

A view of the Church from (almost) the outside

by Gary Marsh

My mate Dave is a lovely fella. Dave will do anything for anyone. He is a decent, hard working, law abiding chap who was brought up in 'Middle England' to respect and honour people and property, to know the difference between right and wrong, and in fact observe most of the Ten Commandments. The ones about not stealing, coveting, murdering etc, Dave has no problem with, but the first three commandments, all relating to God do cause him a problem because he is not a 'believer'. His wife Jane on the other hand, is a 'believer' and as such wanted their two children to be Christened. Dave was happy with the idea and so, because Jane hadn't been a regular churchgoer for some time, a 'qualifying period' was undertaken whereby they both had to attend Church for several Sundays in succession prior to the Christenings taking place. Dave was apprehensive at first but over the weeks he actually got to quite enjoy going. The congregation were a nice mix from all walks of life, they made a lot of new friends and interesting events were regularly organised but the thing he liked the most was the singing. Dave fancies himself as bit of a singer. He said to me one day that it never really mattered that he was singing religious hymns and carols, he just really enjoyed singing. Who doesn't enjoy belting out 'Onward Christian Soldiers' or 'Jerusalem', or 'Ding Dong Merrily On High' at Christmas? I fully expected Dave to go church every week after the Christenings took place. He was enjoying it so much, especially the singing, but it didn't last. Jane and the children still go occasionally but not Dave. I asked him why he had stopped going and he said;

"I'm fine with the people, the camaraderie, the music, the planned events, the singing, but when the God stuff kicks in I'm just not interested!"

Personally speaking, I hope that my confusion masquerading as ignorance will not offend anyone reading this article but I do find the history of religion very interesting. There are so many similarities between different religions that it almost seems to be an accident of geography as to which 'team' you support. Judaism, Islam and the different flavours of Christianity all have differing versions of the Ten Commandments, and it wasn't just Christianity that can claim a shining star in the sky when their prophet was born. Religion is very confusing, which is possibly why many people choose not to worship at all. I still get confused by the statement 'Jesus, King of the Jews'. Well if he was a Jew, then why aren't all Christians Jews? As for the 'virgin birth' well that baffled me for years, and still does, and yet it is an idea popular not only with Christians but also with Hindus. Have millions of people of different faiths all over the world been duped over thousands of years by their forefathers into believing things which can't possibly be true or can miracles happen? (Could be a future Magna article)



Young children are taken to Church regularly by their parents but as soon as they get older some, not all, choose not to go any more. Some find other interests but I suspect that others find that either they no longer believe or actually never did. Some, like myself, went to Sunday School every week as a small boy and Church Parade every month as a cub, a scout and a venture scout. In all that time I wanted proof of the existence of God, not just people who were older than me telling me that it's true and to just accept it. That proof has not been forthcoming.

My mate Tom is a lovely fella too, a lot like Dave, married with two children. Dave is 35 years old now, and still not a 'believer' but Tom was 35 years old when he suddenly started to believe in God a few years ago. He had his proof. Maybe there's time yet for Dave, but I somehow doubt it.

As you probably know, I have family members who take an active part in all aspects of Holy Cross Church life, the committees, the social life, the worship and I will always support that. It is undeniably a great 'club' to belong to. Myself, well I have some sympathy with Dave. I go to the quizzes, the treasure hunts, trips out, walks etc, but until I get my proof I will carry on doing that..... from (almost) the outside.