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MINISTERIAL PREPARATION BRISTOL FASHION

As every Bristol College student learns sooner or later, the purpose of the College was defined during the eighteenth century as being to produce “able and evangelical” ministers. Ability and conviction are not to be played off against each other, nor an apparent excess in one to be viewed as an adequate compensation for deficiency in the other. Both require to be nurtured for effective ministry. Both, ultimately, derive from God who calls men and women to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to lead and equip the whole people of God in their worship and mission. The focus of this paper is necessarily upon the “ability”, but it is to be understood throughout that the other term is always implicitly in view, and the two cannot be separated in ministerial preparation.

“Preparation” — this in itself is a more popular word at Bristol these days than “training” and for several reasons. The latter term can suggest that there is a given body of information, a well-defined set of skills and behaviour patterns which are to be imposed on a student, so that after three or four years of such instruction and conditioning, there will be produced a ready-made minister equipped for a life-time's service. We prefer to consider the ministry itself as a continuous learning experience through service and reflection, and that the time in College is but the beginning of this journey: the preparation of a person for entry into the ministry, through the discovery of *how* to develop in thought, spirituality, pastoral relationships and leadership, at least as much as *what* is to be learnt. Of course, certain practical skills and techniques need to be grasped early on, and certain areas of experience to be encountered by the student — more of this below. But it is quite unrealistic to suppose that *every* eventuality and demand of ministry can be covered in “training” without superficiality and its attendant dangers creeping in. What can and should be attempted in the limited time and resources available, is the development of a truly ministerial mind which, having grappled theologically and practically with certain fundamental items in worship, pastoral care and mission, can instinctively relate in similar fashion to a wide area of contingencies. If this seems to open the door to the charge of vagueness, it also means a measure of flexibility, which is increasingly necessary today in view of the wide range of age and previous experience with which students are entering college.

Moreover, if the emphasis falls too heavily on the particular “skills” to be acquired for ministry, the most fundamental issue of all can be overlooked or forgotten; *what* or rather *who*, the minister is meant to be. The candidate for the ministry certainly has to give some thought to this when facing an association ministerial recognition committee and the college's own body of interviewers when seeking entry. After that, it can be too readily assumed, by student, college and denominational authorities alike, that it is an issue too obvious for serious reflection. But the experience of those who undergo an “identity-crisis” in the ministry indicates otherwise. What the minister is

supposed to do, must be based on an understanding of what he or she is called to *be*, and ministerial preparation must find room for this to be developed adequately.

All theological colleges have to try to provide a course which is both "academic" and "practical". How much relative time and energy is to be accorded to each, and how they are to be related together, is a subject of much debate and some experiment in colleges of all denominations. The most commonly re-iterated criticism of ministerial education is that the practical suffers at the expense of the academic. Some colleges have attempted to deal with this by providing a final year exclusively devoted to "pastoral studies", following on three years' primarily academic study. At Bristol, so far, we have decided against structuring the curriculum in this way, and not wholly for pragmatic reasons. It seems to us that if our conception of ministry is one in which theological reflection and actual practice are inseparable, there is much to be said for the college course reflecting this as far as possible, with the "academic" and the "practical" running in harness throughout. It may be too much to say that chronologically dividing the college course between a first academic and a later practical syllabus only reinforces an assumed division between the two, but we certainly feel that a student who is *continually* having to move between these poles will be encouraged to relate them and to see himself as living in the one world of ministry of which, indeed, they are but poles.

So, a student arriving at Bristol this autumn will right away embark on theological study, whether for the University degree in theology, or the Cambridge diploma, or a suitable preparation for either, and at the same time, will be introduced in various ways to theology and practice of ministry. A central feature is the weekly session on pastoral theology, in which the Principal himself takes a leading role. (Till recently, as former Bristol students will remember, this was so much the case that he was ceremonially ushered into the lecture room at the stroke of nine on Thursday mornings by the House President). These sessions follow a three-year cycle, dealing with such main topics as: Identity and Function of the Minister; Ministry; Health and Healing; The Minister as Leader and Administrator; Worship; Ministry and Nurture (including the various *rites de passage*); Preaching and Teaching; Ministry to the Dying and Bereaved; Children in the Church. Here the basic outlines are etched of what being a minister is about, in the study, in the pulpit, in the hospital, in people's homes and the community. Teaching techniques vary as appropriate, as does the teacher who is often not a member of the college staff, but from outside: doctor, psychiatrist, nurse, educationist, solicitor, "working minister" — or one of the students reflecting on his or her experience in a "placement", and so on. Also it should be said, the presence in these sessions of ministers doing a sabbatical term at Bristol is always invaluable. Just to give one example of the way themes can be tackled, a term's course on Ministry to the Dying and Bereaved last year began, not with a formal class on the subject, but with the students meeting in small groups to discuss two main questions: (1) In what ways, personally or pastorally, have you had to deal with death and bereavement? (2) What are the main issues which you think should be explored in relation to ministry in this area? This seemed the right way to

approach a subject where the pastor's own humanity is as sensitive and vulnerable as those to whom he ministers, and some of the students revealed afterwards that sharing with others (perhaps for the first time) in this way was a therapeutic as much as a "learning" experience. In succeeding sessions, use was made of the excellent film, "The Life that's Left", a G.P., and a nurse from a local hospice for the terminally ill, while the Principal and a tutor led the class to think out the pattern of pastoral practice and the necessity for a theology (an eschatology, in fact) appropriate to such situations.

Baptists have it on august authority that preachers are born, not made. But birth alone hardly suffices. How is the infant preacher brought towards maturity? The theology and dynamics of worship and preaching are dealt with initially in a first-year introductory course taken by the Principal, and also in the Pastoral Theology course. The former includes examination and discussion of sermon outlines devised by the students themselves. On one occasion in the first year, a tutor attends a Sunday service conducted by the student in a local church, and this is discussed by the two of them together shortly afterwards. Then there is the time-honoured, and much-lamented institution of Sermon Class, held weekly. At Bristol, the usual custom is for each student to deliver a sermon before the class twice while in college, in his penultimate year on a text of his own choice, in his final year on a text or passage set by the staff. This latter feature is more than a devious manoeuvre to corner a student on the most suspect part of his or her theology. It is designed to ensure that in the course of a year a wide range of scriptural material is used, and the questions of exegesis and exposition arising out of prophecy, synoptic gospels, Johannine writings, Pauline epistles or whatever, are presented to the class. Sermon class is attended by two members of staff who comment following the remarks of two students. The sermon is tape-recorded, and discussed in detail with the preacher by one of the staff members soon afterwards.

The criticisms of Sermon Class are well-known, and in part valid: its "artificiality" in setting and atmosphere, the strain of having to preach to a congregation deliberately gathered to "criticise" rather than simply to receive, the temptation it offers for theological (and maybe personal) point-scoring, and so forth. Yet, when all this is said, one suspects that if it were abolished, something like it would be invented instead. True, the atmosphere may seem coldly artificial. But that is precisely what the minister in the pulpit sometimes has to contend with even in church, and the servant of the Word has to learn to project himself beyond his emotions, or lack of them (what did the Apostle say about preaching in "fear and trembling?") As for the critical response, that of the students at any rate is habitually constructive, as indicative of strengths as of weakness, and often the class proves to be a learning occasion for all present (staff included). Above all, it is the case that in any branch of communication, at certain points the would-be communicator must, as a matter of integrity as well as development of technique, be exposed to realise how others actually hear, see and understand him. Illusions must give way to a measure of reality as to what is happening in the attempt to communicate, and it is very doubtful whether Sermon Class is any more painful than the parallel procedures

imposed on many novices in, for example, education, broadcasting and the performing arts.

So much for encouraging the development of the preacher. What of the pastor? We try to avoid two misguided notions: in the first place, that pastoral care is just a matter of smiles and commonsense; in the second, that we should run after every latest wonder-working technique and pseudo-science in the market of do-it-yourself psychiatry. There are certain basic disciplines to be grasped in pastoral counselling, above all that of being able to *listen*, which sounds so easy and yet is so demanding — as our first-year students discover in their introductory course on the subject. This takes them through some of the basic psychology of one-to-one relationships and requires them to work out their own understanding of what a concerned yet non-dominating counselling relationship is. Case-studies are worked through and, in two's and three's, short but effective exercises are undertaken in listening and reflecting back to the "client" what he seems to be saying and feeling. The communal life of college, it is pointed out, thereafter offers an ideal practice-ground for what Bonhoeffer in his *Life Together* called "the ministry of listening".

So far, it may sound as if ministerial preparation takes place only in college, but that is far from the case. As with everything else, the most effective way of learning is by doing, with opportunity for reflection upon the doing. Vital here are our student pastorates. For several years now, a number of smaller churches in and around Bristol have received pastoral oversight from college students. Admittedly, there is some element of virtue out of necessity here, since these are churches — often on "difficult" council estates — at present unable to afford a full-time minister yet still owning a manse, while the student pastors are usually family men needing a house during their college course. But the work done by the student pastor is seen as part of his total education for ministry. The student is responsible for services on two Sundays per month, and, as a rule of thumb, one weeknight meeting and a few hours' pastoral work per week. Other students can also share in this work. This, with a full college course, is demanding. But we have long ceased to be surprised at just how effectively the ministry is carried out, and the academic work sustained (even, in some cases, the University degree course). In fact, in the past four years we have "lost" three student pastorates which, as a result of the students' ministries, have progressed to the point of calling full-time ministers with HMF support.

It is, of course, important that the College should provide support for the student pastor, with opportunities to reflect on the experience. Periodically, the student pastors meet for a session together, with a tutor. In turn, each student shares with the group a particular issue, problem, or creative idea arising out of his work. This is then discussed at some length with the others. Quite apart from any help gained in relation to each particular issue, there is obvious value in ministers becoming more skilled in defining their problems and recognising the underlying issues which may not have first been apparent. And, in a denomination where the ministry can be isolationist, ministers quite simply need to learn how to talk with each other. One student pastor, at Southmead, is also usefully linked with the ministerial team at Horfield. In addition, from time to time issues arising out



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of the student pastorates are fed into the pastoral theology classes for examination by the college as a whole.

The norm is for other students to have a pastoral placement during at least one summer vacation, working alongside an experienced minister, seeing at first hand and sharing in the day-to-day work of ministry. Again, as important as the experience is what is thought about it. Church and student each write full reports, which are discussed with college staff. In addition, where thought appropriate, an extended placement of up to a year may be arranged for a student who has completed the normal academic and pastoral course, but who would benefit from a time of supported and monitored experience before seeking a call to a church. Last year, four such placements were arranged in the very different environments of Hall Green (Birmingham), Keynsham (near Bristol), Custom House (Newham, London) and Wellington (Somerset). Again the students concerned were required to feed back to college staff and the student body as a whole what was being learnt (or unlearnt).

As well as this staple diet of ministerial preparation, students are offered and required to take a number of options available to them. The Pastoral Clinical courses arranged in general and psychiatric hospitals each summer, by the Hospital Chaplaincies' Board, invariably prove highly worthwhile. The Bristol Medical School runs inter-disciplinary seminars with places for theological students. We are developing teaching links with Wesley Methodist College. Two fields in which co-operation here has proved stimulating are Urban Studies, taken in very imaginative fashion by a staff-member at Wesley, and Communication in the Electronic Age, in which we have been greatly helped by R.T. Brooks, formerly of the BBC. Moreover, the advantages of the College's situation near the centre of a large and complex city are increasingly apparent in preparing for ministry in modern society. The night when St Paul's erupted in riot and flame in April 1980, two of our students were in the area, doing their regular turn of duty in a hostel for young women at risk. In fact, our periodic course on Multi-Cultural Society virtually sets itself up in this city. Students benefit from placement also with social workers, industrial chaplains, and even Bristol Cathedral. And those who have conducted small-scale surveys of what is going on within just a quarter-mile radius of the College have learnt never to take for granted that they will "know" what life is like on their church's doorstep.

Indeed, the opening of eyes sums up much of our aim in ministerial preparation — opening just not to theology but, through theology and experience to the needs of the Christian community and the world. In all this, the local congregation, with its specific peculiarities and gifts, in its own unique bit of the world, must not be lost sight of amid the generalising tendencies which are the temptation of any educational process. With this in mind, we have recently been developing a scheme whereby on entry to College each student (except student pastors) is linked as an associate member with one of four churches near the centre of Bristol. The aim is two-fold: to try to ensure that College and local church together form the context of ministerial preparation; and to extend the student's experience of congregational life beyond that with which he or she happens to be familiar

— and sometimes in marked contrast to it. The ministers and some lay members of these churches are gladly taking on the role of partners with us in preparation for ministry.

Finally, it should be said that, whatever the justifiable question-marks placed these days against a residential institution as the right means of preparing ministers, it remains the case that, provided such an institution does not become isolated from the life of the churches and the world around it, the sheer experience of living closely in community for thirty weeks in the year, for three or more years, is itself an enabling factor in producing “able” ministers. By some standards it may seem to be an “artificial” community. But there is nothing artificial about the qualities which it can engender in its members: acceptance of others as they are; encouragement of others to become more than they are at present; sharing with others in the quest for fuller understanding of a gospel which is to be lived rather than locked in a system; and preparing with others occasions of worship, when the whole is offered to God in thanksgiving and praise, as happens in our weekly eucharist, the spiritual focus of College life. That is the basis for ministry and preparation for it.

Keith Clements

DOORS TO ETERNITY

“Begin at the beginning” the King said gravely, “and go on to the end; then stop”. (1) Not bad advice that, either to poets, painters or preachers.

My brief (and it will be) is to offer some thoughts on the help preachers can get from the plastic arts, painting, sculpture, carving etc. though my main interest lies in painting. I am not an expert, scholar or connoisseur, and happily leave Saul’s armour to those who can wear it. I’m a preacher, if anything, and acknowledge my debt to artists who have interpreted for me truths I seek to communicate, and the hopes and fears of my audience. In order to communicate our Eternal message, we preachers need *every* insight into the contemporary situation that we can get.

“... those who stand in the pulpit, midway between the theological schools and the world of passion and ambition, cannot afford to deprive themselves of the insights which the novelist, poet, the dramatist and the painter can provide.” (2)

What are these insights? To begin with — just to see the beauty of the Universe, the sheer loveliness of the world we live in.

“If we may judge from the world of nature, God loves colour,” wrote Stephen Winward. (3). Or again,

“The beautiful, wherever it is, is ours, because it came from our God” said Clement of Alexandria. (4)

So art may represent beautiful things, and be a response, akin to the Psalmist’s, to God’s creation. We may be made aware of the lovely shape or colour of something, a tree, a cloud or a stream, because we first had our attention called to it by a painter.

I remember going to the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy once, and there was a colourful picture of a shop. Red bricks, yellow bricks, blue tiles; purple bricks in the fore and for good measure, the grey and white clouds reflected in the windows; it was all there, a riot of colour. The wet pavement (this in the picture, too) reflected all in reverse. The shop was 200 yards from where I lived in Beckenham. I'd never noted sufficiently the richness of colour. Has this anything to do with the preacher? It has — the picture opens our eyes and minds to the rich variety of God's creative work. I thought of Henry Drummond's words:

"Physical beauty makes for moral beauty a mere touch of it in a room, in a street, even in a door-knocker is a spiritual force." (5)

Perhaps if our eyes were more open to the beauty of God's creation, we would be more appreciative, more alert to what God has provided. The painter can help us.

"We're made so that we love

First when we see them painted, things we have passed

Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;

And so they are better painted – better to us,

which is the same thing. Art was given for that;

God uses us to help each other so,

Lending our minds out" (6)

Probably so far the running is fairly easy, the going is flat, and we are within sight of home. If art remains illustrative we can perhaps make sense of it. But since the advent of colour photography the artist need no longer be confined to reproducing what he sees. He may take the constituent elements and make a pattern. He may emphasize one element to the point of distortion, thus drawing attention to it. I once "taught art" or rather encouraged art in a school in Zaire. I refrained from teaching the laws of perspective or other devices of another culture. The boys drew as they felt, or responded, to life. Footballers had size 14 feet, gardeners had huge hands capable of dealing with anything, and the guinea fowl in the tree was such that even if the hunter suffered from 'clot-behind-the-trigger' he couldn't miss. Each one picked out the essential thing and exaggerated it to convey a message. So Picasso, profoundly shocked when Guernica was bombed during the Spanish Civil War, expressed his horror in the painting of that name. When the ancient and beautiful Basque town was destroyed he painted no nostalgic view of it, nor even the ruins, in perspective. He painted the bombs falling, the sheer terror of the mother trying to shield her child; the bull's head — symbol of savage ferocity, and the horse's mouth agape in agony ... and human bodies and limbs no longer joined in harmonious unity. No-one can miss his indictment of the 'volunteers' who assisted General Franco in this wanton cruelty.

Surely a 'Crucifixion' should be as angry as that? Surely 'The Flight into Egypt' should convey the terror of the parents as they fled Herod's search? Pictures need not have a Biblical theme, but if they do they are most helpful when the imaginative reconstruction of the artist faithfully interprets the Scripture. Poussin's 'Madonna and Child' may be excellent painting, but is the calm lady in blue too serene for one who fled as a refugee to Egypt? and the fat bambino of this and a hundred other Nativity scenes not an idealised

WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

409, Barking Road, Plaistow, London, E13 8AL

Dear Fellow Ministers,

The phone on my desk rang — my Secretary's voice — "The Rev. Jim Clarke rang while you were out. He is waiting for your copy for the next issue of the Fraternal".

I could hardly believe that time had passed so quickly. It seemed only a week or two since I had agonised over my last literary masterpiece, and I was already under pressure to produce the next.

There had been so much to do — letters to write — sermons to prepare — all the paraphernalia of committees and agendas and minutes that threaten to swallow us up in an ever rising tide of paper.

The trouble is, and you may have felt this at times, that it is possible to be so busy, so occupied with the machinery of Church or Mission, that we can forget the real purpose and meaning of it all. We are here to glorify God as we proclaim Christ by word and action — and, unless all our activities and all our structures further this end, then "we are no more worthy to be called His Church".

It is with such considerations in mind that we have decided that we at West Ham Central Mission need to stand back from our many concerns and activities, and to seek afresh the vision and the guidance and the spiritual power without which our work is bound to "miss the mark" in the deepest sense.

May I ask you, brothers and sisters, to be much in prayer for the West Ham Central Mission in these coming months. We who are intimately involved in the work are observing November 16th - 21st as a Week of Prayer for our work. Day by day we shall seek afresh God's will and His blessing on our work. Will *you* also pray for us, during that week especially? We have also arranged a Public Service of Re-dedication on Saturday, 5th December, at 7 p.m. at West Ham Central Mission. As the Mission stands "on the threshold" of an exciting and tremendously challenging future — we shall join with our many friends and supporters as we lay all our gifts, talents and resources at the feet of Christ — for Him to mould, to use and to bless. If you can possibly come, that would be wonderful. If not, then please remember the Service in your prayers. Pray particularly for Bernard Green who has graciously agreed to preach on that occasion.

May the Lord bless you in your Church and in your home.

Sincerely yours,

Trevor W. Davis
Superintendent Minister

picture that helps us little? Is not Millais' 'Widow' casting in her two small coins that bit too well-dressed and self-conscious as she puts in all she had?(7) The fat child beside her is more a vehicle of Millais' craft than a help to our understanding of the Scripture.

If we insist that the artist paints 'nice' pictures we may end up with the pretty, or illustrative anodyne thing that reveals nothing of the beauty of creation. Nor will such art have message or impact for it does not deal with real situations, real emotions or indeed, real people. We end up then with a Poussin 'Crucifixion' where each figure is posed, the whole atmosphere relaxed and theatrical, and there is nothing to offend or instruct us. Look at 'Guernica' again, and you will see that Picasso has more feeling of agony and pain in a single horse's head than Poussin in a whole crucifixion scene.

This brings up the purpose of the artist. He may paint, like Gully Jimson in Joyce Carey's *The Horse's Mouth* because he can do no other. As the blackbird sings, and as the prophet speaks when the Lord has spoken, so the painter must paint, and it would be impertinence to impose a theology on what he has done. But we must pass by some artists as of lesser importance to our work as preachers.

I have found help in Stanley Spencer's pictures of Cookham. He paints with a deep religious conviction and at the Resurrection morning it is real people we can know and recognise who come from the graves. The residents of Cookham, in working clothes, overalls and aprons may be the result of a little artistic licence, but there's no doubting the reality and truth of the Resurrection. Or again, 'Christ carrying the Cross' (Tate Gallery) depicts our Lord as though coming through the village street, with every house window crowded with curious onlookers. Of course, it goes beyond the printed record, but one senses the feeling is right. There are the anonymous soldiers, bearing no responsibility, showing no shame, "we were only obeying orders". For me, the sadness of the crucifixion hour and the joy of resurrection dawn became more clear as Stanley Spencer held the truth this way and that to let the light fall on facets I had not seen before. I recall, too, Carol Weights' 'Entry into Jerusalem' at another Summer Exhibition. Not palm fronds, but bunting and flags decorated the highway for this was Christ entering our town. There were children looking over a wall, a knot of workmen intrigued by, or indifferent to the procession. I think there was a blind woman tapping a white stick along the way, and a pale girl running out wonderingly. The details are obscure — it is twenty years since I saw the picture — but the effect remains. Some gladly received Him, but some were stonily indifferent. It would have been more appropriate from the looks of some, to silence the enthusiasts, but Christ looked unperturbed by their excitement and one felt if they were silenced the very stone would cry out. So, majestically he rode into our town, and for a while I felt I had shared a triumphal entry. He came that bit nearer to me as he entered Cookham.

I find I do not mind if the artist, recreating for our day, deals with Scriptural themes with wonder and imagination. For too long we have expected our art to be pleasing and simple — it is the constant plea to poet, painter and preacher. Forty years ago, my copy of the *British Weekly* was delivered to the home of a Yorkshire Baptist where I was spending part of

the Easter vacation. My friend picked it up and brought it to me with shock and disgust written all over his face. "Just look at this" he said, pointing to Graham Sutherland's 'Crucifixion' which covered the title page. "It is dreadful to look at. They never ought to have allowed anything so horrible to be seen by the public." "Perhaps", I ventured, "the crucifixion was like that", but I don't think he heard me. I cannot convey in words the impact of the picture. Art takes on where words end. But go to St. Matthew's church, Northampton, you will also see Henry Moore's 'Madonna and Child' there; and see 'Christ on the Cross'. The young body hangs in real agony, the face is distorted with pain, and the legs are bowed with the cruel weight they take. The hands are torn, and blood flows from them and the nailed feet. No-one seeing that picture will preach Christ crucified without added depth and feeling.

This is a far cry from what we have perhaps been taught is 'art'. The pictures of N.T. scenes that decorated (not graced) the walls of the Sunday School I attended were not of this order. They resembled more the 'religious pictures' Mrs Marston lingered over when out with Hazel, gypsy girl, and prospective daughter-in-law.

"... then she came to one of the crucifixion ... 'Oh! what a drowsome un! I dunna like this shop" said Hazel tearfully. "What'm they doing to 'im? Oh. they'm great beasts!"

"What is it my dear?" Mrs Marston looked over her spectacles ... "That there picture! They'm hurting Him so cruel. And Him fast and all!" "Oh!" said Mrs Marston wonderingly, "that's nothing to get vexed about. Why, don't you know that's Jesus Christ dying for us?" "Not for me!" flashed Hazel.

"My dear! Needs to be that one man die for the people" quoted Mrs Marston easily." (8)

So we ask sometimes for pictures 'that are nothing to get vexed about' and are impatient of artists whose style we cannot understand, or whose symbols are inexplicit. Sometimes children have a sounder instinct for what is good. At one school I knew, children painted pictures bright with colour, alive with interest and full of imagination. This was their 'day-school' and the teacher drew out the best in them. What were these children to make of the dreary, sentimental stuff that for too long had been in their Sunday School? Thank goodness for a teacher who let them help choose pictures, patterns and colours that they would enjoy! But does this happen as often as it should? Unless there is rapport between picture and viewer there will be no praise, no excitement, no feeling at all.

I was once, nearly thirty years ago, in Glasgow Art Gallery, and one picture had a gallery to itself. It was Salvador Dali's 'Christ of St. John the Cross'. I had read that too much fuss had been made about it. "The artist was an extrovert!" Yes, I know he once went on stage to speak wearing a diver's suit and accompanied by two poodles. Yes, he had to be helped out, he got too hot! He'd been Cubist, and Surrealist, exploring the dream-world until the movement became too closely tied to Communism. But, back to the picture ... I was determined not to be prejudiced, and yet I was, I suspect! The picture was flanked by blue curtains. Christ was seen as from above, as

though God were looking down. The head is young, the body young, foreshortened, but strong and brown, and eloquent of zestful life. Yet the bottom of the picture is in another, human perspective. The two perspectives are joined, and at the human level three men stand, each very isolated from the others. They seem stunned and sort out their nets, or stand by the boat as if dazed. But there is a light from the East already illuminating the figure on the cross. Could this be already prefiguring a resurrection? (In our local churchyard, the tombstones face Eastwards, all that is, except the parson's! "He has to keep an eye on his flock" an old man told me). Before the picture were five rows of chairs, in semi-circular arrangement. I took my place with twenty or so city workers. Men and women came, wondered and commented. In the hour I was there a hundred must have come and gone. I could not help but notice that some were moved to pray, and all were very quiet. Perhaps Dali's ways were odd, but his picture was God-inspired. After all, a man who climbed or poked in cracks for wild honey, and ate grasshoppers was maybe a figure of fun to some, but his message was clear to those who came to Jordan's banks.

Perhaps the artists, like hymnwriters (and some preachers?) do not give as much attention to the Resurrection as they do to the crucifixion? We have noted Stanley Spencer. Let us think briefly of Graham Sutherland's marvellous 'Christ in Majesty' that dominates the nave of Coventry Cathedral. Most people will have seen it, or pictures of it. I made mental notes of what was said around me!

"Aren't the colours wonderful!" "Christ really shines in glory there!" "He doesn't seem to be of any one or particular race!" "Look at that little man between His feet." "He looks so insignificant, yet he's there!" All out of proportion then? No, just a visual expression of the wonder that the great God even gives man a place in the scheme of things. "What *is* man that Thou are mindful of him?" Even 'Christ in Majesty' gives his child a place and calls him to share in His glory.

We need truth, and scientist and scholar can serve us here. We also need values and vision, and here is the artist's realm. God works through artists, opens our eyes and conveys His eternal message through them, to us preachers and all alive to the everlasting mercy. We get a new vision of the material world. Van Gogh paints a rush-seated chair and the beauty of textures, the reflections in tiles, the shadows with all their warmth, the muted yellows and reds and blue-tinged edges come to life, and open our eyes to a more wonderful creation than we ever knew existed. Man's creativity must always be interpreted within the creativity of God.

*"Yet is there life in that I make,
O thou who knowest, turn and see,
As thou has power over me,
So I have power over these
Because I made them for thy sake,
And breathed in them my agonies."*(9)

We get a new vision of the human situation. Artists have brought us face to face with the futility and waste of war, and the courage of man in peril. If we would share men's fears and doubts and hopes we cannot push aside

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Yours sincerely,

M.E. PURVER
General Manager

playwrights, poets and artists as of no importance, or as 'mere exhibitionists'. They may give us Saul Kane's —

"Glory of the lighted mind

How deaf I'd been, how dumb, how blind" (10)

— and increase our awareness of God and his handiworks. The vision of God still comes to those who seek it.

Was it Phillips Brooks who said "Toil terribly at your sermons"? I think so. I know it was Cezanne who said, "I would concentrate on Mt. St. Michel so hard it felt as though my eyes must bleed as I sought to know its secret!" The two are not so far apart as we once thought. We recall Fra Lippo Lippi's word to the constable who found him out, after midnight —

"You're my man you've seen the world

*- the beauty and the wonder and the power,
the shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises - and God made it all!*

For what? Do you feel thankful ay or no?" (11)

So we feel thankful, not just that God reveals Himself in the beauty of the lily, but in a thousand other ways, in artefacts simple and profound. Gully Jimson said to an uncomprehending Cokey —

"even jugs and chairs can be very expressive"

*and every space smaller than a globule of man's blood opens
into eternity of which this vegetable earth is but a shadow."* (12)

"Say it again!" "No I can't stop. It means a jug can be a door if you open it. And a work of imagination opens it for you." Opens a door into eternity.

John D. Viccars

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SUNDAY AND THE MEDIA

In the days when Sunday night was radio night and a later evening radio programme on the Light Programme could command an audience of 5 or 6 million, *Late Sunday Special* was born of research into the great British Sunday. It was then assumed or proved that the country feasted upon the Sunday papers and talked about them in the evening. Radio had to deal with those issues that the Sunday newspapers were raising. Of course, it had also to satisfy that worshipping community which wanted to be lifted out of the narrow confines of its own local church and assured that they were not on their own; it had to serve the housebound and it tried to put over the churches' case to persuade the outsider to look kindly upon the Church.

We shall never know how much it succeeded. There were those who said it was a holding operation while the country drifted into secularism. When the critics said that religious broadcasting had failed to keep the country Christian, there were those who replied that things would have been a lot worse without it.

Sunday in a Television Age

There are two views about Sunday coming from the Jewish commandments about the Sabbath which survive strangely into the TV age. They can be found in the two reasons given in the Pentateuch for the keeping of the Sabbath: 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth ... and rested on the seventh; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath and hallowed it' (Exodus 20); 'You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt ... therefore the Lord commandeth you to keep the Sabbath' (Deut. 5). Jesus, in his teaching, did not have to argue for the *holiness* of the Sabbath; but he did have to contend for the *compassion*, 'Do good and not evil on the Sabbath', 'Save life and not destroy it'.

In our day, these two emphases have emerged as religious and social. The religious emphasis is admittedly held strongly by a small minority; but it is also recognized by a much larger group. Churches are expected to hold religious services. When they do not, there can be irrational objections from those who never attend. If a church is closed, the protests are there. The high percentage of those who say they believe in God suggests a need for some symbol of the divine in national life.

What appears to have happened is that TV has followed the pattern set by society in its observance of the sacred weekend. Saturday is a day for shopping, sport, activities such as museums, zoos, trips into the country; Sunday is for domestic duties such as the cleaning of cars, the preparing of a family meal, visiting relatives, enjoying the parks. One of these Sunday activities seems to be going with some member of the family to church, not on a regular basis, but as an occasion.

The pattern varies, but it seems to be a pattern. Parties are usually Saturday and less frequently Sunday nights.

TV has followed rather than made this pattern so far. But it is having an effect upon it. Popular TV programmes have specific spots during the week,

but there has been a marked failure to sustain a popular programme at weekends. The nearest approach has been a programme which simulates an activity appropriate to the weekend — 'Match of the Day', the Sunday Film, and on BBC 2, the 'one day' Cricket. I do not use 'popular' in the sense of large audience, but rather 'audience loyalty'.

The Social Element

Most arguments for restricted activity on Sunday have been along the lines of the two emphases already mentioned — the holy and the social. The 'holy' argument has grown weaker and weaker, countered by the 'democratic' argument, 'why should you stop me doing what I want to do?'. But the social argument has cogency still. It is shown in the popularity of 'demonstrations'. Pickets may operate during the week, but real demonstrations belong at the weekend. Saturday is possible, but Sunday and Bank Holidays are the real days. These demonstrations reveal a very strong desire to assert social justice. Anyone living in a multi-national area knows that this is quickly picked up by ethnic groups who rapidly find causes for support. Television has failed to follow this adequately. It rouses the conscience on Mondays in *Panorama* and in every news bulletin. It has not caught the pattern that the British demonstrate on Sundays for social justice. In this form the Deuteronomy cause for keeping the Sabbath remains.

Television as Reflector and Initiator

According to the sociologists, the values of a society are of two kinds: *genetic*, inherited even from our animal ancestry, and *rational*. F.A. Hayek has pointed out the inadequacy of this because even from a purely sociological point of view the 'learnt rules' have been omitted. These learnt rules are what is most influenced by TV. That radio was (and to a certain extent TV continued as) a reflection of society cannot be denied. But TV has become much more powerful and what was occasionally noticed in radio has become major in TV. Society learns its values from TV as well as TV reflecting its values. The balance between TV as reflector, which it must partially be or it will be rejected, and TV as initiator, which every creative producer must want to be, is the most important balance in the whole field of media effect.

TV is so much part of the habits of life that it must be domesticated to a certain extent. That thing in the corner of the sitting room cannot continually project unintelligible or unacceptable symbols into the room. It would be switched off, the ultimate freedom left to every viewer. But equally if it played the role of a mirror and simply projected reflections it might not be switched off because it would not even be noticed. The balance is crucial.

The laws of that balance must be applied to Sunday. Two questions must be answered in depth: what is there to reflect? what initiative can TV take in developing the meaning of Sunday in contemporary life?

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What of Sunday is reflected in TV?

What is there to reflect? First, a sense of what is right for Sunday. There is an innate sense of certain things not being right for Sunday. This is an amalgam of 'genetic' and 'learnt rules'. The 'genetic' does not change, except very slowly, and is popularly defined as 'gut reaction'. It was observable in the opening of shops on Good Friday. No one minded food shops, but the opening of department stores caused an illogical objection. Among most of those I met, there was no question of 'learnt rules' or reason, but simply gut reaction — 'It don't seem right'. The same applied to the opening of a department store on Sunday.

One of the earliest examples of Sunday protest on TV came in the broadcast of 1984. The objection was to the horrific scene of the rat. Viewers protested against it being shown on Sunday. There was very little of the 'Don't frighten the children' protest; it was mostly, 'It doesn't seem right for Sunday'.

These negative reactions should lead any TV company to ask what is appropriate for Sunday and that will mean examining the accepted values for Sunday — 'genetic', 'learnt rules' and 'reason'. And it is not enough to deduce all this from behaviour. The fact that only a minority of people go to church on Sunday, does not prevent a sizeable 'moral majority' thinking that TV should have religion on Sunday. The objectors are a small intellectual minority who are out of touch with 'gut reactions' and an even smaller politically motivated minority. Compared with these minorities, church goers are considerable in number. Their activity must be reflected and a much larger group expect it to be.

But church-going is not the only Sunday activity. The Victorian Sunday has long since disappeared, with its carefully coded list of permissible activities. But if we examined it carefully we might find a code in modern attitudes if not behaviour. The sense of family is strongest on Sundays! There is also a strong sense of leisure and lack of stress. There is a noticeable tendency for people to want to be different people on Sundays. This tendency needs careful study. It has a long history and despite the number of people working on Sundays it still persists. In fact, the rise in unemployment has emphasised this tendency to be different on Sunday. On this day, the unemployed person is like everyone else.

A culture is evolving which cannot be defined rationally: 'Culture is neither natural nor artificial, neither genetically transmitted nor rationally designed. It is a tradition of learnt rules of conduct which have never been 'invented' and whose functions the acting individuals usually do not understand' (F.A. Hayek).

What of Sunday is reflected in TV must however be determined by a process of reasoning. That reflection must be of both the activities and the cultural assumptions or attitudes. The activities include those supportive of the accepted attitude and those attacking the attitude. Both are proof of the attitude. Those who attend church, those who dress differently and move more leisurely and with an added air of importance, the oppressed worker who is his own master, the unemployed who has the dignity of the employed, are supporters of the tradition. Those who demonstrate for social justice are also supporting the tradition. The 'rebels without a cause',

those who are destructive only in their activity, wrecking the traditional Sunday — the disruption caused to a summer resort centre is as sacrilegious in this sense as breaking up a church service.

When TV is reflecting it always has to decide, because it has the power of reflection, whether it is reflecting a support for some tradition or a protest against it. The viewer has a right to know whether he is being asked to participate or disapprove. An excellent example of this was the showing of the three *King* programmes over Easter, a time when the slightest vestige of religious feeling tends to surface. Did those three programmes ask the viewer to share the faith of Martin Luther King in non-violent persuasion or were they attempts to show that the rioters in Brixton had a point? A 'religious' programme of any kind invites participation. It is for this reason that it is reflected.

What of Sunday can be initiated on TV?

There was a time when complaints about religious broadcasting were met by the superior reply, 'Well! We can only reflect what is there. Religious broadcasting is as good or as bad as the churches themselves'. We can no longer say that. It was never an adequate answer, because the religious broadcasting department is a part of the Church, an active part and not simply a mirror of the Church's hopes and defects.

The first element of initiation is in selection — even the selection of what is to be reflected. In a religious culture which is a mixture of growth and decline, it may be necessary for broadcasting to reflect the decline, but not in such a way as to encourage participation — that would be to cause further decline. It is necessary for the broadcasting system to reflect the growth, not as an example of the typical which it never is, but as something in which viewers may participate. A simple example of this can be found in the early years when it was decided to broadcast good and well conducted services — helping with the singing, improving the liturgical sense, assisting in the construction of the sermon. In this way, the professionals had better broadcasts, the urge to participate may not have been felt by the non-churchgoers, but it was by the church goers and thus tended to improve the quality of church services and of singing, even shortening the sermons, throughout the land, whether broadcast or not.

An impartial reflection is meaningless. No one would attempt it in football. Selection is the first axiom of initiation.

A religiously orientated culture also needs information and education. The importance of *Everyman* was not seen in the size of its audience, but in the extent to which it was discussed. There is a parallel with church-going! There were many occasional viewers who were made aware of the world-wide interest of the Church. The programme on Ernesto Cardenal, to take but one random example, prepared viewers for the events that followed in Nicaragua and also for the participation of the church in those events. The W.C.C. special fund to combat racism would have caused less surprise if something like *Everyman* had been regular fare in the 60s. There is a field of broadcasting on radio and TV which, within the setting of religious broadcasting, can prepare the viewing public for the participation of the churches in unexpected activities.

A religious programme can educate and inform about the churches in a way that general broadcasting cannot. The growing points of Christian witness can be illustrated and explained in the setting of a tradition in a much more effective way than *Newsnight* or *Question Time*, both of which must inevitably regard the issue as a curiosity. Viewers need to know whether they are being taught within the tradition or being asked to discuss curious behaviour contrary to tradition.

This discussion which is really a defence of 'religious' broadcasting must be carried on elsewhere, but here it is relevant to the content of Sunday broadcasting.

New and unusual activity, development that look like divergence from orthodox theology, support for causes thought to be contrary to the tradition, all these and much else beside can be broadcast most effectively from the setting of traditional practices. In some ways, this was the value of the God-spot which on other grounds I would oppose.

Sunday Fare

Religious broadcasting has been as earnest in its endeavour to get outside Sunday as the churches have been to show that Christianity is not just a Sunday religion. But the plain fact is that for a public broadcasting system, Christianity has a special task on Sunday.

For reasons given earlier, the public expects programmes on Sunday to reflect religious activity, as surely as they expect sport on Saturday. Church services may not be required, but some religious equivalent more suited to viewing will be. When the Pope comes to Britain, however many services there are during the week, Sunday will still remain Sunday for the population and they will expect the BBC to know.

The Closed Period has had trouble from the start. It was intended to be abstinence from TV, so that people should not be kept away from Evening Worship. That was never a good idea and it did not last. The earlier proposal by Neville Davidson on CRAC that there should be a church service — preferably with a Scottish preacher — at peak viewing time never stood a chance, but it made sense and the public would have accepted it, even if they did not like it. There is still a need to mark Sunday.

Summary Conclusions

The foregoing has raised many points for discussion. If I read them aright they do not add up to a 'closed period' for religion; but they do add up to a special treatment for Sunday, consonant with the expectations of the viewing public. This would not be deduced from viewing figures or opinion polls, but from the moral and social attitudes of society, inherited, learnt and rationally explained, giving due weight to all three sources of values.

- a) religious activity should be reflected at the highest level of performance — the comparison with sport is not irrelevant.
- b) 'religious' should be interpreted broadly to include the expression of values whether related to worship and belief in God or not;
- c) the Christian point of view wherever it is relevant should be put adequately in all controversial discussion;
- d) the 'good taste' of a programme should be watched more sensitively on Sunday — *That was the week that was* would not have been tolerated on a Sunday night;

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- e) the changes in attitudes towards religion are best reflected on a Sunday when the subject is expected, but they should take into account more than a cerebral reaction to the subject;
- f) it is on Sunday and particularly in dealing with religious subjects that the producer must be clear about what he is doing in a controversial programme — encouraging participation, demonstrating for disapproval, presenting for judgement.

Edwin Robertson

BOOK REVIEWS

Celebration and Order by Stephen Winward (Baptist Union Publications)

Church Administration by Fred Bacon (Bristol and District Association) £2.20

Two of our colleagues have produced these books that cannot fail to help any minister who reads them.

Stephen Winward can now deservedly be described as the ‘father’-figure of liturgical renewal in our denomination. Long before the ecumenical and, more recently, the charismatic movements had opened our eyes to the riches of other people’s traditions, he was introducing ways of worshipping that made possible a greater participation on the part of the people and a deeper sense of the centrality of the eucharist. His writings have become indispensable in the renewal of our worship.

This, his latest book, is slight, compact, but full of practical advice in the structuring and offering of worship. The theology that lies behind a book such as this should, by now, be familiar to all of us. What is to be found here is detailed advice on how we might implement the insights that we have gained over the past two or three decades. This is a resource book that, even on the most cursory reading, will provide suggestions for the enrichment of our Sunday services. The book concludes with a helpful introduction to the lectionary, together with a complete list of the lessons covered in its two-year cycle. The lectionary is one of the surest safe-guards against imbalance in our preaching, ensuring that we proclaim the whole counsel of God and not simply that part of it which rates high in our current enthusiasms. As Stephen Winward repeatedly reminds us, true worship is trinitarian. And true preaching likewise.

Fred Bacon’s book is a marvel of precision, wide-ranging advice and comprehensive coverage of those tasks faced by ministers and church leaders. It covers everything from ways of integrating visitors and new members into the church to the most efficient plan for siting furniture in the minister’s study and church office, from the legal, pastoral and liturgical details of rites of passage to ways of creating filing systems that will assist in the retrieval of information.

Those who are already efficient administrators by nature will find their gift honed to an even more critical degree of sharpness by this book. Those who are more familiar with Moltmann than money matters, with Tillich than with effective time-tabling and with charismatic renewal than with competent cataloguing will rise up and bless Fred Bacon. Read his book and you need

no longer live hand to mouth, wondering where you put last week's letters that are still awaiting replies, or desperately struggling to recall where you read that apposite word on prayer that will so neatly fit into next Sunday's sermon.

No minister, no church officer can afford to be without this book. It is a mine of information, a fund of common sense, a plain man's guide to more efficient use of resources. This book reaches parts that others have never heard of! Thank you, Fred.