









# The idiot who came to Church

The Rev. Dr. Paul Barnett is Master of Robert Menzies College. He lectures in N.T. at Moore Theological College and the University of Sydney.

This is the text of a speech given at the Church Record dinner for Sydney Synod members in October.

The Apostle Paul expresses deep concern for the outsider and unbeliever who is present at the gathering of the church (1 Corinthians, Chapter 14). The Greek word for "outsider", IDIOTES, occurs only 5 times in the N.T. In Acts 4 the High Priests are scornful of Peter and John because they are AGRAMMATOI (unlettered . . . but not illiterate) and IDIOTAI (uninitiated, outsiders, laymen). In II Cor II Paul confesses to being IDIOTES TO LOGO (to being non-professional in rhetorical speech). An IDIOTES, therefore, lacks the appropriate qualifications to belong to a group or class — whether of Educated High Priests or of Rhetoricians. He is, therefore, an outsider to a professional group, a layman. Our word IDIOT, of course, comes from this word. What disqualified the IDIOTES in 1 Corinthians 14 from truly belonging to the church was, as the text indicates, that he was APISTOS, an UNBELIEVER. So, in 1 Corinthians 14, we see IDIOTAI, the IDIOTES, who came to church, who because they are unbelievers they did not really belong.

## "deep concern for these idiots"

I have great sympathy for these IDIOTES because like them I did not belong. I too was an IDIOT, an outsider, an unbeliever, who as a young man came into the church. The idiot who came to church.

The Apostle expressed deep concern for these idiots who came to church. It wasn't that Paul had a fuzzy view of congregational membership. He addressed God's church at Corinth as "Those set apart in Christ Jesus, called Holy ones. He described the church as God's Holy Temple indwelt by God's Holy Spirit." The openly immoral person in chapter 5 was to be removed from their midst. The boundary line between the gathered congregation of Holy Ones and unbelievers was not at all blurred, but in sharp focus. What then, was the boundary line?

It was not racial or physical or ceremonial. The APISTOI and IDIOTAI (unbelievers and outsiders) were, apparently, quite able to attend the church without explanatory comment by Paul being needed. Outside the church Paul by no means called for separation by Christians from even grossly immoral unbelievers. From immoral Christians, yes; from immoral unbelievers, no. Jews were not permitted to enter a gentile home for a meal; but Christian believers were free to eat in unbeliever's houses, though not to attend ceremonies at pagan temples. Marriages with unbelievers, while not to be entered into, were certainly not to be dissolved where conversion occurred after marriage. The unbelieving spouse, like the childrer of this mixed marriage, are somehow reckoned as Holy.

So, the congregation were God's Holy Ones, with a clear sense of a separate identity. Yet the line of demarcation was not physical, racial or ritual but confessional. The Holy Ones were believers, those who confessed "Jesus as Lord", whose lifestyle was now an expression of that Holiness. But they did not separate themselves from unbelievers or prevent IDIOTES coming in and going out from among them.

Not only were they to be prepared to mix with and welcome the APISTOI and IDIOTAI, they were also to take note of their presence among them and to order their affairs with them in mind. Thus those who delighted to Give Thanks at the Eucharist in a tongue were to desist. Why? Because the IDIOTES would not know what they are saying and be able to add his AMEN. What believers in church did had to be intelligible to the visiting IDIOT. Likewise Paul is concerned that

IDIOTAI, hearing the church members speak in tongues, will say you rave, you speak like madmen. Paul's concern was that by being unintelligible the Christians would confirm the APISTOS in his APISTIA, the UNBELIEVER in his UNBELIEF.

The Christian Church must be one of the very few groups, if not the only group, which has as a criterion for its group life that non-members, outsiders, should be able to make sense of what happens there. This is, of course, an expression of the love and commitment the Christian members are to have to bringing unbelievers to a living faith whereby they too acknowledge that "Jesus is Lord", and join the ranks of the Holy Ones. That is why they will eat in the house of unbelievers raising no scruple about the food set on the table, even though it has been idol-sacrificed. That is why they engage in Prophecy, that speech which is intelligible, so that the IDIOT who comes to church will fall on his face and worship God. What Paul describes here is, of course, the conversion of the IDIOT who comes to Church. He is said to be CONVICTED (Elenchetai — what the Paraklete-spirit would do in the world — that is, convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgement), "Called to account (Anakrinetai), the secrets of his heart are manifested, falling on his face, he worships God and declares that God is really among you."

This last statement is vital, being a reference to two end-time prophecies — Isa. 45:14 and Zech. 8:23. The latter speaks of the time when gentiles, the people of the nations, will come to Jerusalem, when ten men from the tongues of every nation will grasp the garment of one Jew saying "Let us go with you, for I have heard that God is with you". In 1 Corinthians, Paul depicts this as happening when the IDIOT comes out of the dark world of unbelief into the congregation of the Holy Ones, hears prophecy and declares God is with you, I have found Him. The gathering of God's people to hear the prophetic word, therefore, is an end-time, eschatological activity of the greatest importance. Christians should see the IDIOTES who comes into the church and is converted there, as the end-time fulfilment of Zech. 8:23.

## "the congregation were God's Holy Ones"

What does all this mean? It means that we too should care about the poor lost IDIOT who comes into the assembly. It means further that we should acknowledge the magnetic power of the congregational gathering of God's Holy Ones as possibly the most significant means of evangelism open to us. It means we should ensure that all that we do is intelligible, able to be understood, and that the prophetic word is heard in the church; that what we do does not turn people away from God because what we do is unintelligible or un-prophetic. Will we not be judged by God for that?

Here are some examples where I think we may be unintelligible to the IDIOTES who visits us. They are just examples to illustrate the principle, which I believe is a theological principle resending an important criterion for our corporate life. These examples are offered, to illustrate the point.

### Example 1

Where the words of the songs of worship are not intelligible. The Bach Anthem may have beautiful music and bring pleasure to Bach-lovers but can those who listen identify the words so as to say "Amen" = it is TRUE. The round sung in the fellowship service may be lots of fun, but is it intelligible; can we discern

the words? I am not suggesting we be either legalistic or pedantic. But surely intelligibility is something to aim at, as the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer made clear. (The service to be read in a loud voice and in the language of the people).

### Example 2:

The present arrangement of An Australian Prayer Book is confusing and unintelligible and not just to the IDIOTES. I refer to the Morning and Evening Prayer Services and to the numerous alternatives in the Communion Services. For me Sunday Services Revised, in use for a period before AAPB in 1978, had much to commend it. The Sunday Services were clearly set out with large print in a way that was easy for everybody to follow. I hope that future Prayer Book Revisions will give attention to the arrangement and presentation of the services along the model of SSR and keep the IDIOTES, not just the initiated in-group, in mind.

Finally, those of us who are engaged in congregational leadership would do well to think about the IDIOTES who may come into our churches, mindful that our city is now a kaleidoscope pluralism. The IDIOT in Lindfield may be an educated, affluent white Anglo Saxon; the IDIOT in Lakemba may be a poor Turk. We in this Diocese are well trained in examining the context of our biblical text but are we as careful in examining the human contexts of our congregations so as to be intelligible to the IDIOTAI around us? We exegete the word but do we exegete the world?

Paul Barnett

This is not a call to gimmickry, compromise or ill-thought out short-cuts. But it is a plea for reflection, for freshness and above all for love — love of the

## "we exegete the word but do we exegete the world?"

IDIOT who would come to church. For, where else can God be found? We must not stop IDIOTAI finding Him, but do all in our power to make it possible.

Let me conclude with a practical suggestion: that you form a small working group in your church, with good representation from various age and interest groups, to analyse how intelligible your services are and how prophetic the ministry of the word. It may be that the work of ministry will be enhanced by the prayerful discoveries of the group, to the salvation of many IDIOTAI. I pray that the IDIOTES who came to your church will say, in response to what he sees and hears, "surely God is among you".

## Children's ministry

### The Cinderella of the Church

Owen Shelley speaking at a Church of England Boys' Society Leaders Camp recently, said:

"I think that the only people in our parish who are interested in ministering to the children are those of us who are involved with them. The rest of the church members give the appearance that they couldn't care less."

Coming from a woman who is the superintendent of the Sunday school of a large suburban church this is a very disturbing statement.

Unfortunately it is true of many congregations who have filed children's ministry in the "too hard" basket. Children's Ministry is the Cinderella of the Church.

One only has to peruse current statistics to become aware that there has been a staggering decline in the numbers of children involved in church-based activities. Sunday schools and children's clubs such as CEBs and GFS have all recorded a marked drop in attendances and this trend is continuing.

The reasons given for this decline are very varied. The most common is the changing nature of the town or suburb where the church is located.

"Our district is aging. Young people cannot afford to buy into this suburb and are forced to move out when they marry, thus there are more older people than children in our area now."

Most Anglican congregations are predominantly anglo-saxon and the influx of ethnic groups into many inner suburban areas has had a marked effect. A visit to the local school soon confirms the fact that there is a large number of children whose family belongs to different persuasions.

In many instances the predominant affiliation of these children is one of the Orthodox churches while in other areas there are increasing numbers of Muslim families.

Another reason given for the decline in numbers is the wide variety of conflicting interest.

In some respects the problem of declining attendances is the least of our difficulties.

Many of those children who are involved and attend very regularly for quite some time eventually fail to become mature members of a local congregation. A number of factors have a bearing on this. There has been a failure on the part of some of the groups themselves to correlate their activities with the overall ministry of the church.

What then can be done to tackle the problem?

### Parenting groups

Firstly there needs to be a renewed awareness on the part of those of us who are parents and grandparents that we are primarily responsible for the spiritual upbringing of our children. Much of us have abdicated in favour of the Sunday school teacher or children's club leader whose influence is limited.

Perhaps churches should be conducting "parenting" groups to guide and help those of their number who are grappling with the responsibility of parenthood.

Secondly much more effort must be given to the training of those who are involved in ministry to children through church based activities. Many of our ineffectiveness can be traced to the failure of those who teach to communicate the message clearly and appropriately.

Another forward move may be the appointment of full-time workers with children.

"Inter generational worship" is a phrase that is being bandied about in these days. Basically it means that the congregation attempts to adjust the traditional way their services are conducted to cater for the interests of all ages.

This isn't easy as many of our current practices have had long traditions and are deeply entrenched so that many members strongly resist change.



# Russian poetess free but not free

## KGB pressure on Irina Ratushinskaya



Irina Ratushinskaya

The Kiev KGB appears to be stepping up pressure on poetess IRINA RATUSHINSKAYA, who was unexpectedly freed from imprisonment on 9 October 1986.

Ratushinskaya and her husband, IGOR GERASHCHENKO, have expressed concern to friends in the West on a number of counts:

1. As happened in the case of veteran human rights campaigner academician ANDREI SAKHAROV, Gerashchenko's flat is being jammed for radio reception: The jamming is so bad, that not even local radio broadcasts can be heard in the flat, let alone any foreign broadcasts. This is causing particular concern, because several weeks ago Ratushinskaya heard the tail end of a western broadcast in which it was claimed that in an interview to a Western journalist, Ratushinskaya had stated that she considered her fate to be inextricably bound to the Soviet Union, and had no wish to emigrate from the USSR. As this is the exact reverse of the truth, Ratushinskaya fears that Western journalists, trying to telephone her are, in fact, being put through to a female KGB operative, who feeds them disinformation.

2. Censorship of mail: Virtually no correspondence is reaching them. The few letters which are passed on from time to time are all months old. Among material which has definitely been posted to them from abroad are numerous invitations to emigrate from a number of countries: All these invitations have, so far, been intercepted e.g. an invitation

sent by the Swedish Writers' Union, invitations from Universities in the West etc.

3. Tampering with telephone. Their telephone is cut off for days at a time, be it to local calls or calls from abroad. In the case of calls from the West, the Kiev International switchboard frequently maintains that there is no reply at the number, even though Irina is too ill to go out and is at home all the time. Calls which do get through are heavily monitored and frequently cut off if the KGB listeners consider that the conversation has taken an "undesirable" turn.

All the above measures are illegal under Soviet law.

Furthermore, KGB Officials are questioning Ratushinskaya and Gerashchenko's friends for information as to substance of conversations they have had with them, what Irina and Igor have said about their plans for the future, and so forth.

Ratushinskaya and Gerashchenko have asked their personal friends in the West to stress that whatever claims may be made by Soviet Officials, their sole aim is to leave the USSR, as quickly as possible, for urgent medical treatment in the West. In view of the physical mistreatment she suffered during four years in hard labour camp, Irina categorically refuses to submit to treatment by Soviet doctors, who swear an oath of allegiance to the Soviet State before taking up medical practice.

(KESTON COLLEGE)

## MAINLY ABOUT PEOPLE

### DIOCESE OF GIPPSLAND

Reverends W. J. Ireland & Russell MacQueen from the parishes of Stratford and Morwell were ordained on October 19 by Bishop Neville.

### DIOCESE OF RIVERINA

Rev. Robert Collie, Vicar of Greythorn has accepted the parish of Wilcannia, which includes the centres of White Cliffs, Tilpa and Tiboooburra.

Rev. Harley Lockley, assistant in the parish of Griffith, will become Chaplain to Wagga Base Hospital and also Priest-in-charge of the parish of The Rock.

Rev. Rex Everett, of the parish of Deniliquin, will become assistant priest in the parish of Griffith.

### DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

Rev. Gary Harch, from the Cathedral parish will move to the parish of Middlemount, Tieri and Dysart at the end of January.

Rev. Peter Elson has resigned as Rector of Springsure to become Rector of the parish of Yeronga in the Diocese of Brisbane.

Rev. Rod Hart, Priest-in-Charge of Barcoo will become Parish Priest of Springsure in late January.

Ven. Rob Philp's primary ministry early in the New Year will be as Chaplain to the Rockhampton Base Hospital and Priest-in-Charge of Mount Morgan.

### DIOCESE OF ADELAIDE

The Rev. P. Garland has resigned as Priest-in-Charge of St. Francis of Assisi, Northfield as from 31st January 1987. He will continue as Precentor of the Cathedral.

### DIOCESE OF SYDNEY

Rev. J. R. Livingstone will resign as Rector of Normanhurst on 31st January 1987 to become Director of Care Force.

Rev. D. Mansfield, Rector of Fairy Meadow, has accepted the position of Rector of Kiama.

Rev. R. Vassallo will resign as Asst. Minister of Turramurra on 12th December to become Asst. Minister of Panania on 14th December.

Rev. M. Eaton, Asst. Minister of West Pennant Hills is to become Asst. Minister of Balgowlah.

Rev. R. A. Miller will resign as Asst. Minister, West Wollongong to become Asst. Minister of Cataract with Ambarvale from 15th January 1987.

Rev. D. B. Coy will resign as Curate of St. Andrew's Cronulla to become Asst. Minister of Keiraville from 15th January 1987.

Rev. R. Robinson, Curate at Ingleburn with Denham Court & Rossmore will become Asst. Minister at Kurrajong on 25th January 1987.

Rev. H. Isaacs will resign as Curate at Doonside with Quakers Hill to become Asst. Minister at West Pennant Hills in January.

Rev. G. Crew will resign as Curate of St. Andrew's Sans Souci to become Asst. Minister at West Wollongong on 19th January 1987.

### DIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

Rev. D. J. Conolly, Incumbent St. John's East Malvern will become Incumbent St. Faith's Burwood. He will be inducted by the Archbishop on 26th February 1987.

Rev. G. S. Perkins, Priest-in-Charge of St. Silas', North Geelong, with St. Michael and All Angels, Corio, will become Incumbent of Holy Trinity, Bacchus Marsh. He will be inducted by Bishop John Stewart on 28th January 1987.

Ven. F. L. Cultriss, Chaplain to the Archbishop, became Associate Priest, St. George's Malvern, on 30th November.

Rev. J. D. Potter, Incumbent of St. Paul's, Canterbury, has become Incumbent, All Saints, St. Kilda. He was inducted by the Archbishop on 10th December.

## SMBC graduation continued

students, 20% were proceeding to the overseas mission field, 45% were entering Christian ministry in Australia and 35% were returning to the workplace better equipped for the ministry involved there.

An audience of approximately 900 enjoyed contributions from the student choir, and the Rev. John Coleman, Editor of New Life, who challenged the students to "preach the word" and underlined the importance of returning to the centrality of the preaching ministry of the church.

In his report, David Cook mentioned that 1987 will bring many changes to the life of the College. The new Certificate in Biblical Counselling course will be launched and the Rev. John Webb will begin on the Faculty in January 1987 to be responsible for this course.

Already, Stage One of the building programme has begun with the erection of a new food store building.

For the first time a team of students will

go overseas to Papua-New Guinea for the College Mission in June.

Mr. Cook said that there was much cause for rejoicing at the record enrolment of students for next year which was going to stretch the accommodation resources of the College to the limit.

"The need of the world around us for the gospel is obvious", he said, "we have the gospel, we have the students, we have the Faculty who are prepared to give themselves unstintingly to this strategic ministry. It is our prayer that God will continue to raise up prayerful friends for the College".

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### Church Services

MELBOURNE: St. Jude's Carlton. Near city centre, cnr. Lygon and Palmerston Streets. Sundays 10 a.m. Holy Communion. 7 p.m. Evening Worship. Minister, Peter Adam. Visitors welcome.

GOORPAROO: St. Stephen's, Brisbane, Cnr. Cavendish and Chatsworth Roads. Visitors welcome: 7.30 a.m. and 9 a.m. Holy Communion. 7 p.m. Sunday at Seven. Rector: Rev. Ken Baker.

CANBERRA: St. Matthew's Wanniasse Cnr. McBryde Cres and Laurens St. Services: 8.15 a.m. 10 a.m. and 7.00 p.m. All welcome. Rev. Paul Watkins.

Sydney Holy Trinity ("The Garrison Church), The Rocks. Services: 11 a.m. Thurs., Fri. & Sat. 10.30 a.m. & 7.15 p.m. Sunday. AAPB & BCP. Crying Room, S.S., Kids & Youth Clubs. Off-street parking. Good Acoustics (02) 27 2664.

TEA GARDENS/BULANDELAH: St. Andrew's, Cnr. Wilt & Oden Streets, TG. Holy Communion 2nd & 4th Sundays (8 a.m.) Other Sundays (10 a.m.) Minister-in-charge: Rev. Ian Copland B.A., Th.L. (049) 97 4264.

## Price Increase

To meet the rising costs of publication and posting there will be a slight increase in the price of the Church Record. From the first issue of 1987 the Record will be 80 cents per copy, \$24 per year posted. Thank you for your continued support throughout 1986, and we look forward to bringing you the best of news and comment on christian ministry in Australia and overseas in the new year.

## Accommodation

MANLY. Serviced rooms, casual or permanent. Cooking facilities. H.R. Russell, 17 George St., Manly, Ph. 949 2596.

Pensioner requires flat. Telephone 597 6570. After 6 p.m.

C.E.N.E.F. University Hall (opposite Sydney University) offers reasonably priced accommodation near city from late November to mid-February for families (\$37 per night) and single women (\$15 per night). For enquiries and bookings, phone The Director (02) 660 4881.

Reg. Nurse would like to share unit with retired lady share expenses please write c/- Box No. 1512 Church Record Office.

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