

BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

BIBLE SOCIETY HAS BEGUN A JOURNEY WHICH TRANSMISSION IS DESIGNED TO REFLECT UPON AND TO SEEK TO DEVELOP THROUGH THE STRENGTH OF THE IDEAS THAT THESE PAGES CONTAIN.

This edition of *TransMission* has sought to be more explicit about the nature of that journey. Neil Crosbie's article highlights the new direction for Bible Society as an agency campaigning for the Bible to be heard in public life and in the Church. Kathy Hasler explores what that "voice" or "voices" might look like in the world of lifestyle issues.

The recent roadshows undertaken by Bible Society have featured the work that the Society has already undertaken in relation to this new challenge. Many readers of *TransMission* will not have a chance to attend a roadshow and so we want to take the opportunity of describing some of the existing projects and initiatives undertaken in relation to campaigning.

Two principles underlie our campaigning initiatives. First, virtually all are partnerships of one kind or another. Some are partnerships with educational institutions, some with media companies, others with Christian mission agencies and some with churches. For Bible Society, partnership is a key strategy which allows us to maximise the expertise of the Society by adding the insights, skills and experiences of others. The task we have undertaken is too large for us to accomplish without partnership.

Second, there is an attempt to work at both an academic or "high" level, attempting to identify and tackle the really hard questions that need to be faced and at a popular level, seeking to engage with the broadest possible public. So what are some of these partnerships and initiatives?

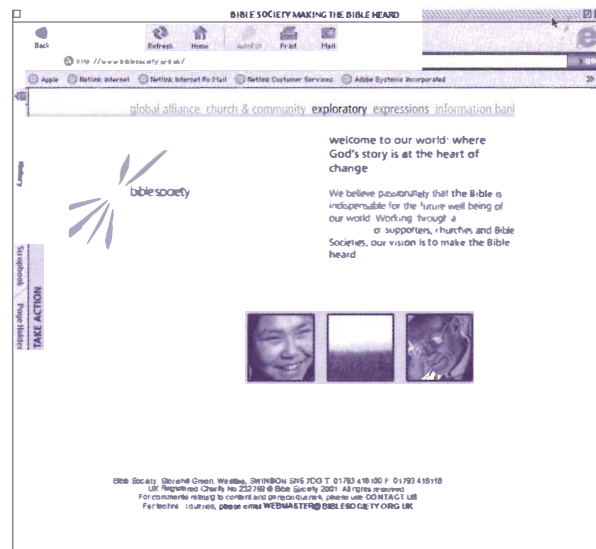
- 1 *Biblos*, a partnership with Exeter University looking at how the Bible is used in schools. This research project has tried to understand how pupils and teachers respond to the Bible and to develop ways of engaging with the Bible that will enhance the communication of key biblical themes and stories. A report entitled *Where Angels Fear to Tread* has already been published and is available from the Society.
- 2 *The Bible in Pastoral Practice*, a partnership with Cardiff University attempting to identify how clergy in particular use the Bible in the course of everyday pastoral work. The aim is to find ways to help clergy use the Bible more effectively in their ministry.
- 3 *The Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar*, an international eight year partnership with the University of Gloucestershire (formerly Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education) attempting to recover the Bible as scripture. This initiative is now in its third year and aims to produce a significant collection of essays that track the seminars. The first and second volumes from the seminar are now available as published books.
- 4 We have just begun to work with King's College, London, on Public Theology in Cultural Engagement, trying to create a public theology that relates the Bible to contemporary cultural questions.
- 5 *Faith Comes by Hearing*, an audio programme designed to allow whole congregations to encounter every book in the New Testament over a 40 day period. Research into the effectiveness of this programme indicates that many congregations find that they are able to use this encounter as a major means of developing their spiritual formation.
- 6 *Miracle Maker*, an animated presentation of the gospel of Luke, told through the eyes of a child. This partnership with S4C and the film distributors Icon has allowed *Miracle Maker* to be shown in approximately 350 cinemas nationwide. The film has also been shown on national television and is widely available as a video.
- 7 *Tales from the Madhouse*, a partnership with BBC television, originally shown during Holy Week in the year 2000 explores the encounters of a number of characters with the person of Jesus. The series won critical acclaim and is also available on video.
- 8 *The Test of Time*, a partnership with BBC Education, explores how the teaching of Jesus has stood the test of time by looking at a number of challenging situations in locations on three continents. This Bafta-nominated programme, together with teaching resources, is available to schools and churches.
- 9 *Deeper than the Wound*, a video which explores the way in which the Bible is being used in Rwanda to bring healing and reconciliation following the tragic massacres in that land. The award-winning video, together with other resources, has been made widely available as a Bible Sunday pack this year.

Other initiatives are also being developed, for example:

- 1 We are working with S4C to produce a three part series on the New Testament to be shown on prime time television during the Autumn of 2002. Our intention is also to produce materials and suggestions that will enable churches to make best use of this programming opportunity. ▶

Vist Bible Society at www.biblesociety.org.uk

- 2 We plan to organise some residential events for clergy and other leaders. These will be designed to explore in more depth many of the issues we are raising at the roadshows. Such an event has already been piloted with the Diocese of Winchester.
- 3 Agora, the Greek word for marketplace, reminds us that Paul often shared the Gospel in the context of the public life of towns and cities. Our Agora initiative is a multi-faceted way of helping congregations develop a vision for public life and engagement with their local communities.
- 4 We have just launched an interactive web site which enables the Society to pick up many of the ideas that leaders are sharing with us and offer them more broadly. It is also a means of allowing the Society to offer more resources on the web than we can put out by print alone. So, for example, back editions of *TransMission*, together with the results of research projects can be accessed via the site.



What we are developing is not just a set of resources but a campaign. As with any campaign, it does not stand or fall by an individual project or even a whole collection of great ideas. Campaigns are about people and they need people to be involved if they are to succeed. Our aim is to develop a number of campaigns around the Bible and to mobilise Christians around those initiatives – if possible, to create a movement. But we want to develop such campaigns in dialogue with the Church rather than come with them already fully formed. We want to seek your help in a wider discussion about what such campaigning might look like.

The challenge is to engage in a campaign for the place of the Bible in our national life which will not be complete until the Bible really does become a source of inspiration for the social imagination of our land. Imagine a situation where the stories of the Bible were so known, loved and embraced that the practise of goodness really did become fashionable. We are in the early stages of launching the kind of initiatives that will make this possible but we want you to join us on the journey. We want you to be our partners in a conversation that will lead to these kinds of outcomes. ■