



## Fighting Fundamentalism

A Spiritual Autobiography  
by Ven. Douglas Bartles-Smith

### Beverly Fraser writes:

Douglas Bartles-Smith's book begins with an insight into his formative years in a mainly Anglo-Catholic environment with a bit of evangelical 'fundamentalism' thrown in for good measure and a spell in the armed forces which seemed to help solidify his desire to become an ordained minister.

He takes us on his eventful journey shepherding churches in varying locations. He shares the peaks and troughs in home and family life as they came up hard against his role as a vicar and the potential conflicts arising from differences in the 'interpretation' of scripture.

Douglas provides an insight into his role as an Archdeacon (of Southwark) - a role no doubt flavoured by his interests and his decision to engage with various issues. Examples are provided of contributions to debates and activities such as 'Faith in the City'.

Reference is made early in the book to 'intelligent Christianity' with a whole chapter devoted to this concept which is an underlying central train of thought throughout this book.

The two last chapters give insight into Douglas's thoughts on the issues relating to fundamentalism as it presents itself in 21st Century society - in particular the havoc wreaked on 'humankind' as a result of the actions of those with extreme beliefs.

One concern I had however, was that evangelism - which at its most 'basic' is the sharing of the 'Good News' of the New Testament - was so often juxtaposed with 'fundamental extremism'. This coupled with the inference that those of an evangelical persuasion lacked intellectual rigor in their thinking and interpretation of scriptures was, some might say, a somewhat outdated way of thinking.

That should not distract us, however, from the harm that has so often been done in the name(s) of a particular faith or 'God'. As Douglas stressed we should not only be aware of this but be ready to respond and counter any actions that detracted from the loving and caring God to whom Jesus attested.

This was because the 'fundamental truth' of the Gospel was that Christians of whatever 'churchmanship' were joining in 'the mission of God' (Missio Dei) and that God did the calling to which individuals responded.

It seemed that the dilemma individual Christians and groups faced was not only 'discerning' their own 'calling', but was also how they dealt sensitively and lovingly with the 'calling' of their sisters and brothers. In this they had to be mindful of another fundamental truth, which was that we are all made in the image of God and that God calls and uses individuals - whatever their ethnic origin, creed, gender or sexual preference - for 'who' they are and from 'where' they are (not who, what or where others think they should be).

This book provides an informative *ecclesiastical* insight into the Church of England and some food for thought - and, as such, is an interesting read.



Beverly Fraser, Lay Canon  
Southwark Cathedral

## New Diocesan Safeguarding and Child Protection Adviser

THE DIOCESE has appointed Jill Sandham to be the Safeguarding and Child Protection Adviser.

Jill, who is a qualified social worker, has been working since 2004 as the Operations Director of Welcare. Prior to that she was the Diocesan Community Development Adviser, a post which she took having been the Diocese's first Child Protection Co-ordinator.

In this role she was instrumental in helping shape and implement the Diocese's first Child Protection Policy.

This new full time post builds on and enlarges the work undertaken by Claire Turney who has been part time Child Protection Adviser to the Diocese. Jill, 55, is married to Hugh Dawes, Vicar of North Dulwich, St Fath's, and takes up her new role at the end of August. Speaking about her appointment she said 'I am delighted to be appointed to this full time post which shows the importance that the Diocese places on making sure that we and all those within our parishes work together to

ensure that our church communities are safe places for all who belong to them.'

Bishop Tom said, "I am delighted that Jill Sandham will be working within the Diocese in this important new role. In making this a full time post we are showing how seriously we take safeguarding children and vulnerable adults within our churches. Jill Sandham brings with her vast experience in this field and within the Diocese itself and I look forward to working with her."

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