

## COLIN BAILEY - ELECTION ADDRESS

It may seem paradoxical, and probably rather a cheek, for someone who has spent his working life in the guided weapons industry to have pretensions to sit on the General Synod. But that is only because people find it convenient to create stereotypes. Hence “armourers” are easily transposed into “hatchet-faced merchants of death”, just as Moslems are often subliminally bundled together as closet terrorists or their harbourers.

My own experience is that there are people of kindness, joy and uprightness in all walks of life. Two of my colleagues in the weapons industry actually became priests in the Church of England. Others, less religiously inclined, were people I still regard as rôle-models for my own life.

In the ten years since retiring as the UK’s sole full-time guided weapons lawyer I have been a regular communicant and helper in my local church at Benington near Stevenage. Organising and leading intercessory prayers has become my special responsibility. It is a discipline that requires one constantly to look outside the church to the needs and aspirations not only of village and nation, but of the whole world, and to form some idea of the way God would expect us to frame a prayer-life that takes in all he has made.

The works of C.S. Lewis informed my early years, and his struggles and convictions became my own. Just before he died I wrote to thank him for all he had meant to me, and a few days before his death that great Christian sent me a written acknowledgement.

I have participated in no less than 14 half-year Bible study courses run by ICES, which have greatly enriched my scriptural knowledge, although moving me away from the “literal” and toward the “liberal” wing of Christian thought. As a defence lawyer I have immense sympathies with the intellectual struggles of Dietrich Bönhoeffer in his attempt to reconcile his pacific religious position with the perceived duty to take an active part in the ill-fated Stauffenberg plot that led to his execution by Hitler’s express decree in 1945.

This need to find a place where the worldly and divine can join hands seems to run through the whole purpose and thrust of the General Synod. So often the issues dealt with are a matter of choosing the ethical course involving the least harm. A firm pragmatism is therefore essential because the tougher the conundrum the more one comes up against the law of unintended consequences. In such areas hard study and honest analysis become critically important. And we must open dialogues with all genuine religions and confessions, tearing down walls. We may have more friends than we realise.

My own contribution to the work of the General Synod would have to be based on the sort of person I think I have become. At the age of 75, I am still able to absorb and deal with data and form reasonably cogent judgments. I can broker compromises and write reports which are readily understandable - a long-learned skill that comes from having to explain the intricacies of the law to engineers!

We worship a God whose love destines his creatures for joy, and who sent his Son to ensure it. I find myself most comfortable with people who know how to laugh out loud. I believe that God expects us to do so. The more the Church of England is beleaguered with problems, the more we must live out generous lives of laughter and joy. That way we “go further into God” and share around more widely his unconditional love.