



Feeling the sun on your back

It's that lovely time of year again when we anticipate newness and fresh beginnings. It's what some writers have termed "The sweet of the year." The sun is beginning to shine more and, as it does so, people's faces begin to lighten too. The clock has gone forward and after a few bleary days we've begun to enjoy longer hours of daylight; and all this tells us that the greatest of events is just around the corner; just a few short weeks away in fact. I am of course referring to the start of the cricket season.

In April the whole season stretches in front of us and for those who like that sort of thing there is the prospect of long hours watching or playing or listening to the matchless commentary on Radio Four's Test Match Special.

Cricket has often been described as a metaphor for life and although this can easily be pushed too far; and although one must be wary of getting too precious about it, there is some truth in it. Batting especially bears strong comparisons with life. Moments of rest and moments of intense concentration; the need to face all sorts of different challenges from different bowlers; the feelings we sometimes have of being alone against the world which is coupled with the need to work with other people in order to achieve anything. Although batting sometimes seems a solitary occupation the fact is that co-operation with the other batsman is essential in order to avoid being run out. I could go on but let's leave it at that for now. Perhaps your own imagination will, by now, be running away with other points of contact (assuming you're still awake, apologies to those for whom cricket means only terminal boredom and sleep.)

There is one way above all others in which batting in cricket can image real life and that is the end of an innings. Death comes suddenly. Not unexpectedly; we all know we're going to die just as the batsman knows he's going to be out at some point, but when it comes, it comes with a finality which is profound and devastating. When the umpire's finger goes up, there is no debate; no going back; no recovery; all that remains is to accept what has happened and to walk off the field. Sometimes it's just; sometimes it's mistaken, but either way, it's happened. The game goes on and the cricketer has to learn that it can continue perfectly well without him. So it is with life and death. Again the points of analogy go further but here has been a taste.

Here, too, the analogy stops because death opens the way to a new life, and that new life is emphatically not simply a second innings; it is not simply more of the same; that new life is infinitely more glorious and joyful and peaceful and hopeful and loving than we can ever conceive; perhaps like hitting a six off every ball and never tiring of it emotionally or physically; like enjoying every moment as much as the first; like being able to enjoy others succeeding and revelling in such enjoyment too.

Easter doesn't take away the devastating finality of death or the necessity of eventually reaching the point of being able to accept that, but it does open to us a vista which puts that death into the context of eternity; which gives it infinite importance, and which fills it with meaning.

May God bless you with a new understanding and a new sense of meaning for life this Easter.

**Michael Camp**

**COMMON  
GROUND**

In this edition Michael Camp writes our leading article. It also appears in the magazines of Bromley Methodist Church & Bromley URC