The Cross and the Crescent

On 19 September Lord Carey, the 103rd Archbishop of Canterbury, presented the annual Beach Lecture at Newbold College. In ‘The Cross and the Crescent’, Lord Carey looked at the need for deep and honest dialogue between the two faith communities. Before the main lecture he gave an exclusive interview to BUC Communication director, Victor Hulbert.

Q: Lord Carey, the cross and the crescent seem to be moving further apart rather than coming together. How should this issue be addressed?

A: We've got to find ways of living together. We've got to find ways of deepening the dialogue and understanding. We cohabit so many things and values with Muslim people. I don't think the situation is hopeless, but I am concerned about it because some people are trying to make it look as if the two civilisations are at war.

Q: While there are a lot of moderate people, including moderate Muslims, what we hear through the media is that an innocuous remark can lead to something that builds tensions. Is dialogue really possible in that kind of situation?

A: Dialogue is possible, but dialogue is tough. And what passes for dialogue today isn't dialogue at all. It's too tame, it's too politically correct. We tend to say nice things to one another and the real tough questions are avoided. But we can only ask tough questions if we understand people — if we're friends. And I do believe that one can talk to the majority of Muslims whom we might call 'moderate'. But I think that's a bad term, because I'm not a 'moderate Christian'. I'm a Christian, and we've got to engage with true faith on both sides. I also want to say something else. I actually believe we are defeating the terrorists. What is happening all the time is that we are increasing the number of mainstream Muslims in the West who actually want to do what we do, and that is to have a good life, to have a fulfilled life; and they don't want violence.

Q: There's a difficulty, though, as well, isn't there? If you believe that Jesus is the Saviour, how are you going to have that conversation, and gain the respect, and gain the trust, when ultimately your role as a Christian is to say, 'Well actually, maybe Mohammed isn't the prophet you thought he was, but let me introduce you to . . .'

A: I believe very firmly that Jesus Christ is the way to God; I don't regard Mohammed in the same way. But the problem at the moment is that we're all dancing around this and not facing up to the real issue. I think it is possible to have such a relationship with Muslims that we can say to them, 'For me, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. I know you see him differently, but let's talk about this.' In parts of the Muslim world there are Christians who have a very brave testimony. So the dialogue is possible. But if I were to say, 'You're an unbeliever; your way is absolutely wrong. My way is right,' there's going to be no dialogue because I've come at it arrogantly.

Q: What do you really want a Christian audience to understand?

A: We live in dangerous times, and we need to be alert to the fact that terrorism is in danger of tearing our world apart. What will overcome it will be the depth of Christian faith, in association with understanding Islam better, and making friends with Muslims. If we can do that with confidence, then we can make a real difference.

Q: We've talked about the Muslim-Christian dialogue. We have tensions within the Christian community itself. It must be easier to relate to some groups of Christians than others?

A: You know, the funny thing is, I've found on occasion, I've had more in common with a practising Jew or Muslim, than I have with an extreme Christian. I mean there will be some extreme Christians whose attitude and arrogance can be such that I wonder if we are in the same family. But sometimes a friend who's a Jew — I can think of Rabbi David Rosen in Jerusalem — has taught me about God. I feel I have a lot in common with him. Of course, I'm not denying that Jesus Christ is the centre. He's the heart of it all.

Q: Is there anything that the Adventist Church can learn from the kind of leadership role and model you're giving us?

A: No. It would be arrogant for me to suggest it. All I want to say is that I know something about the Seventh-day Adventist Church and respect it enormously. I have a sister-in-law who's an Adventist, and I see the difference it's made to her life. I do believe that the Anglican tradition, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church have a lot in common. We can work more together, and I would hope that we would start to do that.
Dr John Woodfield celebrates his 90th birthday

On 11 September, Newbold Lecturer Emeritus Dr John Woodfield celebrated his 90th birthday. The young John first came into the Church when his father became an Adventist in the early 1920s and lost his job as a result. It was not an auspicious introduction. John knew hardship as a boy, but this did not deter him from enrolling at Newbold in the mid-1930s, paying his way through college by teaching in his father’s departmental management. When he graduated in 1939 he began pastoring in the Derby area but was soon called to move to larger premises. John was appointed principal, a post that he held until he was asked to head the English department at Newbold in 1945. John is appointed principal and is the only one of the first British Adventists to do so. In his MA he drew the attention of the scholarly world to the existence of a number of congregations of Seventh-day Baptists in London and the provinces in the first half of the seventeenth century and then turned his material into articles for the Advent Church’s evangelistic papers.

He is also remembered by his former students of English literature, one of whom is a professor of English at an American university, said recently, “Having tried a number of approaches to teaching the subject, I have come to realise that Dr Woodfield’s methods worked the best.”

John Woodfield is a modest man. Wiston Church once paid his great political rival Clement Attlee that he was a ‘modest man, but then, he is much to be modest about. It was not true of Attlee and it is not true of John, for he is multi-talented and, after his retirement in 1958 he took up wood carving and mock antique furniture-making, as well as denimning more time to gardening, which he has always loved. He is also an artist of consider- able talent – a picture of the crowds milling about on Moor Cluse lawn at a graduation now hangs in the principal’s office at Newbold. He also writes poetry and loves to hand out passages from the Bible.

He has always made a significant contribution to the lives of his friends, his colleagues and his students at Newbold. In the Newbold community we are still benefiting from his presence and are delighted to see him reaching this milestone in his life.

With Richard J. B. Willis

Do you have a Bible hero? Some brethren may say Paul, others may say John. Others may say Paul, Daniel, or Joseph, or John. Some sisters might receive special inspiration from Esther. Mary’s买东西, her mother, Martha, or Mary of Bethany.

For my hero has been Barnabas, the ‘Son of Encouragement’ in the Apostle’s family, one of the seven deacons of the Jerusalem church, a man of integrity and of aim of my ministry to affirm and build up, to be an encourager.

That is the purpose of this paper in Messes’ian. It is also the underlying aim of every other page. That, of course, does not suit everyone. They have noticed that Barnabas would be used to use the Union paper as a means of convincing others of the validity of those opinions. On a theoretical level that sounds great. But I have noticed over the years that the opinions urged are too often at variance with the fundamentals of the faith or at the very least, likely to divide the Church. Hence it becomes a judgement call. Do the church mem- bers whose offerings fund this paper, and the British Union who owns this paper, want me to use it as a sounding board for controversial opinions?

I have to make the judgement call. In making it I am influenced by the views of three groups of people with whom I want to keep faith. The first group is made up of rank-and-file readers, of each and every ethnicity, and I want to keep in touch with my letter, email, or in person. I don’t think of this group in the abstract, I think of specific people. Nothing will appear in these pages to cause hurt and distress to those honest, authentic Advent people.

The second group with whom I keep faith are the field leaders in Watford, Nottingham, Cifford, Belfort, Banbridge and Crief. These are good, decent men. I want them to have their respect and have, after all, been elected to their positions. I shall not let them down. Good, decent, and honest men I expect me.

The third group of people with whom I keep faith have one thing in common. They are all Adventists. Nevers, I don’t know who they are, but I have, their pictures on my office wall. They were the builders of the Advent Movement, including those who built the Church in the British Union.

Messes’ian is not a sounding board for divisive opinions. It is the newspaper for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the British Isles. Our publications exist for those who want to push back the frontiers of belief to either the left or the right. While the issue page is there to sensitize, it is not there as a hustings from which to attack the beliefs of the Church voted by the GC in session. That is not what Messes’ian is for. It has been at any time during its one-hundred-and- eleven-year history, at least half of which I can remember and for a quarter of which I have been its editor.

The purpose of this paper is to inform, to teach, and to encourage. Barnabas would be used to use the power to do so.

To perserve. Unlikely as it may seem, millions can testify that for them, somehow, this has actually worked. It’s the God-given, Christ-inclining, Spirit-driven miracle at the core of Christianity. To say it to those who have been saved by grace cannot then become gracious is to deny the miracle. To deny the miracle is to say that Christianity doesn’t work.

It works! For millions, life-direction has changed rad- icaly, Self-centred, callous people have become warm, loving people. They have overcome all manner of destructive habits and addictions. Not being ‘conformed to this world’, they have been transformed through mind renewal (Romans 12:2).

The Gospel is not just a theological proposition, ‘it is the power of God for the salvation of every one who believes’. For in the gospel a right- eousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that ‘is by faith from first to last’ (Romans 1:17). The marvel at the heart of the Gospel is summarised by Paul (Romans 1:16, 17) and by Habbakuk (2:4) in the phrase ‘The just shall live by faith’. Here we’re into encouraging and building, not destruction and demolition.

There are those, apparently, who have decided that what was good for the builders of our move- ment, and may continue to be good enough for its rank and file members, is no longer good enough for them. Well, congratulations! Adventists have always encouraged thinkers. And I mean that! But no amount of intimidation-me-wards will make the eight pages of a Union paper an appropriate forum in which to advance your ideas. Truth is no longer consensus. Christianity is a revealed religion centred on the Person of Christ. We are saved by grace through faith. And those in Christ are ‘a new creation’. That’s the Gospel. The Gospel is not only for conservatives. It’s for us radical superstitious, too. One Church. One Baptism. One Lord and Saviour of us all.

At the heart of the Gospel is the belief that men and women can change. There can be a ‘fundamental change’ – what will be exercised with will of vital importance to our destiny!
Paula comes to Christ

Leicester Central has witnessed the miraculous conversion and baptism of one of its most interesting young people.

Paula Pryce, 19, surprised Leicester Adventists by declaring her love and discipleship for Jesus in a moving baptism attended by dozens of young people, friends and family, including some of whom performed musically for the first time in church.

Paula admits to experiencing a long process. Things that never used to bother her before. ‘It’s a momentous occasion when you experience God bringing you to him.’

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GEORGE POWLS

I first met Uncle George (as every one affectionately calls him) when Llew and I moved to pastorate the Middlesbrough church in 1991. He quickly introduced himself to me and made me feel at home. I was telling him that I knew my parents as he had attended Newbold with them.

Uncle George is a family man. He loves his wife Josie and his four children and three grandchildren. But, more than that, he loves the whole family. He takes a keen personal interest in every member and visitor.

He was baptised in the Middlesbrough church in 1953 by Pastor Sammy Joyce, and ever since has had a passion for the church, working for the Lord, and an ever-increasing longing to see his precious Saviour return. He spent years as a literate evangelist both in England and in Scotland. He loved children, which is reflected in the fact that he spent his working life teaching and always had a pocket full of sweets to hand out to them.

SABBATHS

Sabbaths are a joy to Uncle George, and he is even at the age of 84 - an active, conscientious and hard-working member of his church. He still teaches and preach- es Sabbath school classes, and has spent over forty years as the head elder. His wisdom has been a great blessing to the church board. He has been actively involved in countless evangelistic outreach programmes under Josie's leadership, and pastored, and as worker and pastor, for many years encouraging the youth to commit their lives to Christ. He also has a very charismatic laugh that can be clearly heard, especially at the various church social events he has helped to organise.

AILEEN ALICE

It was a particular pleasure on Sabbath 19 August to present a Certificate of Honour to Mrs Alice Allen at the Canterbury church. Mrs Allen had been a member of the church for more than sixty years. Since her retirement twenty-five years ago, Sister Alice has faithfully served the church in many ways, and has brought encouragement and blessing to them. She has always shown loving concern towards everyone and would be the first to say that whatever she has been able to do was by God’s grace. She was also the only one who has known our Alice all her life, and because of her love for him and her Church, and his own desire to win souls for the Kingdom.

During the past thirty years he has sat in the front pew coaching church offering advice and support. Arthur has held the position of elder for the past twenty years and currently the leader of the recently formed Kingston church.

In addition to this, he has also spent a lot of his time utilising his preaching training. He is also a member of the Area 4 Lay Advising Board, and also at some point given talks or health talks in church. Since he had attended Newbold with his family, he had been a member of the church by the minister or a lay elder for almost 50 years. Sister Anna was always ready to serve her church. Brother Brown was always a quiet, unas- surprised person who in later years was not able to attend church. Brother Brown was always a quiet, unsurprised person who in later years was not able to attend church.
Who’s changing the church?

YOU are!

Calling ALL Youth aged 14-25

by Des Boldeau, Youth director, BUC

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during the month of December young people aged 14-25 will have the very exciting opportunity to tell the church leaders of the UK what they think of the church and other related issues. Not many of us will have such an opportunity again within our lifetime, so please stop and take note.

Who is conducting the survey? The Trans-European Division of our world church (of which the UK is part) is joining up with the Euro-

Africa division to conduct this much needed survey. It will be conducted in 18 countries throughout Europe.

Aim

The aim of this survey is to understand how European Adventist youth live out their faith, in order to develop a culturally-appropriate strategy for Adventist youth ministry and mission.

Subject matter

We need to know your thoughts and feelings on a range of subjects that will give some indication of the relevance of the Adventist church to your everyday needs; that means you, the youth of the church.

The survey will look at certain key areas relating to: faith maturity, personal spirituality, relationship with the church, commitment to Adventist doctrines, behavioural standards and social ethics.

Why should you participate in this survey?

1. Because youth are an important part of our church
2. Because this is an opportunity to express your opinion about the church and its relevance to you
3. To try and find out why youth are leaving the church
4. To make the church more aware of youth issues
5. Because the opinion of every young person is important to us
6. Because the answers will help in setting strategies relevant to young people’s needs
7. To help the church make changes to fulfill its mission better

How does it work?

For the first time the survey will be administered through a website designed by a professional survey company. All youth either owning or having access to a computer will be simply connected to a very easy series of questions.

The website will provide confidential and anonymous access to the questionnaire by means of a password. Each young person will receive a personal password which will allow him/her to fill out the questionnaire. The password will expire at the completion of the questionnaire.

Each local church which has young people registered with the Conference will receive the allocated number of passwords (one for each person). For those not having direct access to a computer or Internet for completing the questionnaire, a PDF file or hard copy can be obtained from your local Conference/Mission youth depart-

ment and local church ministry at Union.

When will the results become available for public knowledge?

The results will be available for public knowledge at a conference in January 2007.

How will the results become available for public knowledge?

An analysis of the raw percentage scores for all questions will be available in the March issue of Excomesx, so watch this space to see what the survey will reveal about British youth church trends.

The benefits

The benefits will be experienced by all entities of the British Union. It will influence the direction of youth ministry at Union, Conference, Mission and local church level. It will change the way the adult church addresses youth issues, the leadership, and the way youth ministry is done.

I foresee that the results could be an eye opener and somewhat of a revelation for the church. With this in mind, if the results of this survey do not alter the structure of what we presently see as the youth ministries of the church, then the exercise will have been in vain and the expense will be wasted.

So, get ready and tell all within this age range to prepare themselves to engage with the church in this survey.

If you have any questions about the survey now, or want to feedback on the survey after completing it, please feel free to contact me or my secretary on 01476/571544. I’ll be in touch again!