

The Fraternal

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Editorial

Growing up within an evangelical ethos, one was warned against the *mystical* strand of Christianity. Suspicion was directed toward its lack of objective doctrinal content and what appeared to be moral strivings, suggestive of a religion of 'works'. So Julian of Norwich, St John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila were viewed from a safe distance, as a false path through the woods. In such ways the 'rightness' of our views is reassuringly confirmed over against what is perceived as false.

Yet much contemporary Christianity is highly coloured by the subjectivism associated with the mystical stream. What is even more significant is that this is encountered in expressions of the faith which are otherwise poles apart: from the Charismatic Movement to the radical anthropocentrism of the kind of left wing Christianity represented by Don Cupitt. What unifies this spectrum is the stress on self-realisation and personal spiritual fulfilment, which may have only an indirect connection with Bible, doctrine and creed. The impulse is coming not so much from an objective, historical revelation of God, but one which is subjective and existential. One is almost tempted to say, we're all mystics now.

It is not easy to submit this to a value judgment. On the one hand a very subjective Christianity needs the checks and balances of an external authority: scripture, tradition, the role model of Christ, otherwise, as in Carl Jung, 'God' becomes totally privatised and may provide the justification for anything one wishes to think. On the other hand it is equally dangerous when Christian experience is totally subjugated to objective authority, playing no part in the re-interpretation and re-application of the faith, generation to generation. That charts the way to a dead orthodoxy. Somehow a dynamic must be maintained if Christianity is to be both historic and renewed.

Closely related to the inner search is the extraordinary burgeoning of the Retreat Movement. Many now build regular retreats into their lives and ministries as indispensable for sanity and sanctity. Since its formation just two years ago, the Baptist Union Retreat Group already numbers over 150 members and is clearly meeting a felt need. John Rackley, its Secretary, provides a rationale, meets the criticisms and offers insights gleaned from retreat theology for worship. Following this, George McKelvie, possibly moved by the heart-rending catalogue of national tragedies, addresses the notoriously difficult subject of 'Providence'.

The 'Greening of God' increasingly characterises Christian theology in the Nineties. We have been fortunate to herald the decade with a President eminently qualified, as Christian leader and scientist, to bring us to our ecological senses. John Biggs shares with us his presidential year, giving us the chance to express again our deep appreciation. Then, Alec Gilmore and Stuart Jenkins provide an update on the eagerly awaited new Baptist hymn book and service book respectively. 1991 will make liturgical explorers of us. Lastly, Paul Beasley-Murray, in a paper first presented to the BWA last year, addresses the theological presuppositions which he believes must undergird any evangelical activity in the future. It reminds us that Christian activism needs to draw upon sound biblical principles if integrity and wholeness are to prevail.

Retreat Spirituality

Within a few miles of each other in Leicestershire are two places of rest and cure. One, a health and fitness centre, complete with every modern aid to produce tanned, supple, trim bodies, with calmed-down minds, has just gone bankrupt. The other, Launde Abbey, a retreat centre, celebrates many hundreds of years of prayer on the site with bookings that stretch into 1992.

This is the story of our times. The Christian Faith gave to our country the idea of holiday. Occasions to opt out of routine and opt in to what is important, serious and splendid. Today's society clamours for recreation, "peace and quiet", week-end breaks, getting-away-from-it-all, either to the Mediterranean or over to the allotment.

Certainly Retreat Houses have benefitted from this desire. The need for rest and change is valid and necessary. But a Retreat is only marginally about putting a distance between ourselves and the noise and responsibilities of each day. A Retreat is a time for silence, solitude, simple living, understanding companionship. It's an opportunity to explore the self-expression of God in Christ, Culture and Creation. It is only a suspension of daily routine not a cessation. For the point of a Retreat is to help us join the human race at a deeper level of commitment and understand God's directions for our life.

For those who have not been on a Retreat, let me refer you to what others have written ¹ and the programme of the Baptist Union Retreat Group (BURG) ². In one of its periodicals Barry Vandy describes a typical Retreat thus:

"The day will contain periods of worship, silence, sleeping, eating and relaxation. There may be addresses by the Retreat leader (not to stimulate the mind so much as to lead into prayer) and opportunities for private consultation. A person on Retreat has great freedom to pray and to use the time in their own way."

With that in mind I wish to consider the following:

God and the Gaps. Times chosen to step out of our routine can be ambiguous in their effect on us. A holiday may be a time for a person to reassess their priorities and make decisions, so it can also be stressful and disturbing because we are missing the support of our usual mindless headlong rush. A Retreat can produce similar experience. Such "betwixt and between" times have been given spiritual significance. The story of God meeting people often highlights the gaps in life when this happens. Whether it is Abraham or Paul on a journey, Jesus in the wilderness, Isaiah coming to worship in the Temple or Jacob stopping at a brook and getting into a wrestling match, there seems to be an important correlation between the disturbing effects of breaks in routine and the presence of God.

This has consequences for how we view our Sabbatical scheme. We underplay the recreational effect of a Sabbatical. It can be difficult to let go responsibility and take it up again! The gap in our pattern can reveal ourselves to ourselves in a way for which we are not prepared. Experience of people on Retreat has been

acknowledging this for a long time. The sustaining presence of God is mediated through the joyous and comfortable and the disorienting and ambiguous. To promote a Retreat as a rest sells it short. Re-creation like any birth will have its discomfort.

Worship The lessons for our worship in Retreat revolve around Silence and Time. A Retreat aims to give a person more time to think deeply about less. For this to occur the Retreat Leader doesn't have to say a lot, but only enough to help a person have time to respond to their own needs, aspirations and the God that meets them at that level. This raises a series of consequences for our Baptist Worship:

- (a) is time given for silent reflection (supported by guidance on how to use that time)?
- (b) is there too much happening in the service for people to have opportunity to pause and collect their thoughts?
- (c) are people given the chance really to hear scripture for itself before it's swamped by a hymn, sermon or the offering?
- (d) and for the preacher, have I maintained the balance between stimulus, advocacy and maintaining interest, and really trusted people to listen and react how they must, thus avoiding the trap of turning my preaching into manipulation?

It may be correctly said that Retreat experience invites us to believe the closer we get to God the less we have to shout. The real lesson lies in how we allow and prepare a congregation to use the gaps between our words.

A Valid Criticism Brian Haymes reminds us:

“Right belief is too important just to be left to our slogans without qualification. A lively interest in theology, in articulating and discovering the faith by which we live...is too important to be left out of our adventure of answering the call of Christ our Saviour.”³

And it may be left out in all this search for pausing, gaps and silence. It is a justifiable criticism that in all this a proper respect for sane considered theological exposition can be forgotten. This is all part of the on-going balancing act between nourishing the feelings and nurturing the mind. Those who fear that a Retreat can be just as mindless and just as much as escape from reality as countless choruses clapped out in syncopated rhythm must make that point loud and clear. I for one cannot sacrifice, for instance, what modern biblical criticism has made of the Gospels and the contemporary culture in which Jesus lived, and provide Retreat talks that studiously ignore all that. So I would suggest that current developments in what is called “Narrative Theology” have particular insights to those who lead Retreats. Two authors who meet my need to match imagination and informed theological reflection when dealing with the Gospels are Kathy Galloway⁴ and Gerd Theissen⁵.

Spiritual Direction A Retreat aims to treat our relationship with God seriously. Those Christian traditions who are the natural mothers of the Retreat Movement

also gave birth to the role of the Spiritual Director. That person's task has never been better interpreted than by Thomas Merton as:

"One who helps another to recognise and to follow the inspirations of grace in their life, in order to arrive at the end to which God is leading them."⁶

Recognising the dangers in the title "director" and preferring, myself "companion" in such a definition, there is an explicit invitation to have no more ultimate credentials for our existence as Christian Ministers than that we wish to keep the rumour of God alive. However the practicalities and priorities of our Ministry work out that must be our true cause for being relevant.

Whilst it may draw upon a common pool of techniques and styles, Spiritual Direction is not the same as Pastoral Counselling. It moves through the problems, crises, opportunities that any pastoral care may encounter and seeks to give them a further context in what we believe God is getting up to in us and through us. It is difficult not to resist the conclusion that this is just another fancy way of describing what I'd like to think could happen when I sit down with Mrs Moppett for a cup of tea and yet another interminable drone through gossip, chilblains and why I should sack the organist. Let the task of Spiritual Director then stand as a suggestion and a question:

When you've cut through the gossip (but not the chilblains) called in the chirpodist and changed the organist, is that all you and God can do for Mrs. Moppett!?

It strikes me that Maslow's hierarchy of human needs...ascending from the need for food to the need for integrity and balance in body, mind and spirit is the route the Spiritual Director must travel with a person. It is not easy and should not be seen as a solitary task. In the Baptist Union Retreat Group recently folk have wondered whether there should be a more tangible expression of this Baptist concern for the Retreat. A Baptist Retreat House has been suggested⁷. Or should this be preceded by a community life in which people spend time together and share a common 'rule of life'. It is interesting to note that over the years local churches have attempted the latter. Known to me are that of the Yeovil churches and Girlington in Bradford. I wonder how they have prospered. Have other fellowships attempted a Constitution of values and guidelines? I would be interested to know. For it is in the local church, if anywhere, that it must happen if we are true to ourselves as Baptist. "Church Membership" is the remains of what our forefathers honoured as the gathered-church principle. Perhaps new life can be breathed into this all-too-often moribund allegiance if we were more articulate as to what that commitment means for each other and resurrect the notion of "covenant". It is interesting to note that Taize music can now be heard in the most august Baptist gatherings; but have we anything to learn from the Taize way of life?⁸

A young acquaintance blurted out: "I'm fed up with Graham Kendrick songs, same old tunes, same old ideas; let's have more Taize stuff!!" Who knows? Spring Harvest '92 – at Taize!?

John Rackley

Footnotes

1. Baptists and the Retreat Movement: Barry Vendy.
What is a Retreat?: Mary Holliday. (Available from Pam Neville)
2. Available from myself or Pam Neville (Baptist House)
3. A Question of Identity: Brian Haymes, Yorkshire Baptist Association.
4. Imagining the Gospels: K. Galloway, S.P.C.K.
5. The Shadow of the Galilean: G. Theissen, S.C.M.
6. Spiritual Direction and Meditation: T. Merton, Anthony Clarke
7. Colin White of Kegworth and myself are at present preparing a feasibility study to consider the nature of such a place of prayer and community. Anyone with ideas or insight are welcome to be in contact.
8. Parable of Community: Brother Roger, Mowbrays.

Providence: Tracing God at Work

What is God doing? It is a question that is often asked and to which we must address ourselves. The atheist can't believe in a God who is both almighty and good or why does He allow so many evil things to happen? Thomas Carlyle said, "The worst of God is He does nothing."

Some Christians have the idea that God is regularly intervening, even in the most miniscule ways, sending down little messages and answering prayers of not very much account, like "Give us a good day for our annual outing" or "Dear God, please find me a parking space". They can quote instances of God's marvelous intervention – like the Christian man who was sitting on top of a bus: there was an accident and some people below were injured; but there was he sitting up there in isolation and gloriously free from hurt; God was looking after him! What presumption! Wasn't God interested in the others, and why didn't He prevent the accident anyhow? I've heard a missionary tell us that God sent the much-needed rain in answer to his prayers while the fields of the neighbouring infidels had none – surely at odds with Jesus who said that God's rain falls on the just and the unjust and His sun shines on the good and the bad.

They sing in their choruses that God can do anything. But here we are not concerned with what God can do but with what He does do. For example, if He does intervene to heal, why doesn't He heal in far more instances when prayers are offered; and why doesn't He do something really big and worthwhile and convincing, like liquidating the Hitlers of the world and scattering those who delight in war, like preventing earthquakes, tornadoes, droughts, floods, like feeding the starving millions and preventing accidents and atrocities? If God does intervene, why doesn't He make a better and fairer job of it?

There are other people who believe that this is a random world involving chance and accident and that God does not intervene. Is there any reason why one soldier in battle is hit and killed by a bullet and a man a yard away is

unscathed; any reason why the driver of the lorry is saved and his partner killed? As in the Genesis creation story, God gave Adam and Eve a garden to tend in which to learn and use the laws of nature and with perfect freedom of action, so He gives us our world and its laws and leaves us to it, like the Parable of the Talents employer who divided his capital among his servant and went off to another country. God places a tremendous trust on us, lays a great responsibility upon us, and gives us a glorious opportunity. He is glad when we learn our lessons, make our scientific discoveries and advances, and wisely exploit our world.

But, you say, isn't He a God who acts? That is what our theologians say; and our Old Testament says it with a vengeance. Didn't He bring His people out of Egypt and slay the first-born of Egyptian families? Didn't He lead them into the Promised Land, fighting their battles for them and even proving by the slaughter of 127,000 Syrian soldiers that He was not only the God of the hills but also of the plains? And when they went into exile did He not bring them back to their own land – which hadn't happened to any other nation?

The whole business is, to say the least, quite thought-provoking. Let me say two things that make some contribution to the discussion.

1. God does His work through people. When He wanted to set up a new race of people in the world He chose Abram, who was prepared to go out into the unknown; when He wanted to bring Israel out of Egypt He chose Moses to deliver them from bondage; when they were to enter the Promised Land He chose Caleb and Joshua to do the leading; when through the years God would nurture His people progressively in truth and righteousness He raised up that wonderful succession of men called the Prophets; and when He would bring the nation out of exile in Babylon it was Ezra and Nehemiah and King Cyrus whom He chose to do it.

Then, when the time was ripe and God would bring salvation to the whole world and reveal himself in a way that men could see and understand, it was to Jesus of Nazareth that He looked – and that life and death of Jesus is the most wonderful jewel of our human history. Or, if you like, the Son of God had to become a true Son of Man in order to redeem the world.

And when that Jesus, about to ascend into heaven, would evangelise the world He bequeathed the mammoth task to His Twelve disciples. He had no other plans!

Since then God has needed Saul, Tertullian, Augustine, Luther, Carey, Wesley, Booth, Bunyan, Wilberforce, Schweitzer, Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale and Mother Theresa. Remember what Dr. Ryland said to young Carey, "Sit down, young man, you're an enthusiast. If God wants to convert the heathen, He'll do it without you and me bothering about it". But he was very wrong. God needed Carey to go to India and learn the languages and translate the Scriptures and build the College and initiate the greatest ever expansion of the Christian religion.

It has always been through people that God does his work. It is the same in all spheres of life. He uses doctors and nurses to do His work of healing. In science He uses Logie Baird, of Helensburgh, to give us the marvel of television. In

religion He finds an assortment of men to write His Bible. Remember also George Eliot's words about the great violinist:

'Tis God gives skill,
But not without men's hands:
He could not make Antonio Stradiviri's violins
Without Antonio.

Isn't it quite amazing in our Lord's model Prayer how much God has us answering our own prayers: His name is to be hallowed by us, His will is to be done by us, the bread He gives is to be produced by us, His forgiveness only comes to us as we are prepared to forgive others, temptation has to be resisted by us.

2. God gives us His Holy Spirit. When God by His son redeems, converts, saves, forgives us and does for us what we could never do for ourselves, He brings us into a new and living relationship with Himself and makes us ready and able to answer the call to do the things He wants done. This He does by giving us His Holy Spirit, His very own presence in our lives, Jesus' other self within us; so that we know what is right and what is wrong and what is good and advisable for us, and we don't have to go looking for signs and putting out 'fleeces'; so that our common sense is sanctified and our natural powers refined and perfected and utilised for the general good; and so that we, to the extent that we desire it, are given new and spiritual gifts for the furtherance of His purposes.

It is as when a great orchestral conductor takes on those who already in their own right are skilled musicians and unifies, controls and inspires them, giving them something of himself and lifting them up to new heights so that all they have to put in to their performance brings a thrilling and enthusiastic response from the hearers.

See what it did to those early Christian disciples – fishermen, publicans, ordinary men – and they "turned the world upside down". Look also to the Old Testament story where, it is said, God gave His Spirit to select individuals called to do an important task. And now that Spirit is given universally to all who believe.

Most of all, the Spirit that imbued Jesus, inspired, guided, motivated and activated Him in all He was and did and said, is given to us. Could anything be more wonderful than that?

What is God doing? He is perpetuating in us what happened in them. He gives visions to young men and dreams to old men. He gives us an eternal quality of life that lifts us far above ourselves. God's greatest miracles are human miracles. He does His greatest work in the lives of people. His greatest glory is a good man or woman.

With that Spirit what a wonderful institution the Christian Church ought to be! With that Spirit the world of human affairs can be transfigured. God has no other plans!

Right now God is looking for a breed of humanity whose priority is to change the face of the world. We have butter mountains and grain mountains and spend

millions on storage. We pay farmers to leave their fields barren and we limit the production of meat and milk and the harvest of fish while millions of our fellows starve. We give aid to overseas countries and take more in interest from them for previous Bank loans given to them. We go on spending billions of pounds on armaments in a situation that does not require them and selling armaments to poor countries who cannot possibly afford them. There are barriers of race and colour prejudice that offend the Holy Spirit.

It could be that there are people in high places making Holy Spirit noises and we are not listening to them. There is not the slightest doubt that the Holy Spirit would deal with those situations if Christians gave Him the chance. Christian Aid, Tear Fund and Operation Agri, etc, ought to be swamped with cash, and governments ought to be prodded and goaded. Mountains of selfishness and high living and indifference ought to be eroded.

God is looking for His people, and He waits for them to offer themselves. The Providence of God is looking for channels.

George McKelvie

My Presidential Year

I am writing these reflections about my year in the Presidency just after the announcement that the new Archbishop of Canterbury to succeed Robert Runcie will be George Carey, the Bishop of Bath and Wells. It has been interesting to see how the media have covered the news. They have been keen to seize upon his origins in the East End and his having left school before taking O-levels, so as to assure the public that he is a 'man of the people', and from the very beginning they have given him a label: he is an evangelical. Lest this appear too strident for some, it is modified by assuring us that any evangelical fervour is tempered by sound common sense and a broad theological understanding developed when taking his degrees at London University and as the Principal of a theological college: as Bishop he has soon won himself a place in the hearts of the people of his diocese by being approachable.

Labels

It is the need to stick a label on a churchman that interests me. For once I do not think that the media are being unfair. At the beginning of July I was privileged to be the Baptist observer at the General Synod of the Church of England held at York, and often during the sessions a close friend who is a member of the Synod came and sat with in the roped-off area which served as a public gallery. For over thirty years a priest within the Church, he has been a residential canon of one of our Cathedrals for the last seventeen years and knows his Church and its Synod well. At suitable moments there came his comments on the proceedings.

The nearest thing we have to the Synod is our Baptist Union Council, but to say that is misleading. Synod is a much more formal affair with a mass of Standing Orders that beggars belief, and a legalistic frame that reflects the House of Commons – for good reason, as any measure that it passes has to go to Parliament to become part of the laws of England. Instead of a free interchange

of ideas, most speakers in the debate come with their speeches already prepared and – sadly – written out, and it was noticeable that many dropped the hint in some sentence or other as to where they stood in the ecclesiastical spectrum. And the comments made in my ear helped the categorisation and delineation. Of course the width of dog-collar, when worn, can be some indication. But the labels were there, often self-chosen, willingly accepted and at times doughtily defended. It seems that in such a broad Church some feel the need to take a stance. Measures that are carried through by the Synod can be compromises between the contending parties, or they can be seen as small victories of one party against another.

As you will know, there was an unofficial poll carried out by Parish and People outside the building where Synod met, in which members were invited to indicate their choice of the new Archbishop. Not all chose to vote. Nevertheless, easily at the head of the list came John Habgood, but when second and third preferences were taken into account David Sheppard was the choice, and again he was given a label: an evangelical who has the sympathy of many within Synod who have at heart urban mission and the drawing together of the differing strands of Christian tradition which he has helped to shape in the East End and in Liverpool.

Each year the Baptist Union elects a Vice-President to take over the office of President in the following year. What are your expectations of the President? Do you elect those of us who serve because we represent a particular stance? Do you call us to office for some association we have with a movement within our churches or a concern we have? In your eyes, do each of us carry a label?

When I was asked in the autumn of 1987 if I would allow my name to be considered for the Vice-Presidency, it was not an easy decision to say 'Yes'. Would I be able to meet the very diverse demands made on the President? Would I be at home, and seen to be at home, in patterns of worship that vary from the traditional to the charismatic? Would I be able to demonstrate my openness to all strands within our denomination, while at the same time maintaining my own integrity with my own convictions? At the base of all these questions was the underlying uncertainty as to whether I would in any way measure up to the task. The Presidency of the Union is an enormous privilege you bestow on anyone: it is also a daunting responsibility. In the end I took comfort in the fact that I was not being asked to say that I thought I could do the job: all I was being asked to do was to let my name go forward and in the ballot the decision would be made by my peers. It is part of our Baptist insight that we seek the will of God for the calling of individuals to specific tasks by seeking the collective understanding.

Of course it didn't work out that way. In the end I was the sole nominee. When I remarked to some close friends that I would have preferred there to have been an election to confirm or deny the calling, they observed that Baptists are a cursed lot, and if they had not wanted me they would soon have found someone to stand against me! I could take some odd comfort in that. So from January 1988 we all knew that I was to become Vice-President.

What remained to be resolved was whether I was seen as a standard-bearer of some cause. Why had I been chosen? Was it my long association with Home Mission? or as a lay preacher? or as the writer of the Science Column in the Baptist Times? How was I to know? I thought I might discover by writing to each

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.

Bob's ministry to workers in the stores and offices is an important one. He has to listen with love and build up relationships with those in management.

The work of The Undercroft at Broadmead Baptist Church is an example of how an inner city church can offer a place of rest and a place for counselling where the warmth of the fellowship is felt.

This is yet another challenging aspect of Home Mission support and is a welcome addition to our current videos.

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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.

"I will build my Church", the title of our latest Home Mission video, focuses on this fellowship. With only a few years to go before retirement, Bill is able to meet the special needs of this church. Home Mission, through the Older Ministers' Scheme, has made Bill's ministry possible.

This video is for all ages, and illustrates the fact that God is building his Church.

Produced: 1989
Time: 24 minutes
Available: VHS or Betamax

of the Associations which nominated me, asking them what it was they looked for. Not all answered. It was clear that it was *not* the Home Mission connection: I was not necessarily to go stumping the country drumming up more support for Home Mission, though I would never be true to myself if I didn't give it my wholehearted backing and make use of what opportunities would come my way for enlightening our churches with what is already being done in their name in the field of mission. There was little positive that came in the replies save two notes: 'Be a layman'; 'be yourself'. It was seven years since the previous layman, David Charley – another previous President of the Yorkshire Association - had been President of the Union.

Contributions and Surprises

Clear that I should not try and imitate what my friends in the ministry could do far better, I realised I did have skills as a university lecturer in a scientific discipline to awaken our churches to the imminent cause for concern about the deterioration in the world's physical environment, and to call us all to work out our Christian understanding of relationship to God's creation and our responsible stewardship of it. But during my year of office it was clear that there were other themes that might need to be addressed, not least our relationship with other church traditions in and outside the Inter-Church Process. More than that, I was determined that I would not take the same them *necessarily* in all Association gatherings, but would be open to meet their requests for a topic. There is such a welter of concern and activity going on in our churches at the moment as we prepare for the Decade of Evangelism, as AIM makes its impact, as we face a range of challenges in social issues and as, through the review of the Home Mission Scheme, we widen our understanding of mission in a range of enterprises and initiatives. So the over-arching slogan became "For Such A Time As This" to reflect the currents of interest flowing strongly among us: I would tackle whatever aspect of the *kairos* seemed appropriate, whilst maintaining the freedom to raise my concern for the environment, happily protected by that convention that the Baptist Times never gives any details of what the President has said when he addresses an Association gathering.

I was to have two surprises. Within England the matter of the Inter-Church Process was hardly raised as an issue at all. Now I am aware that inevitably this may reflect the churches and Associations I visited – however many a President includes in a year's itinerary it is still a small proportion of the whole – but I have the impression that the lengthy debate at the 1989 Assembly resolved the matter for many. Those with unease are willing to wait to see how CCBI and CTE work out. More particularly I suspect that our people may have strong feelings about what goes on locally to their church, where inter-church relations may be either close or totally unproductive: by contrast they have little interest in the organisations that emerge and do business at the 'top level'. This also reflects some of the attitude we have towards the Union itself.

The other surprise was the way interest developed in the theme of our stewardship of the environment. Fortuitously (?) I delivered the Presidential address just a month before local elections, followed by the European parliamentary elections, in which 'Green' issues surfaced as never before, and increasingly I have been drawn into leading workshops and conferences trying to bring a little light in what is often a confused issue. I was also surprised by the amount of broadcasting that came my way: some more formal spots like conducting a week

of 'Prayer for the Day', but many more informal interviews on local broadcasting when the interviewer was surprised to find that a leading churchman was not only a layman but competent and anxious to campaign on such matters. More recently it has led to lobbying in Parliament and helping to lead other Churches into expressing their opinions to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Chris Patten.

Impressions

And how did the year work out? It was a fascinating experience, a great privilege, and when we say that we **enjoyed** it, we really do mean that! Note the "we". Having no family commitments, Brenda travelled with me to share in almost all my appointments, saving the rather more routine business ones like committees! That meant that we could share our experiences after a function: we had often met quite different people, and the welcome she received (or failed to receive) shed a third dimension on the impression that I had gathered. So we could chat in the car coming away at the end of a weekend: that helped in the unburdening that any President must do. It also meant that we shared in the driving, which was an enormous help: Brenda often drove at least part of the journey towards an appointment, enabling me to catch up on orders of service and necessary reading. A President that does not have a spouse to do this for him or her is at a distinct disadvantage, and a privilege soon becomes a pressure. Our car covered 29,000 miles in the twelvemonth: to fit in the many geographical locations each weekend would have been difficult by rail, it would have been impossible to get back home to Hull on a Sunday night, and the car also took not only our luggage but also books and pamphlets to sell and to publicise the work of the Union. A reliable car is essential.

In other offices in the past we had experienced Baptist hospitality: there is a great danger of over-eating, and in being engaged in conversation too late into the night, reducing the hours of sleep. But to be fair, this aspect was better than we had anticipated and we had some marvellous and understanding hosts: keep the news spreading that Presidents, like visiting preachers everywhere, welcome moments just to be alone and quiet, and to read. The one pressure that I had not correctly anticipated was the sheer volume of correspondence, not just of committee papers (I had grown used to that), but the letters that needed a reply. And you would be surprised the number of church and pulpit secretaries that assume you know what their times of service are, even to the point of asking you to conduct their two Sunday services when they mean morning and afternoon, and not at all what you have in mind.

Our patterns of worship, as is widely known, have become very diverse indeed. We have experienced fully charismatic and almost totally unstructured worship: there are churches where a suggestion that a member of the congregation should share in the conduct of worship by reading a lesson is virtually revolutionary and viewed as such. We shared in a highly liturgical service with 'responsorial invocations'. The welter of hymnbooks and songs on overhead projectors is a minefield for the visiting preacher. After all, in the days of one common hymnbook we had to wonder which hymns were known and which not: what confidence can we have now?

I also sprang some surprises on a number of church officers in admitting that I didn't rely on the same sermon week by week, or even on just a few sermons. For

me that would have been disastrous. My personal chemistry is such (and surely that must be the right term for me?) that a sermon frequently repeated would go dead on me, and if it goes dead for the preacher how is it to come alive and spark off a vision in the minds of its hearers? Apart from this it is important to *try* to match the sermon and theme of a service to the needs of each congregation (and in this connection it is helpful to know something of the tenor of the church in advance), and as for me I would prefer to take cognisance of the church calendar and tackle the great themes of our redemption through the year.

Again, with the caveat that the overall impression is inevitably distorted by the limited number of churches seen, I would judge that, within England but not within South Wales, there is good ground for hope: many churches are in good heart, expanding in their membership and/or in their vision for mission in their community. The range of ministry is widening; churches are receiving pastoral oversight that have not had such for a generation or more; situations are coming alive that were previously dead or dormant. We still struggle in council estates, in some inner city areas, in isolated rural villages and in multi-racial areas.

I have not attempted in this review to give you an account of the many experiences of the year: that would be another kind of article. Suffice to say that a President finds himself standing in all sorts of situations where you have to pinch yourself to believe that it is all happening to you. You have to be open to dine in simple cottage and illustrious home; to eat sausage and mash on a loaded trestle table or balance your glass and plate delicately in one hand. There are still leading members of other churches who find it bewildering to discover a President of a Church (their term, not ours) who is wearing a tie, albeit a bow tie, not because he is off duty and has laid aside his piece of plastic, but because he has no other adornment to wear: so some had to be given a gentle lesson in the priesthood of all believers.

A Final Thank You

A final word of thanks to you, my ministerial friends, who welcomed me to your pulpits and the conduct of worship. At the beginning of the year I had wondered how much of each service I would conduct: would I simply preach, or would I share with another leader in worship, or would I have the whole conduct to myself? I was willing to fit in in whatever way seemed most appropriate, and I was conscious that there might be some who would be uneasy at a layman presiding at the Communion Table when a minister was present in the congregation. With only one exception this proved not to be: I was free to develop the shape of most services and, I hope, make a bigger contribution to most services than would have been the case if my task was simply that of exposition. In your way too – and I hope you will understand this – you thus expressed your own convictions about the role that lay men and women have to play in the working out of God's purposes. So you helped me to remain a layman.

I think it is the only label I would want.

John Biggs

Baptist Praise and Worship: The new Baptist hymnbook

Baptist Praise and Worship is the title of the new Baptist hymnbook to be published next year by Oxford University Press.

It will include only about 300 from the present book, many of them modernised and with inclusive language where possible. To these have been added 30 from *Praise for Today*, 50 from *Hymns for Today's Church*, a score from *Mission Praise*, a score from *Songs and Hymns of Fellowship*, another score from various other sources, some from Iona, some from Taize and over 40 previously unpublished, giving a total of nearly 500.

There are 60 psalms plus responsive readings and prayers for each section of the liturgical calendar and a new feature is that choruses and readings are all placed in the appropriate section instead of being gathered together at the back.

There are four sections: Call to Worship (comprising almost one-fifth of the book and including 50 hymns of praise), Proclaiming the Gospel (our Lord's ministry), Celebrating the Gospel (confession and commitment, baptism and the Lord's Supper, church and family) and Living the Gospel (prayer and service, harmony and healing). Three of the largest sub-sections, each with more than 30 hymns, are those on Response in Faith, Confessing the Faith and Renewed Commitment.

New writers such as Christopher Idle, Michael Baughen, Timothy Dudley-Smith, Graham Kendrick, Brian Wren and Fred Kaan take their place besides Wesley and Watts.

The Music Committee (Chairman, Michael Ball) have preserved a balance between the familiar, the traditional, the new and the need for change, and have given special consideration to arrangements singable by the congregation and playable by a less-than-professional organist.

A Promotion Committee is working with the publisher to plan promotional events throughout the country. Meanwhile there are still copies of the old book, available from Oxford University Press through your usual suppliers, if you need them.

Alec Gilmore

Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship: A new book for Baptist worship.

"Payne and Winward" is long since out of print; "Praise God" was limited in its scope and unpopular with some. Where is the new book of Baptist services? Not a Baptist ASB; we don't wish to lay down the liturgical law. Not another book of some person's prayers; there are plenty of those and we all like one or two. What we need is a book that gives clear guidance for every service we may have to lead without restricting those who wish to do it differently, has resource material that is stimulating but not outlandish, and will be a valuable educational aid for those

new to leading worship, yet still have something to enrich the seasoned preacher. Six of us, under the chairmanship of Bernard Green, have written a book that attempts to meet these needs.

The new book contains most of the services you are likely to come across – the Lord's Supper, Baptism and Reception into Membership, Infant Presentation, Marriage, Funeral, Ordination and Induction – each complete with necessary material, prayers and recommended readings. There is a full introduction, and a chapter on planning worship followed by resource material for Sunday worship, both general and seasonal. There is a section of occasional services such as opening a new building or forming a new church, and material for healing services. Finally there is the new four-year lectionary of the Joint Liturgical Group.

The churches of the Baptist Union are very varied, and nowhere is their diversity more obvious than in worship. To offer a single book of services and worship resources to such a constituency was a demanding challenge. Others must judge how far we have succeeded, but I should like to say something about the way we have tried to meet the challenge.

Many worship books are written by gifted individuals; others are denominational books that set down the official services. In either case they speak with a single voice and exhibit a unified style. Ours is different. Whilst we have been able to identify much common ground, we have also felt it important to preserve the proper diversity of Baptist worship. We have done this by offering alternative forms for most services, and a variety of prayers and other material within them.

Our diverse readership has also influenced our way of working. The writing process has been interlaced throughout with group editing, field-testing, and comment from others outside the group. And always re-writing, and more re-writing. As a result, not only is the new book a group work but its true authorship is considerably wider than the six of us who actually put finger to word-processor. The book you finally open may lack the polished and unified style of a book written by one person, or from denominational authority, but will, we hope, reflect the rich variety of our Union, and be a contribution to the worship of all styles of church.

The camel has been described as a horse designed by a committee. The originator of this *bon mot* was presumably trying to disparage committees rather than camels, but was actually unfair to both. It is true that a camel lacks the elegance of an Arab stallion, but you wouldn't cross the desert on a racehorse. The new book is more camel than thoroughbred; it needs to be. It has to bear the burden of being educational for the novice as well as valuable to the experienced. It must be able to travel widely, finding many homes across the broad and varied continent of the Baptist Union. It must be a practical aid to each worship leader's spirit-led preparation. It is asking a lot – we hope that the hybrid vigour of "Patterns and Prayers" will enable it to succeed.

"Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship", published by Oxford University Press, should be available in time for the 1991 Baptist Assembly.

Stuart Jenkins

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To the Readers of the Fraternal.

Dear Friends,

In the April journal I referred to the storms of 25th January. My letter was written in good time for the printer before the further gales which occurred towards the end of February.

I am pleased with the way our staff were able to cope with the hundreds of claims which arose from almost every part of the country. Our response time compared very favourably with other insurers. When claims, because of the serious extent of the damage, were handled on our behalf by Loss Adjusters settlement has taken a little longer. Tribute should however be paid to the Loss Adjusters many of whom worked seven days a week for long periods.

We are very lenient with our Churches regarding submission of claims bearing in mind Church Officers are busy people handling these matters in such spare time as they have. We also appreciate the difficulty in arranging for repairs to be carried out, particularly minor repairs. However, I would stress the necessity now of completing a claim form, where one has not already been submitted if repair work is still outstanding arising from these storms. An indication of likely cost will assist.

We do need to know as accurately as possible the amount of these claims as we draw near to our financial year end.

Yours sincerely,

M.E. PURVER

Toward a Biblical/Theological Framework for Evangelism

1. Evangelism: The Mandate of the Church

1.1 Evangelism is rooted in the Great Commission of Matt 28. 18-20: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you to the close of the age". Indeed, whatever the form of the Commission, whether it be found in Matthew (Matthew 28: 18-20), or the oral tradition of Mark's longer ending (Mark 16:15), in Luke (Luke 24:46-49; also Acts 1.8) or in John (John 20:21-23), the mandate is clear: the Good News of the Gospel has to be shared with people everywhere. Evangelism is no optional extra. It is the fundamental task of the Church. Indeed, "A church not engaged in mission is guilty of apostasy" (John Stott). Evangelism, in this world at least, is of the essence of the church: for, as Emil Brunner rightly said, "A church exists by missions as a fire by burning".

1.2 However, evangelism, although an essential task of the church, is not the sole task of the church. Evangelism does not exhaust the church's mission. Social action and service need to be seen as part of the church's mission too. "As the Father sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21) declared the Risen Christ in the Upper Room. Here the incarnate Christ is the model for mission, a model which displays the power of God transforming every aspect of human life, of body and mind as well as spirit. Jesus not only proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14), he demonstrated the Kingdom in action as he drove out demons (Matthew 12:28). "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised" – these were as much signs of the Kingdom as "good news preached to the poor" (Matthew 11:2-6). Kingdom action must therefore accompany Kingdom preaching!

1.3 Baptists scarcely need to be reminded of the importance of evangelism. "Every Baptist a missionary" was, for instance, the great slogan of Johann Gerhard Oncken, the German Baptist pioneer. Nevertheless the broader understanding of mission, which has gained general acceptance amongst many evangelical Christians since the International Congress on World Evangelization held at Lausanne in 1974, has perhaps yet to be taken up by all Baptists. The Lausanne Covenant, for instance, affirmed that "evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty" (para 5). But would that be affirmed by all Baptists? Colin Marchant, President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain 1988/89 and much involved in urban mission, is one who would link the Nazareth manifesto of Luke 4 with the Resurrection mandate of Matthew 28: "Too often it has been an 'either...or'; either social justice or personal conversion. The great need has been to hold the two together. The two streams will then flow into the key model of 1 Corinthians 12 – the Body of Christ uniting believers in a total ministry of directed love towards the world in its anguish and yearning". (*Signs in the City* 81) If Colin Marchant is right, and we believe he is, then any biblical/theological framework for evangelism must have this wider dimension to mission.

2. Evangelism: The Spirit's Work

2.1 Evangelism is not only the task of the church, it is also the work of the Spirit. The Spirit, from one perspective at least, is God in mission. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in Luke's account of the beginnings of Christianity, where the "Acts of the Apostles" are in reality the "Acts of the Holy Spirit". At every stage of the church's advance it is the Spirit who takes the initiative. Whether it be in Jerusalem (Acts 2), Caesarea (Acts 10) or Antioch (Acts 13), it is the Spirit who encourages the infant church to move out in ever-expanding circles of evangelism. Paul's missionary strategy is a Spirit-inspired strategy: so much so that on one occasion the Spirit actually leads Paul not to engage in mission in one place, so as to extend mission to another – in fact to a whole new continent (Acts 16:7). In the light of this account of the Spirit's work, Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the NT* (75) comments: "The greatness of Luke's view lies in his sharing more impressively than anyone else that the Church can live only by evangelising, and by following whatever new paths the Spirit indicates" (our italics). The Spirit is God's missionary!

2.2 Not only does the Spirit take the initiative in evangelism, he also empowers for evangelism. Evangelism is only possible as the church moves out in the power of the Holy Spirit. This surely is the clear implication of the commission found in Acts 1:8: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth". A similar emphasis is found in other forms of the Great Commission recorded in the Gospels. It is precisely because all authority has been given to him, that the Matthaean Christ commands us to "go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:18-20). The Lucan Christ instructs his followers to "stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" before they begin to witness to him (Luke 24:48-49). In the context of sending out his disciples the Johannine Christ breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22). The word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is in this context salutary: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" says the Lord Almighty (Zechariah 4:6). Or in the words of the Apostle Paul: we may plant and water, but it is "only God, who makes things grow" (1 Corinthians 3:7).

2.3 How seriously do we take God's Spirit? At a time when literally hundreds of Christian agencies – the BWA amongst them – are drawing up plans for the evangelisation of the world by AD 2000, this Biblical emphasis upon the divine missionary initiative seems of vital significance. Important as planning and method, strategies and techniques may be, at the end of the day it is God who, through his Spirit works miracles of sovereign grace in the hearts of men and women. The evangelisation of the world will not be achieved through mass manipulation, but through prayerful dependence upon God's Spirit. Participants in the "Global Consultation for World Evangelisation by AD 2000 and Beyond", meeting in Singapore in January 1989 were right to say in their manifesto: "We acknowledge that the evangelisation of the world can be carried out only in the power of the Holy Spirit. Listening and ready, we declare our dependence upon the Holy Spirit and commit to undergird all efforts for world evangelisation with personal and corporate prayer. We recognise that human energy cannot replace divine activity nor can spiritual success be measured in terms of human achievement. The effectiveness of our endeavours does not lie in human expertise but in the sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit."

3. Evangelism: The World in View

3.1 Biblical evangelism always has the world in view. "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son"(John 3:16) is the message of the Fourth Gospel. "God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting men's trespasses against them" (2 Cor 5:19) declared the Apostle Paul. God does not want "anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9) wrote Peter. Every strand of Scripture is permeated by this universal outlook. God's gracious offer of salvation in Jesus Christ is for all. Potentially all are saved, for Christ, the Second Adam, died and rose that all might share in his victory over sin and death. True, not all in fact will be saved: as Paul wrote to Timothy: "We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:10)! For universal reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19) to become a reality, the world must turn to faith in Christ (2 Cor 5:20).

3.2 If the Gospel is inclusive, it is also exclusive. Jesus, God's Son, the crucified Saviour and the risen Lord, is the only way to God (John 14:6 see also Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 8:6). The many faiths of today are expressions of man's response to God's revelation of himself in creation (Acts 14:17; Romans 1:20). Jesus is the one Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:4,5), hence salvation is only found in Christ. What of those who never hear of Christ? JND Anderson in his commentary on Peter's words to Cornelius (Acts 10:34-35) offers an answer: "May it not mean that the man who realizes something of his sin and need, and who throws himself on the mercy of God with a sincerity which shows itself in his life...would find that mercy – although without understanding it – at the cross on which Christ 'died for all' (2 Cor 5:14)?" One thing for sure: salvation will not be outside Christ. We are saved through faith in the grace of God which has received expression in the Cross of Calvary.

3.3 The inclusive nature of the Gospel is a challenge to much popular Church Growth teaching, where the institution tends to be at the centre whereas, in fact, it is the world which we are to have in view. There is a world to win, and not just a church to build. True, rightly understood, the church is the means to this larger end – but how easy it is to be comfortable with the means, to be satisfied with bigger and better churches rather than to be haunted by those who are being lost to all eternity.

4. Evangelism: A Resurrection Gospel

4.1 If Luke's account of early Christian preaching is anything to go by, then it is clear that the Gospel the early church had to proclaim was first and foremost a resurrection Gospel: "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact". (Acts 2:32; see also 2:24,31,36; 3:15,26; 4:2,10,33; 5:31 etc). That was the theme of the apostolic proclamation. Indeed, so much was this the case, that at Athens it was believed that Paul was "advocating foreign gods" for he was "preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18). True, to the Corinthians Paul wrote: "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23), but as he makes clear in that very same letter, it is the resurrection that makes sense of the Cross: "If Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). It was a resurrection Gospel which the church proclaimed.

4.2 On the basis of resurrection the early church went on to proclaim Jesus as Lord – Lord not just of the church, but of the world (see Romans 10:9,14). "God

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exalted him (Jesus) to the highest place...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord". (Philippians 2:9-11; see also Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16). In the words of Ernst Kasemann, "The content of the Resurrection is primarily not anthropological at all, but Christological. It is the work of the Second Adam and therefore its meaning is not immediately and primarily our re-animation, but the Lordship of Christ. 'Christ must reign': that is the nerve centre of the design and the firm ground which gives us confidence concerning our own destiny". To proclaim Jesus as Lord is in a very real sense to claim the world for him. The Gospel is not only personal in dimension – it is cosmic.

4.3 Such an emphasis on resurrection challenges much traditional Baptist preaching, which centres above all on the Cross, and tends to neglect the resurrection. Furthermore where the resurrection is proclaimed, it is almost always in terms of personal immortality. But if Jesus is Lord of all – and not just a personal Saviour – the implications are far wider; for then no aspect of life today can be beyond his jurisdiction. Maybe the lordship of Christ can be the bridge between the traditional evangelical understanding of Gospel preaching and the more radical understanding of mission emanating from the WCC, in which salvation is seen at work in the struggle for economic justice and for human dignity.

5. Evangelism: A Call to Respond in Baptism

5.1 The Gospel demands a response. In the first place this response involves repentance. As the preaching of John the Baptists (Luke 3:7-20) indicates, repentance can have radical implications. A "new life" demands a "new lifestyle" (see Zacchaeus' restitution in Luke 19:8). This radical Gospel demand is expressed in baptism. As Paul wrote to the Romans: "Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death" (Romans 6:13).

If the truth be told, we evangelicals have often underplayed the demands of Christ. With our emphasis on Christ as Saviour rather than upon Christ as Lord, we have called for decisions rather than for costly repentance. As Jim Wallis, *Call to Conversion* 6 rightly says: "The first evangelists did not simply ask people what they believed about Jesus; they called upon their listeners to forsake all and to follow him. To embrace his kingdom meant a radical change not only in outlook but in posture, not only in mind but in heart, not only in world view but in behaviour, not only in thoughts but in actions. Conversion for them was more than a changed intellectual position. It was a whole new beginning".

5.2 Secondly, response to the Gospel involves faith. Faith goes hand in hand with repentance (see, for instance, Acts 20:21; 16:31). Such faith, in biblical terms, is expressed in baptism, for baptism is faith in action. In baptism we are buried with Christ and raised with him "through (yôur faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12). Baptism is part of the conversion process. To quote the Anglican theologian-evangelist, Michael Green: there was a "universal and quite unselfconscious link in the early Church between the invisible encounter of man's faith with God's grace and its outward expression in baptism. So far from being in some way antithetical to grace and faith, as much protestant thought has in the past imagined, baptism is the sacrament of justification by faith. To say 'in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith' is tantamount to saying 'As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ' (Galatians 3:26-27). It is not by accident that Romans chapter 6, with its teaching

on union with Christ in death and resurrection, comes immediately after Romans chapter 5 with its high doctrine of justification. They belong together. Those who repented and believed the Word were baptized. That was the inevitable pattern" (*Evangelism in the Early Church* 152f).

Here is a challenge not just to paedobaptists, but to those many Baptists who reduce the meaning of baptism to a confession of faith and an act of obedience. Baptism involves far more than that. Baptism is part of faith's response to the Gospel.

5.3 Thirdly, response to the Gospel involves community ('church membership'). Evangelistic preaching that is true to the New Testament will make it clear that commitment to Christ involves commitment to his people. For by repentance and faith we are transferring from "the dominion of darkness" into "the kingdom of the Son" (Colossians 1:13) and thus become "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19). Those who on the day of Pentecost repented of their sins and were baptized, were "added" to the church (Acts 2:41) and began a new and impressive form of life together (Acts 2: 42-47). Church membership in New Testament terms meant "unconditional availability to and unlimited liability for the other sisters and brothers – emotionally, financially and spiritually" (Ron Sider, *Rich Christians in Age of Hunger* 164). All this is expressed in baptism. for baptism is also a corporate act whereby a person enters the new community of the people of God. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:13: "We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body" – a body in which he later goes on to say all the parts each have "equal concern (care) for each other" (1 Corinthians 12:25).

This emphasis on the church is absent in the evangelism of many a para-church grouping. It is also absent in some of our Baptist groupings too. Church membership for some is an optional extra, whereas in New Testament terms an unattached Christian is an incomprehensible notion. Evangelism which is true to its New Testament roots brings people into the body of Christ. There is, however, nothing static about such church membership – it is an ongoing dynamic process of living together in community.

Paul Beasley-Murray

Book Reviews

The Bible and the Flag: by Brian Stanley (Apollos, 1990, 224pp £10.95)

Overseas Missions have not always had a good press. Anti-Christian ideologies past and present, both Marxist and Nationalist, have consistently accused British Protestant Missionary Societies of the 19th and 20th Centuries of being in the vanguard of, and the continuing supporters for, Imperialistic and Colonial expansion. This in turn led to the subjugation and exploitation of the native peoples.

Even some Christians have felt such an accusation to be well-founded and for certain historians this interpretation has become "dogma"!

Brian Stanley, a young Baptist Church Historian, impressively refutes this negative judgment from a massive data base of both extant official and unofficial records, and a thorough detailed study of contemporary argument.

He does not deny there is some truth in this accusation: almost inevitably motives were mixed – patriotism and a sincere belief in British Christian values and civilization. The conviction that the illiterate pagans would benefit from what the West had to offer also played a part. He also admits that some missionaries had imperialistic tendencies; others saw real value in commercial trading etc. But on the whole their motives were as sincere as any human motive can be and they wished only to convert the heathen, the lost!

In addition to a first-rate piece of research which gives us information previously tucked away in dusty files, he offers cameos of **all** the Societies and their missionaries, both famous and less so. He reveals, too, that he is not limited in his scholarship to sound historical research but that he is also efficiently versed in theology, sociology, political philosophy and other related disciplines, all which he handles easily and well.

I confess that I am no missionary buff, but this book, sub-titled *Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, enthralled me; I could not put it down, it was such an intriguing and informative read. In view of this I cannot but urge you to read it. In doing so you will end up better informed and wiser ministers of a great Church; and committed to a world-wide commission which has a fine history and pedigree of which we need not be ashamed.

George Neal

The Biblical Bases of Healing by Edwin Robertson (Arthur James, 1988, 128pp, £3.95)

The Fire of Love by Edwin Robertson (New City, 1989, 286pp, £7.95)

Though these two books by Edwin Robertson are very different in form and subject matter, they belong together in that they are both about healing.

Biblical Bases has grown out of the author's involvement during the '80s with the Churches' Council for Health and Healing and the Westminster Pastoral Foundation. It moves from the healing God of creation, via an examination of Job's answer to the problem of unearned suffering, to an analysis of the healing practices and teaching of Jesus. Broad in its range, it encompasses and challenges the teaching of miracle healing by faith alone and those who think that the Bible is generally in favour of health, but has nothing to say to a generation that has read Freud! At its heart is the belief that "there must be suffering if there is to be healing", and that is what gives these chapters their strength.

In *The Fire of Love* Edwin Robertson looks at the life of Igino Giordani, co-founder of the modern Focolare movement. The brainchild of Chiara Lubich in Northern Italy towards the end of the Second World War (on whose life Robertson has another book, *Chiara*), it was Giordani's influence and political experience that helped to make it the international network it is today. This is a major biography – the first to appear in English – of an Italian Roman Catholic layman whose story belongs to all churches and all nations. "A Christian of the first order, a

scholar, an apologist, an apostle", Iginio Giordani's life is an illustration, against the backdrop of Mussolini's Fascism and the post-war recovery of his country's fortunes, that "there must (indeed) be suffering if there is to be healing".

Gethin Abraham-Williams

Seeking the Face of God by William H. Shannon (Fount, 1988, 184pp,£4.95)

The author is an American Catholic Priest and expert on the thought and writings of Thomas Merton.

His thesis is the necessity of contemplation, if we are serious about 'seeking the face of God'. In approaching corporate or private prayer (the prayer of the choir and the prayer of the desert) there is a strong emphasis upon the need for silence – a 'hidden hunger' as far as the bulk of humanity is concerned. The meat of the book is a study of the classical "Lectio Divina" as a ladder of development in prayer.

The first rung of the ladder is the Reading of Scripture. This should be done slowly and allow for re-reading the same brief passage again and again. Not in an analytical way, but rather in order to let the words permeate one's whole being. Then comes the second rung of the ladder, which is Meditation. Here there is discursive thinking about the text and its significance as a vehicle for what God is saying to the pray-er. This in turn leads to Prayer itself, the third rung. This is the fruit of Reading and Meditation. The final rung of the Lectio is Contemplation. This is a form of communion with God (or in God) which is beyond words and beyond discursive thinking. It is simply 'being' in the presence of God.

What the author calls 'the missing rung' of the Lectio is a plea for social involvement as an outworking of oneness with God and his world. This is seen particularly in an espousal of non-violence. Gandhi's thoughts are used as a basis. The author suggests that non-violence is the true Christian position (rather than the 'Just War' theory). He points out that Gandhi's philosophy was heavily influenced by his understanding of the teaching of Jesus. This, Shannon points out, was a biblical teaching lost to the Church in the Constantinian era.

The most helpful aspect of this work is in challenging the assumptions of an evangelical conversion experience which assumes 'We've got it all'. Shannon uses biblical concepts of living 'in Christ' in such a way as to show that we all have a long way go to in 'seeking the face of God'.

The main fault in this sort of presentation is that it makes the journey to God appear attainable by adopting certain disciplines or methodology, and that you need a considerable amount of mental equipment to make the journey – rather than resting upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ. However, a careful reading of the text dispels such an impression.

The book may appear pan-entheistic in its concepts. Those who seek 'something more' in terms of their personal prayer life will find this presentation a useful survival tool for ministerial stress.

Although adequately produced by Fount, there is an annoying and clumsy use of 'she/he' and 'his/her' in order to avoid sexist language. Please, will someone create a more aesthetic literary device?

Charles Rutter

Disaster and Disorder: the Human Predicament by Peter Cotterell, (LBA Preachers' Association, 1989, 20pp £1)

Fellowship in the Gospel (Yorkshire Baptist Association, 1989, 33pp, £1)

People Like Us by Eric Hayden (Ambassador/Highway, 1989, 136pp, £2.95)

It is always good to be able to commend publications by fellow Baptists, which all three of these short works are. Dr Peter Cotterell, the new Principal of the London Bible College, gave the C.R. Batten Lecture for 1989 to the LBA Preachers' Association and tackled the difficult issue of suffering. Clearly one lecture only allows for a fairly swift survey, but he does not dodge the hard questions nor does he supply easy or superficial answers. He recognises the variety of disorder within our fallen world and briefly examines possible answers to this question from other faith communities. This is the weakest area of his contribution. He is on surer ground when he points to the distinctively Christian understanding of the God who limits himself in order to grant true freedom of relationship to his creation, and who, in Christ, shares our human predicament as Emmanuel, God-with-us. Although he recognises that description and even explanation are not enough, he does not really suggest how Christian understanding *changes* the human situation, but perhaps that is too much to expect from 20 pages! A helpful review of an ever-present question.

The Yorkshire Baptist Association have again placed us in their debt by publishing a booklet of six studies on Baptist principles and practice. These studies have been produced by the Doctrine and Theology Group of the YBA in response to Dr Brian Haymes' lectures on this issue also published by the YBA: "A Question of Identity". The studies are intended for small groups and are clearly presented and helpfully illustrated. They cover the nature of the Church, Christian Initiation, and the relationship of the local congregation to the community, to fellow Baptists and other Christians, and to the worldwide Church. The usefulness of these studies extends beyond denominational boundaries and could stimulate lively discussion in ecumenical settings.

Finally a retired colleague, Eric Hayden, has produced a series of short studies of 21 lesser-known characters from the Bible, including such as Onesimus and Simon of Cyrene, but many of them women who, then as now, carried the torch of faith with little recognition. They are devotional in character, drawing some helpful parallels with contemporary circumstances. This volume might provide the basis for some short studies in mid-week meetings or some helpful illustrative material for sermons and addresses.

Nicholas J. Wood



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The Pastor as Theologian by Wesley Carr (SPCK, 1989, 256pp, £6.95)

The minister does not leave theology at the training college. Through dealing with people, she or he gains valuable insights that can help to explore Christian doctrine. This premise underlies Wesley Carr's book. Using the study of human behaviour and motivation as a tool, he sets out a way of holding together theology, pastoral practice and discipleship.

The first part introduces the psychologist's vocabulary. Limitation, negotiation, dependence, transference and other terms often unfamiliar to the minister's study are explained in everyday relationships. In part two they are used to explore the "classics" of Incarnation, Atonement and Creation Resurrection and in each the implications for pastoral practice and spirituality are brought out.

Not an easy work to come to grips with (your reviewer found the second reading more enlightening), thankfully a clear and systematic presentation helps with good use of introductions and summaries as the argument progresses. At its heart is the assertion that people of faith and no faith share common human experience. How this is understood provides the building blocks to assess personal relationships and re-interpret Christian beliefs about the nature of God.

This is a good book, well worth reading and re-reading. It is not "A Pastor's Guide to Psychology" nor "Ten Psychological Ways to Make your Church Grow". The author encourages his readers to bring together theological expertise, day-to-day experience of people and the life of discipleship, worship and prayer to discover that each can be enriched in the exchange. I hope that this would encourage both pastors and theologians. I suspect that the faint-hearted may find it hard going.

This book is part of the laudable *New Library of Pastoral Care* series. The author is an Anglican, who has already contributed two titles to the series.

Stephen Copson

Student Discount Scheme from the Bible Society

The Bible Society offers a 25% discount to full-time theological students on any item in its catalogue. In addition, a free Greek New Testament, in a choice of two editions, is offered to all first-year students of theology.

Also, the Society has published a catalogue, *Scriptures and Helps*, containing details on Greek, Hebrew and other ancient texts, together with a range of publications which explore these texts. It will prove invaluable to students, expositors and translators, studying the Bible in depth.

Overseas News

One of the most regular correspondents from Australia, Ralph Hodgson, has sent me further news of some of our members there. As it is difficult to know how many of these are known by any in Britain I will report on all the folk he mentions.

First, the Rev. Neil Watt moved to Scotland a little while ago and intended holding a ministry for a few years. Unfortunately, domestic concerns required he return to Queensland. Anyway, Neil met once more a few Scottish relatives. Sorry it didn't work out, Neil. Hope you settle down again soon.

Two members have died: Murray Sinfield whose final days were spent fighting cancer with courage and Christlike patience. He was a faithful minister fully supporting all his churches and a keen denomination man. He was a regular reader of the *Fraternal*. He was made an honorary life member of the Australian Baptist Council at their last Assembly. Our sympathy and Christian love to Nancy his dear wife. Pastor Fred Stafford one of the General Superintendents has also died. His death was sudden. The support at his Memorial service (over 1,200 present) reveals the respect in which he was held and the degree to which he will be missed in denominational circles. Again, to Elaine his life partner, we extend the loving sympathy of us all in our Fraternal.

Dr. Ted Gibson, Principal Emeritus of Queensland Baptist Theological College, lost his partner in life recently and to him we extend also our sympathy and concern.

These friends in Christ may not be known personally to many of us but they are known to God and our prayerful thoughts will reach home as needed.

To all those who read our magazine overseas – God bless you, your families, your churches and all your service for the Kingdom of God.

George Neal

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