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# The Fraternal

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# Editorial

In this year of anniversaries — 25 years after Beeching (wot no track?!) and 50 years after Munich ('peace in our time') - the two rightly afforded most publicity have been the defeat of the Armada (1588) and 'The Glorious Revolution' (1688). In the first case whether, in fact, Drake or the prevailing wind was responsible seems debatable. In the second whether there was anything particularly 'glorious' 'in the fact that a foreign fleet and army...had been required to enable Englishmen to recover the liberties they had muddled away...' (G.M. Trevelyan) is equally debatable. But then, as Trevelyan goes on to say, the *true* 'glory' of the Revolution is that it was bloodless. These qualifying irritants aside, 'freedom' is what they each celebrate. Today, as a nation, the freedom expressed as national self-determination is, of course, more and more subject to the EEC as 1992 and the 'single market' becomes a reality. It is a case of freedom being conceded in the light of a greater good: the political and economic unity of Europe. Elsewhere it is a very different matter. In so many places 'freedom' has to be negotiated across the bargaining table, or violently torn from the clenched palms of those who would deny it to any but themselves since only they, of course, are the arbiters of what is right and good for the people. The 'givenness' of freedom, as an inalienable human right, though recognised philosophically, is no more acceptable in practice than ever it was. Its denial to so many is surely part and parcel of our bitter wanderings 'east of Eden'.

In the personality of Thomas Merton we encounter one whose concept of *spiritual* freedom was inseparable from every *other* freedom. It was what it meant to be truly human. For those unfamiliar with him Michael Walker, former Fraternal editor, offers a helpful introduction. Merton is increasingly recognised as one of the most significant spiritual influences of our time. From the former editor to the present one, we move to the first of what is hoped will be a short series of brief introductions to developments in N.T. exegesis. We open with 'Redaction Criticism'. This is followed by a welcome article from Belinda Copson, whose husband ministers in Birmingham. Belinda brings our series on 'Cristianity and Culture' to a conclusion with some insights into the contribution of 'literature' to Christian understanding. We hope that this series has been stimulating and thought provoking with its wide cultural context.

Recently, at the Lambeth Conference, Fr. G. Gutierrez, 'father of Liberation Theology', asserted that such a theology, 'while concerned with social justice, lacked content if not grounded in God'. Andrew Pilcher, in the concluding part of his article, continues to appraise the phenomenon, arguing that personal conversion and social justice cannot be separated in our understanding of the God of Christ.

Our fifth contribution is from the pen of Margaret Jarman, reflecting upon her Presidency of the Union. Her emphasis on 'contemplation' has been timely and is evidence that not all Baptists are frenetic activists! We add our thanks for her example and quality of leadership.

Two short but important notes follow. Vic Sumner makes clear the present position on help with retirement accomodation through the Retired Baptist Ministers' Housing Society, especially relevant in the light of soaring house prices. Secondly, Keith Roberts appeals for help with his research into Stress and Support in Ministry. Your assistance now could well benefit our colleagues in the long term as more adequate support structures come into being.

# Twentieth Century Pilgrimage: A reflection on Thomas Merton

Twenty years ago, on December 10th 1968, two remarkable men died. The one was Karl Barth, the master architect of the theological reconstruction after the First World War. The other was Thomas Merton, a Cistercian monk, theologian and man of letters. The memory of Barth will not fade as long as the church engages in theological reflection, nor that of Merton as long as it wrestles with the meaning of prayer in a world of constantly shifting landscapes.

Merton was born in France in 1915 of an American mother and a New Zealand father.<sup>1</sup> His mother, Ruth, died when he was six and Owen, his father, when he was fifteen. Following this second crushing experience of bereavement, he went to live in London with his godfather and his wife, attending Oakham School and then going on to Cambridge. He spent a year at Cambridge, a period of his life that he was to recall with great pain. He set out to 'have a good time', worked little, drank heavily, lived beyond his resources and, most painful of all, sired a child who, with its mother, was later to die in the Blitz. In the Summer of 1933, Merton returned to America in shame, never to come to England again.<sup>2</sup>

In November 1938, he was baptized into the Catholic faith. During this period, his skills as a writer became evident, many of his articles and poems being published in various American journals. The turning point of his life was a visit to the Trappist Gethsemani monastery in Kentucky. Here at last he found all that he was looking for. He was made a novice of the community in 1941.

Merton wanted to sacrifice everything, not least his gifts as a writer. The Order, however, was not prepared to see wasted a talent that could be used in its own service. Merton was set the task of writing edifying literature, a task he came to loathe. He decided that if he was to write then he would write out of the core of his own experience. His autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948), published in Britain under the title *Elected Silence*, was prodigiously successful. It was followed by a steady stream of books that kept Merton in the limelight for the remainder of his life.

Yet, beyond this very public activity, there were the struggles of Merton the man. His writing added to the rigorous demands of the Trappist rule. Merton drove himself, allowing himself no respite in any aspect of the monastic life. He came near to a nervous breakdown. His superiors found him difficult. He longed only to deepen his life of prayer and allow space for his communion with Christ, but the demanding structures of the Trappist life, designed to further that end, seemed only to militate against it. It was in the early Sixties that, with the permission of his superiors, he began the life of a hermit in the grounds of Gethsemani. Here, he found the time for prayer and reflection that had been so hard to come by.

Merton was changing. In the late Fifties and the Sixties, he became increasingly involved, through his pen, in the great social and international issues of the time: Vietnam; the struggle for human rights being waged by American blacks under the leadership of Martin Luther King; the morality of nuclear arms. His essays, collected in his book *Faith and Violence* (1968), reveal his ability to order words in the service of clarity and intellectual vigour, even when he was dealing with the most complex contemporary issues whether in ethics, politics or theology. He grew more and more open to people, to men and women, beyond Catholicism and beyond the boundaries of the Christian church.

He developed an interest in, and felt an affinity with, Zen Buddhism. In pursuit of it, he travelled to Bangkok for a conference of Catholic and Buddhist monks in 1968. On the morning of December 10th, he gave a paper to the conference. In the afternoon, he tragically died in his room as a result of an electrical accident.

Merton has been described as the 'symbol of a century'<sup>3</sup>. His passionate quest for a deeper union with God, a quest at the heart of every Cistercian's life, was pursued against the background of a rapidly changing America, a Catholic Church in the process of that *aggiornamento* (renewal) which Pope John XXIII had initiated with the Second Vatican Council, and an international community of nations facing problems unprecedented in the human story.

*Merton's life compels us to reflect on the true nature of catholicity.* His book *The Seven Storey Mountain* is steeped in the Catholicism he had discovered and with which he had fallen hopelessly in love. It was a confident Catholicism, assuming itself to be the guardian of divine truth and the custodian of civilised values. There was no surer guide to the spiritual destination which Merton, turning from his rootlessness and what he saw as the debauchery of his former life, desired above all else: the union of the soul with God. If Catholicism pointed clearly to the destination, the Trappist discipline, asking nothing less than everything, provided the route. Enfolded in his habit, merging with these men who 'stood in their stalls and bowed like white seas at the end of the psalms'<sup>4</sup>, denied even rudimentary speech and communicating by sign language much of the day, isolated behind the walls of Gethsemani, Merton would have been happy to drown in an anonymity in which he and God might truly find each other.

From those 'spiky' Catholic beginnings, Merton developed into a man who, living as a hermit, argued for our responsibility to one another and for one another. Isolated in the grounds of Gethsemani, his was to become one of the most powerful voices of protest against the racial and nuclear barriers that divided people from one another. Beginning his journey with a triumphalist Catholicism, he was to end it amongst Buddhists in a distant land. Yet, nowhere in Merton's writings, is there any hint that he had become disenchanted with Catholicism. If, by his own choice, he had known it at its harshest, it was also the soil in which his spirituality has grown so strongly. Merton was not in the business of trading beliefs or fitting his Catholicism into the soft cushions of syncretism. In the dark days of his inner struggles in Gethsemani, he turned, as have so many in similar situations, to St. John of the Cross, that cartographer of the soul's night journeyings. In his book *The Ascent to Truth* (1951) he echoed John's insistence that faith and prayer are founded upon revealed truth. Our knowledge of God rests upon his revelation of himself in Jesus Christ, witnessed to and interpreted by Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Church. The concepts of God found in Christian theology 'speak the truth about Him'<sup>5</sup>. Merton was as much a Catholic when he wrote towards the end of his life, 'The task of theology is not merely to improve our scientific understanding of dogmas but to deepen and enlighten our personal relationship with God in the Church'<sup>6</sup>. In the intervening journey, however, his Catholicism had turned to the world. He had ranged himself alongside the civil rights workers, the protesters against the continuing and increasingly dreadful war in Vietnam, and with those who looked at the world's arsenals and demanded, 'enough is enough'.

Was he less a Catholic at the end of his journey than at the beginning? Was human solidarity and the willingness to listen and learn from others nothing more than a dilution of the pure faith? Merton the man is the answer to the questions his life and thinking raise. Perhaps catholicity has as much to do with

generosity as with loyal adherence to received truth. What Christians believe is not meant to fence them off from humankind but to bind them in solidarity with it, as surely as Christ bound himself in the swirling baptismal waters of the Jordan. Merton discovered his own humanity and cherished it as the greatest prize God could give him. There is no greater vocation than that of the One who 'was made man', accepting the necessity of becoming fully human. Christians, believing as they do in the Incarnation, are 'humanists' and 'universalists' almost by definition.

*Merton's life provides a commentary on the relationship between prayer and action.* He made his commitment to the Cistercians in the belief that he was committing himself to a life of contemplative prayer. It was the way of Mary, as the fourteenth century anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* had described it, superior to the active role chosen by Martha and the majority of Christians. Contemplative prayer required an attention, a single-minded concentration upon God that lay beyond the reach of men and women who were immersed in the business of the world. It was the far country that lay beyond liturgical prayer and even beyond meditation. It was a state of emptiness, a place where all striving became futile, a vast emptiness of the soul, immeasurable and thus a silent witness to the Infinite God who alone could inhabit it. Contemplative prayer demanded time for waiting, since all the initiatives lay on God's side.

Yet, changes were taking place, in the Church and in Merton's own understanding, which were to reverse the centuries old elitism so eloquently advocated by *The Cloud*. The Second Vatican Council continued a process, begun during the pontificate of Pius X, of restoring to the whole people of God the liturgy and prayers of the Church. The Daily Office, for centuries the preserve of priests and religious, returned to the role it had played in the early centuries of the Church as the prayers of the people of God. Men and women, properly devoted as they were to glorifying God in their secular duties, were to be encouraged to base their daily living on a structured form of prayer that would unite them with all other Catholic Christians. Side by side with this, affecting Protestants as well as Catholics, was a growing awareness of the wealth of the Church's spiritual tradition. Contemplative prayer was being democratised. Merton contributed to that movement. The eremitical life, with its scope for silence and contemplative prayer, led him deeper into God. But the journey into God also proved a discovery of the truly human. Prayer, far from leading Merton away from the world, led him more deeply into it. The familiar chasm between prayer and action began to close. His own life became a testimony to the inseparability of what the Taizé community refers to as 'struggle and contemplation'. To place our human struggles in the context of God's eternal presence, to see them *sub specie aeternitatis*, is not to minimise them, and certainly not to trivialise them. Prayer is not a religious activity, above the realm of the political, where the cries of human beings can be muted, the complexities of human causes suddenly simplified, and all our pain cushioned in a comfortable spirituality. Merton's very vantage point provided him with a house-top from which to cry out.

He called Vietnam 'an overwhelming atrocity'<sup>7</sup>. He saw the struggle for black civil rights as an opportunity for white repentance. It offered the American Christian the 'chance to face reality about himself and recover his fidelity to Christian truth, not merely in institutional loyalties and doctrinal orthodoxies... but in recanting a more basic heresy: the loss of that Christian sense which sees every other man as Christ and treats him as Christ'<sup>8</sup>. He said of modern methods

of war, 'It is this polite, massively organised white-collar murder machine' that threatens the world with destruction, not the violence of a few desperate teenagers in a slum<sup>9</sup>.

Merton's writings have provided material out of which men and women, in their secular calling, have been able to shape their own viable style of prayer in the world. The last decade of Merton's life was lived in the radical milieu of the 1960's. It is as well that we should remind ourselves of the nature of that radicalism, since the word has now been appropriated by a conservatism, both theological and political, which would once have abhorred it. It had two concerns, theological and social. With the theological Merton took issue, courteously and passionately. For some radicals, such as John Robinson, he had great respect. For others, such as the 'death of God' theologians, he kept the sharpest weapons of his intellectual armoury. With some, such as the Catholic theologian, Rosemary Radford Reuther, he developed a deep affinity.<sup>10</sup> In his response to the social agenda of radicalism, however, he was unequivocal.

That social agenda has not changed, even if some of the theological fashions of the 60's now look faintly bizarre. The world wears a familiar face. The same futile wars, the national and international systems based on various forms of *apartheid* which still flourish like a noxious weed, the hunger and deprivation which still thunder, like the horsemen of the apocalypse, across large tracts of the world — all are the enemies against which radicalism took up arms in the 60's.

Merton is witness to the response that Christians must make when faced with that radical agenda. He is also witness to something that we have forgotten. Neither he, nor many of his contemporaries, would have foreseen that the world, instead of converging towards some distant omega point, as Teilhard dreamed and so many hoped in those distant days, has instead spiralled into a sectarianism that now eats into all our lives. The break-down of the Ulster community in 1969 has proved to be a grimly prophetic augury of what was to come. Old wounds are remembered, old scores settled, old battles revived as men, in T.S. Eliot's words, 'follow an antique drum'.

Merton points us to a catholicity, to a truly Christian humanism, that alone can bind our bleeding wounds. Sectarianism, whatever the shape or form in which we encounter it, cannot heal us, rather it contributes to our ills. A catholicity that truly believes in the faith once given in scripture and in Church, will call men and women out of the ideological strongholds in which they have barricaded themselves, out into the freedom of a truth that sets them free. Merton the monk found himself and the world beyond Gethsemani. He showed us that, in the profound silence which lies at the heart of contemplative prayer, there is healing for ourselves and for the whole world. In prayer we realise that it is not our humanity that shames us, but we who shame our humanity. Our faith is confirmed and seen not to be in vain. In prayer, above all, we stand at the threshold of those unutterable depths of love which lie at the heart of all things.

**Michael Walker**

## NOTES

1. Excellent accounts of Merton's life and thought are to be found in Monica Furlong, *Merton: a Biography* (Collins 1980) and Anthony T. Padovano, *The Human Journey* (Doubleday 1984)

2. For an article on Merton's English period see Terry Tastard, 'Anglicanism and the conversion of Thomas Merton' *Theology* Vol XCI January 1988
3. A.T. Padovano op cit.
4. *Thomas Merton: The Seven Story Mountain* (Sheldon 1975) 324
5. Thomas Merton: *The Ascent to Truth* (Burns and Oates 1976) 68
6. Thomas Merton: *Love and Living* (Sheldon 1965) 105
7. Thomas Merton: *Faith and Violence* (University of Notre Dame 1968) 87
8. *ibid* 143
9. *ibid* 7
10. For an account of Merton's remarkable correspondence with Reuther see Monica Furlong op cit 297ff

## **Fresh Perspectives in New Testament Exegesis: Redaction Criticism**

Redaction Criticism's immediate predecessor, Form Criticism, was concerned wholly with the individual units of the gospel tradition as they were transmitted during the 40 year oral period before the Gospels were written. These units were categorized according to their literary form, viz. pronouncement stories, parables, miracle stories et al. It tended to convey the impression that the Gospel writers were merely collectors of the traditions about Jesus who in a kind of unreflective 'scissors and paste' way, put them together. By contrast, Redaction Criticism is essentially concerned with a later stage in the formation of a Gospel, namely its final editorial form. To this extent it is synthetic rather than analytic. Exponents claim that it is possible to identify a Gospel writer's theological emphases and overriding convictions about Jesus. In terms of the history of critical examination of the N.T., it arose in Germany after WW2 and is associated with the scholars Bornkamm, Marxsen and Conzelmann.

As a literary-critical tool it is dependent upon a comparison with a known prior document. So while it is possible to carry out Redaction Criticism of Matthew and Luke in the light of their use of Mark, it is not possible with any confidence to do this for Mark itself, since we cannot be sure which sources he may have used. Consequently, as a method, it is most often applied to work on the first and third Gospels.

The great gain of Redaction Criticism is that it brings out the distinctive character of a Gospel which is often lost in the all too frequent tendency to harmonize and smooth out the differences between Gospels. What is often overlooked is that each Gospel writer expected his work to stand alone and be judged on its own merits. There was no anticipation that the Church would eventually have a corpus of four Gospels at its disposal. Secondly, the method gives due recognition to the theological creativity of the individual writer and that community within which his perspective on Jesus was formed. Such a recognition concedes that within the one apostolic kerygma there were differences of emphasis and outlook.

Reservations about the method include the fact that it can be quite subjective, leading to differing results between exegetes. Also, emphasis can be placed solely on where the Gospel writers differ in their presentation, overlooking the fact that points of agreement are also a reflection of their theological outlook.

How is the method undertaken? Primarily it depends upon the detailed examination of common material in the Gospels, noting in which way this material is handled differently. Of course, if every difference in a common narrative is explained away on the basis that it merely reflects the different

traditions each evangelist possessed, then Redaction Criticism as a method is thereby redundant. Its rationale consists in the conviction that each was a theologian in his own right and interpreted the tradition according to his own convictions and understanding of the Christ event. Exegetes using this method differ according to the measure of creativity they are prepared to concede to each Gospel writer. There does seem to be a dichotomy here between theological creativity and faithfulness to the received tradition. How do the two interact and what constraints did each impose upon the other? This urgent question does not always receive the attention it deserves.

In practice it is necessary to examine the way that material is joined together i.e. the seams between units of tradition. A comparison between Gospels might then indicate a particular conviction or view of the writer. Other aspects to be taken into account include that which a writer adds or omits, the arrangement of the material and the repetition of certain emphases. Some examples at this point will help illustrate the method:

(a) **Luke 24:6 cf Mark 16:7**

In the setting of a resurrection pericope, Mark (and Matthew) has the angel direct the disciples to Galilee as the place of manifestation of the risen Christ. This harmonizes with what is said in Mark 14:28 about Jesus preceding the disciples to Galilee.

However, in Luke the message in the same setting is 'remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee', indicating that Galilee belongs to the past rather than to the future. The point is that this allows Luke to identify Jerusalem, not Galilee, as the location of the resurrection appearances. Such a location could not be more appropriate in a Gospel (and Acts) which puts so much theological emphasis on Jerusalem as the epi-centre for world mission. (Luke 24:47, cf Acts 1:8) In this way, by the slightest change in sentence construction, a wholly different perspective is introduced, and one in harmony with the Gospel writer's overall perspective.

(b) **Matthew 17:1-8, cf Mark 9:2-8**

When the transfiguration narrative of Matthew is compared with that of Mark, which was clearly his source, points of difference are illuminating.

In Matthew Jesus' face 'shone like the sun' and the cloud which overshadows is said to be 'bright'. Such details are evocative of Moses' appearance after the law-giving on Sinai (Ex 34:30), and the pillar of cloud in the Wilderness in which the shekinah glory of the Lord is manifest. (Ex 16:10) Moreover, in Matthew's narrative Moses is mentioned before Elijah.

Small in themselves, these differences indicate a particular christological outlook on the part of Matthew; one based upon Moses the great law-giver. In support of such a supposition is the fact that Matthew, against Mark, introduces the clause, 'With whom I am well pleased', which ties it in more firmly, not only with the baptismal episode, but with the Servant Song of Isaiah 42 where, in verse 4, the Servant is said to establish '*justice* in the earth'. One could conclude then that whereas Mark may have intended the transfiguration to evoke awe, (Mark 1:27, 4:41), Matthew brings to it the particular theological understanding of Jesus as a 'greater than Moses'. Other evidence of such a christology in this Gospel, though restrained, includes Jesus' association with 'Egypt' (2:14) and, of course, the Sermon on the Mount.

The examples above hopefully indicate how Redaction Criticism may be undertaken. It opens the door to approaching the Synoptics in the same way as

the Fourth Gospel, inasmuch as the latter has long been accepted as a 'theological reflection', rather than history per se. Now we are invited to consider that this is also true of the Synoptics, though they make their theological emphases by way of narrative, rather than by long reflective discourses. It is a more subtle approach, and for this reason, not so easily perceived.

A disciplined acceptance of the method concedes that the historical tradition of Jesus and interpretation belong together in the transmission process, and that the Gospel writers wrote with theological purpose and conviction with a view to meeting the spiritual needs of the communities of their day.

**Michael V. Jackson**

### **Further Reading**

- I.H. Marshall (ed)      *New Testament Interpretation* (Paternoster 1979)
- N.Perrin                      *What is Redaction Criticism?* (SPCK 1970)
- C.Tuckett                    *Reading the New Testament* (SPCK 1987)
- P. Henry                      *New Directions in New Testament Study* (SCM 1980)

## **Christianity and Literature — A Personal View**

During a recent weekend visit to York, I had the opportunity of attending a Quaker meeting. Sixty or seventy people gathered in silence, which continued unbroken for perhaps twenty minutes. Then came the first verbal contribution to the worship. A member of the congregation recited, from memory, a short piece from Milton's 'Paradise Lost', and commented on an aspect of the text which had impressed him - not just critically, but theologically. Milton's description of the attractiveness of Lucifer, ultimately corrupt and physically most beautiful of all the angels before his appearance changed to reflect his corruption, was perceived as a warning of the seeming attractiveness of evil in its early stages. The thread was picked up as others in the meeting contributed to the line of thought: another few lines of 'Paradise Lost', a few words from 'Macbeth', were offered as extracts theologically resonant and valid.

Sharing in such a meeting was a reinforcement of my own feelings about the relationship between literature and Christianity. I've found, increasingly, literary interests and explorations, and the development of Christian life and faith are closely related and deeply interactive. As a study and appreciation of literature has enriched and informed my faith, so a Christian perspective has enhanced my understanding of some literature, by making possible a sympathetic understanding of the religious climate and thought of the author's time, or the author's perspective stemming from underlying religious assumptions — from within which context much of the greatest pre-twentieth century literature must be understood.

Whilst reading English and French literature at Bristol University, I was also living as part of the community at Bristol Baptist College. Anyone who has spent



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Dear Fellow Ministers,

One of the most enjoyable, though at times the most demanding, aspects of my work is the deputation and preaching ministry. Each year I drive many thousands of miles and visit many churches and meetings. I am always grateful for the opportunity to make such visits, and appreciative of the warm and generous hospitality that I enjoy.

In more recent years I have become increasingly aware of the variety of styles of worship to be found in our churches. The old "hymn-sandwich" is by no means extinct (and, may I say, there can be good and nourishing meat in such a sandwich). On the other hand there is a warmth and freedom of worship that has developed recently, and has obvious attractions for many people who were untouched by the more traditional liturgies. I must confess, I have learned to appreciate the modern mode; although I still have slight difficulties when "Trevor" is suddenly pounced upon to preach after being lulled into a false sense of security by forty minutes or so of "praise and sharing"!

The lovely thing for me is that, in churches of both kinds, I find a real and heart-warming interest in the Mission's caring and healing ministry. The sad and untheological division between the "Saving Gospel" and the "Social Gospel" has been broken down, and a real sense of fellowship and commitment to the "Kingdom Work" is so evident.

Thank you for your support and interest, and whether your church is an "eyes down" or a "hands up" one — please say one for us!!

God bless you and strengthen you in His service,

**Trevor W. Davis**

time at a theological college, or as a student, will remember the endless discussions over coffee, and how the imminent essay deadline, or the need to prepare next day's college prayers, acted wonderfully to focus the mind! Experiencing both types of life simultaneously had a crystallising effect — literary and Christian thought and discussion became more interactive and mutually informing than ever. Authors were studied in the university course — Milton, G.M.Hopkins, Chaucer and Shakespeare to mention a few — were discussed, researched, written about — and then perhaps used as a reading or a basis for meditation if I were taking part in leading college prayers. In a university seminar, I would be talking about Baudelaire's expression of the tension and coexistence of good and evil, and then, informed and stimulated by the poetry's concise expression of complex thought, be debating whether mankind was basically good or not, with a group of College friends later that same day.

In attempting to identify the factors which make this process of literary and religious interaction possible, I've selected what strike me as certain unifying threads in the nature of religious and literary experience and development. Creative tension, struggle for satisfactory formulation of complex ideas, change and development to maturity are, I suggest, essential components of both good literature and mature Christian faith. Douglas Stewart, in his preface to his study of five twentieth century novelists *'The Ark of God'* (now out of print), writes:-

'Christian theology can never be fully Christian while it remains systematic, withdrawn from life as men actually experience it. The stuff of the novel is human character and human conflict, and these are also the stuff of a Christian theology.'

The human element, then, so vital to literature too, is the last-identified but not the least important of these unifying factors.

Having identified linking factors between good literature and vibrant Christian theology, it needs to be stressed that a 'religious book' is not necessarily (or possibly, as Douglas Stewart has argued in the same work, not usually) one which deals with specifically 'religious' topics or which is written in a way which fits our own beliefs and structures. A truly 'religious' piece of writing may be one which presents something which we recognise as a truth or a new insight, but perhaps in a startling, unexpected or uncomfortable framework. Perhaps the characters are unsympathetic, or the tone hostile to our preconceived ideas; in any case, we don't immediately recognise it as 'religious'. Literature which presents us with ideas, images and insights which enrich or challenge our theology, or give us a fresh angle of perception on some aspect of faith, is surely 'religious' in a real sense.

A selection from some personal favourites is probably the best illustration of how this can work. George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, I would suggest, is a thoroughly religious book — not for its subdued external pious trappings (Dorothea, plainly dressed, rather consciously doing good works), but for the way in which character is gradually revealed so that the central characters of the doctor, Lydgate, and the young woman, Dorothea, are gradually brought to an emerging awareness of themselves and those about them. Their developing insights include compassion for the limitations of other people, awareness of their own inadequacies, and a resilience to cope with disappointment. The characters mature emotionally and psychologically in the course of the novel, through their experiences and contacts with each other and other people. Dorothea comes to recognise the shallowness of her girlish religious posturing and to develop a more mature attitude to her faith. There is a richness of

religious interest here to the Christian concerned about attitudes and actions towards other people as a vital dimension of faith.

A dissertation about the work of the novelist Antonia White formed part of my degree coursework; I became fascinated by her distinction between religion and religiosity. Writing in the 1930's, her semi-autobiographical novels describe a girl's Catholic convent education in the early years of this century. Details of a life regulated by religious customs of rituals and retreats are abundant, but the theological resonance of her work lies not in the outward practice of Catholic life so minutely described, but in the inner turmoil of a young girl struggling to extrapolate and develop real faith in conflict with the restrictive and suppressive outward regime.

Similarly, Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* may perhaps be seen as a 'religious' book for the wrong reasons — i.e. because it is about a priest carrying on with his job during civil war at the actual risk of his life. A closer look reveals the priest to be not superficially holy and heroic, but one who is ever conscious of personal guilt and failure, terrified of being shot, not even sure if he still believes in God — yet continuing in obedience to act as a priest throughout the hopelessness of his situation.

The theological interest and application for a Christian reader in works such as these is found in the characters' inner lives, which tend to diverge from external appearances and events. The force of such writing lies in the powerful portrayal of the 'human element', identified above as one of the links between literature and Christianity.

Other types of writing, for example those which appreciate the natural world, also bear on Christian experience and understanding. Gerard Manley Hopkins, poet and Jesuit priest, was a writer whose work I can best characterise as being an expression of *immanence*. Hopkins has used to good effect the medium of poetry to express complex thought in few words. He has created startling and numinous images:-

'The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil'

(from *God's Grandeur*)

and finds an awareness of God in ordinary things:-

'Glory be to God for dappled things —  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles in all stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced — fold fallow and plough,  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.'

(from *Pied Beauty*)

Hopkins' writing is implicitly religious but not didactic. His work is an expression of his Christianity; as his faith was enhanced by his love of nature, so this became a pervading theme of his writing.

T.S. Eliot's Christian beliefs are similarly evident in his writing, but he is perhaps more obviously concerned than Hopkins not only to encapsulate but to develop chains of thought. A passage such as the following one, which links Biblical echoes with the problems of modern life, is typical of much of his work: striving, sometimes obscurely, to relate faith to the rest of life:-

'What life have you if you have not life together:  
There is no life that is not in community,

And no community not lived in praise of GOD.  
Even the anchorite who meditates alone,  
For whom the days and nights repeat the praise of GOD,  
Prays for the Church, the Body of Christ incarnate.  
And now you live dispersed on ribbon roads,  
And no man knows or cares who is his neighbour  
Unless his neighbour makes too much disturbance  
But all dash to and fro in motor cars,  
Familiar with the roads and settled nowhere.'

(from *The Rock*)

A brief article can be no more than a taste of some writers whose work is of interest to a Christian reader as well as having intrinsic interest as good literature. Other writers I would identify by those criteria would include William Blake, Arnold Bennett, C.S. Lewis, Tolkien, Emily Bronte. This is of course a personal selection, and by no means an exhaustive list. Literature is a rich resource with which to enhance our Christian insights, worship and meditation; I hope that my own examples and suggestions may stimulate readers to make their own explorations in this field

**Belinda Copson**

## **Liberation Theology and Salvation: A Critique**

The meaning of salvation in Liberation Theology is liberation for the poor and the oppressed. Is this an adequate definition of salvation? Can it be reasonably argued that Jesus' teaching about salvation meant only liberation for the poor and the oppressed? Have Liberation theologians proved Western theologians wrong when the latter talk of salvation as personal forgiveness of sins? In this article a critical look will be taken at the teachings of the Liberation theologians. An attempt will be made to come up with a true meaning of salvation, loyal to the teachings contained in scripture, and to people in their different situations whom God has placed in this world. In other words we are seeking to find the meaning of 'salvation' for the world of the 1980's.

### **Criticisms of Liberation Theology**

One of the fiercest criticisms of Liberation Theology is that it is Marxism with a different name. The response of some Evangelicals to Marxism has often been one of aversion and rejection, not because of an intelligent appreciation and repudiation of Marxism as a world view, but rather an opposition to regimes which harass and persecute believers. The fact that Liberation Theology is influenced by Marx is indisputable. When one considers that Liberation Theology arises out of situations where people have been oppressed for many years, it is perfectly understandable that these people are very impressed by statements by Marx such as:

'The Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point is to change it.'<sup>1</sup>

Liberation Theology wants liberation from oppression, and revolution is the way to obtain this. So is this the connection between Marxism and Liberation Theology? Many Liberation theologians do see capitalism as evil, though the oppressive regime could just as easily be left wing as right wing, and still need

opposing if it oppresses people.

It is our opinion that for the vast majority of people caught up in the struggle for liberation from oppression, revolution is conceived of as the only way to bring the changes needed to end oppression. Marxism talks of revolution and therefore this idea gains credence. However, these people are embracing revolution and not Marxism. In much of the writings of the Liberation theologians it seems that little attention is paid to Marxist thought on many issues. So we conclude that Liberation Theology is not the same as Marxism. It borrows from Marxism but in fact has many differences.

A second criticism of Liberation Theology is that it promotes violence. It is indeed true that some Liberation theologians do justify violence, for example James Cone says:

'The christian does not decide between violence and non-violence, evil and good. He decides between the less and the greater evil ... if the system is evil, then revolutionary violence is both justified and necessary.'<sup>2</sup>

But it would also need to be said that some Liberation theologians seek a non-violent revolution.

Liberation Theology allows for violence if other means of bringing about the required changes to end oppression have failed. It needs to be stated that almost all Liberation theologians argue that to do nothing about oppression is to support the violence of the oppressors. It could also be questioned whether it is possible on biblical grounds to rule out the use of violence completely. There are great differences of opinion amongst Christians on the use of violence and since no one opinion is held to be right by all, it would be unsatisfactory to reject Liberation Theology solely on these grounds.

In the writings of the Liberation theologians there are few references, if any, to personal sin. This seems strange when so much of the teaching in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is about the need for forgiveness for personal sin. The concepts of structural sin and national sin are found in scripture too, but it would certainly seem that Liberation theologians are wrong in their neglect of discussion of personal sin. This neglect seems even more strange when proponents of Liberation Theology define 'salvation' as arriving at personal wholeness as they did in Bangkok in 1973. Can this be at all possible without any mention of personal sin?

A further criticism of Liberation theologians is that basing their theology on the so called 'historical Jesus' could prove to be an unsatisfactory basis. The debate has gone on for some time as to whether it is possible to get back to the 'Jesus of history', or indeed whether the life of Jesus is important for us. Some scholars such as Barth and Bultmann claim that rather than trying, unsuccessfully, to work out an historical life of Jesus, people should concentrate on the Resurrection, because it was this that marked the beginning of Christianity. In a M.Th. thesis F.W.J. Clark looks at the place given to the historical Jesus in Latin American Liberation Theology and he poses the question:

'In light of the difficulties entailed in finding the historical Jesus, why do Liberation theologians place so much importance on it?'

Clark never really answers the question he poses but ends up contending that the emphasis on the historical Jesus is not as central to Liberation praxis as it first appears. Perhaps Clark has a point. At times it seems that Liberation theologians would still be able to preach a theology of liberation purely from the Old Testament using Moses and the Exodus together with the prophets.

However, Liberation theologians do talk about the Jesus of history making much use of Luke chapter four.

Whilst we feel the Jesus of history *can* be found, we would question portraying him solely as the liberator from physical oppression, as the Liberation theologians do.

Another criticism of Liberation theologians is that they have misinterpreted the meaning of the Exodus. Are Liberation theologians correct in seeing the Exodus as an event that should take place within every situation of oppression? It would seem that this approach would lead to problems if applied across the board. The Exodus, as recorded in the Old Testament, was a liberation for the Israelites from the oppression of the Egyptians. But surely it was more than that. God led the people out of Egypt in order to make a covenant between himself and the Israelites. We contend that Liberation Theology should not only help people in an Exodus type of liberation from oppression but should, as part of this liberation, lead people into a covenant with God. We would endorse the way of doing this as being through personal repentance and faith.

Having agreed with the criticism that Liberation theologians have misused the text in their interpretation of the Exodus-event, there would seem to be another criticism along the same lines. Boff, in a number of places, particularly in his book *Jesus Christ Liberator*, misuses texts to support his own theme. For example, Boff quotes Luke 2:11 as;

'Today a liberator has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord'<sup>3</sup>.

The word translated 'liberator' by Boff is the Greek word 'soter', normally translated 'saviour'. The Greek could possibly allow it to mean 'deliverer' but 'liberator' is not at all accurate. It would seem foolish of Boff to translate in this manner in his desire to portray Jesus as the liberator, as there is enough evidence to show that Jesus wanted to liberate people without changing texts to support this point.

Yet another criticism of Liberation Theology is that Jesus is identified with the Zealot party and a number of Jesus' disciples are portrayed as guerillas. Perhaps here the Liberation theologians are stretching the texts — certainly at least one of the disciples had been a Zealot, but whether or not Jesus had close associations with the Zealots is open to question. Boff goes out of his way to emphasise a connection between Jesus and the Zealots, though this would not be common to all Liberation theologians.

One criticism acknowledged by Liberation theologians is that it neglects Christology. Boff's *Jesus Christ Liberator* is an attempt to redress the balance. We would challenge this criticism as there would seem to be far more important issues to be addressed, such as practical issues of liberation. Liberation theologians should not be spending valuable time pandering to desires of theologians of the West for a fully worked out Christology. It is, in fact, arguable that Liberation theologians are doing Christology in their own way. Liberation theologians criticise theologians of the West for allegedly preaching 'Jesus' instead of the Kingdom of God. They feel strongly that priorities are wrong if Jesus is preached rather than the message that Jesus himself proclaimed. A danger here is that an 'either..or' situation arises with Liberation theologians overstating their case in order to make their point that the 'proclaimer' has become the 'proclaimed'.

One final criticism is that liberation simply replaces one tyrant with another if it only leads to the revolutionary group becoming the ruling group. We accept this criticism and feel that this is an issue which Liberation theologians have not yet adequately considered.

**THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY P.L.C.  
4 SOUTHAMPTON ROW,  
LONDON, WC1B 4AB  
Telephone No: 01-405 4084**

**To the Readers of the Fraternal.**

Dear Friends,

In the financial press and the "money" columns of the newspapers there has been considerable reference to the Financial Services Act 1986. In particular, after the 29th April this year it became illegal for firms or persons to provide "investment advice" unless they are authorised as required by the Act as Independent Intermediaries or have become tied agents.

The Baptist Insurance Company does not itself underwrite life assurance but has in the past responded to requests for advice or information through its contacts with various life assurance companies. The volume of life business placed by us was modest but we performed a useful service to our clients. The Financial Services Act faced us with the alternatives of seeking authorisation, or becoming tied agents or ceasing to give advice on life assurance matters.

The amount of business transacted did not justify the administrative work or cost of authorisation as independent intermediaries. Neither as tied agents did we wish to be seen as only recommending one life assurance company who clearly could not be best at everything! Regretfully therefore we have ceased to provide a life assurance service although I am sure the knowledge and experience of our senior staff is of greater depth than many an authorised intermediary.

Yours sincerely,

**M.E. PURVER**  
General Manager

In the July Edition of *Fraternal*, we regret that one line of the original text was omitted by a typographical error. We apologise for this, and are glad to repeat the text of this important piece of information in its fulness in this Edition.

We must beware that Liberation Theology is not rejected totally, and seek to learn from the criticisms in order that we might further enlighten our understanding of theology.

### **Liberation Theology Restated**

Having looked in detail at Liberation Theology and noted many criticisms of it, it becomes clear that it also has a number of strengths which make it very meaningful as a theological way forward in the 1980's. The meaning of salvation as 'liberation', put forward by the Liberation theologians, is a helpful definition but liberation must be expanded to make room for the issue of personal freedom from sin. It does not appear to be a case of either having physical liberation or personal spiritual liberation, but rather that the two things go together. This is our understanding of the teaching of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels.

The definition put forward at Bangkok in 1973 by the World Council of Church essays 'Salvation is arriving at personal wholeness'. To be truly liberated a person needs to experience freedom from physical oppression as well as freedom from personal sin. People can be partially liberated in that they can be liberated from physical oppression through revolution, either violent or peaceful. But true liberation includes liberation from personal sin and is only made effective by accepting the forgiveness of God offered freely to everyone. This is made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In this light how does salvation work out? Salvation means liberation and is realized by revolution:

**Spiritual revolution** — recognizing one's personal sinfulness and accepting God's free gift of forgiveness and new life in Christ.

**Physical revolution** — procuring freedom from oppression by resisting and rising up against any system, authorities and powers whose actions lead to oppression. In some cases, where all else has failed, such resistance may need to be violent.

We recognise that, particularly in the Third World, it is more meaningful in many cases to start with liberation from physical oppression, whereas in the West, in many cases, it is more appropriate to start with an individual spiritual conversion. The stress is that true liberation, true salvation, should include both physical and spiritual aspects.

Although there is an eschatological aspect to salvation and complete liberation will only be achieved at the time of the second coming of Jesus, this should not be used as an excuse for inaction and lack of involvement in people's struggle for liberation. We should be as fully involved as possible in this liberation process and should be looking for new, effective ways of involvement in the struggle against oppression throughout the world. We are then involved in ushering in the eschatological Kingdom of God.

In his book, *Theology Encounters Revolution* J. Andrew Kirk says:

'What is urgently needed both within ecumenical and evangelical circles is a serious attempt to bring together theologically a concern both for social justice and for personal conversion.'<sup>4</sup>

It is our belief that this can be achieved with the understanding of Liberation Theology put forward in this article. The outworking of this is another issue and one that the theologians might still not have resolved by the end of the decade.

**Andrew G. Pilcher**

## NOTES:

1. Marx K: *Theses on Feuerbach* (1888) 158
2. Cone J: *Black Theology and Black Power* (1970) 143
3. Boff L: *Jesus Christ Liberator* (1980) 175-176
4. Kirk J.A: *Theology Encounters Revolution* (1980) 140

## My Presidential Year

To review a presidential year is to gasp in wonder at how one was upheld and carried through such a demanding but exhilarating time. You can't have a dummy run to find out what it is like, but once you are launched there seems to be a momentum about it. I suppose it's a mixture of adrenalin and prayer, in varying proportions, as you respond to the demands and plead for heavenly help.

Picking out the highlights is difficult in a year of so much light, but it has to start with the Bradford Assembly, and the realisation of being carried along on people's prayers, so much so that I could actually relax into the situation and enjoy it. This set the tone for the year, so at the end of it, when people ask "Did you enjoy it?" I can answer, "Yes, to my surprise I did. I knew it would be worthwhile and a wonderful opportunity and all that, but I actually enjoyed it too!"

The occasions which provide material for subsequent name-dropping are highlights inasmuch as our sort of garden party does not usually lead us through the magnificent ground floor rooms of Buckingham Palace. Nor does a local Baptist Minister often chat with the High Commissioners, the Cabinet and the Prime Minister before and after a Remembrance Day Service. Indeed it fair took my breath away, when later in the day, I heard the news, and realised that I had been talking with the other Margaret about Northern Ireland at the moment when the Enniskillen bomb went off. A lighter side to the Cenotaph was that the Home Office kindly provided a separate robing room for the ladies, but since neither HM nor the PM availed themselves of it, I had it to myself.

Of the Association gatherings, I think the one that stands out is the Yorks/Lancs/Cheshire Women's Rally at Blackley, as part of the 200th Anniversary Association celebrations. The combination of the historical significance, the impressive situation high on the Pennines, the capacity congregation of 600, filling every nook and cranny, and above all the blessing of the Spirit ensured that the occasion took off.

The trip to the Soviet Union was not in the original programme but a call from Church House which started, "You know you're supposed to be ready for anything when you're president", led to a fascinating twelve days as the only Baptist in a WCC team visiting Soviet Baptists. It was a thrilling, inspiring and humbling experience to share with our Soviet brethren in that situation. The trip to Bangladesh and India was much longer in the planning, and was abbreviated by the political situation in Bangladesh at the time, but those three weeks will permanently affect my understanding of mission, of missionaries, of what it means to be the Church in a Muslim culture, and of what it means to be poor.

Most of the time is spent travelling around this country and that gives a wide experience of the life of the denomination. All sorts of places are visited which would normally be out of one's orbit. People are very ready to show you what is

going on and to discuss the work. On this basis I would say that there is much to encourage and there is a quickening of the Spirit among us. I am aware, however, that what a president sees and hears may not be representative of the whole gamut of the denomination. A president naturally sees things at their best. A church in low ebb or going through a sticky patch is less likely to welcome a presidential visit. Some do, I'm happy to say, but on the whole one understandably shares in the peak times, special church anniversaries, opening new buildings, and so on. One meets people who are at least committed enough to come to Association meetings or who have the initiative to try for a spot in the presidential diary. This is all stimulating and encouraging for the president, and a year of it can tempt one to forget that it is not the whole picture.

But what struck me most was the wide variety of ways in which the Lord is working among us. The same Lord, by His Spirit, works in different situations in different ways, using all sorts of people. We have our labels, our preferences for styles of worship, our theological emphases, our favourite forms of evangelism, our various ventures in service and concerns for justice, all in rich variety, but the Lord does not seem to be too choosy and He works through them all.

What is the role of the presidency among us and do we make the best use of it? I suppose the most obvious functions of a president are to make an input at Assembly, especially with a presidential address and then to develop the theme in visits around the churches and associations. My theme of 'Prayer and Action' took off far beyond my expectation, and I have no doubt that it was the Lord's plan that I should make that particular contribution in the year, that He prepared me for it through my own spiritual pilgrimage in the preceding few years, and that He gave me the ideas and words which spoke to many situations as I travelled round. That is a big claim to make, but I have to say, in what I trust is humility, that it is so. But I believe it is equally true of David Coffey and his 'Bridges' before me and Colin Marchant and his 'Shalom' after me, and of other presidents.

It fits our Free Church ethos that the head should roll each year, that leadership should be shared, that the top two should be an on-going General Secretary with wide-ranging responsibility, accumulating years of experience, able to weigh the varying needs of the Union, seeing through long-term policy, and becoming widely known in ecumenical and international circles, together with a changing President, with many opportunities to contribute to the life of the Union, but for a short time, bringing a particular emphasis for a particular year, acting as a personal focus of our fellowship, yet that person changing each year. For the president there is a year centre stage, full limelight, then you move over to the penumbra of the side-stage for a year as ex-president, but still an officer of the Union, then by the next Assembly you have toppled off the edge of the stage into a pool of ex-presidents, each marked for life by the experience, but taking their place among the hoi polloi.

To focus on the steps up to the stage, how about the process of electing vice-presidents? I remember this cropping up one year in my first church when we knew nothing about either of the two nominees. In the end we voted for the one who grew potatoes on the grounds that he would understand our rural situation better. A certain amount of factual information is given but should the churches be told what emphasis each nominee would make if elected, how they see the future of the denomination, whether they are conservative or moderate, à la Southern Baptists, what are their views on church meetings, charismatic renewal, South Africa etc? Where does it stop before turning it into a political campaign which leaves little room for the guidance of the Spirit? A few churches would like more details of a person's views, but having glimpsed where that

could lead, I would not want to go down that path.

In fact it is remarkable how virtually the same people each year vote in a wide variety of presidents. There seems to be a feeling each year that this year it should be some one who is young/lay/female/from the north/a minister in pastorate or whatever. Surely this is part of the Spirit's guidance. Our election should be something like a church meeting writ large, when we seek to discern the movement of the Spirit rather than campaign on a programme.

After accepting nomination there is a period, six months in my case, during which you live with two alternative futures depending on the result of the election and this cannot be avoided. But the method of announcing the result must be due for review. It did not arise this year with only one name, but both Colin and I found problems which could be avoided with a more open approach. From the time you are told the result until the second session of Assembly it is a deep, dark secret. One must look neither sad nor happy, relieved nor apprehensive lest it gives the game away. And there are always the bright sparks who notice that one of the nominees has a new suit. It would be more straightforward to announce it in the Baptist Times as soon as the result is known. This would avoid a number of problems.

When you are elected vice-president you move on to the stage, but at the side, and spend a year observing what is happening, working out what your role will be and writing your script. During this period there will be hundreds of invitations and the temptation is to fill the presidential year chock full in order to please as many people as possible, to make the most use of the year, and perhaps to flatter yourself at being in such demand. How should we best use our presidents? Some useful guidelines were produced last year, based on submissions from past presidents and discussed by the General Purposes Committee. These outline the role and offer more help in coping with the practicalities of the job, but there is room for further thought on what the president's priorities should be. It may be that having seen the presidency at close quarters I have the illusion that it has grown, but my impression is that before long it could get out of hand. I wonder how long we can go on finding suitable people who are active enough and are free to work virtually full-time at it. It is asking a great deal of one's church or employer, of colleagues and of family. I chose to be without a pastorate for the period, but that is easier when one is single.

And now for some hints on how to look after a president who comes to your neck of the woods. A sign of welcome is to send clear directions, with road numbers, road names and preferably a map. It's surprising how difficult it is to put ourselves in the place of someone who does not know our town. Ask what hospitality will be most helpful, a meal and rest in a home, a snack at the church, overnight hospitality, possibly for two, or what. And if you have one in your home do allow for a bit of presidential peace. One past president told me that the hardest part of being president was the hospitality. The good-will is always there but sensitivity to need is sometimes blunted. And what about finance? Presidential visits should normally be self-financing: that is expenses should be fully covered, with a mileage allowance, not just petrol, if a car is used. A small church a long way from the president should not be prevented from having a visit but try to arrange a series of visits in the area and share expenses. If what is received does not cover all the expenses the president should ask the Union to cover the difference, but if so it comes out of Home Mission so there's no point in skimping on the expenses so as to send a larger offering to Home Mission.

A presidential year is very demanding but my last word must be of the

tremendous support of which one becomes aware. The president's engagements in the Baptist Times are widely read, remembered and prayed over. There is a great deal of prayerful support and practical help given, and I have no doubt that this is why I have been carried through this marvellous year.

**Margaret F. Jarman**

## **Somewhere to Live on Retirement**

The considerable material advantages for a Church in providing a house, and requiring the minister to live in it, will be a compelling factor in Church finances and Settlements for many years to come. And it must be confessed that there are a few Baptist Ministers who prefer this arrangement because they are allergic to D.I.Y., or anticipate very little pleasure to be gained in house-hunting when moving to another Church. However, it is a ministry living on a time bomb with a count-down due to shatter lives at 65.

With this pastoral trauma in mind, the Retired Baptist Ministers' Housing Society Limited (RBMHS) was brought into being in order to provide 'housing and associated amenities for persons of limited means being retired or incapacitated Baptist ministers or missionaries or the widow(er) upon terms appropriate to their means.' The term 'Baptist minister' is wider than the Accredited List as it includes ministers (for not less than 15 years) of Churches in membership with the Baptist Union.

Baptist ministers, and surviving spouses, who occupy RBMHS property pay rent and the RBMHS are responsible for repairs and maintenance. A reduction in rent can be obtained by making an interest-free loan to the RBMHS which does not exceed 25% of the value of the property. The very limited, and fully employed resources of the RBMHS has made it necessary to have a ceiling purchase price which at the moment is £60,000 in top price areas. Wherever possible every attempt is made to enable applicants to be housed in the area of their choice, so that they can be near family or friends, allowing that it is unwise for a minister to be housed in the vicinity of his last pastorate. When a property is bequeathed to the RBMHS, it is offered to applicants even if it is above the ceiling price, with the added option that perhaps a property of similar value in the same area could be considered. It will be appreciated that sometimes it would be a more attractive alternative to sell the property and use the proceeds to buy homes for two, or even more, retiring Baptist ministers in another area.

The acquisition of housing for retired Baptist ministers is by bequests, legacies and monetary gifts. It would, for instance, be an act of loving koinonia for a Baptist minister without immediate heirs and successors to bequeath his retirement home for the benefit of colleagues in due course. (The RBMHS can provide advice on how to protect the interest of the surviving spouse). It would be a welcome bonus for the Society. The main core of support ought to come from Churches that operate an occupied-manse economy.

There are other schemes for ministers who have more than 'limited means'. One Association encourages a 'buying-into-the-manse' scheme. A Finance Company operates a Clergy House Purchase, mortgage & insurance package. For any minister with determination, there are now real possibilities for providing for retirement.

**Vic Sumner**



**Baptist  
Housing  
Association** LTD

## **BAPTIST HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED**

By the end of the financial year in March 1988, the Baptist Housing Association owned 108 properties, and was housing 2,999 people. The last two or three years have been a period of enormous growth, and we are happy to be able to report that during 1988 we will be opening properties at Sheffield, Preston, Hull, Devizes, Treherbert, Brondesbury, Elm Park, Pentre and Corringham. We are also building on several other sites, and as we reported last year, we are now managing some leasehold properties in the south of England, with a prospect of many more in the pipeline.

We are as ever always on the lookout for pieces of land to build more properties. We believe that God's purpose for us is to provide homes with a Christian caring input from the local Church community. If you have surplus land, and your Church has a real mission to support a scheme, please write to:

The Director  
Baptist Housing Association Limited  
Baptist Church House  
4 Southampton Row  
London  
WC1B 4AB

# Stress and Support in Ministry

Within many of the caring professions there are very adequate structures for support, supervision and equipping, with self-help skills available, which seem to be unavailable to many in local pastoral ministry. Within our own denomination, for example, the drop-out rate of those in pastoral ministry is quite alarming. Various attempts are beginning to be made to address this issue, but clearly more needs to be done. Certainly, compared with the sort of resources available in the Australasian and North American situations, little is happening here, and we do not appear to have done much to explore the need, or to discover the root causes of ministerial 'burn-out' or drop-out.

Because of a concern about this I have been doing some research into the sort of resources available to Baptist pastors in other parts of the world, and two projects are developing out of this. The first is a book that I am working on at present on the theme 'Who pastors the pastors?' The other is an involvement with one or two Christian Trusts with a view to establishing how best to facilitate, not just crisis intervention work, but also on-going supervision and support for pastors. (In no way is this an implied criticism of the Area Superintendency, for I imagine that everyone recognises the pressures of time that the Superintendents are under).

In order to move forward with these two projects there is a need to establish exactly what the stress factors are in ministry and the sort of support that is given. If you would be prepared to help with some *research* to enable me to discover these facts, I would appreciate it if you would contact me at Mitcham Lane Baptist Church, 230 Mitcham Lane, Streatham, London SW16 6NT, and I will gladly send you a survey/questionnaire which, of course, would be totally confidential. In this way we can hopefully work towards the provision of adequate care of the carers in the future.

Keith T. Roberts

## BOOK REVIEWS

### The Pastoral Nature of the Ministry

Frank Wright (SCM 1980, 96pp, £3.95)

First published in 1980 and now in its fourth impression, this modest little book has firmly established itself on a shelf currently groaning with books on pastoralia.

The author, a Canon Emeritus of Manchester Cathedral, in eight brief chapters, opens up the urgent question of the philosophical basis of the pastor's work. It is certainly not about methodology and the 'nuts and bolts' of ministry, rather outlook, attitude, motivation and perspective. In a day when many of the old certainties and assumptions are under review, the question of what a pastor is *for* is even more pressing in the author's view.

'Vision' is the integrating idea, by which he means vision of the mystery of God in Christ: absolutely indispensable for effective ministry. This informs and authenticates the pastor's role as 'educator', 'counsellor and helper' and 'proclaimer of the Kingdom'. In essence he or she is an 'artist' inviting others, without manipulation, to catch that vision which possesses them. It is a vision sustained by the Bible and liturgy, but also by contemplation of life as it is in its

sheer 'createdness' (even fish and chip shops!).

Inasmuch as the theology expressed is 'incarnational', it is informed by life at its greatest breadth with Iris Murdoch happily rubbing shoulders with A.N. Whitehead and Carl Jung with Mary Warnock. This makes the book somewhat allusive, though the writing itself is engaging and direct. It is a stimulus, not a dogmatic statement.

If the author is happy with any 'role' for the Christian minister then, as the title makes clear, it is the 'pastoral' role i.e. helping to sustain and nourish people toward personal growth and self-realization, though he does not deny a prophetic ministry to the pastor. He believes it a great irony that the secular world in actively promoting the 'human potential' movement is filling a vacuum left by the Church. A case of 'secular movements catch us (the Church) bathing and run away with our clothes'. (a lovely metaphor).

Personally, the observation on the dangers of pastoral 'professionalism' and the need to be vulnerable, sharing your weakness with others and allowing people space and freedom to be responsible for their own lives, was particularly immediate and helpful. It made one conscious of how great is the temptation to solve people's problems, by which one's own sense of value is enhanced, though at the cost of their independency!

Overall, a great deal is said in a short space with perspective questions and sensitive observations on almost every page. It is a 'must' for every Pastoral Studies college course and for reference, time and again, in the thick of ministry.

A question which rankled throughout was: wherein lies the distinctiveness of the minister in his life and work? For there is nothing here which could not equally be applied to any Christian. Yet more support for the 'functional' nature of the Ministry?

**M.V.J.**

## **Love the Stranger**

by Roger Hooker & Christopher Lamb: (SPCK 1986, 176pp, £4.50)

Should a Christian minister say prayers in the home of a bereaved Sikh family at their request? How do we assess the spiritual classics of other faiths, like the Bhagavadgita in Hinduism? In what ways can we witness to the gospel in a multi-faith society? These and many other practical and pressing questions are faced honestly in this book which is sub-titled: 'Christian Ministry in Multi-Faith Areas'.

Its strength is that the contents are earthed in the joyful and challenging realities of a multi-faith context. The authors are well qualified to write such a book having spent many years in India and Pakistan before their present work which is based in the West Midlands. Whilst Roger Hooker and Christopher Lamb focus on the practice of ministry, they realise rightly that this is bound up, inextricably, with theological and cultural issues. Hence, after considering the importance of ministering to people where they are, with practical suggestions for 'starting points' and the role of the local church, there is a very important chapter on models of ministry. These models determine how we see our work and the particularly useful model in multi-faith areas is that of the 'explorer'. Other valuable chapters take up such aspects as 'learning from other faiths', recognising our own prejudices as we 'read the Bible with new eyes' and 'Nationhood, Culture and Truth'. There is a very helpful bibliography with appendices including one on 'mixed-faith marriage'.

This is a highly readable book and will prove to be of immense value for those preparing to work in, or those already involved in, multi-faith areas, whether ordained or lay. It will whet the appetite for further reflection and action. Indeed, since we are all ministering in a multi-faith society this book raises important questions for everyone of us.

**Ernest Whalley**

## **If This is Treason, I Am Guilty**

by Allan A. Boesak (Fount 1988, 192pp £2.95)

If you enjoy reading well crafted and substantial sermons about an issue that confronts the gospel in a way none of us can ignore, then this book is for you. If you admire Desmond Tutu's stand, but want also to hear what another Christian giant has to say about witnessing in his country, then this book is for you. And if you want to know what makes the conflict between Church and State in South Africa *unique*, then this book is for you.

These addresses, many of them keynote, were delivered by Allan Boesak, Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, between August 1982 and June 1986, to congregations ranging from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, of which Boesak is President, to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, where his analysis and application of the theme, 'Jesus Christ the Life of the World', was generally judged to be 'superb'.

What comes across again and again in these pages, whether he is addressing young people in Budapest or defending himself at home against charges of slander brought by the Minister for Law and Order, or whether it is after his own release from detention and solitary confinement or at the funeral of a victim of racial violence, is the formidable grasp he has of the Bible and of Christian theology in refuting those who dare to suggest that apartheid can ever be anything other than immoral, evil and sinful.

Apart from sharpening up one's own homiletical style, there is also material in abundance here for equipping British congregations to be alert to injustice on their own doorsteps. At heart, though, this book like Boesak's life, takes up the challenge of one of his heroes, the Danish pastor, Kaj Munk, who said at the height of the Second World War, "What we as pastors lack is not psychology or literature. We lack a holy rage."

**Gethin Abraham-Williams**

## **A Perspective on Baptist Identity**

Ed. David Slater (Mainstream 1987, 88pp, n.p)

These seven papers by seven writers have been published by Mainstream as a contribution to the current 'debate about Baptist Identity'.

The collection is opened by Derek Tidball with a response to 'A Question of Identity' by Brian Haymes in which he finds much not only to provoke an 'Amen' but a 'Hallelujah!' The criticisms he has are largely of emphasis and of that which is unsaid — though these may be as telling as any outright disagreement. Barrie White and Alastair Campbell write of 'Association'. Barrie White puts the case for a fuller and closer association of churches, and warns against unbridled independence. Alastair Campbell argues that association must be based on shared distinctiveness of doctrine.

Nigel Wright offers a historical analysis of Baptist Identity; he suggests that a

radical attempt to form a church conformed to the New Testament theology of the church is the primary characteristic from which other characteristics follow.

Mike Nicholls has written a thoughtful paper which argues for a flexible understanding of ministry — not only ministers, and not only within the local church. Stephen Ibbotson considers worship, pleading for a culturally sensitive style and arguing against any over-hasty judgements.

George Beasley-Murray's contribution is easily the most exciting. Setting the search for Baptist Identity within the community of the world's churches, and setting the Church within the Kingdom, he calls on us to produce a new confession of faith.

Seven papers offering different contributions to the search for Baptist Identity, but some themes can be isolated. There is a concern to be more sympathetic to conservative ideas and to charismatic and Restorationist churches, to be more clearly conformed to the New Testament, and to be less fearful of openly stating our beliefs. At times the papers are contradictory, but they are always positive, and often challenging. If they are engaged with in a similar spirit, they will doubtless prove to have been of considerable importance in the search for our identity.

**Stuart Jenkins**

## **Equipping Your Church for Tomorrow**

Fred Bacon

Workbook 2: Making the Most of People's Resources (120pp, £1.75)

Workbook 3: Getting Well Organised (122pp + 30pp, £2.00)

Bristol & District Baptist Association 1987)

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, urged that 'everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way'. That which he applied to church worship, Fred Bacon now applies to church administration. Since 1981 we have been grateful for his previous book 'Church Administration', one which has become a standard text-book in several of our colleges. We are now further in his debt with his series of three Church Development Project Workbooks, the first of which was reviewed in the April 1988 Fraternal.

In the second of these workbooks, the author provides us with material for discovering and deploying the gifts and resources of church members. He begins with the need to discover these resources, spiritual, physical and material, as well as assessing the needs within the church. He then suggests a number of ways in which this can be done, together with means for deploying them in the life of the church. He also shows ways and means for adequate delegation in developing these resources.

In the third workbook, he touches on a sore point in a number of our churches, the need for good organisations. He provides ways and means of assessing the present organisation of a church, and how this may be improved. In so doing, he looks at three main areas — the main leadership team, church activities and church administrations — and provides guide lines for each. In both workbooks there is a step-by-step outline of the processes involved in using the projects, together with a useful series of appendices of the materials involved.

Both workbooks are attractively produced and well laid out, and should prove useful in a good number of our churches. But there is, in places, the danger of distracting repetition, which could make them less than helpful in other churches.

**Graham A. Thomson**

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## Jesus — Man of Prayer

Sister Margaret Magdalen (Hodder & Stoughton, 1987, 240pp, £4.95)

The author of this fascinating and helpful book, Sister Margaret Magdalen, CSMV, formerly a Baptist Missionary in Zaire, is now an Anglican nun, living and working in Botswana. Her rich and varied experiences of life are reflected in the diversity of traditions upon which the book draws, interweaving evangelical and Biblical insights with sources of devotional, spiritual and theological writings spanning many centuries. This all helps the book bring prayer to life in a very clear and profound way.

Anyone reading this volume will soon realise it is not a book to be casually glanced at. Rather, time needs to be set on one side so that its many insights can be appreciated, absorbed, and applied as appropriate.

Essentially a devotional book, it is written in a style which draws the reader to prayer and charts a course through the New Testament and the prayers of Jesus. The thirteen chapters take a journey through the variety of prayers which formed Jesus' life and work. It considers prayers inspired through the senses; prayer in solitude and silence; liturgical prayer; prayers through the scriptures; intercessory prayer; prayers to glorify God; and prayers of redemption, desolation and commitment, Especially helpful were the chapter devoted to the Lord's Prayer and the suggestions for following up each chapter.

Although a serious book, the content is readable and easy to understand. It makes prayer seem accessible, exciting and inviting. It was difficult to put down. The chapters could be taken individually in their own right. Another helpful way of using the material might be to read a chapter a day over a period for daily devotions, perhaps on a retreat, or a holiday where there was peace and quiet for some reflection. Alternatively the sections could be used as the basis for a series of Bible studies or sermons.

A book which, once read, will invite return again and again. A treasure and good value for all who are serious about the business of prayer.

**Alison R. Goodwin**

## Books Also Received

*The Lion and the Honeycomb* (religious writings of Tolstoy) ed A.N. Wilson (Collins £7.95)

*Forgive and Forget* (Healing of hurts) by Lewis Smedes (Triangle £2.50)

*Good Morning Margaret* (broadcast talks) by Margaret Cundiff (Triangle £2.95)

*Jesus, the Word to be Spoken* (prayers and meditations) by Mother Theresa (Fount £2.95)

*Timeless at Heart* (essays on theology) by C.S. Lewis (Fount £2.50)

*The Heart of Christmas* (anthology) by Sarah Bubbers (Fount £1.95)

*Finding God in All Things* (Ignatius for today) by Margaret Hebblethwaite (Fount £2.95)

*Meister Eckhart* (selection) by Ursula Fleming (Fount £2.95)

*Words of Life from John the Beloved* by Frances Hogan (Fount £2.95)

*The Blue Guide to the Here and the Hereafter* by Lionel Blue (Collins £10.95)

*Is There Anyone There?* (God's immanence) by Richard Mackenna (Fount £1.95)

*First Steps in Prayer* by Jean-Marie Lustiger (Fount £2.95)

*Delighting in God* (inner liberation) by Melvyn Matthews (Fount £2.95)

*Looking Before and After* (Lent Book) by Helen Oppenheimer (Fount £2.95)  
*Living Water* (Letters of direction) by Robin Baird-Smith (Fount £2.95)  
*Through Seasons of the Heart* (anthology) by John Powell (Fount £4.95)  
*On the Thirty Nine Articles* by Oliver O'Donovan (Paternoster £5.95)  
*God the Evangelist* (Holy Spirit) by David F. Wells (Paternoster n.p.)  
*Gospel and Wisdom* (O.T. Wisdom Literature and salvation) by Graeme Goldsworthy (Paternoster £4.95)  
*A Thousand Tongues* (Wesley hymns and Scripture) by John Lawson (Paternoster £5.95)  
*Chasing the Wild Goose* (Iona Community) by Ron Ferguson (Fount £2.95)  
*Reclaiming the Church* (C of E and renewal) by Robin Greenwood (Fount £2.95)  
*Rescue Shop* (personal evangelism) by John Allan (Paternoster £2.95)  
*Frank Buchman* by Garth Lean (Fount £5.95)  
*God Within Us* by John Wijngaards (Fount £2.95)