyalism.

All sections of Unionism and Loyalism lack self-confidence. Because of historic circumstances, Unionism has depended on leadership from the British government, a government that they distrust immensely, and with just cause. It was that government who betrayed Carson and partitioned Ireland; that government who signed the Anglo-Irish agreement; that government that was having secret meetings with the IRA. The insecurity of Unionism and Loyalism has been vulnerable for exploitation by their enemies and by the government which they mistrust so much.

Loyalists have seen themselves prepared to take the IRA on in a military capacity, and prepared to accept the consequences: death, imprisonment and its impending hardships, while their Unionist leaders have sought protection from government, seeking others to take on the IRA.

Unionists have never shown the leadership to take on their enemy in the same way Carson did. They have attempted to emulate him but have never shown the willingness to endure the same sacrifices he displayed. Nor have they been prepared to take full control of their own destiny since Carson.

Loyalism received a level of empowerment during the negotiations to the Good Friday Agreement, when they were consulted and received communications about the negotiations. The Confidence-building Committee was the vehicle used for this purpose and it was successful in developing confidence and security during the negotiations leading to the Agreement. However, Unionism failed to take confidence and security from the principle of consent enshrined in the Agreement and by so doing failed to take control of their own destiny. The principle of consent should have given Unionism the confidence and security to embark on removing the inequalities and injustices of history and assisted to secure the Union. The established

# POLICING MATTERS



Unionist representatives failed to take this opportunity to cement the Union and have allowed Unionist insecurity and lack of confidence to be exploited both by their enemies and anti-Agreement rejectionists.

Following the Agreement, the Civic Forum was established. It was intended to be a vehicle for consultation and communication with all sections of the community in the same manner that the Confidence-building Committee had been during the negotiations. Instead, it has been hijacked by civil servants who control and dictate its role and functions. There is insufficient community representation on this forum, thereby dooming it to fail in achieving its intended objectives.

Established Unionism, instead of embracing these two elements, of the principle of consent and the establishment of a genuinely representative Civic Forum, and taking Sinn Féin on politically, embarked on seeking ways to avoid taking on traditional enemies and sought to have them removed from the Executive by running to London and Dublin, making demands of the two Premiers. This displayed a lack of leadership and a reluctance to take control of our destiny. Our traditional enemies exploited this insecurity by making their own demands and creating a circumstance where Republicans appear to be benefiting more from the Agreement than Unionists and denying any Unionist fault or responsibility in this process.

Those of us within Loyalism are frustrated with established Unionism's reluctance to take Sinn Féin on politically. It is all the more frustrating that they are preventing us from developing Loyalism to take on the task which Unionism is shying away from. They want the credibility of being elected representatives, but will not accept the accountability such a role demands. Established Unionism has been an obstacle to Loyalist development to take up this political role.

The formation of the Loyalist Commission is the most positive step that has taken place within Unionism for many years. It has the potential to develop Unionism constructively, but it is important that it does not become a version of the Combined Loyalist Military Command representing solely Loyalist paramilitaries. The Commission consists of political, religious and community representatives in addition to representatives of the Loyalist paramilitaries.

For the first time in our existence a group has been established that can bring Unionism and Loyalism together. An opportunity now exists to learn from each other, to strategise for the benefit of the Loyalist and Unionist community and to secure the Union by putting the past inequalities and injustices behind us and persuading those from the Nationalist community that our objectives are to their benefit as well.

← The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has had a unique history. It has embodied a great breadth of plurality in its membership; it has embraced Nationalism, Unionism, Republicanism, Orangeism, Gaelic traditions and Loyalism and much, much more. But I have to say that large parts of evangelical Presbyterianism have shown awful ambivalence and indifference to the cocktail of bitterness, division and hate which emerges when you mix deeply held religious conviction with political or social ideologies. Rather than being a powerful witness of reconciliation and redemption, of grace and mercy, parts of my church have been a stumbling block to the gospel and the love of Christ.

The Presbyterian Church is a sleeping giant with a meeting-house in almost every hamlet in this country. I would love to see it put the call of God first and rise above any trace of sectarianism or parochialism. One of the recent Moderators put it very well when he said (and I paraphrase his words): I can't accept the Word of God from somebody who wraps it up in a Union Jack and I can't accept the Crucifix from someone who has wrapped it up in a tricolour. Christians in Ireland and Christians in Northern Ireland, in my opinion, need to start being unequivocal about the love of God and the demands that that love makes on us as neighbours.

## What do you think loving your neighbour might look like in Northern Ireland?

I always start with a view that love is generally a verb – it is about doing things. How do you be a good neighbour? It's about giving, it's about doing and receiving, no less than what you would want

to do, give and receive yourself. It's nothing more profound than that. Paul, in Galatians chapter five, talks about the fruit of the Spirit being 'love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, temperance, against these there is no law'. I think that is a lovely recipe for being a good neighbour. With those attitudes and values we wouldn't need the 'law' to be keeping us apart. This part of Ireland, and in fact the whole of Ireland, still has the potential to be one of the best democracies and places to live in Europe. It has the potential to be one of

the shining beacons in terms of faith and practice, of people living together and bringing out the best in each other. The pain and suffering of the last 30 years could be turned to an eventual good because the moral sensitivity, the faith, the commitment and generosity, the basic kindness and hospitality that exist in Irish and Ulster people are surpassed by none. This potential for good just needs to be set loose.

## The Presbyterian Church is a sleeping giant with a meetinghouse in almost every hamlet in this country.

MERVYN GIBSON

# loyalism

## the issues

Loyalists would probably be prepared to accept the current political set up, warts and all, if only Sinn Fein/IRA would stop their neverending shopping list of demands, manufactured victimhood and orchestrated violence.

**There is a story told** about a Salvation Army girl collecting in the pubs of East Belfast on a Saturday night. This particular evening she had no newspapers to give out. As she was opening the pub door one customer shouted after her - "What about the 'War Cry'?"<sup>1</sup> "It's still the same", she replied: "No Surrender". In many respects the cry 'No Surrender' still encapsulates the position of Loyalism<sup>2</sup>. But not, as some claim, a negative stubborn head-in-the-sand approach denying progression and change in a post-modern enlightened world, but a simple slogan that indicates Loyalism will not capitulate to physical force Republicanism. Where the confusion arises for some Loyalists, and others alike, is that this position does not necessarily preclude accommodation, dialogue or even co-operation. It is in these areas that Loyalism must define its position, establish parameters and develop a strategy that does not allow it to be sidelined or marginalised.

Loyalism, traditionally, has not been good at engagement - not only outside, but also within its constituency. However, the situation has not been helped by those within the Protestant traditions who demean and even demonise Loyalism, in order to embrace Nationalism for selfish motives that often equate Christianity with a specific political process or ideology.

This insecurity of engagement also derives, in part, from a lack of confidence within the Loyalist community, a condition diagnosed by Dr Reid (Secretary of State) as the result of living in a 'cold house'. Unfortunately neither he nor others appear to have the capacity or will to address the symptoms. Therefore Loyalism needs to repair the house in order to stop the chill factor and make it into a home where there is respect, equality and justice for all.

The cold house for Loyalism has largely been created by the failure of

the Belfast Agreement to deliver meaningful benefits to Unionism and by their exclusion from the process that preceded it. Sadly the appeasement that resulted from these situations continues unabated and undisguised. The reasons for the failings of the Agreement are irrelevant, Loyalism must move beyond the divisive pro- and anti- Agreement positions. We exist in a post-Agreement landscape and must recognise the realities such a situation has brought about.

Therefore Loyalism must strive to re-establish its confidence, articulate its case and focus on the future. However, the one factor outside the influence of Loyalism that can frustrate this journey in understanding and the prospects of peace, is Republicanism. Sinn Fein/IRA need to decide, once and for all, is the war over? Are they really engaged solely in democratic politics or do they want to continue their charade of 'deniable' violence and consolidating their apparatus of terror.

Inequalities will have to be addressed and a language that we can all buy into - and I do not mean either Irish or Ulster Scots - must be found. I suspect my understanding of sectarianism would differ from that of a nationalist - one person's sectarianism is another's Sunday sport. The Belfast Agreement has at least taught us it is futile to pretend all are agreed, when it is clear the Belfast Agreement means all things to all people. Spin and deceit are not the foundations of peace.

The saddest observation of the present situation is that the overwhelming majority of Loyalists would probably be prepared to accept the current political set up, warts and all, they could live with the treacherous treatment of the RUC, the contrived institutions, even terrorists in Government, if only Sinn Fein/IRA would stop their never-ending shopping list of demands, manufactured victimhood and orchestrated violence. Republicans must accept the reality of difference and of demographics - there are one million Unionists who do not want to belong to an Irish State. Equally, Loyalists must recognise the significant moves there have been within Republicanism. It is not Unionists who entered the Dáil - but Sinn Fein/IRA who entered Westminster. It is not Loyalists who sit in a federal Irish Parliament, but Republicans in a United Kingdom devolved Assembly. The Union Jack is still the flag of the country and we remain British citizens. The reality is that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom; a United Ireland is still an aspiration. Many play down these truths again under the guise of not offending others, to the point of denying the legitimacy of the pro-British community and destabilising Loyalism.

In the foreseeable future it is unlikely we will return to a mono-Unionism, which for bread and butter politics is a good thing. However, Unionist fragmentation creates difficulties in developing an effective strategy when addressing constitutional issues. Loyalism must find unity in diversity, new ways to accommodate differences within Unionism. If the Loyalist paramilitaries can do it after a violent feud and the Protestant denominations can do it

after several centuries, then it is achievable.

Of course there are many issues to be addressed internally by Loyalism, not least paramilitary violence, racketeering and gangsterism. The increasing lack of respect within communities for any authority is a key factor that has to be tackled and a proper sense of pride rediscovered. These are the building blocks of a confident future. All, especially the churches, have a role to play in restoring values and morality on our streets and in our families, but how can this be achieved unless all community stakeholders engage and, where possible, co-operate?

Loyalism is today more inclusive and open in its approach, but sadly there has been little sign of hope. For me the story of the Salvation Army girl in an East Belfast pub has personal resonance. It's where I minister and pastor, it's where over recent months I have seen families burned out of their homes and visited those in hospital who have been shot. It's where I have heard the community cry 'No Surrender!' but in the midst of it I also heard loyalist Para-militaries asking for all to draw back from the brink. Sinn Féin/IRA have yet to respond, while cynically and dangerously pursuing the Pinocchio Politic of 'it's not us' when undeniably engaged in manipulating the violence that is only drawing us all deeper into the mire of negative sectarianism and polarisation.

These Republican propaganda tactics have been forged out of 33 years of justifying the unjustifiable and present a considerable challenge to Loyalism. Some would seek Loyalism to focus its energies on engaging in a media war. However, when the British government, Irish government and the American administration have difficulty in combating it, what hope has Loyalism? Instead a Loyalist agenda needs to be forged that promotes and articulates the positive, rather than always responding to Republicans and allowing them to dictate the issues and control the context. Only a more confident, articulate and focused Loyalism is capable of engaging effectively with Republicanism. Loyalists simply want to remain British and live at peace. The question is, can Republicans live with such a reality?

MERVYN GIBSON is minister of Westbourne Presbyterian Church on the Lower Newtownards Road.

<sup>1</sup> 'War Cry' - Paper produced by the Salvation Army and distributed free, often while collecting in pubs and clubs.

<sup>2</sup> Loyalism has for some come to mean 'working class' Unionism and especially that embracing Para-militarism, but it is used throughout this article in the broadest sense and in many instances could be interchanged with Unionism.

# scapegoating

the ancient art of shifting blame

IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES the itinerant Hebrew nation had a novel way of cleansing itself of any guilt arising from social sins. The religious leaders laid hands on a goat and ceremoniously transferred the guilt of the people to the goat, which was then driven outside the camp of Israel into the wilderness. From this ancient ritual we have developed the practice of scapegoating.

When something goes wrong in society and it is perceived that this is due to corporate wrongdoing we look for a scapegoat. We usually pick on the eccentric, the minorities and the unlovable. Someone has to bear the guilt for society's ills so that the rest of us can rest easy in our own sense of self-righteous well being.

In Northern Ireland we have ready made scapegoats in the paramilitaries. Like every other part of the United Kingdom and Ireland we have a problem with drugs. But it is not our fault. The paramilitaries are to blame. We still have the most ancient trade in the world – prostitution – but it is not really society's fault. It is all down to the paramilitaries. We are plagued by anti-social behaviour, petty crime and organised crime – just like many other cities. But in Belfast it is not our fault. If it wasn't for those damned paramilitaries Northern Ireland would be a great wee place to live in. At least that appears to be the analysis of politicians, clergy and other civic leaders.

Let me make it quite clear. I am not an advocate for paramilitarism, nor am I about to suggest that they are paragons of virtue. I used to be one myself and am not blind to what goes on within paramilitary circles. At the same time I refuse to make them the scapegoats for society's ills.

Like many of my former comrades I have moved on. But I have not moved away from those who remained nor turned my back on the new generation that came after me. Because I know that there is a better, less violent and more democratic way in which to resolve Northern Ireland's problems I have a duty to work with others of a like mind

alongside my former organisation in the hope that we can be an influence for change. I believe that we are being successful.

One would have thought that the slow but steady move towards politics and the steady reduction in violence would have been welcomed by so-called constitutional politicians and church leaders. But not so. Raise the issue of drugs, rackets, prostitution and other forms of criminal activity and my former organisation is automatically blamed (along with others). No evidence is ever produced. No names are ever linked to specific criminal acts. Nothing tangible is ever presented. Yet the organisation as a whole is painted with broad black brush strokes. The ritual of scapegoating does not require evidence, it just requires a prejudiced mind and a willing press.

Scapegoating is as pernicious an evil as any of the sins that are ceremoniously heaped on the heads of our vicarious victim. It is first of all an exercise in self-righteousness. As a society we can cleanse ourselves of all guilt for our social ills. So long as we can point to the scapegoat we have no need to look at ourselves.

Secondly, it is an exercise in social exclusion and marginalisation. Just as the scapegoat was driven outside the camp into the wilderness so we attempt to drive our scapegoats outside the parameters of respectable society into the margins of a supposed mafia sub-culture. We demonise, vilify and marginalise others so that we can enjoy the smug satisfaction of our own self-righteousness. We fail to recognise that members of paramilitary organisations are members of our own communities – that they are husbands and sons, brothers and fathers. They are not animals like the Hebrew scapegoat, they are flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone.

Scapegoating saves the media from having to investigate the true origins and nature of society's ills. It is a lot easier to lay the blame on a ready-made scapegoat than having to look for real identifiable culprits. Blaming unincorporated organisations which have no legal remedy against slander and libel is a lot safer than naming individuals and having to face them in court.

Politicians use the paramilitaries as scapegoats to cover up their abject failure to establish a just, equitable and peaceful society in which all citizens can enjoy a life free from crime and deviant behaviour. The clergy use the paramilitaries as scapegoats to cover up their failure to build a bridge between a world of hurting humanity and the love and compassion of a healing Saviour. Locked away in their holy huddles and spiritual bunkers they have lost the significance of incarnational theology and forgotten the true meaning of kenosis.

In the wake of recent events within loyalism some of these clergy have emerged from their cloistered hide-aways to present themselves as potential mediators. How people can present themselves as credible and impartial mediators, while still engaging in the prejudicial art of scapegoating the very people between whom they wish to mediate, is beyond my understanding.

Whatever the faults of paramilitarism may be – and there are many – they ought not to be used as the scapegoats for society's ills or as a cover for the failure of civil society to address its own problems.

BILLY MITCHELL is a member of the Progressive Unionist Party Executive and Programme Manager of LINC resource Centre, an inter-community development initiative based in North Belfast.

The ritual of scapegoating does not require evidence, it just requires a prejudiced mind and a willing press

# review:

## Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime and Punishment

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN GRAHAM



THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK is a little deceptive as Marshall covers much more than a “New Testament vision for justice, crime and punishment”. In fact, it seems to me that his work on the Old Testament and his theological and philosophical analysis on various theories of criminal punishment are among the best sections in the book.

There has been a growing debate in theological circles about retributive and restorative theories of justice and punishment. While retributive punishment appears to be the dominant paradigm, there increasingly seems to be a shift towards thinking about restorative theories of justice. Marshall’s book is an attempt to set restoration theory on solid theological ground, something which has been largely missing from the debate. This book does it well, and succeeds by considering matters apart from the New Testament itself. Marshall’s arguments and comments with reference beyond the New Testament make this book better than it would otherwise have been.

It is impossible to cover the entire remit of Marshall’s work and so I will simply pass on four “snap-shots” that are, to me, worth noting:

**1** Marshall rightly calls for caution in the discussion. The New Testament tends to talk more about sin and its consequences and about salvation than it does about crime and punishment and we must be careful not to equate crime with sin. We must also recognise that the New Testament is addressed to believers in a community of faith and not to secular rulers administrating justice. So, it is not clear how relevant the New Testament is to matters of public policy and how relevant its teachings are to those outside of the community of faith. The New Testament does not provide a blueprint for secular penal justice or a strict theory of punishment.

**2** Restorative justice, argues Marshall, is much more prevalent in the Old Testament than we might think. Admittedly, retribution themes are found in the Old Testament, but counter-themes of restoration also appear. Retribution seems most poignant when God’s wrath is seen in the complete destruction of a guilty party. However, Marshall points out, we cannot infer from this that scripture promotes a complete and coherent retributivist theory – certainly not along the lines of the Western notion. He points out that the central intention is the maintenance of shalom and of the covenant. A criminal offence breached relationships that were established by the covenant. Punishments were not good in and of themselves; rather they were an aid to communal living. Justice was not about giving someone his or her just deserts; it centred more on

restoring community relationships. This also applies to the seemingly harsh and retributive punishments such as exile and death. The goal was not punishment, as an end in itself – it was to restore the community to its commitments under the covenant. Thus, the killing of a person was not retributive in the strict sense, it was more a case of purifying or purging the community of a sin that would threaten the existence of the covenant community if it were not dealt with. On a number of occasions the Bible speaks of such actions in terms of a ‘cleansing.’

**3** Marshall’s summary of the various theories of criminal punishment was to me one of the best parts of the book. He discusses problems with retribution theories – such as the difficulty in accurately defining just what punishment is “equal” to any given crime, and the tendency of a retributive mindset to overlook victims. Deterrence theories are also critiqued and found wanting – in terms of providing a justification for punishment more brutal than would be acceptable, and in terms of their potential justification of punishing innocents if it has a deterrent effect.

**4** The analysis of capital punishment is also refreshing and a break from what seems to have become the norm in terms of Christian thinking on this issue. It seems ironic, given how Jesus died, how the early martyrs died, and how thousands more Christians have died in the past 100 years, that among the most vocal groups in favour of either the retention or reintroduction of the death penalty have been Christian ethicists. Not so Marshall. He critiques the death penalty both biblically, offering alternative interpretations to passages that seemingly support it or require it, and also addresses the other arguments in favour of it – showing how they are either morally unacceptable, unjust, or practically useless.

Anyone interested in the theological debate about retribution and restoration, or in the ethical debate concerning how criminals should be treated will be interested in this book. I commend it highly.

**BEYOND RETRIBUTION:**  
A New Testament Vision for Justice,  
Crime, and Punishment

Christopher D. Marshall

Published by  
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co:  
Cambridge, 2001.

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MALACHI O'DOHERTY

# down to basics

For once, no one  
is saying that  
any principle is at stake.  
It is driven by  
old fashioned sectarian hatred, the thing  
that was always there,  
behind all the riots of the past,  
previously garnished by political rationale  
but not any more.

NOW we are getting down to the basics. In the past we have seen principled and ideological positions advanced to explain why people took to the streets to stone the police or their neighbours. It was to do with civil rights, or prisoners, or the right to march, or police brutality or the Anglo Irish agreement.

The people who led these issues did not usually lead the riots, but they interpreted the riots as the inevitable outworking of the pain caused by constitutional uncertainty or the denial of rights.

Not any more.

No principle is at stake on Short Strand, any more than on the Limestone Road or Ardoyne.

No political translator of the pain of these communities is telling us that if only the law was to change this way, or the constitution that way, or the Brits were to go home or the Orangemen had their hill, there would be peace.

You get the usual apologists - community representatives who see little or no blame on their own side, who put it down to Unionist alienation or police mismanagement. We live in a political culture in which violence is expected and in which the blame for it always attaches to an outsider's provocation, never to the insider.

Violence now does not come out of an issue. It is down to this: that Prods and Taigs in some areas can barely stand the sight of each other. For once, no one is saying that any principle is at stake. It is driven by old fashioned sectarian hatred, the thing that was always there, behind all the riots of the past, previously garnished by political rationale but not any more.

The message coming out of the interface areas is that Catholics and Protestants simply cannot peacefully be close to each other. It is a depressing message. If it is true, then there is no point in all our political creativity, and only re-partition of Northern Ireland will bring peace.

The instincts of the paramilitary organisations fuelling the riots have always been segregationist. That has been most obvious of the UDA, which never, to my knowledge, has had Catholic members, though the IRA has had Protestant members, if only a few.

There was a statement from the UDA back in 1972, offering shelter to defecting Catholics. Only a lunatic would have taken it seriously.

Loyalist thinkers have been unexpectedly accommodating, as in the UDA's Common Sense document, but the energy which drives the organisation is contempt for Taigs.

The Loyalist project has always been to clear Catholics out of their territory, even - especially - when those Catholics were in minorities which contributed virtually nothing, by their negligible votes, to the political character of the areas themselves. It is hard to attribute political intelligence to people who behave in such a way.

It was fear of Protestants which produced the massive consolidation of Catholic west Belfast. Does anyone seriously believe that Sinn Fein could have created a ghetto on its own initiative? Is that an achievement for Loyalism to be proud of?

I'd hate to be responsible for suggesting a better idea to

them, but if they think they can save Ulster by shifting populations around, their political interest would be in eroding Catholic majorities, not eradicating Catholic minorities. They should be enticing Catholics into safe Unionist constituencies, like east Belfast, where they will have no political impact, not picking them off at interfaces.

But then, lateral thinking has never been a Loyalist approach.

They say it is not about Taigs but about territory, imagining that Catholic population growth can be confined to current ghetto boundaries and that those who want to move into Protestant streets are the vanguard of a filthy conspiracy. This is equivalent to telling Catholics not to have children.

Catholic sectarianism is more discreet. Republicans don't publicly announce their aversion to Protestants; they contain it within their humour, and with expressions which they don't use in political speeches; expressions like "your own" or "the other sort". They know that there is credit to be gained from disguising sectarianism, yet their premise is that they live beside a community which cannot be trusted to make a fair deal with them and which must always be coerced.

Republicans deny responsibility for the violence on the streets but their claim to total innocence is not credible. But why would they stir trouble that jeopardises a political agreement they say they support? Either they don't really support it at all or they just can't resist having an odd whack at the police or the Prods.

Their primary target is the police, and there is logic in that. They want to position them as 'Black Bastards'. But treating Protestant responses to this as irrelevant is acting as if nothing Protestants do has any political value. That's sectarian.

The friction between the Loyalists and the IRA in east Belfast threatens the agreement that both the UVF and the IRA say they support. The police believe they shot a Republican in Short Strand in June. Imagine how the political context would have been changed by an IRA funeral. If the gunman was Real or Continuity, his death would have given a new legitimacy to dissidence, and his supporters would be celebrating him as a defender of his people.

If he was a Provo, Gerry Adams would have carried the coffin and the Unionists would have walked out of the Assembly.

Someone will die in this rioting, and then the political groupings will exact their political advantage from it, and the paramilitaries will make the excuse for further rioting, and we will all forget in time that this was started either for another, undeclared reason, or for no reason, perhaps just to create a new generation of instability and force new political negotiations in the future.

The police now know that the way to prevent this spiralling out of control is to try very hard not to kill anybody. They must be restrained. But they should use their water cannons, liberally, with freezing water, preferably with indelible dye in it too, so that we can see the people who are wrecking our future.



*invites you to celebrate the advancement of  
restorative justice in Northern Ireland during*

*International Restorative Justice Week  
17-24 November 2002*

*Events will be planned throughout the week to  
acknowledge the diverse range of restorative justice  
initiatives in Northern Ireland.*

*For more details, contact the  
Restorative Justice Ireland Network;  
tel: 028 9024 0900  
info@rjin.org  
www.rjin.org*

“Listening in on conversations in church circles, throughout Northern Ireland, it seems to me that ‘the future’ is going to be a bigger shock to the Church than to most”.

DAVID W PORTER

# faith in the future

FOR THE BEST PART of about eighteen months around ‘the Millennium’ we had a ban on the M word in the ECONI office, because when it comes to millennial celebrations, I’m afraid I’m a bit of a purist.

One positive outcome, however, of having marked ‘the Millennium’ is that it has helped us all - society at large and the Church in particular - to begin to focus on where we’re at, and on the bigger picture: where the past has brought us and where the future is taking us.

In 1970 the futurist writer Alvin Toffler coined the phrase ‘future shock’, which he describes as ‘the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time.’ It seems the speed of change, in the world in which we live, is a shock to the system for both individuals and society.

Listening in on conversations in church circles in a variety of contexts I have heard this sense of future shock. Whether hearing Peter Brierly present the results of his English Church census at the Evangelical Alliance Council, sitting in on denominational conferences or working with small groups of clergy fraternal in towns throughout Northern Ireland, it seems to me that ‘the future’ is going to be a bigger shock to the Church than to most.

As we try to analyse what is happening around us we are concerned about the moral breakdown in our society: crime, abuse, addiction, and the challenges in family life. Wherever we look in our wider world we see political conflict, with the rise of nationalism, and tribal and community violence that has brought such pain and suffering to this world in the twentieth century, and sets to determine its course for the twenty-first. Those in the Church are deeply concerned about the religious decline that all our statistics are showing, wherever you go, whatever denomination you look at.

But the world that we live in, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is no different to the world at the time of Christ. We face no greater crisis now than the Church has faced in the past.

Jesus himself lived in a world of moral breakdown. He lived when the world of Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean was controlled by a morally decadent empire with all its excesses and sexual perversions. He lived in a world of political conflict, where nationalism fired the passions of people - where they took life, engaged in terrorism, where military dictators and the power of force determined government. Jesus also lived in a world of religious decline, where the Jewish authorities were concerned about the secular Romanising influences undermining faith and practice in their community.

It is into this world, a world where every generation of the Church has had to face the consequence of sin and bondage to the control of the evil one, that Christ came.

As I prepared this series of Bible studies on ‘the Future of Faith’ I found myself constantly drawn back to the world as Jesus found it. And to the man Jesus whose ministry, from a human perspective, had little indication of a future - cut off in the prime of his life at 33, at full flow in his ministry. To believe in any future impact arising from the teaching of this renegade, wandering Rabbi was itself an act of faith.

What did Jesus in his life here on earth, in his ministry and teaching have to say about faith? The word ‘faith’ occurs twelve times in the gospel of Luke. Reading through these twelve stories, which Luke relates, some things struck me very deeply about how we need to change how we think about the future of our own faith and ministry.

## Quest

The uncertain future of faith concerns Jesus. Indeed, his quest for faith is at the heart of his ministry, ‘when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?’

This question is found in Luke 18:1-8, where we read the parable of a widow and an unjust judge - a parable that Jesus told about people’s need to pray always and not lose heart. It is the story of a man who neither feared God nor respected people, and a widow who came seeking justice.

The world of the first century, just like the world of the twenty-first century, is made up of people who neither fear God nor respect their fellow human beings. Jesus uses the encounter between a man who is a brutal, honest portrayal of all that this world stands for when it stands against God - a world like ours - and a widow who is helpless, but who persists until she gets justice, to teach his disciples about faith.

## Question

‘Where is your faith?’ is a direct question that Jesus puts repeatedly to his followers. Like the day when they set out to make a journey across the lake (Luke 8:22-25): Caught up in a storm the disciples are frightened, meanwhile Jesus sleeps. With their past flashing before their eyes, their future in jeopardy, they wake Jesus who asks them, ‘where is your faith?’ Their faith is found lacking in the storm.

In Luke 12:28 Jesus is teaching his disciples who are worried about the



future - about food, security, clothing, about their ability to provide for their own well-being, for their family, for their community. He tells them not to worry, to look at the lilies of the field, and the glory of Solomon. 'And God who loves you will clothe you and feed you more than all of these, you of little faith.' They worry because their faith is little.

In Luke 7:1-10 Jesus seeks faith and finds it - not in Israel - but in the Roman centurion. He asks Jesus to heal his servant, but not to trouble himself with the journey to his house, 'just speak the words and let my servant be healed'. Jesus responds, 'I tell you not even in Israel have I found such faith'. In his own people, the people of God, faith is deficient.

In his quest for faith, when Jesus questions his closest followers, the disciples, or the community of faith, faith is found to be deficient and weak. If faith is not to be found in the 'people of faith', where then?

## Quandry

What we find perplexing is that faith is found in places that offend us. Not only that but we, the 'people of faith', are confronted with the stark reality that often the future that beckons for our own faith is fossilisation, where faith becomes encrusted in tradition and ritual within the safe space of our boundaries of doctrine and religious lifestyle.

Jesus' ministry exposes this. In Luke's gospel the references to the faith found in Israel and amongst his disciples are negative. In his quest for faith among his closest followers, those who were in the synagogue on the Sabbath, or when he went up to the temple for conference, among people like you and me, it is found to be little and it is found to be lacking. Rather, true faith is found by the Son of Man on earth in the unexpected places.

Faith is found among the unnamed: a woman, a man, some friends. We are never told who they are, whether they attended Bible class every week or said their prayers every day. We know nothing about them.

Faith is to be found among the unclean and the unacceptable: the paralysed man in Luke chapter five and the peasants who carry him and lower him down through the roof; the centurion in chapter seven and the prostitute later on in the same chapter; the bleeding woman in chapter eight; the lepers in chapter 17 and the blind in chapter 18. These are the weak, the religiously unclean and, like the Samaritans, who also demonstrate faith recognised by Jesus, they are people considered to be outside the respectable circles. Jesus found faith where it might be least expected.

In contrast to this, the Pharisees are critical of Jesus and critical of the prostitute who came and washed his feet, while they themselves neglected their duty to this teacher. We read that the crowd of religious people laughed at Jesus who was on his way to heal the daughter of Jairus saying, 'she's already dead! This is a joke, stop him coming!' The crowd of Jesus' followers rebuked the blind beggar in Jericho saying, 'don't call out, don't make a fuss, he won't be interested in you.' It was these interested, religious people who, in total contrast to the unnamed, the unclean and unacceptable, did not have faith.

I'm glad I live in a post-modern world. I find the world that we live in today exciting for the future of faith. I feel that my calling in the world is not to blame it, but to belong to it. To incarnate my faith in it, to embody the ministry of Christ in the stark realities of our day, to the point of seeing that even those who neither fear God nor respect people present us with opportunities to learn about faith. And, in so doing, to realise that faith is there to be found, not created; to be explored, not exported; to be nurtured in our world, not neutered by our Christian sub-culture. Faith is the gift of God and God is at work before us in the world, by his Spirit.

This to me is the future of faith. This is the challenge that comes from the ministry of Jesus, a calling to be there in places where true faith is to be found. It is in finding faith where we least expect it in our churches and in our world, that we truly secure the future of our faith for ourselves, and for generations to come.

Faith is found  
among the unclean and  
the unacceptable: the  
paralysed man and  
the peasants who lower  
him down through the  
roof; the centurion... the  
prostitute... the bleeding  
woman... the lepers...  
the blind...

This is the first of a series of three Bible studies previously given as talks to the 2002 Methodist Conference.

# For God & His Glory Alone

biblical principles

## Study 1 LOVE

Exodus 34:6f  
Leviticus 19:18 & 34  
Deuteronomy 6:4f  
Deuteronomy 10:17-19  
Proverbs 10:12  
Proverbs 17:9  
Jeremiah 31:3  
Matthew 5:43-48  
Luke 6:27-36  
Luke 10:25-37  
John 13:34f  
Romans 5:6-8  
Romans 12:9  
Romans 13:8-10  
1 Corinthians 13:1-13  
Galatians 6:2 & 10  
1 Peter 2:17  
1 Peter 4:8  
1 John 3:18 & 23  
1 John 4:7-12

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself”

Luke 10:27

“Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love”

1 John 4:8

GOD IS LOVE, and if we do not love, we cannot claim to know Him. This love is to be pre-eminent in the church, and is to be evident in our relationships with our neighbours, irrespective of their culture, religion and background. Distinctively, followers of Jesus are told to love their enemies.

Such love is not just an emotional feeling, but an active concern for the welfare and good of others. It must be shown in our attitudes and actions. In showing such love we reflect God’s attitude to us. He showed His love by sending Jesus while we were still His enemies. We may find it difficult to love our enemies if they are terrorists, but we can begin by learning to love those of our neighbours who are from other traditions.

**Read Luke 10:25-37.** There are two questions in the passage (verses 29 and 36). Notice the difference between the two. By turning the issue around, Jesus presents us with the challenge to be neighbours rather than to debate about whom we ought to consider as our neighbours.

In what ways have evangelicals failed to see the implications of what Jesus is saying to us on this matter? What needs to be done about it?

The key term for love in the New Testament is agape. It has been described as “the love of the cross” (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10). It is a love towards the undeserving and those who deserve the opposite - a love that reaches the “hard cases” (e.g. in Acts 3:14-26 - those implicated in the death of Jesus and Acts 9 - Saul). What are the implications of agape love in evangelism, social action and politics?





## Study 2

# FORGIVENESS

“For if you forgive others when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

Matthew 6:13-14

Matthew 5:7  
 Matthew 6:9-15  
 Matthew 7:1-5  
 Matthew 18:21-35  
 Mark 11:25  
 Luke 7:36-50  
 Luke 11:4  
 Luke 23:34  
 John 3:16  
 Romans 3:9-18  
 Romans 3:23-25  
 Romans 5:16-21  
 Romans 7:15-20  
 Romans 12:17-21  
 Ephesians 1:7f  
 Ephesians 2:8f  
 Ephesians 4:29-32  
 Colossians 1:13f  
 Colossians 3:13  
 1 Timothy 1:12-16  
 Titus 2:11-14  
 1 Peter 2:18-25  
 1 Peter 5:10  
 2 Peter 3:9  
 1 John 1:9-2:2  
 1 John 3:8

THE ROOT CAUSE of the Ulster problem is that we are sinners. We have, like all humanity, a natural inclination to live without God and to rebel against His will. Pride, bitterness and bigotry have the same root cause as racketeering, kidnapping and murder. They are the inevitable consequences of our rebellion against God's purpose for our lives, which is to love and to be loved. All of us have sinned and deserve God's condemnation.

Yet there is complete forgiveness with God. It is not that He treats our sin lightly. The cross of Jesus reminds us how seriously God regards sin. He has borne the pain and cost of the forgiveness that we are invited to receive through the Holy Spirit.

By God's grace those who, through faith, acknowledge their need for forgiveness and accept His salvation in Christ, receive the gift of new life. In Jesus Christ we are completely accepted by God.

Through His amazing grace, God has done everything necessary for the salvation of His enemies. Believing in Christ and repenting of what we have done is our proper response to such grace. It is not the prior condition - for when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. In parable and in teaching us to pray, Jesus shows that we must now follow this model. We are to forgive others as we have been forgiven - unconditionally.

In a situation that demonstrates humanity's inhumanity and despair, it is our responsibility to be agents of such forgiveness. This will mean that:

- We take sin and its consequences seriously. To forgive is not to say 'it doesn't matter'.
- There will be an expectation of pain in offering forgiveness. It is not easy to forgive, especially when there is 'justifiable anger'. Nevertheless, we are called to leave the judgement to God and instead to offer mercy as we have received mercy. It is those who acknowledge that they have been forgiven much who in turn forgive much.
- Those who are offered forgiveness, including terrorists, will experience what it means to be forgiven only when they are truly sorry for what they have done and have a genuine change of heart and mind. However, whether this reaction is present or not, we are commanded by Christ to offer forgiveness unconditionally.

**Read Luke 23:34 and 1Peter 2:18-25.** The key to understanding how Jesus could utter the words in Luke 23:34 is found in 1 Peter 2. How valid is the observation that a refusal to forgive others is an expression of a lack of trust in our Heavenly Father and His care for us?

It would appear that an essential ingredient of politics in Northern Ireland is a long memory for the wrongs of the past. In what way would political aspirations and expressions be changed by taking seriously passages such as Matthew 6:14-15, Mark 11:25 and Colossians 3:12-14?

One of the key words for forgiveness in the New Testament is *aphesis*. Its associated verb, *aphiemi*, was used in everyday language to speak of letting go of something - a ship's mooring or an arrow from a bow. The idea is that when God forgives us, He lets go of our sins and does not hold them against us. They become part of the past, they no longer colour His attitude to us either in the present or in the future. Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 43:25 and Micah 7:19 are Old Testament parallels. Why do we find it so difficult to let go of the past? What does such difficulty say regarding our understanding of God's forgiveness?

# summer school

Four days of transformation at Greenmount



“I discovered just how strongly I feel about many issues and how outspoken I can be sometimes. This week has shown me that it is good to ask questions.”

THE TRANSFORMATION SUMMER SCHOOL continues to be a significant event in people's lives and we are grateful to God for another successful event in July. Its success lies as much in the process as in the content of each of the three strands – we don't just talk about the issues but seek to bring the

experiences that make transformation a reality for those who attend.

The Summer School remains a central event in ECONI's overall programme. It is an event, which brings together research, programme and learning as it challenges assumptions and offers opportunities for reflection and personal growth.

We were excited by the change of venue for the Summer School. In previous years we have used the excellent facilities at Belfast Bible College. However, growing

numbers meant we needed to look for larger facilities. Greenmount College, situated two miles from Antrim on the shores of Lough Neagh, provided an ideal location giving us the opportunity to further develop our programme and better cater for all the participants.

Heather Morrow from Evangelical Alliance joined us this year to co-facilitate the 'Faith and Politics' strand with Alwyn Thomson. Heather's interest in the world of politics and her role as Public Affairs Officer with EA have been a valuable resource.

We are also grateful to David Campton for his contribution. His exploration of the book of Amos brought scripture to life. For many this was a time to find new connections between the Old Testament prophet and the reality of living faith in this time and place.

Summer School attracts people from all parts of the world, and this year was no exception. 50 participants came from Canada, USA, Japan, Northern Ireland, England and the Republic of Ireland.

TRANSFORMATION truly is an experience that can alter your life. Plan to join us in 2003.

“I am going home with a desire to share Northern Ireland and this experience with others from home in order to strengthen positive understandings of Protestantism, Evangelical Protestantism, and to begin to RECLAIM Protestantism in light of our tradition – Christian and cultural.”

STRAND 1 participant



## STRAND 1:

### BACK TO THE FUTURE

Lynda Gould & Emily Stanton

NO ONE living in Northern Ireland can be in any doubt about the importance of the summer marching season. For many in the Protestant community, it is the public expression of their religious, cultural and political identity. With the peace agreement still in the forefront of political and social life in Northern Ireland, the need to examine the issues around Protestant identity remains paramount. Responding to this, this strand set out to examine the essence of Protestant culture.

'Back to the Future' was a challenging and interactive exploration of the nature of political, religious and cultural identity. Over the four days we considered the positive and negative aspects of the relationship between Protestant faith and culture in the context of Northern Ireland. Facilitating, in essence, the telling of a story, as the narrative unfolded we heard many voices exploring what it means to be Protestant. Participants' own voices together with the personal experience of an Orangeman, a sociologist and a loyalist began to uncover the many layers of identity in Northern Ireland. These conversations happened against the backdrop of bonfires, parades and the field; together they created a rich tapestry of ideas, questions and insights.

#### STRAND 1 participants said:

"Learning more about Northern Ireland has enriched my identity of being in the U.S. It helped me get outside my assumptions."



## STRAND 2:

### A SPIRITUALITY FOR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Derek Poole & Glen Jordan

TWENTY PARTICIPANTS signed up for strand 2 this year and from the post-event emails, letters and phone calls they were not disappointed. The increase in numbers choosing this strand is indicative of a new awareness of the relationship between spiritual values, practice, vision and motivation. Many of this year's participants are already actively engaged in some form of social compassion as an expression of their Christian witness and they expressed the need to cultivate a deeper spiritual life to sustain a long-term commitment to their work. We believe that the comprehensive programme of teaching, practical workshops, field trips and discussion was a genuine help for those seeking to root their social involvement in a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

ECONI exists to nurture and resource Christian involvement in the wider community. In the context of Northern Ireland we are particularly concerned to see the church at the cutting edge of peace and reconciliation initiatives and we are committed to supporting this vocation. If you are interested in a concentrated and experiential event designed to help you nurture your spiritual life as you care for the hurts of our world, why not consider booking for next year's Summer School?

#### STRAND 2 participants said:

"I will be encouraging friends to go next year."

"I am so grateful to all at ECONI for a superb summer school. As a participant in the spirituality strand I was keen to strengthen the relationship between my life in God and my commitment to social justice. I was not disappointed."

"I want to say a very big thank you to everyone at ECONI for quite simply the best run and most refreshing conference I have been to in over 30 years of being a Christian. I particularly appreciated the spirituality strand, which far exceeded my expectations."



## STRAND 3:

### FAITH AND POLITICS

Alwyn Thomson & Heather Morrow

A MIXED GROUP of participants from Ireland – North and South, the USA and Canada took part in the Faith and Politics strand at this year's Summer School facilitated by Alwyn Thomson and Heather Morrow from Evangelical Alliance.

When people think of faith and politics together they often think of it in the context of Northern Ireland and generally perceive it to be a 'bad thing', but as well as tackling these issues this strand aimed to look more broadly at the relationship between the two. So we asked three basic questions: Is there a relationship between faith and politics? Should there be a relationship between them? How should that relationship work out in practice? In trying to answer these questions we dealt not only with the politics of identity that lies at the heart of many conflicts around the world, but also with the politics of social engagement. How do we bring a faith perspective to bear on issues around education, healthcare, criminal justice – areas that actually affect our lives more deeply than any others? We also looked at questions of economics, of globalisation, of wealth and poverty, asking what role faith has in helping us shape responses to these big issues.

Of course it was far too much for one week, but those who took part were challenged to make some of these questions their own and to continue to bring faith into a critical and constructive engagement with politics.

## Catherwood Lecture

In October we will be holding the fifth, annual Catherwood Lecture. Rev Dr David Smith of the Whitefield Institute will deliver this year's lecture. David spent six years working in a Bible college in Nigeria and has written extensively on the challenges facing evangelicalism in the Western world.

Bringing these and other areas of his work together, David will be speaking on 'World Christianity and the Healing of the Nations'.

"I am increasingly aware of the immense significance of Southern Christianity and its growing importance in the era of globalisation," writes David.

To hear more come along to the Ramada Hotel on Thursday 24th October at 8pm.

## ECONI Sunday

3rd November 2002 is ECONI Sunday. This year's theme 'Facing the Unknown' will consider the issues of journeying in faith, new beginnings, authentic belonging and welcoming strangers, pertinent questions facing today's church as it seeks to bear Christian witness in a sectarian society.

By sending for the ECONI Sunday Resource Pack your church can take part in ECONI Sunday through prayer, reflecting together biblically on the theme and by identifying with the many others throughout the country who are praying about and addressing these issues.

The Resource Pack provides three substantial Bible studies specially designed to help clergy and lay leaders prepare. These include:

**Facing the Unknown:** Following Abraham in a journey of faith and the implications for us of this man's ability to move beyond the familiar and secure in search of the living God.

**Endings and Beginnings:** An exploration in the book of Ruth on how our life choices and sense of belonging shape our identity. This ancient story of love,

loss and loyalty holds many insights for the church in contemporary Ireland.

**Welcoming the Stranger:** Guided by Paul's letter to Philemon this study considers the role of the stranger in our lives. In particular we are invited to take the risk of making space for the 'other' in a way that challenges the assumptions and boundaries of our lives.

See the enclosed flyer for further details on ECONI Sunday and how to order a Resource Pack.

If you would like to invite a member of the ECONI staff or Steering Group to speak at your ECONI Sunday service, please contact Claire Martin, the Programme Co-ordinator at ECONI.

## Clergy Events

For the last eight years ECONI staff have organised a considerable range of seminars, forums, conferences and residentials for clergy throughout the country. Our commitment to supporting ministers in the challenging task of leading the church through difficult times has resulted in a creative exchange of ideas and practice between local pastoral experience and ECONI's particular gifts and resources. Our recent programme of clergy residentials and forums has raised a number of new and pertinent issues for us to consider and we have been reflecting on the challenges that clergy have put to us at these events. Consequently, Derek Poole (ECONI's Programme Director) has been developing a new series of workshops designed to be relevant and helpful to local leadership. These include a series entitled:

- **Vision Building:** Owning the Future by Changing the Present
- **Creative Managing:** Helping Congregations Negotiate Change
- **Understanding Group Processes:** A Systemic Approach to Congregational Life.
- **A Gospel Imperative:** Peace-Building in Church & Society

Derek has had extensive involvement in many local clergy

forums and in organising and facilitating clergy residentials. If you would like to explore these or any of ECONI's range of seminars and workshops please contact the office for further details. Derek will be on sabbatical leave until December but Claire Martin, the Programme Team's co-ordinator, would be happy to discuss possible dates with you for 2003.

## Book Launches

During the past few months, ECONI has launched four new publications. On 15th April, in the Linen Hall Library, David Hewitt, ECONI's President, officiated at the launch of *Thinking Biblically, Building Peace*, *Seek the Welfare of the City* and *Fields of Vision*. The event was attended by more than 40 guests who heard speeches from the authors and contributors of the resources.

The following month, on 21st May, we were very pleased to launch *Changing Women, Changing Worlds* by Fran Porter. This book, which tackles the issue of Evangelical Women in Church, Community and Politics, has been published in conjunction with The Blackstaff Press. The event also took place at the Linen Hall Library with over 50 guests in attendance.

Full details of these new publications, which are all available from ECONI, are listed below.

### Thinking Biblically, Building Peace

An ECONI Resource

This book provides a comprehensive range of biblical material for those committed to the integration of peace, justice and reconciliation in the life of their church and community.  
Price £9.99

### Seek the Welfare of the City

Church and Society in Scotland and Northern Ireland  
This was the theme of the ECONI conference in September 2000. The papers presented in this book aim to encourage churches to see change, not as a threat, but as an opportunity.  
Price £7.00

**Thinking Biblically, Building Peace/ Seek the Welfare of the City:** Church and Society in Scotland and Northern Ireland/ **Fields of Vision:** Faith and



**Fields of Vision**

Faith and identity in Protestant Ireland

Alwyn Thomson

This book aims to shape a deeper understanding of the Christian vision of God, belonging and identity. Changing our field of vision not only changes how we think, but how we live.

Price £7.00

**Changing Women, Changing Worlds**

Evangelical Women in Church, Community and Politics

Fran Porter

Based on 70 in-depth interviews with evangelical women, this book explores the questions women face in their church, community and political participation.

Price £9.99

**ECONI Forgiveness Project**

CONFERENCE:

**Forgiveness: Making a World of Difference**

Over 100 participants attended our annual conference on Saturday 28th September at the Ramada Hotel, Shaw's Bridge, Belfast.

The keynote speakers this year were Mark Amstutz, Professor of Political Science at Wheaton College, Illinois and Mari Fitzduff, Professor of Conflict Studies at the University of Ulster. Jim Wallis of the Sojourners Community in Washington DC also joined us.

The keynote addresses considered international perspectives on forgiveness and how forgiveness has functioned in post-conflict transitional societies and helped us to look at the role of churches and religious groups in making the ethic of forgiveness a central component of conflict resolution. The relation between the church as a forgiving community and political pragmatism was also explored - asking how these two agendas might work together for the common good of society.

Seminar groups tackled the challenge of Bringing Forgiveness Home and a range of speakers contributed their distinctive experience and perspective, helping us

to relate the issues raised in the keynote addresses to the situation in Northern Ireland. This included looking at the similarities and differences between Northern Ireland and other contexts when addressing the theme of forgiveness.

The day concluded with a screening of the award-winning documentary Long Night's Journey Into Day. This moving documentary considered the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission as it facilitated encounters between victims and offenders involved in the political and ethnic violence under the Apartheid regime.

**Forgiveness Papers**

We continue to publish our series of papers on various aspects and issues surrounding forgiveness. The papers so far have looked at forgiveness in the Bible and in various Christian traditions. Forthcoming papers will consider issues such as truth, memory, justice, reconciliation, politics, the church and repentance.

If you would like to register for the conference or would like to receive the series of forgiveness papers then please contact Stephen Graham at the ECONI office or by email at [stephen@econi.org](mailto:stephen@econi.org)

**Socrates**

Together with partners in Sweden and Latvia, ECONI has been involved in a EU funded project entitled 'The role of religion for integration in Europe'. Alwyn Thomson and Lynda Gould spent time in Riga, Latvia in March as part of this project and will be travelling to Sweden for the final seminar in October. By the end of the year we hope to have a dedicated website which will make the findings from the project available for educators.

Reflecting on this project as it comes to a close, it has been fascinating to meet Christians from other parts of Europe who find themselves in different circumstances but struggling with many of the same issues of identity and conflict and the church's role and place in society after Christendom. It has also been refreshing to escape

from the unfortunate parochialism to which we seem particularly vulnerable in this part of the world.

We are discussing with our partners ways of extending this project further so that we can continue to learn from others in their work and to contribute some of what we have learned over the years to our brothers and sisters in Christ elsewhere in Europe.

**Towards a Plural Society**

Life at the Civic Forum continues to consume a fair proportion of our Director's time and energy. At its plenary meeting in September he chaired a debate on diversity as convener of the working group on a plural society as it launched its work programme for the coming year. This will involve contributing comment on the Growing as a Community section of the Programme for Government, responding to the next phase of the community relations review and hosting a series of events giving opportunity for people to listen to each other as they share the key themes that shape their identity in this society.

**Equality and Human Rights**

You may know that ECONI has been working with Evangelical Alliance and CARE on human rights for some time now. Our aim has been to ensure that a Christian voice is heard in the debates over the role of human rights in Northern Ireland generally and the Bill of Rights proposals in particular. Naturally, this work is ongoing as the process develops. As well as continuing to respond to various consultation documents that appear from time to time, lobbying politicians and others and responding to invitations to speak or write on these matters, we are also working on a series of Bible studies which will develop Christian perspectives on these issues. At the moment we intend to publish these on our website, but they could also be made available in other electronic formats. If you would like to know more please contact Alwyn at the ECONI office.

One particular area of human rights concerns rights

identity in Protestant Ireland / **Changing Women, Changing Worlds** Evangelical Women in Church, Community and Politics/ **Forgiveness Papers**



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to equality. In Northern Ireland we now have an Equality Commission and it seems likely that a similar body will soon be created for the rest of the UK. Meanwhile a raft of equality legislation – much of it in response to European Directives – will be appearing over the next few years in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

In response to this ECONI is planning to do some work on this issue over the next few months. A briefing paper will be produced in October which will describe the current and proposed legislation, identify some of the key debates and offer some biblical reflections. This will be followed by a number of briefing days for church leaders later in the year which will provide an opportunity to discuss the role of the churches in relation to these developments. We also hope to invite a number of members of the Equality Commission to be part of this process in order to establish a dialogue between the churches and the Commission. Again, if you would like to know more about this project, please contact Alwyn at the office.

## Budapest, Barcelona, Bogota

ECONI member David McMillan and Director, David Porter were among those who gathered in Budapest last spring for the Hope for Europe conference. Organised by the European Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Committee, participants contributed to a series of mini conferences within the overall event, addressing the needs of Europe as the new century unfolds.

The ECONI delegation was part of the reconciliation track, which focused on sharing resources and news of the various organisations working for reconciliation throughout Europe. While one of the smaller tracks at the event, this did allow for good listening and sharing among the group and we left more aware of the struggles in making the good news of reconciliation effective in an increasingly fractured world. It was agreed to try and set up a European network to facilitate exchange and support across countries and ministries with the aim

of giving a greater profile in the mission of the church to the ministry of reconciliation.

In follow up to this David Porter will be heading for Salou in Spain on October 17<sup>th</sup> to take part in a round table discussion on the outcomes of the Hope for Europe event. This will also overlap with the EEA Assembly and the anniversary celebrations of the Spanish Evangelical Alliance.

Later in the month on 26<sup>th</sup> October, David is again on the move, this time to Colombia at the invitation of the British Council. Together with Professors Paul Arthur and Christine Bell of the University of Ulster, he will be speaking at a conference on the challenges facing societies in transition from violence to peace.

It is part of our vision in ECONI to share with others what we have learnt working in Northern Ireland and to do this in a variety of contexts, both geographical and in church and wider society.

## New School Starts

This July (19<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>th</sup>) saw the first Aughrim Summer School in Co Galway. Held in the village just outside of Ballinasloe, which gives its name to the bloodiest battle in Irish history, its participants explored aspects of religion, reconciliation and healing over four days. ECONI Director, David Porter was the keynote speaker on the Saturday evening on the theme 'It is by bridges that we live.' A further workshop on Jesus and the politics of belonging completed ECONI's contribution to this inaugural event. We were delighted to be able to share with Canon Trevor Sullivan and Robert Dunlop as they launch out on this venture.

Another first was the Summer School at the beginning of September for those in training for the Church of Ireland Auxiliary ministry at the theological college in Dublin. The group was made up of people from both north and south and drawn from all three years of the training course. David was again the keynote speaker, addressing the themes of reconciliation, politics, peace-building and the example of Jesus, over the four day event.

## Derek's Sabbatical

After six years working with ECONI Derek is due a three-month sabbatical leave which will focus on the theme of spirituality in the history of the church. Beginning in September he will be walking the northern mountains of Spain for five weeks meeting various church leaders and reflecting on the development of spiritual disciplines and practice as they have evolved in the life of the church. After three weeks back in Northern Ireland he will then spend four weeks in Italy considering the spirituality of the late medieval church and the challenges and changes to spiritual practices brought about by the Reformation. The sabbatical is an opportunity for Derek to review the leadership training and development work he has been doing with ECONI and to enrich his understanding of church history. He will be back in the office the first week in December preparing for his commitments in 2003 and you should feel free to contact him then.

## ECONI Staff changes

Since May the ECONI Staff team has welcomed three new recruits. However, we have said farewell to:

**Ruth Hutchinson:** Ruth left ECONI in May after six years working as Assistant Editor on lion & lamb. Ruth brought more to her job than her editorial skills; she gave something of herself to every word on every page. Her determination and persistence in the face of deadlines resulted in a good quality product time after time. Ruth also embraced responsibility for the international volunteers who came to support the work of ECONI. Ruth did not simply supervise their work, she engaged with their whole experience in Northern Ireland and offered care and support. We are grateful for her contribution to lion & lamb and recognise how she established the volunteer programme as an integral part of ECONI. She is already missed in the office but we are glad that she has resumed her role as a Company member and we look forward to her contribution to

**ECONI staff moves; Left to right: On sabbatical: Derek Poole/ Leavers: Ruth Hutchinson, Meg Flannagan, Sarah Parkinson**



ECONI in the future.

And **Meg Flannagan**, a one year volunteer from the PC USA, based in Eglinton Presbyterian Church who worked part-time with ECONI as Programme Assistant. Meg returned to the States at the start of August and has gone to live in Charleston, South Carolina where she will be working with colleges and with the church as Director of Education, focusing on youth.

Farewell also to **Sarah Parkinson** who worked with ECONI for nearly two years, latterly in the role of Administrative Assistant. Sarah left in September to embark on a Masters in Development Management at the University of Swansea:

"The experience of working at ECONI has been one that began in a state of transience: a six-month contract before going off with my husband to pursue our dreams. But dreams change, and I was asked to stay here temporarily for a little while longer; and then offered a more permanent place until we found a new future. Now the time has come, and the desire within us to delve into the skills and hopes that God has placed within us takes us to Swansea.

I am going to study, and am thankful to ECONI for helping me to understand the things that move me, that inspire within me the will and determination to make a contribution to making the world a better place. I am thankful also for the encouragement that has helped me to take this step, giving me courage where sometimes it was lacking.

Perhaps most of all, though, I'm grateful for the way in which being here has nurtured my journey of faith: for the questions asked, and for the conversations which delve into depths surrounded by a God whose heart aches for a broken world. It is the permanence of this journey that unites us beyond geographical boundaries, and I am grateful that we have had the opportunity to share that journey for a short while together."

**Amy Ornee**, volunteer Research Assistant from the Mennonite Mission Network, started with ECONI in

September 2001. She has recently had her term of service renewed for another year to work in the areas of learning and ministry:

"Last autumn, I confessed I'd come to Belfast for the moss. Still now, a year on, I'm apt to wax rhapsodic about the fiercely green mounds, billowing over stone walls, wedging tenderness into cracks in the pavement. If moss summoned me here, it's also emblematic of the reasons I'm so grateful to be staying for a second year.

Here's a little list of the qualities of moss: turns up in hard, inhospitable, broken places; transforms and makes new; thrives with aliveness. That's moss - and it's a fair description of how Jesus lived, and what we, his Body, are called to do. Working with ECONI, I've had incredible opportunities to dig deeper into the Bible, to ask questions about how we be Church, what it means to forgive and be forgiven people who love our neighbours and our enemies. I'm surpassing pleased to have been granted a bit more time to have a hand in this work."

Here's a brief introduction to the new faces at ECONI:

**Bill Ellison** has been working part-time since the end of May as Head of the Support Services team and became full-time in September:

"I am a qualified administrator and have worked in a variety of Senior Management positions in industry and commerce. As an evangelical Christian I have been aware of ECONI for some time and when an opportunity came along to get directly involved I was delighted to do so.

As Support Services Manager I will be responsible for the entire range of financial and administrative activities necessary to support the work of ECONI. It is my intention that, by bringing my management skills and experience to the organisation, I will free other staff from the bulk of burdensome administrative tasks in order to expand their ministries and thus enable them to contribute more fully to the work of ECONI."

**Helen Smith** joined ECONI in June to work alongside Lynda Gould in the learning team:

"I was attracted to the job because of the job title

'Learning Co-ordinator' and the concept of thinking biblically, building peace. Learning, biblical insight and shalom have been crucial to my perseverance in various work situations.

My experience of church began in a strict Brethren Assembly in Dungannon. I now belong to Knockbreda Methodist and have been involved in many Christian organisations from School SU to the Iona Community.

I have come from an experience of work where people very different from myself have enriched my life, challenged my faith and questioned my presumptions. In teaching, the YMCA youth club and in The Bridge Community Centre I have worked with people disadvantaged by the lack of opportunity to realise their potential. Success in this type of work has been difficult to measure but I take comfort from Oscar Romero's words, 'We plant the seed that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promises. We lay foundations that need future development. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in that.'"

**Anna Rankin** is from Dublin and worked with Christian Aid in Belfast for over two years before coming to ECONI as Resource Co-ordinator in June 2002:

"I have responsibility for the production and promotion of ECONI resources - including lion & lamb.

I studied Theology and German at Trinity College Dublin and did a Masters at the Irish School of Ecumenics, where I first came into contact with ECONI. So far my career has included working as a teacher, in community projects for the unemployed, with children from ethnic minority communities and in supporting and facilitating development education for young people.

My husband is from Co Down, so our different identities and experiences of church and community have been brought together in an ongoing conversation and now help to inform my work. I am very excited about this new role with ECONI and look forward to seeing it develop and to learning from the new experiences and challenges of the job.

**Staying on:** Amy Ornée / **New recruits:** Bill Ellison, Helen Smith, Anna Rankin



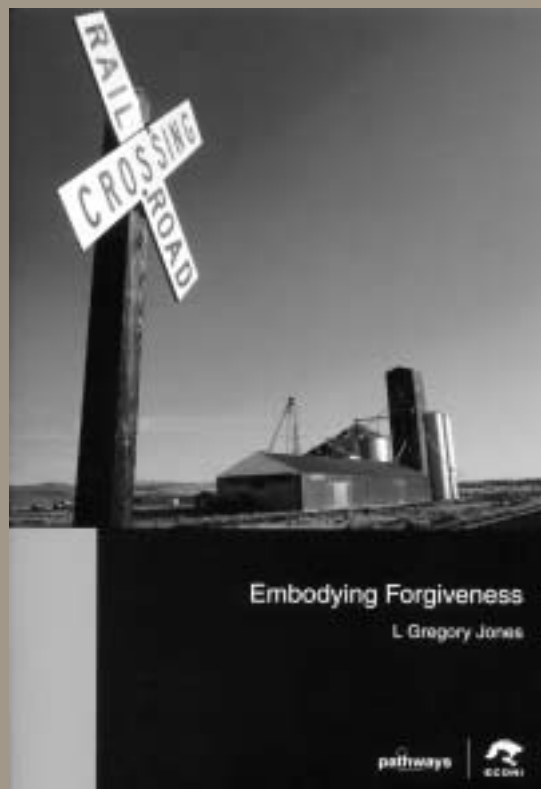
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## EMBODYING FORGIVENESS

L Gregory Jones

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