

The Baptist Ministers' Journal

APRIL 1998

ISSN 0968 - 2406

Vol 262

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EDITORIAL

Changing All The Time

As Christians we celebrate the resurrection every Sunday, but this is the time of year when the Church re-visits and re-examines this cardinal doctrine, rather than merely assuming it.

The Apostles' Creed, specifically affirms: 'I believe in the resurrection of the body'. But what does that mean? Sandra Schneiders, Professor of New Testament Studies and Christian Spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley proposes an appealing explanation in a book of essays from the States (viz. *Christian Resources of Hope*, edited by Maureen Junker-Kenny, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1995).

She equates the reality of being with the *material*, as opposed to 'the earthly frame that houses us today' (II Cor 5: 1), which she calls the *physical*. And just as matter can take lots of forms, so can we. Water, for example, is a liquid most of the time, but if we freeze it, it becomes a solid. If we boil it, it becomes a gas. So matter is less fixed in its manifestation than we sometimes think. It's the same stuff. It has the same elements of hydrogen and oxygen - but it's different in its form. It's still material, but the expression is different. All of us, indeed, are changing all the time, and it makes no more sense, argues Schneiders, to ask where the corpse of Jesus went than to ask where my five year old body is now I am an adult!

In this issue, our three main articles grapple with the interrelation between the physical and the material in a very practical way. Jayne Scott confronts us with the challenge of domestic violence, sometimes under our own roof, and Graeme Dodds writes movingly from personal experience about Christian opportunities in our prisons, while Ken Hyde's article is a salutary reminder of the formation of the material during those physically turbulent adolescent years. This issue also sees a new feature in *j-mail*, which will appear whenever there is sufficient correspondence to warrant it. - G.A-W.

Eternity

... eternal life will not be a bore. I have often thought to myself that I know that I should want eternal life because I am told that God promises it to me and, of course, it is impolite not to want what God promises. But I have often wondered whether going on and on wouldn't be an awful bore. Of course, if we went on and on as we are now we should soon discover, as Satre put it, that hell is other people. We only have to look in a mirror to see that, unless we are transformed, heaven will be hell, supposing we spend our lives there. That is why it must be transformation, growth and development. But I have begun to get glimpses, especially through other people, that eternity could be infinitely worth it precisely because there will always be more to discover. - *Bishop David Jenkins (of Durham): 'God, Jesus and Life in the Spirit', (S.C.M. , 1988)*

[This and other quotations attributed to 'MBCW', are from *'The Monarch Book of Christian Wisdom'* collected by Robert Paterson (Monarch 1997).]

TOO MUCH TO TAKE

JAYNE SCOTT, Community Learning Network Facilitator, Manchester

Cathy: We went to church as usual on Sunday. My husband's a deacon. As usual, he was taking a leading part in worship, directing the singing and taking the prayers, he's a pillar of the church, and well respected as a spiritual and pastoral leader. Our minister relies on him.

My husband says my place is with the children, so I help with the 5-7 year olds in Sunday School. It was a long service, and the children got very restless while we were waiting for it to finish it was hard to keep them interested and occupied.

We always have lunch at 1:00 but my husband had people to see after the service, so I had to walk home. He won't let me drive his car. Hannah, our two year-old, was tired so I had to carry her nearly all the way. Paul, in his push-chair, was crying, his dirty nappy was making him sore. It was a quarter to one when we got home. I hadn't prepared the vegetables, but I decided to see to Paul. He was in such a state it took me ten minutes so when my husband drove up, the dinner wasn't nearly ready. He began shouting at me. He'd been busy about the Lord's work, giving out to other people, I'd only been with the children - any fool could do that - and yet I still hadn't managed to get the dinner at a reasonable time. He went into the living room to read the Baptist Times.

After he'd said grace, we ate. But he criticised my cooking because the carrots were still hard, and it was Angel Delight again for pudding. His mother always made apple pie for Sunday lunch, and she didn't have all the kitchen gadgets! When I'd done the washing up and put the children down for their rest, I lay on the bed and sobbed from exhaustion, and guilt and shame at my incompetence. However hard I try, I can never win my husband's approval.

After a while, he came and found me. He needed a shirt ironed ready for the evening service. He slapped my face hard to make me pull myself together. I wasn't being a good Christian wife. I wasn't giving him my full support in his work for God and the Church.

That night, as usual, he made love to me, and then he fell asleep right away. I wish I could sleep. Night after night I lie awake. My body aches with weariness and the pain where he hits me. People look up to us as a model of Christian family, but I don't know how much longer I can cope?

Perpetrators

Can we believe this? Or, is it just a little too much to take? Is our first reaction one of utter disbelief? If so, let's pause to ask ourselves, if just reading this triggers such a response in us, how could a woman in such a situation find a way of telling any one of us in the church? Where would she be believed?

The ability to respond, as friends and as churches to those who experience domestic violence begins with us coming to grips with the facts. Statistics are often treated with scorn if they don't tell us what we want to hear, but they also give us some

indication of significant information which may be important to hear. Take a few moments to absorb some of them - even should you then choose not to read any further'.¹

- Domestic violence accounts for 25% of all reported violent crimes.
- It is estimated that only 2% of violent attacks on women are reported to the police.
- Domestic violence is more common than violence in the street, pub or workplace.
- Almost half of all homicides of women are killings by a partner or ex-partner.

The imbalance of power, and its exploitation for the advantage of those already in a position of power, is the base from which many destructive acts against people arise. For many women, domestic violence is the manifestation of this abuse in their everyday lives. Perpetrators of domestic violence have such a grip on the destiny of their partners that it becomes almost impossible for the victim to imagine that an alternative is possible. It may be that the abuse they have experienced has been so extreme that they no longer believe they have the right to expect life to be any other way.

It is this cycle of power and control, which is challenged by all those who work to enable women to be free of such abuse. The right of all women to have a life free of violence is a basic human right to which domestic violence workers are committed.

Unfortunately, there are often tensions between what we know to be right and just, and what we practise and feel. Our own childhood, religious tradition and / or cultural practices may make it very difficult to challenge and respond effectively to situations of domestic violence. Therefore, we do need to be alert to what causes such tensions and how we might deal with them responsibly.

Let us look at some of the areas where such tensions occur in the Christian tradition and consider, first of all, the problems they create and, secondly, how they might urge us to respond to domestic violence more effectively as part of our engagement in the community.

Beliefs and Attitudes

Throughout the history of the Christian Church there has been the belief that women, simply by being female, were created to be subordinate to men. Roots for this belief are found in the understanding that the account of Creation in Genesis 2-3 *clearly states this to be the case*. Eve, by disobeying God right from the start, so the argument goes, determined the destiny of all women to be reminded continually that their disobedience is contrary to God's purposes. This deeply-ingrained belief in the subconsciousness of both men and women is the seed-bed for the assumption that men are rightly responsible for making sure that women remember that place of subordination.

The consequences of this system of belief is that it encourages the belief by men that it is not only a duty to be performed but it is virtually a divine responsibility to keep women in order. Likewise, women have believed that, since it appears to be so clearly stated in the scriptures, traditions and practices of the Church, their inequality is to be expected and, by implication, accepted as their lot.

Whatever methods are used to ensure this continues - be it through verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse - it is felt that, thanks to Eve, women themselves have 'asked for it'. Such systems of thinking and believing are by their very nature

closed and serve to reinforce the cycle of power and control on which domestic violence thrives.

Tensions in the Christian tradition are highlighted further when this set of beliefs about Eve is placed alongside the equally firmly held belief that God is not only our creator, but is the source of love, peace, justice and all that is good. For women experiencing domestic violence, these are two conflicting sets of beliefs which they feel with every blow which is then accompanied with the claim that they are actually loved. For many Christians, these conflicting sets of beliefs often result in their offering very confused responses to domestic violence.

Power to Protect

Two of the consequences of basing Christian faith and practice on the belief that all women need to be subordinated as a result of the story of Eve are:

1. God's purposes are seldom portrayed as coinciding with, or relating to, women's experiences. Women's actions are considered suspect simply because Eve disobeyed God. Women learn to distrust their own judgement because it is believed that Eve made a bad choice. Permission for women to be self-determining is removed because the story of Eve tells them that God cursed Eve as a consequence of her bad choice.
2. Men and women relate to one another in a way that is heavily biased in favour of men. No matter what other beliefs are held, power and control over women is thought to be rightfully placed in the hands of men. How men choose to administer this power is trusted to their judgement and can involve as much choice as they want there to be. Women, on the other hand, find their capacity to influence their own futures severely restricted at best, and completely removed at worst.

By starting instead from the point of view that God, as creator, is the source of all love, peace, justice and all that is good, we find that a more balanced understanding of power between men and women emerges.

Love has no room for terrorising tactics. Peace strives for wholeness, not fragmentation. God's justice is demonstrated through Jesus' own solidarity with the marginalised and abused. It is within this frame of understanding the Christian faith that we find the tools to dismantle beliefs founded on a distorted and manipulative interpretation of selected stories or writings from the Bible.

If we believe that God is the source of love, peace, justice and all that is good, there can be no acceptance of domestic violence as part of God's purposes. Throughout his life, Jesus affirmed the centrality of those who were abused and marginalised to the Kingdom of God. His expression of power was always to protect, heal and value those who were persecuted or undervalued by those who considered themselves to be in power. Therefore, if we believe that Jesus was someone who demonstrated God's intention for the wholeness of all humanity, then abuse cannot be tolerated in any form.

Action and Practice

It is never easy to know how best to respond to someone who has experienced excruciating pain and suffering at the hands of another. The scars run very deep and words can seem futile, responses clumsy and actions awkward or inappropriate. This

is why it is important to encourage Christians, and the churches to which they belong, to do several practical things:

- Find out what Domestic Violence organisations operate in their locality. Have contact numbers and addresses displayed on notice boards. Church members could be encouraged to include these details in their own personal address books.
- Ensure that leaflets on domestic violence and the prevention of it are always available and up-to-date. Place them in a place where people can pick them up easily.
- Pay for the minister and/or other church leaders to attend a workshop or training event on providing pastoral care for those in a domestic violence situation.
- Include in the annual budget a regular donation to a domestic violence project or refuge.
- Use times of worship, prayer and discussion as opportunities for developing understanding about domestic violence.

Churches themselves often know what works best for them in terms of effective communication systems and how to embark upon particular projects in their area. What can be emphasised is that responding to domestic violence in a positive, but realistic way, is a significant contribution to speaking Good News to people. No longer do we have to perpetuate the destructive power and control relationships which allow domestic violence to be tolerated. The hope which is central to the belief in God's creating and loving nature, is the same hope which speaks courageously against fear, violence and intimidation. Jesus did just that, and our models for ministry and mission should be derived from the same source.

Responding individually, as Christians, and collectively, as Churches, to domestic violence, let us urge one another to reject beliefs and attitudes which suggest that basic human rights can somehow be overlooked given certain circumstances. Rather, let us confidently promote and establish beliefs, attitudes and practices which openly work towards the protection of all who are violated and abused. This way we will both demonstrate God's purpose for the whole of humanity and offer good news to those caught up in situations where there is domestic violence. We will also know better how to respond to the real people involved, like Cathy and Pat, rather than simply speculating about the issue.

Pat: Last Friday I finally plucked up the courage to talk to Sandra. I got to know Sandra last year when I started taking Tom, my little boy, to the Parent and Toddler Group. It meets on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at the church on Green Street. It's been such a relief to be out of the house on those mornings and to have the chance to chat with other people. The house can feel like a prison sometimes. Some mornings I've not gone because Andy and I have had a row. When we do, he gets really mad and I usually end up getting a thump. Usually when this happens he punches me in the stomach, but sometimes he hits my face and, if it's really bad, then I don't go out for a couple of days until the swelling or bruising has gone down.

Anyway, last Friday at the Parent and Toddler Group, Sandra asked me if I was OK because I had missed Monday and Wednesday. We've never really been close, Sandra and I, but she usually makes a point of saying 'hello' when

I go. Well, on Friday when she asked me if I was OK I started crying and told her about my row with Andy last Sunday which was really bad this time. Once I started telling her I couldn't stop and then I thought she might be able to help me - she is a member of the church where the group meets and she has told me she's a Christian.

I don't know - it all seems hopeless to me - Andy'd murder me if he thought I'd told anyone.

Sandra was very kind, but in the end I'm responsible for what's happened and I can't expect her to put it right. If only Andy wouldn't get so mad at me.

Footnote:

1. This information is taken from the, "National Working Party Report on Domestic Violence", Victim Support Scheme, July, 1992

Jesus,

du hast unser Weinen vernommen; tu as vu nos larmes; tu has oido nuestros llantos; you have heard our tears; the tears women have shed in silence because we were afraid to be heard; the tears women have held back thinking we deserved violence; the tears we have not held back but were not comforted; the tears women have wept alone because we would not ask to be held; the tears women weep together because our sisters cannot feed their children; because our sisters live in fear; because the earth herself is threatened. So we weep. - Janet Morley, 'Bread of Tomorrow', ed. Janet Morley (SPCK, 1992), quoted in 'Celebrating the Decade' (WCC, 1997)

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WHAT MAKES ADOLESCENTS RELIGIOUS?

KENNETH E. HYDE. Dr. Hyde wrote this article for the *Journal* shortly before he died in February. He was Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Education of the University of Birmingham. Formerly he was a Staff Inspector of the Inner London Education Authority.

Adolescence is a time of choice; childhood is ended, and a new, adult identity is formed with the imprints of a distinct personality. There is no particular religious personality; religiousness is not restricted to the introverted - the most that can be said is that it is associated with being tender-minded. Rather, individuals' personalities tend to affect the style of their religion, so that those who are authoritarian are likely to embrace an authoritarian religion. But what makes adolescents religious in the first place? The decline in church attendance, which has continued throughout this century, has equally affected the young, fewer and fewer of whom show an interest in the churches. A periodic survey in some East Anglian secondary schools shows a similar continuing decline in students' attitude scores to Christianity, although recently it seems to be levelling out. The surveys also show that the attitude scores decline with age, starting in junior school days. Girls always score higher than boys, and Roman Catholic pupils higher than most others, apart from the few belonging to strongly evangelical groups. But again, why are some adolescents committed to religious belief? Social pressure is the primary influence affecting religious commitment, and it comes in the first place from the home and later in childhood from society, notably adolescent peer groups.

At home, while the mother's influence on her children is normally a dominant one, a religious father who attends church regularly and is seen to live out what he professes, greatly affects the response of his children. Sometimes a child may prefer one parent to the other, so that generalisations about which parent has most influence must be treated with some caution; certainly a non church-attending father is not a good role model for family religiousness. Parents who model religious behaviour and are perceived to study the Bible and to pray privately set their children on a religious path. If they allow them to choose their own level of religious involvement in adolescence, it helps them to clarify their values and leads to a positive religious attitude with active church participation. When the church reinforces the parents' point of view the influence is very strong. If church and parents are authoritarian, children in turn are likely to become authoritarian adults. American researchers have recently shown concern that such parents tend to rely on corporal punishment, despite its harmful effects, one of which is for adolescents to rebel against parents and church alike. Adolescents' ideas of God, sin, guilt and forgiveness grow out of the experience of parental love and nurture, and parents' reactions to their children's successes and failures, joys and sorrows. Young people who do not see tangible results from religious behaviour and have little family support when faced by other demands for their time, feel vulnerable and are more likely to be persuaded by peer pressure than family influence, so tend to disengage from religious practice. Anxiety caused in childhood by a stern father who does not understand them, or a rigid rather than a loving mother, leads to the development of a dogmatic system as a defensive

reaction. Such authoritarian adolescents are resistant to change.

Quality of Relationships

A series of studies on parental influence originating in Belgium was carried out extensively with Catholic adolescents in Europe, North America, and elsewhere. It showed that these young Catholics thought of God in terms of their concept of an ideal parent. If their image of an ideal parent corresponds closely to that of their parents, then parental influence is very strong indeed. It must not be forgotten that some adolescents have ineffective parents, who still, perhaps, threaten them with punishment by God to make them behave, and lead them to think of God as malevolent. Some do not come from intact families; some have suffered abuse, even to the point of running away from home. If the importance of parental influence is so obvious, should the churches do more to help them build a Christian home life?

In some families and churches, adolescent questioning may be discouraged. This leads to a forced compliance; they adopt a defensive mechanism to quell their doubts, and remain entrenched in a highly structured society that consistently reinforces its values. Alternatively, their rebellion may become a permanent attitude, with their doubts never resolved, unless subsequently they come to see rebellion as an experiment and recognise that it holds the potential for growth. This explains why some adolescents face a period of storm and stress, and warns that compliance may not indicate development, but shows a less mature, conventional level of faith.

Peer group influence in adolescence is a strong social constraint. Many churches are aware that when children transfer to secondary school at eleven, they are soon likely to loose the boys, even though the girls may remain for a few more years, and some perhaps become church members. The anti-establishment attitude of many adolescents is often expressed as hostility to religion, and puts into sharper focus the general attitudes of many adults in our secularised society. However, peer group pressure becomes advantageous to a church when it has a cohesive group of young people whose mutual support helps individual members withstand the hostility of their wider society.

Churches naturally have a strong influence on their youth. The factors associated with negative attitudes include uninteresting sermons, restrictive church standards, not feeling accepted at church, and church youth activities. Alienation is caused by lack of church involvement, lack of the personal interest or religious sincerity of youth leaders, authoritarian ministers who lack personal interest in them, unbelief in church doctrines, the influence of the media, and family disharmony. It is strongly related to the quality of relationships with ministers and parents as well as to opportunities for involvement in the church. Intellectual factors do not greatly influence commitment; it comes from feeling that the church is a good place, its members welcoming and understanding. Only then do questions of belief seriously arise. Preachers often forget that many younger adolescents have not yet developed the ability to understand the abstract vocabulary of religion - nor have some of their older members!

The Complete Person

Conversion is to the front in many discussions of the churches' work with young people. Research has shown that the style it takes, and the ages at which it occurs, is usually what is expected in that church. Conversion in childhood is infrequent in this country, where it is expected in adolescence; among some American churches it is the

norm - and who is to say which is right? Some expect sudden conversion, as if the lack of it is a denial of a full Christian experience; others regard nurture, rather than sudden conversion, as the way to grow into Christian commitment. One comparison of the consequences of earlier conversion experiences showed that the affective reflections of those who grew up in churches looking to nurture were more than twice as positive than those in churches looking to sudden conversion. But in spite of many differences between the two approaches all the subjects gave similar replies to questions about their Christian commitment.

Religious behaviour does not disclose its motivation. Much attention has been given by psychologists in recent years to religious orientation, which began with studies about the differences between mature and immature religion. Strong religious conviction, private prayer and regular church attendance is a mark of intrinsic religion; church attendance means that deep needs are satisfied in corporate worship. However, it may be due to quite different motives. Those with an extrinsic religion use religion to serve their needs; church attendance provides a meeting-place for friends who may lack religious conviction. There is something of the intrinsic and the extrinsic in all of us, but the more extreme instances show a striking range of differences. Extrinsic often display prejudice and tend to be authoritarian and conservative; their childhood families often lacked warmth, they tend to be suspicious and lacking in self confidence, somewhat emotionally restricted, and less rational. Intrinsic have been identified as responsible and having high self-esteem, trustworthy, intelligent and insightful, and with a greater concern for moral standards. They are tolerant and theologically discriminating; their religion is that of a complete person who has internalised views of self, others, and God, in line with classical theological thinking regarding the goals of the spiritual life. These characteristics are not dependent on the age of individuals; they are as much a mark of adolescent religion as they are of the elderly. Much more has been written about them, and other orientations have been described. The accounts are of value to anyone who contemplates what should be the marks of mature religion, something different from enthusiasm or assertiveness.

Moral Development

Adolescent life styles are complex symbols of individual identity. In the new religious movements there are often striking stylistic affinities, from clothing to living arrangements, which distinguish members from the rest of society. The authority of tradition, of law or of a charismatic personality is being overtaken by taste as the hallmark of personal choice and religion can be such a choice. Alternatively, it can direct all choices. Membership of a church Youth club does not seem to affect members' attitudes to religion. Prayer, which is favoured by most members, is practised by few; these have a strong belief in God, but not necessarily in the divinity of Jesus. Religious adolescents tend to be more sensitive, less dominant and more conservative than others; they are less prone to guilt and anxiety as they grow older. They have less worry and are more secure.

Religion has an individual as well as a social origin, as it meets cognitive needs. Children develop an understanding of permanence. When they discover death, they feel the need for the conservation of their own life, an issue that arises fully in adolescence when a religious solution for this need is possible. Once the ability to make logical deductions is achieved, children try to relate things to one another with respect to time, space, causality and origin; this search for relations, if the idea of God

has been accepted, requires a religious means of establishing a relationship with the transcendent. Finally, adolescents develop the introspective ability to examine objectively their own thoughts and feelings, and to make over-riding theories as to the underlying reasons for things. This search for comprehension never meets with complete success, but religion provides a solution to it.

Adolescence is a time of moral development. They discover themselves as unique individuals, still uncertain and questioning. Their moral judgement grows to a conventional level, and many proceed from a conformist to a conscientious stage. Individual acceptance of the rules of the group moves to a stage characterised by a conscious preoccupation with obligations, ideals, traits and achievements measured by inner standards. This development comes about through social interaction, and not all adolescents advance in this manner; many adults remain in a conformist stage and never achieve a developed moral autonomy. Adolescents need to examine their personal conflicts and experience using their own judgement.

Church Schools

What other religious influences bear on adolescents? Do schools affect them positively? This question has weighed heavily on those with responsibilities for church schools, especially in the United States, where church schools are paid for largely by parents and the church, with little help from the public purse. Catholics especially have wanted to be assured that this expenditure produces students committed to their church. A great deal of earlier research seemed to show that indeed church schools did have this effect. More recently it has been realised that the effect may not be due to the schools, but to the religious background of the families who choose to send their children to these schools. Church schools, like all other schools, differ in many ways. Admissions policies can affect the religiousness of the pupils they have selected, and socio-economic differences in their areas will affect the level of pupils' ability and their religiousness on admission. Some pupils will be at a church school because like their family they are committed to their church; others attend under duress - the school was chosen for them by their parents for reasons of convenience or family tradition, but against their own desire to go to another school with their friends. The cumulative effect of these studies in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia shows that while parents have the strongest influence on their children's religiousness, the school may have an independent influence due to its religious climate. This influence is not the result of formal religious education, but arises from the attitudes that it fosters and the effectiveness of its pastoral care. That influence can be negative, even in a church school.

To conclude, research findings confirm what has long been understood. Religion is learned first of all in the home, and the quality of the religious life of parents, and their active involvement in their church is the greatest single influence on adolescents. Children adopt the attitudes and opinions of their parents; adolescence brings greater intellectual and emotional maturity, and with it a more critical outlook, in which childish ideas are rejected. The influence of peers becomes of great importance - but their choice of friends will have been affected by the attitudes they have already formed in their homes. Now the fundamental reality of their belief becomes evident; it may develop into a faith which controls their response to all of life's issues, it may remain in a secondary place or it may fade into insignificance. The schools they have attended may have played a part in such decisions, but a school with a religious

foundation does not necessarily have a positive influence. They will judge the church in the first instance by the degree of its acceptance and the warmth of its friendship, and only then by the message it transmits to them. Parents, church members and church leaders with understanding and insight will recognise the many facets of this development from childhood into adult life, and the individual difficulties adolescents must overcome in the process. This takes place against a background of an increasingly secularised society, where people have as their first priority increased material possessions and comfort. In contrast, the innate idealism of young people is today focused on questions of the environment, freedom from pollution and the preservation of natural resources, and concern about the impoverished peoples of the third world. In a biblical tradition, these are religious issues, and, to searching but critical adolescents, the response made to them may be a key question in determining the integrity of adult religion.

Ed. Dr. Hyde's most recent published work was, *Religion in Childhood and Adolescence* (1990) Birmingham, Alabama, The Religious Education Press, 529 pp.

Youth

When we are out of sympathy with the young, then I think our work in this world is over. - *George MacDonald (MBCW)*.

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“I WAS IN PRISON”

GRAEME DODDS, pastor of Wood Lane Baptist Church, Dagenham, and student of Spurgeon’s College.

In 1982 I was released from HMP Glen Ochill (Young Offenders Institute) in Clackmananshire in Scotland. The journey that had led me to this young offenders institution had been a journey that had started with loneliness and had finished with problems with drugs and alcohol. I had a large police record and I was a known criminal. Burglary and theft were ways to win friends and feed habits. I had very little chance of getting a job with my record. I felt that my life had no purpose. I was 17 years old.

After being released from prison I met up with some born again Christians, and to cut a long story short, I met powerfully with my Saviour one night in a tent crusade in Glasgow. The scene was truly amazing: - here I was, a punk rocker with bleached blond hair, tight jeans and earrings, kneeling on the floor in a tent, and finding to my astonishment that Jesus was real and alive. I left the tent that night a changed man. I was never to be the same again.

A few months later I attended a Christian conference, which my church paid for. During the conference I heard the voice of the Lord in my heart through a reading from Isaiah chapter 42. The version of the Bible that I had at the time read: “I will use you to free men in the prison houses”. I said to the Lord, “I don’t know how you are going to do this but I trust You”. A number of years passed but I never forgot that promise that God had made to me that day, and the call of God still burned strongly in my heart for the lost men and women behind prison walls.

In 1991 I moved to Devon to take up a job working with a Christian firm in Exeter. At that time I felt led to join a Prison Fellowship group in Torquay, and before long I was to make my first journey back into prison. It was an amazing experience to go back into prison, and I became a regular attender both at the Prison Fellowship prayer meeting and at the weekly services at the local prison, HMP Channingswood, Newton Abbot. My ministry to prisoners had begun.

Home Office

On a weekly basis amazing things were beginning to happen in that prison, and so great was God’s impact there that the Senior Chaplain asked me to take more and more services. He eventually asked me if I would like to become a Chaplain. I filled in all the Home Office security forms and sent them to Abel House in London. Back came the reply - “Sorry, you were unsuccessful”. I was disappointed but not defeated and so I applied again. It was at this time that the Governor of the prison came to see me about my application. I told him my story, and when I had finished he said to me “I will take your case and fight it for you at the highest levels”. Somehow, the Area Prisons Manager for the south west, the Assistant Chaplain General and the Chaplain General himself heard of my application and became involved in the discussions. One day, soon after, a letter arrived at my home. It said, “We are pleased to appoint you to HMP Channingswood as part of the Chaplaincy team”.

God had worked a miracle, He had remained faithful to His promise. I could be used to “free men in the prison houses,” just as God said I would be. I could draw prison keys and go anywhere in the prison I wanted to. Hallelujah.

Part of my role as a Chaplain at HMP Channingswood was to interview all the new receptions that arrived at the Prison. This could be any number between 15 and 30 per week. I also had some responsibility for preparing Chaplain's reports for parole interviews, and for visiting the Prison hospital and the segregation unit. Visiting the wings in the Prison was both challenging and exciting. During my time at HMP Channingswood I started a Bible School on one of the wings, and also developed Sunday Worship on the Vulnerable Prisoners' Unit. Another role I played was to organise a Prison day of Evangelism every year, which involved inviting Christian bands, musicians, and entertainers to spend a day in the Prison Chapel and the surrounding area outside, playing, performing and proclaiming the gospel. Between 200 and 300 men from the Prison population attended this day every year. We saw many men come and find faith in Christ.

Sad to Leave

There are many stories that I could tell of God's power at work in Prison. I was in the post of HMP Channingswood for five years and made many friends among prisoners and officers. In the summer of 1996, a Baptist Church in Essex expressed an interest in me becoming their pastor. The inmates in the Prison Church and the other Chaplains all supported me and my wife, and prayed for us daily as the discussions went under way. I was accepted by the Church and we saw the move as being God's will for us. In January of this year we left Devon to come to Wood Lane Baptist Church in Dagenham. Part of the package of my new position is that I can attend Spurgeon's College one day a week for further studies.

It was sad to leave what God had called me into, but I know that God has taken me out of Prison work for a time. I know that I will return to it at a later date. A short time ago I had some talks with the Prison Service Chaplaincy Headquarters about being involved in one of the Prisons in my area. This I could do in conjunction with my course at Spurgeon's College as they will allow me to do a special project on Prison Chaplaincy work, the marks for which will count towards my final result.

Two years ago, a reporter by the name of Michael Apichella came to the Prison I was working in to do a report on revival in Prisons. Michael was touring Prisons in the U.K. trying to establish whether God was at work in Prisons. The information he collected from us at HMP Channingswood and other establishments was sufficient to write a book which was published by Kingsway Publications. The book is entitled,

Culture

...the gospel is a radical judgement upon every culture. The incarnate Word was rejected by human culture in one of its noblest forms. The commentary on the crucifixion of Jesus was the suicide of Judas: what future is there for a humanity which crucifies the Word by which it exists? But the gospel is at the same time an affirmation of new possibilities for human culture. In raising the crucified Jesus from the dead, God opened the way for new possibilities. - *Lesslie Newbigin: in the Church Times (20 August 1992), 'Truth for our Time' (MBCW).*



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Prison Pentecost In the book Michael dedicates a whole chapter to the work of the chaplaincy team at HMP Channingswood.

I believe that God, *is* at work in Prisons up and down the country. I also believe that God is calling the Baptist Denomination to look seriously at involvement in Prison Chaplaincy. The doors of opportunity are opening all the time, and in these days of constant change, I think God is calling our denomination to stand in the gap. We need to hear what God is saying to us about the lost souls in our Prisons. Many broken lives need to be touched with the power of Jesus Christ As I said to Michael Apichella, "If Jesus was living now on the earth, He would be involved in Prison ministry". The ultimate challenge is that I also believe that God would like to see the Prisons of our Country empty, and men and women so changed that they become useful and productive members of society. This can only happen if we take seriously the call of Christ to preach the gospel to every living creature. I, for one, will take this call seriously and will be involved wherever God places me.

POSTSCRIPT

DAVID L TAYOR, General Superintendent of the South Eastern Area, BUGB, adds this postscript:

A number of significant changes and developments have occurred relating to prison chaplaincy appointments. The Methodist Church continues to be the lead denomination regarding Free Church work in prison ministry. This position was endorsed by the Free Church Federal Council (*Ed - now known as the Free Church Council*) in 1996. The decision has been taken to allow Chaplains, other than Methodists, to be appointed and so opportunities may arise for accredited Baptist Ministers to be appointed, giving service of up to seven hours per week and receiving appropriate remuneration.

I have been asked to be the Baptist contact working with the Revd Bill Davies, Superintendent Methodist Chaplain to the Prison Service. If you have currently any regular involvement in Prison work I would be pleased to hear from you. I am seeking to collect a list of those involved and hope to arrange a day's consultation regarding prison work. Even if you are not currently involved, but would like to register an interest, please make contact. *The Revd David Taylor's address is: 40, Ashden Walk, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 3RL. Tel/Fax: 01732 355008*

AFTERWORD:-

Ed - The Association for the Protection and Assistance of the Convicted is a small local prison in Sao Jose dos Campos, not far from Sao Paulo in Brazil. It has no guards or police because security and discipline are in the hands of the inmates themselves. Upon release the re-offending rate is less than four per cent. In 1972 it was completely out of control. The despairing local council decided it had to be closed, but there was nowhere else for the men to go. For lack of any alternative, they gave control of half the cells to a group of Christian volunteers who had been visiting some of the men. In 1984 they were given complete control of the prison. Their approach, based on short intensive courses of talks and meditations which bring the *recuperandos* - 'the men who are recovering' as the inmates are called - to experience Christ, has transformed the prison's culture. The full story can be read in '*NEWLIFE*', the prison service chaplaincy review, issue 13 1997.

j-mail

BAPTISTS AND BAPTISM

From R.E.O. White, Glasgow, onetime Principal, Baptist Theological College of Scotland.

Dear Journal - Is it not deeply significant that a highly trained Baptist can today discuss the place of baptism in Christianity (*Journal*, October, 1997), and set forth "where Baptists are at", without the slightest reference to the example of Christ's baptism; nor to Christ's command to make disciples baptising them; nor to the fourth Gospel's insistence that without birth of water and the Spirit none can see or enter the kingdom; nor to Luke's sevenfold linking (in Acts) of baptism with the gift of the Spirit; not to Paul's assumption (at Ephesus) that the answer to lack of the Spirit is rebaptism; nor, for that matter, to Paul's repeated unfolding of the ethical implications of baptism?

All this is deliberately ignored in order to reduce believer's baptism to the level of paedo-baptism, which cannot bear this weight of significance, with the intent of equating the two for ecumenical purposes. This accords with the prevailing assumption that Christianity is not something given, which we inherit to preserve and obey, but ours to define, reinterpret and adjust to "the state of the market", to humour new customers and facilitate mergers.

Ignored, too, in Mr. Ballard's historical survey, are the laboured attempts some thirty years ago by Ernest Payne, Wheeler Robinson, George Beasley-Murray, Hugh Martin, and the (miscalled) "Symposium" under Alec Gilmore, (not to mention my

humbler *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*), all striving to recover that New Testament explication and valuation of baptism, in particular the vital association of water and Spirit baptism.

The saddest reflection upon the whole modern discussion is that: "our" baptism is so often conducted with no greater spiritual, religious, or ethical implication than infant baptism itself. One of my own deacons made it his practice to warn candidates on the eve of baptism, "Of course, you know that nothing happens in baptism - you are just confessing your faith in obedience to Christ".

Nothing happens! When the rite is so impoverished the claim to dominical authority becomes inexplicable.

The crucial expression "faith is a journey" ("that starts at birth and moves through to the consummation of the kingdom") encapsulates perhaps unconsciously the deepest issue. Baptism on that principle ceases to be the celebration of a wonderful revelation newly discovered and to be explored lifelong, and becomes merely the first, unconscious step on a long, vague, candle-lit pilgrimage in search of some truth to believe and hope to hold on to, that must constantly change to match the uncertain social and intellectual climate of the unbelieving world.

NO! Having inherited so great a truth, so immense an opportunity, we cannot without great disloyalty and immeasurable loss, "let it go" as Mr. Ballard suggests. The informed Baptist churchman must indeed seek fellowship, worship, co-operation to the very limit, with all who confess Jesus as Lord: but the limit remains the lip of the baptismal pool.

A CENTRAL STIPEND FUND

From Graham Wilde, Minister of Hall Green Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Dear Journal - Though accepting the idea as a good one, and hoping one day to see it happen, I do have a problem with the ideas expressed by Jim Pollard (*Journal*, October 1997). Ideas such as Ministers should never be unemployed, and that probationers should be paid 25% less. I am a Probationer, and I have also been unemployed. There is in his words and his suggestions, the evidence of something that I have discovered in other Ministers, and that is a lack of what it's like to be a probationer in the late 1990's, and more importantly what's it's like to be an ordinary person, facing the vagaries of life. Any one of our church members can be made redundant at any moment, should Minister's be protected from this?

To be honest his suggestion about probationer's pay angered me greatly, and I thought I'd write in scathing terms about the obvious way that my children eat 25% less than other children because I'm a probationer, and that their shoes obviously cost 25% less than other "accredited" children's shoes. I could quote Christ as being willing to give all to those who had less, or who were in greater need, and suggest that all Ministers who had no children or whose children had left home, and therefore need only worry about themselves or themselves and a spouse, should be paid 25% less. A wonderful selfless gesture.

Or alternately that all those who paid extra voluntary contributions to the pension scheme should forego the benefits and accept a flat rate pension, the extra going to Home Mission to pay active Ministers. But, hang on, I'm getting personal, why should the older, or single,

or childless Minister be penalised? Why should the probationer? The "job" is the same. The pressures are the same. I'm in sole pastoral charge, I have to do all that every other Minister has to do, plus I have to provide evidence of sustained study over three years, not just for sermons. Perhaps, dare I suggest, probationers should be paid 25% more, in recognition of their extra work load?

Yes, lets have central support and pay, but if the structures are not enforceable who will decide who can draw on the central funds and what discipline will there be for those who do not play their full part? Can we as Baptists give up our independence? Can interdependence really work in a fallen world? Do we trust each other enough to work together? These are the questions we have to answer, and the little details like central pay will fall into place when we do.

*

From Rosemary Clarke, Cheshunt, Lay Pastor, and an executive member of a Preachers' Association and a regional secretary.

Dear Journal - Who picks up the pieces when a Minister is made redundant? The Minister can, hopefully, go to the Fraternal or the Superintendent for support and guidance. Also, hopefully, can the Church from which the Minister has come. However it is often members of the Preachers' Association who have the unenviable task of applying first aid to the Church on the Sundays after the Minister has left, often not knowing what has been happening. Who will answer these questions for them?:-

Why has the Minister left? Was he/she not working with the team? Was he/she seeking promotion and being held back by a senior Minister? Was the Church membership role falling so quickly they simply did not have the funding? If so

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why? Was it a financially deprived area where new housing development was taking place and perhaps a Church renewal or removal was required? Or more to the point, was God calling that Minister, that Church to a different sphere of service which could not be addressed until they parted company.

Fraternals can help the local Preachers' Associations and Church Secretaries by keeping them informed of Preachers/Ministers who are suddenly released or become available for other engagements and just exactly why they are suddenly available. We may be doing more harm than good by putting them into new situations without knowing what has happened before. There are many small churches who might however benefit from their wealth of knowledge and expertise if all that has happened is a fellowship that has run out of cash or two Ministers who don't happen to "jell" fall out.

It does not help matters if a wall of silence descends when questions are asked or people are offended when we ask questions. Regional Ministers can be a great help but they don't always know the feelings of the congregations involved. After all they are there to support the Ministers and sometimes only hear one side of the story. It is often only at Preachers' Association conference or the Assembly, in the discussion groups, that we hear the other side of the story. Some churches have been badly let down and are falling apart after what has happened to their minister or something they have done or not done. We have to minister to their needs too.

Jim Pollard's comment (Journal, October 1997) about the number of Minister's names being removed from the accredited list because they were not in "Qualifying Positions" is a pertinent one. But what about the ones who have qualified but so far not been settled?

It would also be good to see the list of those Ministers who are seeking a change of Pastorate being broken down so that we know exactly what their talents/gifts are rather than the present system.

Perhaps together Ministers' Fraternal and Preachers' Associations can get together to sort out some of these problems and make life a little easier for those of us who wear more than one hat. Continuous assessment would be good for all of us.

CHAPLAINCIES AS OPPORTUNITIES

From Ron Armstrong, Clevedon.

Dear Journal - May I recommend from my own experience that when my younger brothers and sisters in the ministry are invited to take up a chaplaincy, in addition to their normal pastoral duties, they give it serious consideration.

Soon after I started in my first Church at Tyndale, Reading, I was invited to become Chaplain at the local RAF camp, where I soon made worth-while contacts with the service personnel.

At my second pastorate in Glasgow I was invited to be an Industrial Chaplain at a local factory. Living near the 'Red Clyde' I met up with committed Marxists. I learned a lot from these men. There was no rancour in our discussions, and mutual tolerance was the key note for building good relationships. As one Communist shop steward told me, 'If more Christians got out of their organisation of the church and its buildings into the real community and met people at work and leisure, as you're doing, it would give the church a completely different image, and I think it would be more along the lines of what Jesus intended when he founded the church!'

It was at Glasgow, incidentally, that I had my most unusual chaplaincy - at the King's Theatre. It was one opportunity, which did not come by invitation either. I took the initiative and approached the Theatre Manager. One conversation with a young actress lingers in my memory: "I'm glad the church hasn't forgotten us, because many of us still have our faith, often in difficult situations."

While I was in Glasgow I also played an active part in founding the main branch of the telephone Samaritans. When I asked one church-going woman why she didn't take her problems to her own minister, she confessed, 'O, I'm too ashamed to tell it to him, he knows us too well!' And when I asked a teenager why she didn't talk to her minister, she shook her head and said sadly, "I couldn't tell him about it, he'd just give me a sermon, and I feel bad enough as it is."

At my third pastorate, Dorking, I was invited to be Free Church chaplain at the local hospital, which opened up many opportunities for counselling and helping people who were very ill and facing real crises in their lives. And during my fourth pastorate, Gateshead, in another industrial community, I was Toc-H padre, which gave me a valuable link with ex-servicemen and their families.

During my last ministry in Dunfermline, I became chaplain at a local Junior School as well as serving on a Children's Panel - radical Family Courts, very new at the time, where the emphasis was not on the penal side of dealing with crime, but on the whole family and on rehabilitation. So, if you younger ones do get an opportunity for chaplaincy service, even though you shrink from yet another commitment, don't turn it down lightly!

ON BEING CONFUSED

From Glyn P R Prosser, Hastings.

Dear Journal - It first happened some forty-six years ago. I was cycling quite happily up the valley I regarded as mine, the Eastern Valley of Monmouthshire, when I glanced at the notice board of a local Baptist Church. There, in the fashion of the day, was a large poster, stating "Preacher: Next Sunday: Mr. G. Prosser". An immediate panic attack, followed by a speedy dash home and consultation with my diary confirmed that it could not be me. From time to time in the next few years, the same name appeared in similar situations. Obviously somewhere there was a man with the same name as mine, even down to the first initial. For the first time in my life I rejoiced that my parents had given me three of those!

Missionary service in north India followed. All was well until we had our first child. A few months later we received a letter from home saying how pleased the writer was that we had had a second child, but commenting, "Wasn't it a little too quickly after the first?" We were puzzled, since we had not had a second child at that stage, so we refuted the suggestion, which had been based on an announcement in the Baptist Times. Enlightenment slowly followed. The man with the same initial and surname had also joined the Baptist Missionary Society and was serving in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Even more confusing his Christian name was Glyndwr, and was normally called "Glyn", while mine was Glyn. He had trained at Cardiff Baptist College, while I had trained at Regent's Park.

Service in the Mission House followed for me. We got to know each other. He stayed with us, I stayed with him while on deputation. We realised that we needed a mutual protection society when the Baptist

Times sent the wrong one of us a cheque for an article the other had written. Fortunately he started to move in academic circles, and ended up at Keele, far away from London, where we were living.

However, the confusion continued at odd and unexpected intervals. There was the occasion when a fellow minister came up to me after a service, and it was only when he said, "You've changed considerably since college", did I realise he was talking about Glyndwr.

However, the confusion began again when he decided that our southern climate was more suitable for retirement. Just recently I did not receive the papers for a day conference, for which I had sent the appropriate fee, organised by our Area Superintendent. A glance at another participants' papers revealed that my

address was not mine at all but Glyndwr's. Since Area Superintendents are reputed to be infallible, it must have been a computer which made that mistake. A meander through the Baptist Union Directory shows that confusion, and strangely enough it is not just the Evans, Jones and Smiths but even Taylors and Ellises, and less common surnames. Some even share the same Christian name. Perhaps a case could be made out for some serious research into this matter, and then Ministerial Recognition Committees and Colleges could be set a limit on the numbers of candidates with similar names they might accept within any given period.

After all, if you have ever been confused you will know it is a serious business!

Letters may be abbreviated.

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BMM

Book Reviews

edited by John Houseago

Bibleworks for Windows Version 3.5. Hermeneutika. £290.

This software is designed primarily for those who regularly handle biblical texts and who want access to Greek and Hebrew, together with a formidable array of analytical tools. It is powerful but expensive. Before purchasing you need to be confident that you will get regular and sustained use from it.

Bibleworks is designed to be easily accessible. Although recommended for Pentium processors and Windows 95 I had no trouble loading it onto my 486 still running on Windows 3.11. It took only a small manoeuvre to send the files I expect to use regularly of the files on to my hard drive. Inevitably the tutorial programmes were more interesting than ploughing through the manual. A number of demos took the complete novice through basic skills to some handy shortcuts for the more advanced user. One of the tutorials demonstrates the new functions on Bibleworks 3.5 which might be useful if you have used earlier versions.

A total of more than 60 books are included on the CD. Bibleworks contains Greek (including Nestle-Aland 27th ed) and Hebrew (including BHS 1990-4th Corrected ed.), 6 European languages, lexicons, such as Louw-Nida, Friberg's, BDB-Gesenius Abridged Hebrew lexicon, and morphologically analysed texts. Powerful and fast searching facilities are included. The main screen divides into four. The sections provide biblical text, word by word analysis, a section for notes, and function box which accesses searches and other toolbars. The database contains a wide number of bible translations, including a number of European languages, LXX, Greek and Hebrew translations and morphologies. It is possible to see as many or as few of these as you wish.

One of the strengths of Bibleworks is that it gives considerable choice as to how you wish to see and use the programme. The 'point and click' method of using functions is easy to use and it is possible to get Bibleworks working for you very quickly.

Using the Hebrew text, you will have to find the most efficient method of searching for yourself. There is a rather complicated system of codes for searching for particular words that takes sometime to master. The Morphology Assistant function helps considerably, and works out all the codes, but it did not always come up with the results I had expected. Or rather, it did not make quite enough allowance for the ambiguity of the Hebrew, for example, in searching for proper names and their linked meanings. I found it more satisfying to search directly from the biblical text.

Aside from the main functions there are some useful files of bible reference. The Easton Bible Dictionary and Naves Topical Dictionary are quick and easy to use. There is also a well produced timeline, easy to edit and print. I found it helpful for a bible study group.

There are not many pieces of Christian software that are worth the hard disk space they take up, but this is one. Its powerful search engine makes verse hunting relatively simple and if you are looking for serious bible study tools this is a really solid piece of software that is worth serious consideration.

Our thanks to Sunrise Software (01209 821821) for the loan of the software. Full details of the product are available from Hermeneutika, "<http://www.bibleworks.com>".

Sarah Parry and John Houseago.

***The Family in Theological Perspective* Ed.S.C.Barton. T & T Clark.**

1996, xx + 347pp

With politicians of all persuasions ready to champion family values, this is a timely volume. Drawn from the breadth of the Anglican tradition with four women and fourteen male contributors, this collection includes biblical and historical articles (only one essay between Augustine and Chesterton though) and engagement with sociology, ecology, feminism and postmodernity. The intention is to provide a theologically based resource for analysis.

The introduction paints a backdrop of transition in contemporary Britain: diffuse patterns in family life, the impact of feminist thinking on family structures, the penetration of science into the reproductive cycle and the awful reality of child abuse. In this context - our context - the essayists present a thoughtful compendium, offering the family as more than an observable social unit, more than a market sector and more than an advertisers' icon. It is a matrix of grace.

There are gaps, for example the challenge of biotechnology and genetics is not addressed, but generally these essays ought to stimulate readers to reflect on their own pastoral situations - Anne Borrowdale on forgiveness in the family context is a case in point. A distinction is to be made between family as cultural construct and family as theological model. John Rogerson warns of the ambiguity of a simple appeal to Old Testament exemplars. Are biblical insights pertinent or irrelevant in a fast-changing world where ethics cannot inhabit a vacuum? I found myself prompted to reflect more on: "Which family and whose values?"

Stephen Copson

***A Guide to the Sacraments* John Macquarrie**

(SCM 1997. viii + 245pp. £12.95)

This book reveals the breadth of understanding, clarity of thought, and deep faith that is to be expected of John Macquarrie. It is a joy to read, and the one or two occasions when unnecessary repetition creeps into the text can be readily overlooked.

The opening chapters are splendid, giving us a picture of a sacramental universe that has depth beyond the merely physical and where all things can be the means for encountering God. A discussion of language and symbolism makes both Wittgenstein and Tillich seem surprisingly intelligible, and presents a powerful case for thinking and speaking sacramentally.

From this starting point, Macquarrie makes the claim that while God is present in everything, "all things are not equally suitable to convey a symbolic or sacramental sense of God" (p33). The word 'sacrament' only makes sense if it is more closely defined, and so the church has recognised seven sacraments as outward signs of inner grace that all in some sense have their origin in Christ, the primordial sacrament. The main part of the book is given over to exploring each of these seven sacraments in turn.

Throughout Macquarrie works with care. With each of the sacraments, he begins with an examination of scripture and moves on to a discussion of church tradition. He is anxious to repudiate any associated magical and superstitious ideas, and constantly stresses that the action of God's Spirit is never bound by the sacraments. But in the midst of this wealth of good material, I was left with certain questions and disappointments.

First, though the book claimed to have an ecumenical aim, this was very limited, There is no recognition of our Baptist tradition and what it might say about such issues as ordination and ministry, for example, and any liturgical material quoted is almost always Anglican. Second, I was given no compelling reason for recognising the seven sacraments as opposed to the two so-called 'dominical' sacraments of baptism and eucharist. To quote Bonhoeffer in support of the sacrament of penance seemed strange, and elsewhere Macquarrie concedes the somewhat arbitrary nature of the number seven. Finally, the treatment of the various sacraments came across as rather pedestrian. It said little that was new, and the examination of marriage appeared outdated. I wanted the book to help us see the value of the sacraments for the church's mission in the world today.

As Baptists we need a book like this. We have often exalted word and neglected sacrament, and Macquarrie reminds us of the reverence and responsibility expected from those who handle holy things, calling us to link words with signs that point us towards the mystery of Christ. We may wish to offer a Baptist perspective on the subject, but we deprive ourselves if we fail to take seriously the gift of the sacraments.

Graham R Sparkes

***Hymns as Homilies* Peter Newman Brooks
(Gracewing: Fowler Wright Books) ISBN 0-85244 281 5 (pp394 +xv) £15-95**

Acknowledging the importance of hymnody in sustaining, inspiring and instructing the people of God, Peter Newman Brooks presents a series of self-contained chapters centred upon the work of eleven key hymn-writers of the English religious tradition spanning the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, prefaced by a chapter on Martin Luther, whose influence upon post-Reformation hymnody he observes often passes unrecognised. The starting point on each occasion is a well known hymn (such masterpieces as 'Awake, my soul'; 'When I survey the wondrous Cross', 'Love Divine', and 'The day thou gavest'), from which Dr Brooks proceeds to illustrate how each was tailored as a homiletic instrument, as sharply and precisely honed as the sermon it was written to accompany. Each chapter then leads to a contextualisation of the hymn within the writer's wider devotional and spiritual output and within the needs of the congregation which each served.

The style of the book is uncomplicated, the arguments clear, the writing lucid. Dr Brooks has an enviable command of post-Reformation history and his enthusiasm for his subject matter flows from every page.

For the pastor, the value of the book resides in three areas; first, it is quite simply a fascinating and informative read, shedding new light upon traditional hymns whose spiritual wisdom is often obscured by their very familiarity; second, it acts to stimulate the minister's critical senses, reminding him or her of the homiletic power of hymns; and third, contrary to contemporary trends, it challenges the pastor to take the reins of local church hymnody with firm hands, for as a congregation sings so it will believe. I gladly commend this book as a helpful addition to the study shelves.

J P Elliston

***The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Epworth Commentaries)
by Larry Kreitzer, The Epworth Press, 215 pp, £9.95, 1997**

Larry Kreitzer has written a commentary that is academically based but in readable form. He assumes no knowledge of Greek, for all terms are transliterated and

explained. The flowing text and few footnotes, only 94, show that Kreitzer works with a broad brush in his dependence on previous commentators, picking out the broad issues rather than offering specific criticism, and reserving particular comment for the biblical text.

After a 30 page introduction covering author, date and provenance, Kreitzer takes us through the text of Ephesians in 144 pages. The commentary usefully highlights Ephesian's dependence on other Biblical passages, especially Colossians, and offers some helpful improvements to the Revised English Bible translation, on which the whole series is based. Kreitzer follows those scholars who consider Ephesians to be post-Pauline, dating it towards the end of the first century and explaining the personal references by pseudepigraphy.

His 'big new idea' is suggesting that the letter was originally written by a follower of Paul from the church at Colossae, the "mother church", to the church at Hierapolis, the "daughter church", which it founded. On this basis Kreitzer offers a radical reinterpretation of some of the language in Ephesians: the "we" and "you" language represents the distinction between mother and daughter church, "all God's people" refers to the three neighbouring churches of Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea. Hierapolis was at the top of a steep cliff and this is used as part of the explanation for the ascended - descended passage in Ephesians 4:9-10 and for the language of heaven (the church on the cliffs at Hierapolis) and the earth (the churches in the valley at Colossae and Laodicea). Kreitzer acknowledges that this is speculative thinking, and although it is an intriguing theory, I remain unconvinced by this reinterpretation of the text.

In the forward Kreitzer sets out his intention to relate Ephesians to the twentieth century and there are certainly illustrations drawn from such diverse sources as Camus, the film *Platoon*, as well as hymnody. The back cover also claims the book will speak to church planting situations today, but here it never quite lives up to the promise. Although well illustrated from the twentieth century there is less application of Ephesians to a modern situation. As a commentary this book is very readable, contains useful material but needs to be used together with other works rather than on its own.

Anthony Clarke

***Theology from Three Worlds: Liberation and Evangelisation for the New Europe* Michael I. Bochenski. Regent's Study Guides - 5.**

The author's claim is that God is now calling the European Church, in particular the U.K., to be involved in the liberation mission following thinking and action in South American and Polish church life. Liberation from inordinate concern over individual spirituality, liberation from thinking that the church is the main concern of the church, liberation from denominational isolationism and nationalism, liberation to living only for other people especially for the 'unchurched' - a word which I do not like and which is used too frequently.

The theology of some leading liberation theologians and the consequent action are examined, followed by a fascinating firsthand sketch of life in post war Poland and then an overview of Britain in the same period of history.

Through 56 pages we then go surfing through 56 books of the Bible with a paragraph on each looking at texts which open up the nature of this liberation. The

final chapters are the praxis, the realisation that liberation theology calls on churches not just to get their theology right but to insist that their practice is right - orthopraxis AND orthodoxy.

The author invites local churches to learn from the theologians of liberation that God's kingdom is much bigger than what goes on in specifically Christian circles. It demands radical changes in every department of personal, local, regional, national and international Christian living. The final chapters do not fully detail those changes but those who are not familiar with liberation theology will discover the action, though not the reading, in these pages demanding and rewarding.

The author has sown the seeds today but will the flowers grow tomorrow or will they die through lack of nourishment?

Don Black

Books

Some Books are to be Tasted, others to be Swallowed, and some few to be Chewed and Digested; that is, some Books are to be read only in Parts; others to be read but not Curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with Diligence and Attention. -*Sir Francis Bacon (1561 - 1626)* (MBCW).



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