

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bq\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php)

## Reviews

*Edward VI: the Threshold of Power*, by W. K. Jordan. London. George Allen & Unwin 1970. Pp. 565. £4.50.

As Professor Jordan explains, in the preface to his second and concluding volume dealing with the reign of Edward VI, he has sought to provide a full narrative history of this short, five and a half year, period. This has been done in some eleven hundred pages. The personality of the young King comes into clearer focus in the present volume and it is argued that before his last illness Edward was showing signs of taking control of his government for himself. Hence here it is the King, not Northumberland, who attempts to divert the succession from Mary to Lady Jane Gray. Nevertheless, while Professor Jordan evidently admires Edward and thinks him gifted, the characteristic adjective repeatedly used of his personality is 'cold'.

When all is said and done, however, the real interest does not lie in the boy monarch with what Dr Elton once called his 'precocious passion for protestant theology' but with the headlong advance of Protestantism during his reign and the accompanying disendowment of the English Church. Here Professor Jordan inserts two valuable chapters, built upon studies where he has shown himself a master in earlier writings, on 'the expropriation of the chantries' and the rise of what he terms 'the secular charitable impulse'. It may be that he has here separated 'secular' and 'sacred' too sharply: often his 'secular' charity was encouraged and sometimes initiated by the Protestant convictions of the Edwardian reformers.

In other ways this book seems a little old-fashioned with its simple Protestant viewpoint and its judgment that, for example, one could argue that Hugh Latimer was the most famous preacher of all time (p.278).

On the whole Professor Jordan is not deeply concerned with theology and this tends to mean that one important aspect of the period is rather blurred. He is surely right in recognizing that the Bocking sectaries of 1550-51 were not Anabaptists (p.333) but it is odd that he does not link them with Lollardy. Similarly, it is good that he has read and re-read Cranmer for himself (p.349) but unfortunate that he has apparently disregarded some important recent discussions of Cranmer's eucharistic doctrine. Similarly, he makes no mention of John a Lasco's remarkable claim that the Edwardian authorities had intended, if the King

had lived, to reform the English Church on the model provided by the Reformed refugee congregations in London and elsewhere in England.

At various points very interesting suggestions are made which will bear further discussion: was Mary's later identification with imperial policy as complete as Professor Jordan implies (262ff) and, if it were, was it really determined by the badgering she suffered under Edward?

Naturally, with a work on this scale, there will be queries. But Professor Jordan's book will be used with pleasure and profit by all students of the English Reformation for a good time to come and, no doubt, he will think himself well compensated for his work if other men are stimulated to re-examine some of the questions he has opened up.

B. R. WHITE.

*Ministry In Question*, (ed. A. Gilmore), Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971. 103pp. £1.25

These are days when throughout the church traditional patterns of 'The Ministry' are being questioned, not least among Baptists following the publication of the report *Ministry Tomorrow*, and more recently, the appearance in the *Baptist Times* of Barrie Peterson's article on why he left the ministry. This symposium, in which four prominent Free Church ministers, all of them still actively engaged in ministry in the context of a 'local church', think aloud about their role, is therefore especially relevant and welcome. Even the most ecumenical among us can find a special reason for interest in this book in that it is half Baptist!

I must confess to finding Caryl Micklem's first chapter disappointing. It becomes obvious to the reader, although not apparently to him, that his problem of ministry is a problem of faith. Speaking of prayer, he quotes John Kent with approval, "When men believed in fairies, or when the R.A.F., believed in gremlins, it was possible also to believe in the finger of God." (p.17).

For him prayer has become "human reflection and action based on christian hope" (pp. 18f.). Small wonder he appears embarrassed in the pulpit. "Theological and liturgical upheavals" plus "the progress of local ecumenism" have "put paid to the old systematic instruction for church membership which I used to give" (pp. 3f.). He apparently finds no connection between this and another sentence, also, interestingly, on p.3:

"... the small but steady stream of young people coming forward for full church membership ... has dried to a trickle."

Caryl Micklem does not believe the 'full time ministry' has

any real future. He does not leave it, although he wishes he had received some other qualifications "so as to be more than a virtually unemployable journalist" (p.26). No man can be accused for having doubts. They are very fashionable things to have just now. But it must be difficult when a man cannot have the courage of his own lack of convictions.

It is a relief to turn from this to the contribution of Neville Clark who, as one would expect from him, lifts the whole discussion on to a theological plane and treats the question of ministry in depth. I was heartened by his emphasis that the ministry is really ministry of word and sacraments.

"The Word is proclaimed. The eucharist is celebrated.

Therein the ministerial role finds crucial and determinative expression. If there is a sense of irrelevance and unreality here, then everything else is likely to be affected" (p.35).

While problems and tensions are squarely faced it is the contention of this chapter that word and sacrament *are* still relevant as the word of preaching becomes The Word and by the sacrament the Church is "grasped, broken and remade." Ministers are the "fools of God" who "must continue to perform, even when their hearts are breaking" (p.52). It is impossible to do justice to the full range of Neville Clark's argument in a short summary. Read it, and you will be grateful for it, as I was. Further, it is written in that opaque style of his, the unravelling of which affords as keen an intellectual pleasure as solving *The Times* crossword.

Ernest Marvin pleads for a re-structuring of the institutional life of the church that it may be better adapted for mission: familiar, but none the less welcome and profitable for that.

Alec Gilmore's editorial and summarizing chapter I found a moving and encouraging contribution in its own right. Writing in more optimistic vein than some claim to have found in him before, he sees hope of relevance in preaching if preachers will really immerse themselves in the secular world by means of television, modern literature, and living in a real sense as 'laymen' in the world. They must also be prepared to be stimulants to their congregations' working out of their calling in their own secular life, rather than be regarded as the final, authoritative and infallible purveyors of ready-made answers to envy question. He believes that we have to use existing church structures and work patiently towards their radical rebirth. He distrusts those who would snap off the broken reed in radical impatience. Finally, he has a fine passage on the role of the minister in the community at large if he is prepared to serve "with no strings attached". He does not deny the crisis for ministry. But insists that "for the right man crisis is

nothing more than opportunity" (p.103).

Far from such a questioning book indicating the decline of the Church it is a sure sign of life. The pilgrim church is always in crisis. Today's answers are outdated by tomorrow's questions. The real time to order the shroud will be when no one is writing books like this.

REX MASON

*Interpreting Human Experience.* Paul R. Clifford. Collins. 1971. 254 pp. £2.75 net.

This is a fine crusading book. The preface assures us that it is the result of some sixteen years of enquiry, and it is agreeably erudite, fluent and free from obscurities.

It is the author's conviction that theology has been too ready to accept and work within the limits set by prevalent empiricist ideas, to the loss of its distinctively Christian tone. He has found a homeopathic corrective in a little more empiricism. Newly analysed, empiricism is found to offer scope for the lost "dimension of mystery" and so to surpass itself. This is like that kind of judo-throw which defeats attack by turning its momentum to advantage. So we are enabled to see beyond the familiar boundaries, and to conclude that "for man reality is fundamentally mysterious . . . his attempt to eradicate mystery from the universe is a cardinal error."

On what grounds may we accept the empirical attitude as valid without becoming bound by the concept of a closed universe? Mr. Clifford assures us that it is insufficient to stop with a beak objectivism, since at all levels of awareness there is an involvement of subject with object which discloses a depth beyond sense—the lost dimension of mystery. "To disdain a sense of wonder is not to be emancipated, but to be defective as a human being."

If then empiricism as commonly understood is "not empirical enough", where precisely are we to find that extended range of experience which will introduce the transcendent? Three main lines of enquiry are suggested, of which the first is introspection. Tribute is paid to Descartes for having started from the "centre of experience"; but now the area of interest is enlarged beyond "cogito" to include the total activity traceable in perception, creativeness and planning. So we are led to the irreducible Subject—with Karl Heim in careful attendance to safeguard the ego from becoming objectified. Then from this element of the mysterious we turn to consider the Self in encounter with its environment, and the experience of "resistance". Here there arises the mystery of matter as energy (why is not Ernst Bloch invited to testify?), and the Thomist idea of "substance" as being is revived to point the way beyond dualism. Finally

attention is turned to the experience of value, subsumed entirely under the category of truth; and this also is found to point to a trans-subjective mystery.

The pivot of the argument is the contention that the transcendent may be known within the finite, the experience of "apprehension" taking the place of induction. This is essentially what is implied by revelation. It is interesting to note that as Hume's scepticism and Kant's agnosticism are set aside, there is no appeal to Otto; it is Marcel who is the prophet to supply the enlightening oracle. But as long ago as 1878 Max Müller made the same pronouncement in his Hibbert Lectures: "With every finite perception there is the concomitant perception . . . of the infinite . . . Those who deny the possibility of the idea of the finite in our human consciousness must meet us here on our own ground . . . It is the senses which give us the first intimation of the infinite". We wish that this point, so important to the author's thought, had been accorded a somewhat fuller treatment.

When the long philosophical approach is over, it becomes possible to show that the mystery of the universe is elucidated by the essential Christian value-judgement concerning Jesus. The light shines for us. It is shown that "thoroughgoing empiricism does not lead to a closed system," and therefore theology is "freed from inhibitions".

This empirical approach to theology is an attractive change from the existential method of, for example, Tillich and Macquarrie, with their dependence upon basic human questions which may not be asked. Mr. Clifford brings a unique contribution to apologetic thinking. The standard of argument is close and careful, and there are illuminative sections on subjects such as the "tyranny of vision" in empirical thought, and the importance of the idea of "interpersonal relationship" between God and man in correcting some over-rigid theological notions.

Two trivia mar the otherwise impeccable style. On p. 205 there is a sad echo of the A.V. gaffe — "Jesus asked them . . . whom they believed him to be"; and twice we meet a word, "interpretive", which would have made Fowler squirm.

S. J. DEWHURST