

The Fraternal

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Editorial

If you can get ten to one on the Archbishop of York then the Primacy of All England is soon to be vacated. It's a sign of the times that whereas Ramsey succeeded Fisher and Coggan Ramsey with the minimum of fuss and media hype, today there is something of a circus atmosphere surrounding the appointment, with the cult of personality played for all it is worth. No doubt this is exacerbated by the perception within the Anglican Church itself of its crisis being so great that this appointment is no less crucial than that of Augustine himself. Indeed, one quails at the expectations currently being heaped upon the shoulders of Robert Runcie's successor, whoever he transpires to be. And in an ecumenical age, when, whether we like it or not, all our destinies are inextricably entwined, we pray that the mind of Christ may be clearly discerned in spite of the lobbying, party pressures, and glare of media exposure.

Yet all this, vital though it is, has been eclipsed for us by the appointment of our new General Secretary and Deputy Secretary. The acclaim with which the names of David Coffey and Keith Jones have been received reflects both upon them and upon the vision and imagination of the Baptist Union Council. Like the incoming Archbishop, our new leaders inherit responsibility at a crucial time. One aspect of which is the increased demands being made upon the Union, putting greater strain on its federated nature and limited resources. How is cherished Baptist independency to live with a tendency to greater centralising in the interests of our life and mission? Another is grappling with the issue of Baptist identity, sharpened in the light of the Inter-Church Process. Are we at heart no more, but certainly no less, than a reformist movement? And yet another is the grossly unequal stipends among us. Since they are certainly not a measure of relative worth, such inequality distorts our ministry. As they prepare to tackle a full agenda, David and Keith will need the grace of listening, and great courage and tenacity. For this we pray.

Turning to this quarter's contents, anyone serving on their Local Authority's SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) and currently fashioning revised syllabuses in the light of the need for attainment targets, will already have taken the message of the first article to heart. Others of us will do well to heed Howard Marratt's plea for involvement in and commitment to R.E. in our schools. G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), newspaper man, essayist, novelist is chiefly remembered now for his "Father Brown" stories, but in his day was a formidable apologist for Christianity. Paul Rowntree Clifford introduces us to one of his most impressive theological works, "The Everlasting Man", and its relevancy to current debates. The essential nature of preaching as "Proclamation" is argued by Stephen Greasley in "Preach the Word", using the dynamic Hebrew concept of 'dabar'.

In the January edition, Keith Roberts addressed the subject of "Health in the Ministry", in the light of the stress factor. A rejoinder has come from Philip Clements-Jewery, focussing particularly upon the support needed when a change of pastorate is contemplated: 'Pastors Anonymous'? Precisely because it is almost heretical to speak of 'management' in the context of the Church, David Tennant lifts the lid, highlighting the possibilities and the paradoxes. Finally, a book by one of his Whitley College colleagues has so impressed Bob Thompson that he offers us an essay review. "Life on the Road" by Athol Gill is yet another example of the new evangelicalism which gains its integrity from commitment to social action.

Issues in Education for Ministers and Laity

Two 1988 Acts of Parliament have underlined the need for vigilance and action before Parliament approves legislation. The Local Government and Housing Act – despite strong representation by a Free Church delegation in Autumn 1988 to the Secretary of State – removed the majority of Free Church places on Local Education Committees from the voting category to the optional non – voting status. The reason for this action reflected HM Government's concern to retain voting places for those with a financial investment in education, from which, since 1870, the Free Churches have progressively withdrawn because they had committed themselves and their adherents to full support of the State system in County, rather than voluntary, schools. A draft Circular from the new Secretary of State this year failed to clarify the matter but, after our request for improved wording, the final Circular (in April 1990) and the covering letter, support the importance of continuing to reflect the historic commitment of the Free Churches to State education, through at least a co – opted place on each Education Committee. Baptist Churches, in some urban areas where LEAs have withdrawn our representation, have begun to realise that they must be vigilant in defending the continued expression of the Free Church voice. One major barrier to Free Church representation (namely the limit on the percentage of co – opted places), which some LEAs cited, up to March 1990, as a reason for not allocating us a co – opted place, has been removed in the April Circular.

The Education Reform Act

The Education Reform Act of 1988, however, did underline the Christian concerns, expressed in parliamentary debates, and enshrined both the provision for teaching Christianity, and the continued presence of Christian representatives in every LEA on two local bodies – the Agreed Syllabus Conference which determines the content of the LEA's religious education and the now mandatory Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), which must advise the LEA on both RE and Collective Worship.

The FCFC has analysed the composition of all such Councils in England and Wales (and has often been involved in nominating our representatives, after we consulted locally). We continue to express our concern that often LEAs have ignored the fact that the various Free Churches (by local adherents, supporters and activities, as much as by Sunday attendance) deserve more than the one, or two, places allocated to us. Too often the local Churches have failed to make their feelings known to local Councillors when the Act has been misapplied. The Act requires LEAs to include on these bodies the principal "other Christian" and religious **denominations** in the area. One Free Church person can rarely represent all our denominations. Unless we have members on these Councils we cannot monitor the provision, in religious education of adequate staff (over 60% of those teaching RE are not fully trained) or hourage (over 40% of Secondary Schools have little or no RE after the 3rd form) or resources (the majority of County Schools allow less than £1 per annum for the RE books and visual material which each primary or secondary pupil needs, compared with over £2 in most Church schools).

Collective Worship is an area where the Act, for the best of intentions, has created serious problems. It requires worship, for the majority of a term, to be

wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. Free Church people seem divided in their views on compulsory daily requirement (though the Act now allows for worship in small groups and at any time of the school day). Some people, aware of our forefathers' resistance to "establishment Christianity" and / or concerned for the sincerity of worship as a freely given response to God, are offended by the Act's wording. Others are anxious that all young people should have the opportunity to experience worship and to share in occasions (in their class or house group or with the whole school) which celebrate and express ideals, values and concerns. The Act also continues the right of parents to withdraw pupils and allows schools to provide informally for groups of non – Christian pupils or formally (through the SACRE) for a "determination" to organise non – Christian worship for the whole school (or a group within it, eg all the Muslim pupils).

Helpful Resources

The issues are too complex to be tackled in a short article, but the FCFC has attempted to guide its members. Firstly ministers, called in to meet the Act's Christian requirements in schools where teachers, out of conscience, feel unable to lead worship (eg in one school, 330 acts per term which are predominantly "Christian"), have been helped either by a Training course or by our leaflet ("So you've been asked to take Assembly" – 10p plus postage). Our latest publication deals with a range of issues about worship and is designed to help the average school teacher, school governor and concerned church member; entitled "Collective Worship in County Schools", it costs 50p including postage (or £3 per 10 copies) and is available from the FCFC Office, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH. Tel:071-387-8413 (Fax: 071 383 0150).

Acting Responsibly

There are tremendous opportunities in the 1988 Act, but teachers need our prayerful support if they are to be realised. Religious Education is described as a "basic" subject in the curriculum, but lacks national guidelines and the media attention given to the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum. It is under – resourced and often misunderstood. There are an inadequate number of primary and secondary teachers trained in the subject. The Free Churches have a duty to their Lord and Master and to the future of our society to do something to remedy the situation. They must firstly show teaching (especially RE) as a vocation for their members – older, as well as younger, since 40% of the teaching force will, by 1995, be recruited from the middle-aged group. But secondly, they must take up places in Governing Bodies of Schools and Colleges, and on Education Committees (and SACREs) where they can begin to reflect the concerns of our section of society to improve RE in schools. School and LEA budgets are under tremendous strain, and, at the present rate of grants, even RE advisors in LEAs will not meet the needs of reasonable in – service RE training for all primary teachers for about 12 years! There is no point in protesting publicly unless we are also prepared to become involved in a non – party manner, in local political activity.

Howard Marratt

The Everlasting Man

One of the curious assumptions commonly made is that only the latest book on a subject is really worth reading. Of course, knowledge is cumulative and fresh discoveries come to light which may modify or enlarge earlier conclusions. But it does not necessarily follow that we advance in wisdom or insight. Indeed, contemporary assumptions largely determine the way in which we assimilate new facts, and those assumptions may be retrograde. As far as theology is concerned, yesterday's insights may be lost in an uncriticized acceptance of the most recent, though ephemeral, fashions of thought. A colleague of mine on the faculty of McMaster University in Canada used to shock undergraduates by telling them that they could not adequately understand the modern world without coming to terms with Plato. Anyone who has seriously studied the "Republic" will appreciate the force of his contention.

G.K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* is a case in point. It is extremely unlikely to appear on the recommended reading list of any theological student and it would be surprising to find more than a handful of ministers who have read it. And yet it is a work of sheer genius, reputedly Chesterton's greatest achievement, remarkable not only for the magic of the language and imagery, but profound in the breadth of its theological vision. In the light of it, much contemporary writing and preaching look superficial, wholly inadequate to the wonder of God's creation and redemption. First published in 1925, *The Everlasting Man* was reissued by Burns and Oates sixty years later, and this brief appraisal is designed to encourage readers of *The Fraternal* to get hold of a copy and compare their understanding of the gospel with it.

The book falls into two parts. The first is concerned with the history of the human race and its uniqueness within creation. We know very little about our ancestors before the beginning of recorded history, but we do know that the earliest cavemen were artists, not to be classified with animals or a sub – human species. Chesterton effectively dismisses a too facile account of human origins.

Most of the rest of this first part is concerned with a fascinating sketch of pagan history, culminating in the triumph of Rome over Carthage. Much has been written about the Semitic and Hellenistic contexts within which Christianity came to birth. Here in Chesterton we have the Roman background epitomized by the poetry of Virgil, which he sees as the finest expression of pagan humanism; and he goes on to link its pastoral motif to the adoration of the shepherds at Bethlehem who discovered what paganism at its best could only seek after.

Beyond Pluralism

A dominant theme throughout the book is the interpretation of myth as lying at the heart of ancient and modern religion. According to Chesterton 'Mythology is a Search' (p173): the imaginative attempt to give some account of the Transcendent which is deeply embedded in all human experience. His treatment of the major world religions is concerned within the context of mythology: a genuine search for the God whom man, in the Pauline phrase, 'ignorantly worships'. It is highly relevant to contrast this approach with contemporary studies in comparative religion, like those associated with the names of John Hick, Cantwell Smith and even prominent Roman Catholic theologians such as Hans Kung, who seem

to be settling for a radical religious pluralism in which the uniqueness of Christianity is lost. Commenting on the decline of Roman paganism following the fall of Carthage, Chesterton says "The whole world once very nearly died of broad – mindedness and the brotherhood of all religions" (p177). His own approach, while sympathetic to the varieties of religious mythology, paves the way for a robust declaration of the uniqueness of the Christian revelation seen not as a theological system or a different mythology, but as a focus of events which actually changed the universe.

This is the crux of the theological question. Did the coming of Christ, his life, death and resurrection, actually transform not only the human scene, but the very structure of the universe? Was it a cosmic event of decisive significance? Chesterton is in no doubt as to the answer. In a memorable sentence he describes it as "That incredible interruption, as a blow that broke the very backbone of history". (p268) Some idea of the vividness and originality of his development of this theme is indicated by the following quotation from his retelling of the Easter story: "On the third day the friends of Christ coming at day break to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In varying ways they realised the new wonder; but even they hardly realised the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in the semblance of a gardener God walked again in the garden, in the cool not of the evening but the dawn" (p212). Or again in his account of the birth of Jesus in a cave, he turns upside down the mediaeval theatre for mystery plays with its three storey stage representing heaven, earth and hell, portraying heaven in the cave under the earth. "The old Trinity was of father, mother and child and is called the human family. The new is of child, mother and father and has the name the Holy Family. It is in no way altered except in being entirely reversed; just as the world which is transformed was not in the least different, except in being turned upside down" (p54).

The Everlasting Man is a profound challenge to fresh insight and thinking. Three reflections in particular have engaged me.

Myth and Dogma

First, we need to come to terms with mythology as a search for truth in religion. This applies no less to Christianity than to the other religions. The Bible is full of myths in this sense: the attempts in imaginative story form to express the human quest for God in response to the reality of the Transcendent. Often these myths are found to be woefully inadequate in relation to their referent and have to be discarded or refined. An obvious example of this is the Old Testament myth of the warrior God, the Lord of Hosts, who destroys the armies of Israel's enemies. The truth in the myth is the search for the Lord of history whose purpose is brought to fulfilment in the establishment of the chosen people, but the way in which he does this is contradicted by the coming of Jesus and his kingdom, and the myth for all its value has to be replaced.

Myth is basically imaginative story. But it spills over or rather is extended in dogma when this is seen as a human attempt to codify the given – the objective facts – in concepts and language which may turn out to be inappropriate and even false. An example of this is the dogma of Scriptural inerrancy: a claim which the Bible never makes for itself. It is astonishing how many Christians cling to this all too human myth in the face of the facts as to the way in which the Scriptures came to be written as testimony to God's mighty acts and the explicit assertion in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel that "The word became *flesh* and



WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

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Patron: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

Dear Fellow Ministers,

This letter is taking me a good deal longer than usual to write because I am using my newly-acquired, *second hand*, Word Processor. This means that I need to do everything at least five or six times before I get it right. I am assured by the ever-growing army of 'users' that before long, I shall wonder how I managed without one. WE SHALL SEE!

I spend a good deal of my time visiting groups of various kinds in order to show the Mission's slide/tape presentation. The fifteen minutes before the meeting begins are often taken up with frantic searches for extension leads, propping up of the projector with the appropriate number of Hymn Books, (usually Songs and Hymns of Fellowship, these days) and the inevitable battle of wills with screens that seem to have some kind of warped sense of humour all their own! I then collapse into the seat beside the chair-person, a sweating, trembling, neurotic wreck.

All this may be very amusing, as long as it is not happening to *you*. The serious point is that we can become so wrapped up in the new technology, and the latest styles and techniques of presentation that we have little time and energy left for the CONTENT of our message.

In Social Work, as in all other disciplines, there is a vast amount of jargon. The 'buzz words' and 'in phrases' come and go with the passing years, even months, and it is fatally possible to become so obsessed with the passing fads and fashions that the true heart of it all is forgotten.

The West Ham Central Mission does not drag its feet for the sake of being different. We respect and try to achieve the highest professional standards. In the end though, it is the steadfast love of God that brings healing and release to those who come to Him.

It is this love, and this wholeness that we try to bring into the lives of the women, men and young people we serve.

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Yours in the Master's Service,

Trevor W. Davis
(Superintendent Minister)

PS Phew!!!! thank goodness that's finished!

dwelt among us". Nowhere is it asserted that it became marks on parchment, still less printers' ink on paper. And yet the dogma of Scriptural inerrancy enshrines the quest for religious certainty even though it looks for it in the wrong place: in the halting testimony to God's mighty acts rather than in the mighty acts themselves.

Christ and the Cosmos

In the second place, Chesterton compels us to face the question whether the Christ event was of cosmic significance: whether it did really radically change the universe. If so, Christianity is not a religion to be compared with Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or any other system of belief. It is not a theological system at all, still less a set of precepts derived from an outstanding religious teacher. It is essentially testimony to something completely unique in that it has actually happened. Herein lies the weakness of much of the debate about comparative religion. As long as we restrict ourselves to theological concepts and ethical principles and practices - to the ways in which human beings respond to the transcendent - comparison makes sense. But if the coming of Christ did actually change things and change things not only for all people of every race, culture and generation, but for the whole created order, we are dealing with a dimension of fact from which there is no escape whether we or anyone else believes it or not. What has happened has happened and nothing, certainly not our beliefs or lack of them, can alter it. We may dimly understand or even misunderstand the Christ event, but we can only accept, reject or ignore it. We cannot change it or turn it into a conceptual system.

Of course it will be argued that a cosmic account of the Christ event is an interpretation of the bare facts that Jesus of Nazareth was a Jewish Rabbi who was crucified by the Romans. Almost anything else that can be said about him can be classified as myth. This tendency to reduce the data to the bare minimum has been heavily influenced by twentieth century linguistic philosophy which in many of its formulations has virtually trapped its exponents into playing language games with no anchorage in the real world except in the player and those who engage in the game with him. This leads to a radical scepticism about the possibility of knowing anything about the universe. Why should it not be a fact that God did actually redeem his creation through the coming of Christ? Theologians have the task of persuading us that this is what really happened by demonstrating that it illuminates the totality of human experience. But it either is or is not a fact; just as much a fact as that Jesus of Nazareth was a real and not an imaginary person.

Faith as Realisation

The third conclusion which follows from this is that Evangelicals in particular have to ask whether they have trivialized the significance of the Christ event by interpreting it only as applicable to those who have faith. If the Son of God really did become the Son of Man, the representative of the whole human race in restoring the whole created order to God, he did this for everyone, for believer and unbeliever alike. This is powerfully argued by Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics*, particularly in Volume V, part 2, where he expounds the doctrine of reconciliation (T & T Clark, 1958). In a notably trenchant footnote (p. 520) he takes Calvin to task for restricting salvation to the elect. It is all too easy for evangelical Christians to turn faith into the supreme work, making salvation ultimately dependent on the achievement of man. There are passages in the New Testa-

ment which can be interpreted in this way, but set within the context of Pauline theology as a whole they bear a very different meaning. Surely Barth is right in expounding faith as an awakening to what is, an awareness of the universal redemption wrought by Christ, an explicit confession of the fact and a reliance upon him as the Saviour of the world. The Church is then the community within which faith is acknowledged and celebrated on behalf of the whole world. If this is accepted we are delivered from a narrowly individualistic appropriation of the benefits of our Lord's passion (though that is included) and enabled to see the whole human race and the created order transformed in Christ even though through sin, ignorance and unbelief that transformation has not been appropriated and awaits its fulfilment at the end of time.

These are some of the thoughts stimulated by reading **The Everlasting Man** summed up by saying that our unique humanity, though defiled by sin and alienated from God, is reconciled and redeemed by the self – offering of the true and perfect Man, the Son of Man who is also the Son of God.

Paul Rowntree Clifford

Preach the Word

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus,
who will judge the living and the dead,
and in view of his appearing and his kingdom,
I give you this charge; Preach the Word...” (2 Tim. 4:2)

During my first term at Regent's Park College, the Revd Harry Weatherley came to give the Stephen Winward lectures. They proved to be both interesting and stimulating. The most memorable phrase which I remember from those sessions was one concerning the communication of the Christian message. Commenting upon our television age and our post – literary society, Harry Weatherley suggested that people no longer think propositionally, but pictorially. While much of our preaching is attempting to communicate ideas and propositions, most people today think, rather, in terms of pictures.

This fascinating thought set off a chain of thinking concerning how best to communicate the Christian gospel. If Harry Weatherley's observation is correct then the task of preaching faces severe difficulties. Do we need to find alternative ways of presenting the gospel using visual aids? Has the thirty minute sermon had its day? Is preaching obsolete?

It was while thinking along these lines, however, that with the help of some Old Testament study and some wider reading, I came to an important realisation. Preaching is not simply communication. It is proclamation. When a person gets up to preach a sermon she/he is not simply passing on some thoughts about God and the Christian life. Essentially and primarily, preaching means to proclaim the word of God.

The Dynamism of Dabar

In the Old Testament the Hebrew, *dabar*, (word) can also mean event or thing. The spoken word is dynamic. Once uttered, things happen. So, for example, in

Isaiah 55:10-11 we have a powerful testimony to the effect the word of God can bring:

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth....so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty but it shall accomplish that which I purpose...”

The word effects change. The deliverance of the people of Israel from captivity in Babylon is no idle promise. It is guaranteed by God’s spoken word through the prophet. “God’s word is a word that does things. When God speaks something comes about”. (Westermann: Isaiah commentary p 289)

We find something similar in 1 Kings 13. Here we are introduced to a man of God from Judah who speaks a word against Jeroboam, King of Israel. The inseparable preposition, *beth*, which is attached to the Hebrew, *dabar*, in verses 1,2 & 5 can lead to the innocuous translation “By the word of the Lord”. (So R.S.V. and N. I.V.). But equally the inseparable preposition could carry a different nuance, so that the verses could read:

“And behold a man of God came out of Judah *with* the word of the Lord to Bethel...And the man cried against the altar *with* the word of the Lord, and said, ‘O altar, altar, thus says the Lord...’

(This is a translation suggested by Dr. R.A. Mason). The word is something to be released. Once the man of God has brought the word, the power of God has been loosed, and the word will be fulfilled. The prophecy against the altar at Bethel and the house of Jeroboam had the authority of God behind it, guaranteeing that what had been spoken would come to pass. It was for this reason that Jeroboam tried to stifle the prophet and his word.

Several other examples could be used to show this dynamic use of the Hebrew *dabar*. Jeremiah, for instance, brought a word of judgment against the city of Jerusalem and its temple which provoked the city leaders into taking active measures to restrain him. But all of this simply serves to show that in the Old Testament the word (*dabar*) of God, when released through one of his spokesmen, has power and authority. It produces change wherever it is heard. It accomplishes all it sets out to do.

Barth and Preaching

In the Twentieth Century the greatest exponent of the theology of the word was Karl Barth. In paragraph 4 of Church Dogmatics 1:1 Barth tackles the question of the word of God in its threefold form. By this he means the word preached (that is the Church’s proclamation), the word written (that is the Bible), and the word revealed (that is Jesus Christ). Barth argues that in preaching, and in the testimony of scripture, we have human talk about God. This is an important point. It would be both blasphemous and ridiculous to equate directly the words of a Twentieth Century preacher with the words of God Himself; blasphemous, because no-one can claim to have the same authority as God; ridiculous, because everyone who has heard a preacher recognises his/her shortcomings and inadequacies. So that in one sense the Church’s proclamation, like the Bible, are the



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word of God derivatively or indirectly. However, what is of central importance, Barth insists, is that when one has explained preaching as human talk about God, we must remember that it is "Also and primarily and decisively God's own speech." (p93) The human element is never taken away. The work and task of the preacher is never underplayed. But, mysteriously, the proclamation becomes God's own act. "Not only" human talk, "but also" God's own speech is the formula. God has chosen human preaching – the proclamation of the Church – as the vehicle in which, and through which, He speaks about Himself. This is dependant, of course, on the content of that preaching being true to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as attested in the scriptures. But where this does form the basis and subject matter of preaching then the Church's proclamation *becomes* the word of God.

On a more popular level Dr W.E. Sangster's *Craft of Sermon Construction* (1954) also contains a very high view of preaching. In the opening chapter, entitled, "a plea for preaching", Sangster remarks on the declining belief in preaching among ministers themselves. The cause of this, Sangster believes, is the failure to grasp what preaching really is. Preaching, he insists, is a sacramental act. Whereas an address may legitimately be regarded as a man talking to other men [or women!], this is not the same with the sermon.

"A sermon is a man speaking from God. The authority of the preacher, unlike that of a speaker, is not in himself: he is a herald. His word is not his own; it comes from above." (p13)

Preaching is a deed not merely or chiefly of man, but of God. Sangster endorses the saying of Cardinal Manning that preaching is: "A manifestation of the Incarnate word, from the written word, by the spoken word." There can be no substitute. God's chosen means of addressing Man is thorough preaching.

Heralds, not Communicators

In preaching, therefore, God is at work. This was the experience of the Old Testament prophets. It remains the insight of Twentieth century Theologians. As we deliver the sermon, as we proclaim the message of the scriptures, in that moment we have the human effort and preparation accompanied and covered by "The new robe of righteousness" (to use Barth's phrase – p95). In that moment, where the human and divine coincide, we have a new event: the proclamation *becomes* the word of God.

People in our post-literary society are indeed more at home with pictures, stories and visual aids. As preachers, therefore, we do need to present our material in a way which is readily understandable and easy to grasp. Sermons should be enjoyable, not an endurance test! But we will do much to rehabilitate the standing of the sermon in our churches when we the preachers rediscover the importance of the task to which we are called; when we see ourselves as heralds rather than communicators. As we stand up in our churches and proclaim once more the message of the scriptures, we need to sense the dignity of the office and the authority vested in it. We need to be aware that we are releasing the word, and take from that both confidence and boldness. In the words of the writer to the Hebrews:

“The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two
– edged sword.”(Heb 4:12)

Stephen Greasley

Pastors Anonymous?

In the January edition of *The Fraternal* there was a first – rate and very helpful article by Keith Roberts on “Health in the Ministry”. He invited a response, so here is mine.

Keith’s emphasis was on the emotional health of the minister and the role stress, in particular, has to play in this, although, of course, we are all aware that stress can affect physical as well as emotional health.

Settlement and Support

One source of very great stress in ministry is borne by the minister and manse family when a decision has been taken to conclude a pastorate and look for another area of service, usually, but not always, another local church. In such circumstances the guidance and the overruling of the Holy Spirit is always sought, but there are often other important factors to be taken into account. Consideration has to be given to questions of children’s education, the minister’s partner’s own career, and the issue of housing and its cost which varies from area to area across the country. It is not enough to be told ‘The Lord will provide’ – he does, of course, but such simplistic counsel does not necessarily relieve the anxiety and stress.

In recent issues of the *Baptist Times* there has been correspondence questioning some of the practices associated with settlement in a local church. I have a concern that bears directly on the minister in such a situation.

It is this: on deciding to seek a change of pastorate a minister usually gets in touch with the Area Superintendent. A form is filled in in order to provide guidance to the Superintendents concerning personal details, preferences and hopes. The Superintendent takes this to the monthly meeting. Some information is passed on to churches. But the next thing that the minister will hear, sooner or later, is an approach from a church (or churches) with an invitation to explore the possibilities of a call.

My concern – and I imagine that my experience is fairly typical – is that in such circumstances it is possible to be left almost totally unsupported by the system when seeking to discover whether a particular invitation is a call of God or not. What help are we given in this crucial area of discernment of God’s will?

Many ministers, naturally, will not wish to avail themselves of any support other than reliance on the inward prompting of the Holy Spirit in prayer, and I would be the last to question such a stance. Nevertheless, none of us has an infallible appreciation of what might be God’s will for us, and an experience of four settlements leads me to suggest that the growth of self – awareness that

Keith Roberts wrote about, and the means by which such growth is achieved, would have been an invaluable aid when I accepted those invitations. I am not saying that I might have decided differently. I am saying that I might have made those decisions with greater awareness.

In many ways the relationship between a pastor and a congregation resembles the marriage relationship (just think about the similarities between an induction and a wedding!) Those working in marriage guidance circles tell us that there are often unconscious factors operating in the choice of partners. For instance, married couples often discover common ground between themselves and their background that has been part of the "chemistry" that has drawn them together, but which they could not possibly have known about when they first met. Marriages also break down sometimes, and it is a fact that divorce is also followed very often by re – marriage. Unfortunately, because of the unconscious factors operating, lessons can fail to be learned. Second and subsequent marriages, too, can fail, and the reason is the lack of understanding and awareness of those very unconscious factors at work in both the establishment and the failure of previous relationships. This is where counselling can be of such very great value.

It is my contention that processes like these also operate in the choice ministers and churches make of each other. Relationships between pastors and congregations do sometimes break down. The pastor can move on to another charge, but is not necessarily immune from the repetition of errors and mistakes.

Keith Roberts wrote of the various ways in which journeys of self – awareness can be taken. I would like to propose that serious consideration be given (by the Superintendents?) to the provision of skilled professional counselling being made available to ministers, especially at the time of seeking settlement, but not necessarily restricted to such needs. Like Keith Roberts, I too have benefitted from the self – understanding gained through counselling psychotherapy.

Alongside this, either as an alternative or as an additional resource, I would like to suggest the provision of spiritual direction for ministers on a one – to – one basis at times of particular stress, choice or difficulty. Keith Roberts mentioned an Anglican experiment in this field. A couple of years ago we had a President who made this kind of spirituality a major emphasis in her year of office. As a result, the Baptist Union Retreat Group came into existence. In this article, I am suggesting that there is an area of need within the ranks of the ministry to which BURG might well address itself, perhaps in consultation with the superintendents. Again, I am writing as one who has recently benefitted from a five day one – to –one guided retreat. Such an experience could be invaluable to any minister seeking spiritual guidance concerning his or her future. But organisation and resources need to be devoted to such a proposal if such support is to be made widely available.

A Place to Be

Finally I return to the title I have given to this article. Readers will have noticed its similarity to that of other organisations! But why not a "Pastors Anonymous"? Keith Roberts points out that ministers' fraternal do not always function helpfully in support of ministers in pain or stress. There is often too much pressure to appear "successful" in fraternal meetings. What would be helpful would be a

setting where one can be totally honest in a completely non – judgmental atmosphere. In Alcoholics Anonymous, for instance, it is **expected** that one will be completely frank, and one can be taken to task if one is not. I wonder if there is a need for a similar kind of organisation for ministers. It wouldn't be to the liking of everybody, but it could be of very great benefit to many. I happen to be one of those ministers to whom Keith Roberts refers when he writes "People are looking elsewhere for the networks of relationships which are necessary". I, too, have had, for the most part, to create my own networks of support, involving both individual 'soul – friends' and groups, while also remaining a loyal supporter of my local fraternal – to which I look to fulfil other needs than those mentioned in this article. I do wonder, however, if my own search for support might have been easier if there had already been some sort of network into which I could have linked. I realise that there is a significant element in personal relationships that cannot be organised, but nevertheless I believe that there is something in what I am saying that could be looked into, perhaps by the BMF itself. It also needs to be said that this is an area in which some degree of ecumenical co – operation could prove useful, although each denominational system produces its own unique stresses and frustrations, so that it would be important to retain a Baptist dimension so far as we Baptist ministers are concerned.

I would be interested to receive any response to what I have written, either formally through the pages of this journal, or privately by correspondence. I am also prepared to make myself available should it appear that some sort of initiative is required in order, as Keith Roberts puts it, to "contribute to the increasing health of ministry".

Philip Clements-Jewery

Management Problems for Baptists

Introduction

Church management is about the Church as an organisation and management as a discipline. This means consideration of the complex and varied concrete and historical structures of the traditions of Christian belief. "We must face the issue of God, what sort of reality, resource and glory he (she, it) is"¹. The demand is for Visions, i.e. protests against exclusively pragmatic decisions, where every move is little more than reflex action to the urgent and the immediate. Often in decision – making this means 'management by impulse'. Visions are to do with larger frameworks of understanding, long term goals, and distant horizons, designed to lift and brighten the eyes. Visions are given, and that's a difficult notion for scientific management. However, at the same time, visions must be expressed in clear cut aims, achievable targets, and working models, for only so will energy be created and people moved. Salvation may well be by objectives, (though not necessarily by organisation) – at least people on the move have some dynamism, and know what they want and where they're going.

For our purposes a vision is the bringing together of theology, Church and management in a mutually enlightening and creative exchange with a view to actually progressing and achieving something. Management has been defined as "the scientific study of how best to get things done". Theology I define as 'the rational articulate conceptualisation of a religious consciousness to which a

person or group knowingly subscribes and consents and within which he / she / they make sense of things and act for change.' A theology of management must take account of the changing nature of theology, the insights of scientific management critically evaluated, a sociology of the Church, and the place, authority, and use of the Bible.

1. Three major themes emerge:

- (a) **The nature of the Church.** The Church is a human social grouping subject to the same constraints, pressures, problems and threats as all groups. Some of these are internal and others external. Yet the Church affirms another identity, encapsulated in such symbols as Body of Christ, Bride of Christ, People of God, Household of Faith. That suggests characteristics peculiar to itself. A component of all good management is proper consideration of the 'culture' or 'ethos' of an organisation and thus cannot ignore the uniqueness of the Church. So, for example, when we come to decision – making (a major task of management), together with insights from management and the social sciences into how people behave, we must face also the dimensions of the Will of God and the practice of prayer as peculiar to the life of the Church.
- (b) **The nature of Theology.** Theology is about the Church's self - understanding. There is tension between Dogmatic Theology and Practical Theology. The former focuses on G-O-D, defined and fixed in advance and then applied: theology as a fixed and permanent achievement. The latter focuses on G-O-D and M-A-N in relationship, and sees theology as more tentative and changing. Contemporary theology has generated the notion of PRAXIS, 'a combining of theory and practice with a view to change'. Praxis is the sharp end where things happen, and the demand is to understand, control and evaluate situations in order to act in them. Sociologists have reminded us of the categories of Church, Denomination and Sect with their separate characteristics all interacting with our society, with each other, and also with the vestiges of folk religion. We have a multiplicity of forms of organised Christianity and a consequent multiplicity of theologies. Furthermore, there are 'horizontal' differences which make a certain kind of Baptist more at home with a certain kind of non-Baptist than with other Baptists. Theology has become second order. If management is a science claiming thereby to be a first order discipline, then links between it and theology are not easy to establish. If, however, management is also contingent on practice and is itself varied and plural, then there's hope in establishing links with theology.
- (c) **The Bible.** Old questions remain: the nature of the inspiration and authority of the Bible; the relation of the Bible to theology; does the Bible determine or control faith and life; and the question of interpretation. One Third World theologian has spoken of the 'Hermeneutical circle':

"...It is the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present day reality, both individual and societal".(L. Segundo)²

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To the Readers of the Fraternal.

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We are sometimes asked why we do not increase sums insured each year by index-linking. We have not advocated this approach for two reasons. There is no index available for Church buildings which vary widely in the nature of their construction. Secondly, if the base sum insured is incorrect at the outset, the error will be compounded after a number of years whilst a false sense of security may have been engendered. We know of instances where insurers having applied index-linking to recommended sums insured have found serious under-insurance to have occurred in a large number of cases. We feel it essential, therefore, that proper consideration be given annually to the estimated rebuilding cost of Churches.

We do assist at intervals or on request by giving our Surveyors' personal opinions without prejudice of likely rebuilding costs. In the absence of a specific index we have to update this with a General Building Cost Index. Acknowledging this limitation we do advise that Churches should from time to time obtain the qualified opinion of a Chartered Surveyor. One Association, at least, to our knowledge retains the services of a Chartered Surveyor who offers professional advice on various matters at preferential terms.

Because we are conscious that despite considerable efforts to achieve a proper sum insured, there can still be a short-fall, we have largely avoided applying average to our Church policies, except where there is patent gross under-insurance. This obviates partial losses being scaled down and in this we are, to the best of my knowledge, unique.

Yours sincerely,

M.E. PURVER

Clearly we must take the text of scripture with utter seriousness, but at the same time decide what it means for us today. Who we are may be determined by where we are.

Baptists declare the Bible to be "the sole authority in matters of life and faith". Now, authority implies power; power suggests systems; systems determine structures, and structures are about the inter – relatedness of people, ideas and objectives in order to fulfill and complete an overall purpose. Straightaway we are in the heart of management and organisation.

2. Baptists affirm four principles upon which their ecclesiology is based:

- (a) The Church is the gathered community of believers in each and every place; the supreme expression of the Church is the local congregation. The Church is formed by the call of God, and the free and personal response of believers in faith, expressed in believers' baptism. Believers seek to demonstrate in their personal and corporate lives the signs of God's renewal.
- (b) The local Church affirms 'the crown rights of the Redeemer'; Jesus is Lord of all; He is the only Lord. To be a follower of Christ is a way of being in the world. This is not a privatised religion, but a matter of community with a corporate identity. Rights belong to the Lord – obligations to His followers.
- (c) Authority comes from Christ alone; neither the pastor, priest, Bishop or the Council can take it from Him; if they do, then they are the false Church. This is a 'high doctrine' of the Church which gave birth in society to democracy as a political principle, yet within the Church remained subservient to the rule of Christ through His people. Thus the Church speaks and acts in faith, not an easy notion for scientific management, but a challenge to much contemporary Church life which seems to ape the moods and fashions of the prevailing cultural climate.
- (d) The content of belief is as important as the act of believing. This has led to fierce and urgent debates over the years, some with rather unfortunate and distasteful consequences. But such debates about belief are not mere intellectual exercises. For belief and faith are about truth, which has consequences for organisation in the Church, and discipleship in the world.

3. I turn now to some management problems facing Baptists.

- (a) The place of prayer and scripture, and the function of such central theological symbols as 'Kingdom of God', 'Will of God' and 'Mind of Christ' in decision-making and organisation in the Church, create unique management practices, particularly in decision – making. Coping with minorities is crucial and a too simplistic identification of the will of the majority with the Will of God won't do.
- (b) The question of authority and power is central to the relationship of ordained persons to the laity. Theories and practices are often at variance here. Tensions arise in a congregation when both the Minister and

the people are confused over the proper boundaries and limits of the separate responsibilities and duties of both. I suspect a crisis of role amongst some Ministers. I observe a heavy reliance on the 'professional' amongst some congregations, especially when 'he' moves away and they have to begin the process of what is called euphemistically an "interregnum". There are a range of issues here, not least the nature of "profession" and the dangers and evils of "professionalism". The following appeared in *Management Today*:

"At the end of the day management education and development is unlikely to be given the priority it needs unless management is recognised as a full profession in its own right"³

That could not be adapted uncritically in any Church. Yet we must beware of taking from the laity a proper autonomy in their sphere and not attempt to clericalise them, which is an ominous feature of some developments of Supplementary Ministry and other full – time work.

- (c) There is tension between the patterns of leadership and Church life described in scripture and the demands of a contemporary situation. It may be relatively straightforward to discern patterns of pastoral leadership in the Bible, but when it comes to the complexity of modern financing and the pressures of a world governed by strange powers of economics, inflation, investment, and multi – national connections, the tension is not so easily resolved. The New Testament suggests a variety of leadership patterns e.g. bishop, presbyter, deacon, elder, not to mention the place and role of women, and when we contrast Paul's charismatic community with the Mother Church image of the Jerusalem community, tensions arise again. Baptists are keen to be true to the New Testament, but that's not so straightforward in the modern world. Other Churches do not escape these challenges, for one suspects that patterns of episcopacy in the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church rely more heavily on the patterns of a Christendom modelled on the Roman Empire than they are willing to admit.
- (d) Problems arise in structuring the proper boundaries, limits and relationships between the local Church, the regional groupings (Associations), and the national Union. For Baptists interdependence has always been the watchword and voluntarism important. Thus the Baptist Union is a UNION of local Churches in voluntary association. Is it adequate? The problems of the Inner City Urban Priority Areas has raised this matter quite sharply. When the local Church is left to its own devices, not only is isolationism likely but also collapse and decline. What are the proper levels and scope of mission, property, financing and leadership, in the circles of local, regional and national structures?
- (e) A management problem for all Churches, including Baptists, is the tension between paid and voluntary workers, professionals employed by and accountable to amateurs. Team work seems to be of the essence of modern management:

"Today's business organisation is moving away from the functional mode of hierarchies, with people in boxes, jealous of their own territory, and guarding their expertise....multifunctional and interdisciplinary teams"⁴

Team work implies the release of the gifts of the people, a manifestation of the Holy Spirit at work in God's people, and accords well with NT teachings. But it does not resolve the tension between professional and paid with voluntary and lay. Baptists, like others, are taking on not only Ministers, but Youth workers, Educationalists, Evangelists, and paid Administrative Secretaries and this problem will probably get worse.

- (f) There is danger in all lay movements (with stress on lay leadership, lay decision-making and local initiatives) of an institutionalised success. The classic example of a good thing becoming idealised and introspective is the Sunday School Movement. Its success was so overwhelming in its great days that those in the leadership positions could see no other way of doing it ('IT' in this case being Christian Education of children and young people). Certain patterns and systems became the norm and change was resisted. I suspect amongst many Baptists that the 'suburban captivity' is much more powerful than we are prepared to admit. The successful urban Church with its weekly diet of age and sex related organised activities, its monthly meeting for members, its full time minister (or two), its well attended morning service, its charitable good works, its middle class values, and increasingly its popular consumer style of worship is envied by those in rural and inner city areas because it seems to be the ideal. As a former Minister of a suburban Church I observe that in many suburban areas it doesn't really matter which Church you attend, of whatever denomination, the styles of life are not much different, despite traditional doctrinal practices.
- (g) Lastly, a problem for the Baptists now and I suspect for other Free Churches is the nature of dissent in the modern world. To be a Protestant Dissenter or Separatist in the sixteenth century was to make a particular kind of public and political stance. To deny baptism to your children and to separate out from the Established Church was to deny your children their citizenship as well as their church membership. Life is different today. Yet perhaps even now to be a Free Church person with the power of decision – making in the hands of the local gathered congregation demands a particular kind of educated independence not found everywhere, or even desired by some. As a Minister once said to me: 'When do you tell them what to do and when do you enable them to choose for themselves?' Yes and who are THEY? If we are to use people's talents there must be a bedrock of freedom, but how socially conditioned is that?

I read somewhere of a plea by a worthy of another age who begged his listeners with the words:

"I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible that you may be mistaken".

What price that for a sentiment of Free Church Baptist management!

David F. Tennant

References

1. *God, Politics and the Future*. David Jenkins (SCM Press 1988) p vii.
2. *The Liberation of Theology*. Juan L. Segundo (Gill and Macmillan 1977) p.8
3. *Management Today*. June 1988 p. 5
4. *ibid*.

ALWAYS ON CALL



What started as a survey among young people in Bristol has led to the work of the Rev. Bob Mills as Chaplain to the stores and offices in the city centre. The relevance of the church serving the community comes across clearly in this well documented video, produced by John Whatmore.

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I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH



"I will build my Church" was the text chosen by the Rev. Jim Wisewell for the Rev. Bill Whyte's induction service at East Worthing Baptist Church. The same text was also chosen by Bill for the following Sunday. This was a confirmation of what God was about to do.

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Life on the Road (Essay Review)

Books on Jesus and His disciples with application to our discipleship today have been numerous, but only a handful linger in the mind as an abiding inspiration and challenge. My list would include A.B. Bruce's *Training of the Twelve (1871)*, Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship (1937)*, and Eduard Schweizer's *Lordship and Discipleship (1956)*. I have no hesitation including alongside of these the new volume that is not shaded by any of them – Athol Gill's recently published *Life on the Road: The Gospel Basis for a Messianic Life – style*. (Anzea Publishers).

The book, which is a long one, apart from an important introduction and conclusion, is made up of eight chapters exegeting and applying incidents from the Gospels, three to a chapter, with one each drawn from Matthew, Mark and Luke, the only exception being Acts continuing Luke on one occasion, John once and once two from the same Gospel.

The method combines an intensely academic investigation of each passage in the light of the most radical biblical scholarship, followed by a deeply challenging application of the teaching to the life of the Church and the Christian today. The former may be off – putting to those accustomed to reading the Gospels on a flat surface, ignoring the hills and valleys, but anyone who perseveres – and this need not be limited to pastors or trained scholars – will find plenty of solid meat. Evangelist D.L. Moody's call for meeting difficulties in the Bible – that it was like eating fish – can apply: concentrate on the flesh and leave the bones on the side of the plate!

Methodology

Let me explain how the method operates. It has always been maintained by the Church that the four Gospels were preserved rather than just the first (Mark) because they were intended for different audiences such as Matthew for the Jews, Luke for the Gentiles, and Mark for the Romans. It is thus only an extension of this method that current scholarship tries to identify the type of congregation that the Gospel writer was familiar with and addressing, from clues within the Gospel itself – its omissions, emphases etc.. Athol Gill writes:

“Each Gospel, has its own particular emphasis, its own particular theology, its own particular ethos and life style, for each was written in an attempt to meet the challenge facing a particular congregation in a particular situation at a particular point in history.” (p286)

And so it is that Matthew's Lord's Prayer differs from that of Luke since the former's audience of Jewish Christians were inclined to pray a lot and were in danger of prattling on like the heathen, while Luke's Gentile audience knew so little about the life of prayer that this warning against repetitions was omitted. Similarly Matthew's church was rigorous in its application of discipline and needed to be warned to forgive until seventy time seven, whereas Luke delights in telling stories of how the most disreputable people came to Jesus and found a ready welcome in His community. Similarly, a different level of economic prosperity results in different applications of various parables and in the version of the Beatitudes about the poor (and the rich in Luke) (pp 286-88 – summarizing more extensive exegesis earlier).

Application

This leads me to say something about the applications to ourselves, both ethical and devotional, that are made from the many incidents, and often reiterated at the end of each chapter, as well as in the conclusion. The author, as one who has "put his purse where his mouth is" with the founding of the House of Freedom in Brisbane and the House of the Gentle Bunyip in Melbourne, deserves to be listened to when he criticizes the "prosperity theology" – "Give to the Lord and He will give back to you" of the electronic preachers, photographed with their flashy cars (p.114 'It is easier for camels than for cadillacs' Mk 10:25, pp86ff, 92ff))

As co-founder of the School of World Missions at Whitley College, he also has the right to criticize faults in the Church Growth Movement with its "homogenous principle" that "like will attract like" (pp124-25) – there was nothing homogenous about the twelve disciples – (p.181, pp276-7)

As a leading mover in the social justice sphere, he argues that this is not in conflict with evangelism (to say so "would likewise seem to be a dangerous heresy" (p.181) and that the so – called "communistic experiment" in early Acts was neither temporary nor a failure but still relevant. (p 145) It was, however, voluntary (Acts 5:4), as was also the following of Jesus during his Gospel ministry, as several were sent back to their homes to witness or serve (Mk 2:11, 5:19; Lk 8:48 and Mk 1:31! (p.235))

There was also always "the crowd" who often "followed Him" for great distances and from whom many believed, although not required to "forsake all" (p.285).

Again, there is no dreamy utopianism in the book but a sane recognition of the hardness of human hearts as Professor Ian Breward says in his Melbourne College of Divinity BiCentennial lectures on Australian church history (*The Most Godless Place under Heaven*), as he pays tribute to Athol Gill's two "Houses" and speaks of the "hard lessons learned about the intractable sinfulness and selfishness of partly – redeemed human nature" (p.80). Similarly the malignancy of evil is recognized, and the fact that the hopes of the 1970's for a new order have not been fulfilled as revolutions have only revolved into new tyrannies (pp 210-13), because hearts have not been changed (p.209).

Hopes of a "fair deal" for the world's poor continue to be frustrated while multi – national companies are allowed to make profit their only concern, and justice is denied for the Blacks who make up the largest population (pro -rata) of prisoners in the United States, South Africa, Australia (and "Browns" in New Zealand), while the rich who can engage the expensive services of "skilful lawyers and accountants", go free (pp.211 – 12)

Spiritual Resources

The book does not end, however, with "repairs to the road" (social applications Ch. 6), but goes on to two devotional chapters on our resources: "Streams in the desert" (Ch 7) and "Shade Along the Roadside" (Ch. 8), in which it is recognized that the power is not in us but in God ("The disciple who thinks he has arrived has not yet begun and the one who thinks he has the necessary power in himself is powerless" (p. 224)). The call to follow Jesus came to the first disciples "not

because of who they were, or even who they were to become", but "because of who He was – the incarnate grace and love of God" (p.284).

As Bonhoeffer had said, this "grace" was not cheap but costly (p. 33), and involves such things as the forgiveness of others, which is a condition of our being forgiven by God "since the willingness to forgive others is the outstretched hand by which we are able to grasp the forgiveness of God" for ourselves (p. 118). "Streams in the Desert" is a chapter about prayer and "Shade Along the Wayside" a chapter about the unfailing grace of God.

Very few infelicities were detected in the writing – a missing capital letter for God (p. 284), the repetition of the second paragraph of p.15 on p.26, and of the disciples leaving "everything" (p.40) on pp. 112-113 (cf p. 105), (possibly in this instance intentional as the method of re – enforcement by repetition is used to good effect throughout the book.) The mobility of the disciple band works well when it is said "they were in Capernaum one day and Cana the next" (p.85) but becomes mind – boggling when it is "Capernaum today and Jerusalem tomorrow" (pp 91-92)

What is surprising is that in a book of three hundred pages there are so few instances of this kind. Such a large volume needs to be read, a section at a time. A suggestion would be that the first chapter of Introduction and the last chapter of Conclusion (pp 279 – 93) should be read first then attention given to the remainder. Illumination and inspiration will be found on every page.

For the teacher or preacher a textual index would be invaluable in a second edition.

Bob Thompson

Postscript: Between accepting the article and its publication, it was hoped that *Life on the Road* would be available in the U.K. This is not yet the case. Editor.

Book Reviews

Creating a Just Future: by Jürgen Moltmann (SCM, 1989, 104pp, £4.50)

In this book, Moltmann raises questions concerning major problems which face the whole human race as a result of science, technology and their impact upon human affairs. The three areas of concern are, firstly, the managing of society itself, given the effects of communications, the numbers of people, mobility, the problems of employment and so on; secondly, the question of true peace in a world with nuclear weapon capacity; and thirdly, the need for harmony with the environment, rather than exploitation and despoliation of the natural world.

These are important matters for any future the human race may have, and the author has some stimulating things to say. For instance, I was fascinated by his suggestions concerning the Sabbath, that God spent the last day of creation simply leaving everything alone to be itself, without interference, and his suggestions that we humans should do likewise, all fields to lie fallow one year in seven, humans to have a sabbatical every seven years instead of retiring at 60 or 65, and so on.

The author brought home to me again the Biblical truth that it was because God loves the world (i.e. everything that is) that he gave his Son, and that unless more of us human beings begin to practice a similar **love** very soon, then perhaps there is not much hope.

What concerns me are these two questions. Firstly, are there enough Christians to begin to address the problems? Secondly, of the Christians that there are, are sufficient of us both aware of the problems and their urgency, and willing to make radical changes in our lifestyle in accordance with Biblical insights? Simply to use re – cycled loo paper and “Body Shop” shampoos not tested on animals, or to contribute to the World Wild – Life Fund are only empty gestures to salve our consciences if we continue to rush around in our cars, exhausting the world’s oil reserves in one generation, and generally following a lifestyle which will make our planet less habitable for millions of animals as well as humans! At least Moltmann makes a start in raising our awareness.

Michael Ball

Clergy Stress: by Mary Anne Coate (SPCK, 1989, 224pp, £5.95)

Most of us in the course of our ministry develop a measure of ability to distinguish between what people say, and what they mean, and to recognise the subterfuges which we employ to circumvent what is too unpleasant to face. In the writer, a clinical psychologist with many years experience, this faculty is highly developed. Her exposure of what lies hidden is in many cases wonderfully true to life and one chuckles to see oneself and others caught out. The writer, however, seldom permits herself a chuckle, for to her it is all sinister and an unmistakable herald of troubles to come. I don’t dispute that the dangers are there but they can be overplayed.

We are invited to consider six people who are in difficulty and, what is worse, they are either unaware that the difficulties exist or mistaken as to their hidden nature. The writer is obsessed by the trauma of birth which lies at the root, so much so that if it were true we should like Job curse the day we were born.

Theologically, I am not happy with the treatment of atonement and redemption nor with the Fall, the Incarnation and, most of all, the Cry of Dereliction.

If you are accustomed to reading this kind of book, sub – titled, ‘The Hidden Conflicts in Ministry’, then I would say “Enough is enough”, but if like me you tend to neglect it then perhaps it would be good to read it, for at my age it leaves me feeling like a cat which amazingly has walked the full length of a wall studded with broken glass and yet has suffered nothing worse than a scratched paw. Then you will take up your ministry afresh, grateful that we serve a merciful God and that the joys and satisfactions of the ministry generally outweigh its stresses and strains.

Frank S. Fitzsimmonds

Church Renewal by David Kornfield (Paternoster, 1989, 304pp, £8.95)

This ‘Handbook for Christian Leaders’ is written “to assist churches....which are pursuing renewal”. It is “a tool to be used rather than a book to be read”. The

author says about the individual chapters: "Frankly they do not make good reading"; and he is right.

There are three sections to the book: **Section 1:** How to use the book: **Section 2:** Dimensions of Renewal. This deals with thirteen aspects of church life. **Section 3:** Resource material, including Bible studies, for putting the theory into practice.

Section 2 is the meat of the book, covering a wide scope of church life. It begins with a Vision of the Kingdom, and works through Prayer, Worship, Stewardship etc, to Evangelism and Social Concern. Each chapter is intended to be used separately, and much material is repeated to facilitate this. The subject is introduced, reflection on the church's present situation in relation to the aspect is encouraged, Bible study material is given, and finally an action plan is presented.

Section 2 cannot be used without first reading and understanding Section 1, and this is not too easy. The problem is the lay – out. Boxes are used to make the book attractive and to give extra material. It is not always clear where the boxed material fits into the main text, and this I found irritating. The whole book has too many printing errors also.

As a handbook this will be another useful tool for churches pursuing renewal. I found myself getting excited as I read some chapters and thinking: 'I could use this in the church' or 'I need to work this through with my people'. This is the strength of David Kornfield's book. It would have been nice to be told who David Kornfield is.

David Doonan

Worshipping God by R.T. Kendall (Hodder, 1989, 224pp, £2.99)

The first American Minister of Westminster Chapel, Dr. Kendall has now been in London for over twelve years and in that time has seen big changes in both the worship, and ethos of the Chapel. He writes out of wide experience, deep conviction and an unmistakable reliance on the Holy Spirit.

Worshipping God Sub – titled, "Rediscovering the Full Dimension of Worship", is unashamedly a book of sermons (based on Phil 3:3), which when preached, clearly spoke to the preacher as well as to his people. The personal, practical, Biblical style is blunt and outspoken, with little attempt at elegance, and with an incongruous use of the King James Version. Nevertheless the book will help those who need to discover the breadth of Christian worship and how it is affected by our obedience, personality and tradition. Illustrations are mostly home – made and definitions are simple and direct. Worship, for example, is "the response to, and/or preparation for the preached word". Elsewhere it is "any activity which is carried out under the impulse of the Spirit of God...". Preaching is "God's word reaching man through human personality." Repentance means "a change of mind leading to a change of life".

Starting with the earliest act of Christian worship on the day of Pentecost, the author suggests that Peter's sermon set the pattern for making preaching central when Christians worship together. He tackles such themes as worship and listening, worship and spiritual gifts, expressing feelings in worship and the place of

fasting, music and liturgy. The shortest chapter, one of the best, is on leadership in worship, "a leadership that keeps out of the way as much as possible.."

For the preacher this paperback will provide material and challenge. ("The greatest folly of any preacher is to think that he can become the vehicle of God just by stepping into the pulpit.."). It also made me want to worship.

Rodney Collins

The Great God Robbery by George Carey (Fount, 1989, 144pp, £2.95)

We've all heard of the lady who was happy about the existence of God, until the Curate started trying to prove it! I'm happy to report that any reader of Bishop Carey's book will have, either their agnosticism firmly (but lovingly) challenged, or their faith strengthened.

His basic thesis is that, as a society, we have been "robbed of God", not by coming to such a conclusion after careful, considered, reflective thought, but by acquired attitudes, assumptions and transferred values of a culture which is conditioning us not to believe. (p.12)

He proceeds lucidly to defend that thesis by drawing on his very wide reading – especially in current philosophical trends, but also in poetry and the arts generally. The overall result is a book that manages to 'sit alongside' the reader, in genuine humility and openness, and to reach conclusions that are orthodox Christian, but not brittle Fundamentalist.

He takes us patiently through the 'proofs' ("or 'clues' as I prefer to call them" p.25), but the exercise is never allowed to become dry or divorced from ordinary life. He shares his negative feelings about God when his mother died of cancer (p.74), and gives impressive examples of Christian experience, drawn from both the Evangelical and Catholic traditions. He does full justice to the "scandal of particularity", but not in a way which is arrogant or overbearing. 'Mainstream Christianity treats other religions with respect and allows that God can be known, and is known by men and women of non – Christian faiths' (p.123)

Here is a man who is honest enough to say, "I have never found it easy to believe in God" (p. 9), and committed enough to affirm that "God is revealed FULLY AND FINALLY in Jesus Christ. (p.123)

This book is a brilliant piece of intelligent popularisation, and would be excellent to give an agnostic or a Christian going through a period of doubt.

Sam Sayer

Crossfire by Richard Holloway (Fount, 1990, 174pp, £3.50)

Richard Holloway describes himself as once being a horrid young high – church prig. If that ever was the case, *Crossfire* sub – titled "Faith and Doubt in an Age of Certainty", demonstrates that the years have brought maturity and a width of vision to the now Bishop of Edinburgh.

Quotations from authors of a high literary standing, from Shakespeare to Schweitzer, show a broad background. Enigmatic chapter headings and, to me, a somewhat disjointed approach produce a symphony on the theme of doubt and certainty. It is impossible to do justice to this in a few words.

The human inclination to be religious is the starting point. Within this context, Holloway struggles to uphold the uniqueness of Christianity whilst accepting it as one religious system among many. Faith for this Bishop 'is the decision to choose one or other of the answers that we find in human history to the question of life's meaning.' The Bible is the book through which we encounter Jesus but "that mystery encounter takes place in a way that makes the historical status of the vehicle of revelation irrelevant." I found myself protesting the historicity of Scripture and the nature of faith as a personal relationship with God through Christ.

Nevertheless, there are worthwhile introspective insights. *Crossfire* exposes some of the tensions and paradoxes with our human religious experience. Holloway shows, for example, how even our attempts at self – forgetfulness can become excuses for self – expression: "Behold me, notice me. Can't you see how self – forgetful I am becoming?"

"Often disturbing" comments one review quoted on the cover. Here is a book for those who want to be disturbed by examining the relationship of faith to the present philosophical climate. Surely a worthwhile activity even if we do get caught in the crossfire.

Alan Bowyer

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