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Editorial

Inasmuch as the launch of a Decade of Evangelism was overshadowed by impending war in the Gulf, its significance was dramatically heightened. For the utter waste and futility of human conflict served to put the Decade into its proper, desperate context, saving us from any illusions that we can take it or leave it. Just when there are signs of a new dawn breaking in the East, the principalities and powers break out again in all their destructive madness, exposing the raw nerve of human sinfulness.

It has been instructive to take account of the reactions to the launch in the nation at large. There has certainly been a measure of apprehension. An uncomprehending public has voiced uncertainty as to what the churches were about to do to them. When would the church on the corner undergo a metamorphosis – abandoning its famous jumble sales in order to indulge in aggressive evangelism? When could the first shock troops be expected to march down Acacia Avenue, replete with large black Bibles and the light of glory in their eyes? Such diffidence on the part of Joe Public should surely sharpen our sensitivity. For no amount of confidence in the gospel can justify regarding anyone as fair game, a sitting duck for conversion. Travelling with people, slow and painful though it be, is infinitely to be preferred to standing over against them. Only in this way is the profound humanity at the heart of our faith reflected and communicated.

As Baptists, we can with some justification, be a bit snifty about all this. After all, for us, *every* decade is a decade of evangelism! So, what's new? But we might well consider what it is that we are inviting people to associate with. For while we have no misgivings about the gospel, we have more than a few about the Church. Can the 'gathered church' have no other, or no more adequate, representation than the bricks and mortar institution? To ask one of the many Sixties questions which have not been answered, only shelved: "What is the form of Christ in the world"? It is not easy for us pastors for whom the institution is our care, to consider the alternatives, or to free our people from its demands to find out for themselves. Yet still the question rankles: "Where do you live, Lord?" And the reply remains as tantalising as ever it was: "Come and see".

In connection with the evolution (in some cases, revolution) of the Church and its attendant pain and trauma, Nick Mercer assists us to manage change creatively and positively in "Coping with Change". Next, Barrie White questions the assumptions and rationalisations which surround a change of pastorate. Is subterfuge unavoidable, or could we all be more open-handed? Barrie makes us uncomfortable. Church-based training, once a mere expedient, is now highly regarded and integral to many of our colleges. Mike Nicholls explains the philosophy and the benefits.

These days it is a healthy sign that cross-fertilisation is helping to enrich and strengthen all parts of God's Church. Will Thompson introduces us to an area into which some Baptists are beginning, with profit, to dip their toes: Spiritual Direction. The work of the BMF is quiet, but no less effective for that. Vic Sumner, our Secretary, itemises some of the issues currently on file. Few books are still in demand forty years after publication. *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis, is one of the few. Kenneth Toms revisits this enduring work of popular theology, reflective of an highly original mind who "made righteousness readable".

Coping with Change

“There is nothing permanent but change” – Heraclitus

And there is nothing more exhausting. Even young men and women grow weary. But continuous change is here to stay so we all have to learn to cope.

“Nostalgia isn’t what it used to be...”

Think back to just 25 years ago (when I was sweet sixteen and hardly ever been kissed – sexual naivete in 16-year olds is certainly a thing of the past...). In 1966 we made comb-cases for sailors at Christian Endeavour ‘Floating’ evenings; we occasionally substituted a trendy song from Youth Praise for a hymn from the new Baptist Hymn Book; we wondered whether to drop Afternoon Sunday School and thought *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was outrageous; Real Christians didn’t take Sunday Papers or go into a shop on the Sabbath and evangelical Christians knew that number 79 in CSSM was “I am feeding on the living bread..” (“Let’s have the girls asking the question and the boys replying..”) God was still addressed in Thee’s and Thou’s and I was taken to one side by the minister when I turned up for church in a jumper (although still with a tie) – “Would you go to see the Queen dressed like that?..”

Apart from the few gentle readers who are already thinking, “So what’s changed!” most of us are only too aware that there have been a vast number of significant changes in the world, our society and the church.

“All change is perceived as loss”

When 70-year old George dies, we do not go to widow Edith with encouragements like: “He was pretty old and useless anyway, and there are plenty of younger, better men around. A younger husband would improve your image. So just forget George and get to like a new trendier husband”. Of course not. We understand bereavement.

But how many times have I heard (and sometimes said) “They were crummy old pews. Let’s just dump them and get the new chairs..the hymn books haven’t got anything written after 1910. We’re better off without them..The BB has served it’s purpose and is wildly outdated, so let’s scrap it and start an open youth club...”

The changes may be right and proper, but the pastoral insensitivity which accompanies them is totally inappropriate.

Alvin Toffler talks about PSZ’s – Personal Security Zones – in his classic work *Future Shock*. We all need them and sometimes they comprise familiar surroundings (I still remember the secure feelings engendered by the gentle hiss of the gas heaters in my old church on a winter’s evening), hymns, people, procedures...for 20 years the arrangement of bits and pieces in the drawers of my desk has changed very little. I don’t actually use the sealing wax in the Bendick’s Bittermints box, but it is somehow comforting to know that it is there. When for three weeks I was living out of boxes in the vestry down in Torquay – sleeping under the Communion Table where the carpet was cleanest – my emotional life

fell apart and I would find myself sitting on the floor in the corner of the vestry sobbing. My PSZ's were shattered and I could not cope with the everyday stresses of ministry. It was a great and painful spiritual lesson for me.

**“Those who cannot change their mind cannot change anything”.
George Bernard Shaw.**

PSZ's can also exist in our mindsets, and one of the hardest areas of change that we have to face up to is the change in our own theological outlook. It is why we often suppress doubts and honest questionings. “What if I were to become a liberal!” But personal change is essential if we are to grow as people and as Christians.

Last time I wrote in *The Fraternal*, it was on *Preaching Genesis I-XI*. Nearly ten years on, I would write quite a different article. My interpretation of Genesis One has changed radically, and it was a very anguished 2 years of full-time research which led me to review and alter my position.

Some leaders do not mind changing everything in the church structures as long as they do not have to change their own theological position on anything. Stephen Madden was in his 90's and back in his old congregation when I went as a young minister to Torquay. What I admired greatly in him, was his ability to change his mind about various theological issues during his lifetime – even in his 80's. He was secure in Christ and there was little solid ground anywhere else. He would tell me of views he had held during his ministry, and then chuckled at the thought of them.

It is interesting that old age often gives security and the middle-aged are those most threatened in the church – the men and women who have to face up to so much change in the family and at work and so have all their PSZ's at church. I suppose the wise, older men and women have lived through so many changes that they feel no threat in even more. As Harold Rowdon, now retiring after spending most of his life teaching Church History here in College, put it, “The advantage of teaching church history when you are my age is that you've lived through most of it!”

**“When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change”.
Viscount Falkland on the Episcopacy, 1660.**

But too many changes at once can push the stress levels up to danger point. Gaius Davies in his book *Stress*, gives The Social Readjustment Rating Scale: ranging from 100 points for the death of a spouse, through 50 for marriage, 31 for taking out a mortgage, 24 for revision of personal habits, to 13 for the changes brought about by holidays and 12 points for Christmas! It's a good chart to fill in when you wonder why you feel as though it's your turn to have the nervous breakdown.

We counsel the bereaved not to make too many changes too soon, yet in personal growth and church life we often expect far too much too quickly. Despite modern technology and Instant Renewal, the mills of God still grind slowly. In my spiritual formation classes, I always encourage students to try and change but one habit at a time, and even then to take at least six months per change. We all know that crash diets really don't achieve much. It is the steady discipline of change which brings about real growth in Christ.

“We never did it that way before”. Seven Last Words of the Church.

Coping with personal change is hard enough but at the same time many of us are involved in institutional changes of one sort or another. And because people are involved in these changes, they involve far more than simple logic and planning.

Some churches just bury their heads in the sand and hope that it will all revert to how it was in the good old days: the “It’s nicer when it’s just us” brigade. There is some justification for this as the experience of change in church life over the last 50 years has been mainly negative – where are all those young people drums and guitars were going to bring in? The church has steadily declined in most parts of Britain.

“Define the issue, get the facts, consider alternatives, make the decision, and Do It!” Leith Anderson.

But life’s not like that. As we have seen, changes involve emotions, personality conflicts and even spiritual warfare. The ‘Charismatic splits’ of the last 30 years have had more to do with change, threat and security than with theology.

Most of the changes in the past 50 years have been negative – change may help some but it will hinder others.

“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.” Machiavelli

Short-term units rather than organisations are one way forward: a choir that rehearses six times for an Easter Service and is then disbanded; a series of ten prayer breakfasts for men (we found they needed the teaching and experience more than women!) on a Saturday morning at a local hotel; 6 prayer meetings about the new community worker...the ‘units’ start and finish, but many organisations start, fossilize, aggravate, and eventually die. Flexibility is the key in a rapidly changing society.

Good communications are another crucial ingredient. Good teaching, repeated to different groups in different ways must precede change. Then tell everyone everything you can; avoid secrecy and let everyone know what the elders and deacons are discussing. Give a two minute summary in church on Sunday. Especially make sure you spend time explaining to the opinion formers.

It’s a bit like having a baby without being pregnant for 9 months.

The leaders have spent many hours and days in discussion, in the gestation of the idea. Then the “baby” is suddenly presented at a Church Meeting which has 45 minutes to make up its mind! No wonder there are so many unhappy births. The congregation must share in the pregnancy if it is to be a healthy baby.

All this is at considerable personal cost, as for most leaders, changes mean more work, the loss of a comfortable pattern, unpopularity and grief – there is no renewal without pain. There are no short-cuts and we must all beware of manipulation – it will rebound on you! But those who sow in tears will reap in joy.

“Change is the angel of a changeless God”. Archbishop Stuart Blanche.

In the sovereign purposes of God, he has called us to be a pilgrim people. He constantly shakes our world (Heb 12: 22-28) so that we can clearly discern the things that cannot be shaken and place all our hope in the City of God and Jesus Christ who is the same, yesterday, today and forever. (Heb 13:8) Read through the book of Numbers and see how again and again God reminds his people that their security is not in the ‘flesh pots of Egypt’, but in God himself. That’s difficult. But Jesus warns of the consequences of longing to go back to the Cities of the Plain – “Remember Lot’s wife!” (Luke 17:32)

Whether it is personal change or change in our churches, they all throw us back onto God. “All my hope on God is founded” is never more true than in times of prapid change. Our faith is renewed; we come to an end of self and church ‘schemes’; we throw ourselves upon God and find in him our strength and shield.

Let me tell you a story by Anthony De Mello:

“A prophet once came to a city to convert its inhabitants. At first the people listened to his sermons, but they gradually drifted away until there was not a single soul to hear the prophet when he spoke. One day a traveller said to him, “Why do you go on preaching?” Said the prophet, “In the beginning I hoped to change these people. If I still shout, it is only to prevent them from changing me.”

Now was your first reaction to this story that the prophet was a faithful goody - or that the prophet was an intransigent baddy? Most of us are somewhat ambivalent in our attitude to change. We want it, and we hate it. Prayer for grace and wisdom becomes an imperative.

The old nun’s prayer has never been truer:

“God grant me the Serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can
and the Wisdom to know the difference.

Nick Mercer

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The Call of God and the People of God

We still talk, possibly rather unthinkingly, a good deal about "calls" to the ministry at home, to missionary work in the younger Churches and to much else in the life of the Christian family. Recently, with the widening of ideas of "ministry" at home beyond that of the isolated pastor caring for one congregation to teams of ministers, some part-time, some full-time, the question of a "call" is becoming one for more and more men and women in our Baptist community.

In a traditional setting the first "call" is not probably the most difficult. There is normally the counsel of one's College and the advice of the Area Superintendent and, in addition, you seldom have a queue of congregations all clamouring for the opportunity to invite you to become their minister! Nevertheless, even the first call has its own peculiar problems. No man or woman just leaving College is in a position to have a clear idea of his or her personal strengths and limitations. This is because no-one at that point has more than a partial understanding of what the pressures of the ministry in its day to day routines and unexpected challenges will require. The one who goes straight from College full of certainty about their precise role in **any** local church is one who is a danger to themselves and to others; moreover, they are likely to be deaf to the guidance of the church and to the leading of God. Every minister, however long they have been in the work, must continually be on their guard lest they rationalize their own strengths, weaknesses and prejudices to enable them to escape those parts of the pastoral calling they find less or least attractive. We may well thank God that we have those in our ministry whom we may call "ideas women" or "resource men" but even those with the most golden of gifts can be led astray by those very gifts from the agonizing duty of caring for people.

When and Where to Go?

But, perhaps, after one's first and subsequent pastorates, the problem is less **where** one is called to go than **when**. Again, most of us do not have too many churches embarrassing us by their shrill invitations. But **when** is sometimes more than difficult to judge. For it is often difficult to decide whether a series of pastoral problems, or some great crisis, or a sense of staleness or an apparent brick wall immediately ahead should signal the end of one's usefulness in that present church. It is at least as likely that such moments are indications that at last one is really coming to grips with the burden and the cross and the heart of the ministry in that place. The word of the Lord Jesus advising those persecuted in one city to flee to the next has too often been misapplied by tired or impatient ministers! Sometimes our moves are barely forgivable acts of ministerial cowardice – and sometimes our staying is due to a misplaced obstinacy or a half-confessed conviction that anyway we would be less comfortable somewhere

else. We – all of us who are in the ministry – can be all too uneasily suspended between two such possibilities as these. Sometimes the next minister (or, perhaps, the moderator if he or she has the wisdom and the courage and the interregnum lasts that long) will have to grasp the nettles for which our hands proved too...sensitive.

Less than twenty years ago those coming to the ministry were ordained in the belief that this was to be their life's work. Now some are seeking the ministerial equivalent of short-service commissions. I, personally, see no harm in short-service commissions. I do not myself see any reason to believe that God wants everyone whom he calls to be a pastor to be a pastor always. But we are rapidly coming to the other position where it appears that many believe that lifetime commitment is no longer reasonably to be expected of **anyone**. Now, the situation of the church, in the permissive society, is becoming more and more like trial marriage – given a few problems you can all too quickly decide that there has been an irretrievable breakdown of your calling – and the call of God can be returned, like a slightly soiled wife or husband, to store. Ordination vows ought not to have those unspoken conditions: "provided my ministry is abundantly (and **visibly**) blessed", i.e. is **successful**. God forgive us, even now most of us are ashamed to speak openly of our definitions of "success". Yet we mean, all too often, bigger congregations, more money in the offering and more buildings. Has the call of God changed in the last few years? He used not to call us to be successful but to be faithful!

How to Go?

But what about the men and women who are committed to the pastorate – to the key work of the ministry in every generation, rain or shine? Not only the **where** of God's call nor only the **when** presents a problem but also the **how**. Nowadays we are swift and secret in our changes of pastorate or, at least, we aim to be. Is it not time we had a set of rules or conventions about changes of pastorate which measured up to implications of fellowship rather than such terms as "confidential lists"? Are not ministerial fears of telling anyone in their congregation of their sense that they should move lest the church be "disturbed" rather rationalizations of ministerial selfishness? Is the matter of a move really only something where God's will is sought between the minister and the calling congregation? Has the sending church (do we not shudder rather too anxiously at the phrase the "employing church"?) no rights, no responsibilities? In these days of discreet midweek meetings between ministers and diaconates or pulpit committees of "vacant" (have you ever **really** asked yourself about the implications of **that** word or of another, interregnum) churches when much of the process of a call takes place before a sermon is preached, are we not becoming a little too discreet? Of course, I am not here suggesting that the means adopted so widely – of having a heart and mind opening discussion between the church leaders and the prospective minister before a decision is taken about inviting him or her to preach "with a view" – is a bad one. It has very much to recommend it and I would defend it. But what I find less easy to defend is the use of this means further to hide the possibility that a given person in pastoral charge is seeking a move. Ought not the deacons to know, the deacons of the **sending** church? If anyone should say that the fellowship of the deacons is not fit to have such an important matter shared with them in their church, do they not thereby condemn their own ministry among those same deacons?

Have we who have mouthed the word "fellowship" so often from our pulpits and from our pews so forgotten the real meaning of the word that we dare no longer trust one another with the most important decisions? It seems to me no bad thing that in former generations the minister did **not** merely present the church which he served with the **fait accompli** of his decision to go elsewhere. What I am asking is: has not the sending church at least as much right (through the deacons' meeting) to an opinion as to whether a given pastorate should end as the minister himself or herself or the church which is summoning them elsewhere?

To write like this is to condemn oneself; my excuse is that no-one would ever preach who did not thereby condemn himself out of his mouth. But I believe that, when I left my church in March 1963 to come to Oxford, I did wrong merely to face them with my own decision and not **at least** to take the deacons into my confidence and "talk it through". Perhaps that would have changed nothing: I believe that, ultimately, it might not in that case. But I would have treated my friends there more properly **as my friends** if I had done so.

Barrie White

An Evaluation of Church-Based Training

In today's world enormous variety characterises the age and background of those who are called by God to train to be pastors. In the last twenty years great changes have occurred. In the late 1960's most students were single; today they are married. In the 1970's there were many couples; today there are mostly families. There used to be only men; now there are growing numbers of women. Early theological colleges were communities of spirituality; today they are poly-technics. Within the change there is also stability; every person who senses God's call to serve as pastor in a Baptist congregation goes through a nationally recognised process of selection. This involves a discernment of character and gifting in the local congregation. That process is then enhanced through the Association Ministerial Recognition Committee and a College Council. In general six factors are taken into account:

(a) Vocation

- Sharpness and objectivity of sense of call
- Evidence of giftedness in preaching and teaching
- Evidence of giftedness in pastoring
- Understanding of the nature of pastoral ministry

(b) Faith

- Maturity of theological understanding
- Extent of depth of biblical knowledge
- Openness and teachability
- Ability to communicate faith simply and intelligibly
- Baptist convictions and denominational awareness

(c) Academic Potential

Performance in Greek or other pre-collegiate study
Extent of theological reading and evidence of profit thereof
Innate intellectual ability
Motivation to learn

(d) The Marriage Relationship

Does partner share sense of call?
Spiritual and personal maturity of marriage relationship
Stability and health of marriage relationship
Finance and other practical considerations

(e) Spirituality

Depth and stability of personal life
Servant attitude to Christian leadership
Commitment to evangelism
Ability to appreciate the breadth of the evangelical tradition, or narrowly partisan?
Awareness of the contemporary world

(f) Personality and Character

Maturity in personal development
Emotional stability under pressure or crisis
Discipline and personal organization
Ability to form and maintain good human relationships
Leadership potential
General health and stamina

The Church-Based Model

If selection procedures are clear, methods of training today are more diverse than ever. For the past 100 years at least most Baptist ministers have been trained on a college-based course residing in an institution for a period of three or four years and undertaking studies based on the cognitive method leading to a university degree or diploma in theology.

In recent years however, acronyms like APT, RIPT, SALT have become denominational coinage and have indicated new models of training on a church-based pattern. Such developments are now common in the life of three of our Baptists colleges in Manchester, Oxford and London and have biblical and historical precedents. In the New Testament church, most leaders were grown in the local congregation and their basic training was undertaken in that local context. Such a method is used among many Restoration fellowships.

Historically, the Baptists grew many of their early leaders in the context of the local congregation. Many early candidates for ministry were placed alongside a pastor in a local church and many of our early theological colleges grew out of such an expanded pattern.



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Patron: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

Dear Fellow Ministers,

Many of you will know that the work of West Ham Central Mission has been under serious threat in recent months. Financial considerations have driven us to close another of our units, Rest-a-While, which means only Greenwoods Therapeutic Community and Bodey House Counselling Centre, both at Stock, Essex, remain of the wide range of ministries once exercised by the Mission.

We have also seen a reduction of administrative staff and this has included the decision by our Superintendent, Trevor Davis, to return to the pastorate after nearly 12 years of leading the Mission.

Such changes may seem to suggest that the Mission is coming to an end of its illustrious history of 86 years of helping the needy and distressed but that is far from the case.

Greenwoods continues to have many seeking its specialised residential care and has a high reputation with the churches and social services. At Bodey House we have a team of 10 trained counsellors conducting as many as 80 sessions a week and seeing up to 700 individuals, couples and families a year. Ministers come for consultation about difficult pastoral situations and sometimes seek help for themselves. Counsellor training courses are always over subscribed and the number of churches asking for courses to be provided in their own situations continues to increase.

So the needs and opportunities are considerable. What is lacking is a solid financial base from which to meet the challenges. Through re-organisation and other means steps are being taken towards resolving the problems but we greatly need the prayerful and practical support of our fellow ministers. Please commend our work in your churches and if you can suggest other ways in which we might build up our resources, we would be glad to hear from you.

With our prayerful good wishes for your ministry,

Tony Noles
Director Bodey House

Today, in an ecumenical context, many supportive ministries in the Church of England received training on a part-time basis, and the length of time spent in institutional training for full training for the priesthood is often no more than two years, especially for men over thirty. There is, however, very little literature describing such methods of training and little attempt to evaluate what is done. Basically this method of training consists of two aspects. First, the college aspect. In this model most students who live sufficiently close to a college will spend one or two days a week within the college community, undertaking theological, denominational, contextual and pastoral studies. At Spurgeon's College this is worked on a credit system in the following manner:

1. THEOLOGICAL strand leading to the

| | |
|--|------------|
| Cambridge Diploma / Certificate in religious studies: 6 papers | 20 credits |
| CNAAC Degree: 7 papers | 25 credits |

2. DENOMINATIONAL strand in

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Baptist History | 3 credits |
| Baptist principles/ | 3 credits |

3. CONTEXTUAL strand in

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Philosophy | 3 credits |
| Challenge of Contemporary Society | 3 credits |
| Studies in World Religions | 3 credits |
| Christian Ethics | 3 credits |

4. PASTORAL strand

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Homiletics | 3 credits |
| Pastoral Counselling | 3 credits |
| Evangelism | 20 credits |
| Pastoral Studies Course | 10 credits |
| Leadership Weekends | |

On this model people spend one or two days a week in college and one day a week at home undertaking college studies. This lasts for four years and is supplemented by occasional weekends and block weeks of training. In the Oxford system two days a week is normal and at Manchester a much closer integration is made between the college-based students and those in church placements. There is very successful interaction and mutual benefit. It is also possible through the Spurgeon's system, for the students to study through evening classes, or at a distance.

Second, the church aspect. It would be normal for students to undertake congregational-based training for a period of three or four years beginning in the September in which they are accepted and running to June of their final year. The student would be available to lead services on about half the occasions that the church meets for worship. They would be free to engage in the work of the church for two or three other days during the week and they would experience a full range of ministerial opportunities depending on the local situation. In the church context careful consideration would be given to material resources of finance, accommodation and other practical arrangements. Settlement in a church would follow acceptance by the respective College Council and would depend



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1 Merchant Street, Bow,
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upon a call from the local congregation. Careful monitoring and evaluation would take place both through diary records, weekly reflection sessions in the college, listening to sermon tapes, the work of senior friends and the operation of support and evaluation groups within local churches. It is this action/reflection model that is particularly attractive in this method of training.

Thus, this is no part-time scheme of training but seven days a week in which through doing and listening, training is happening both in a cognitive method and through action and reflection.

what is its worth? It is truly biblically-based and has historical precedent. It works on the attractive educational principle of action being followed by reflection and the theological education arises out of the practical experience in a local church situation. Many churches receive pastoral oversight where otherwise none would exist and so this method of training contributes to the overall strategy of the Christian church. It can assist the material necessities of some students who might otherwise be able to engage in no form of training. It clearly enables students to relate their theological study to practical reality and for the process of ministerial formation to be going on in every way. This method of training clearly makes for limitations of time as far as the student's study is concerned. He has limited time for reading, interaction and reflection upon great theological themes. His relationship to the College staff and community can sometimes be minimal and therefore the corporate assessment of colleagues can be demanding. If the person is working with a senior colleague then that model of ministry is clearly determinative in the student's development. If the model is open, good and helpful then the scheme can work well. If the model is deficient, then institutional training becomes a much more attractive option.

Church-based training is very much earthed in the local congregation and community. As such, it agrees with Baptist churchmanship and has great practical worth. On the other hand, it can lead to theological education that is deficient in content, devoid of quality time for theological reflection and development, and inadequate in the way in which students are introduced to the insights of the great Church in history and in the modern world. It can lead to a parochialism in attitude and experience. Nevertheless, at this moment in time, it appears that it is here to stay and it is developing. It is providing our colleges with greater diversity of students and method; all our colleges need to take seriously the development of this kind of training. It supplies a need for those students who come into our ministry without theological education or without such education in one of our Baptist colleges. If such methods of training were available in all our colleges we could do away with the central Selection Conference and channel all entrants into our ministry through our college selection procedures. This would have great worth in terms of the deployment of resources and the use of personnel.

It is too early to assess the success and fruitfulness of the ministries of people trained in this way over against others who have received an institutional training. Nevertheless, with the current levels of stress and burn-out in ministry, difficulties in adapting to team ministry and the challenge of an increasingly secular society where pluralistic approaches are rampant, then it seems that the more theology and formation can be earthed in real life situations of churches and community then the better will be the students who are produced as a result of such training. That training will enable them to receive the tools of their trade. It will not give them every piece of detail that they need but will encourage the use of those tools in ongoing ministerial formation and post-ordination training.

Spiritual Direction – a Personal View

God invites each one of us to join Him on a journey - the journey of life. Such an invitation to "life in all its fullness" ¹ is a supremely personal and unique offer. When Jesus invited the disciples in their uniqueness, he did so knowing that each one of them would respond in their own particular way to the demands of the Kingdom. The same is true for each one of us who would be disciples of the Lord. To each one the Spirit reveals himself in the uniqueness of the journey that is ours with the Mystery that we know as God.

Our journey of life, whether it be as a Baptist Minister or not, is, in today's world, an increasingly complex and demanding enterprise. The pages of the *Fraternal* have, over the past year, reflected some of the very valid concerns of stress and dangers to family and life itself, that face the Christian disciple in our varied and challenging arenas of ministry and witness. As our journey, or pilgrimage of faith, takes us all into this Decade of Evangelism, I am grateful for this opportunity of inviting you to consider an invitation to a deeper spirituality and to the vital role of Spiritual Direction in our lives, as we make our personal response to God's invitation to us. I believe that this developing of the spiritual dimension of our pilgrimage and our witness will be a vital and powerful opportunity for the Gospel in a world that in so many ways has turned its back on God.

Spirituality: the Workshop of Prayer

"Spirituality" can sound a formidable word to many an ear, suggesting strange saintly figures from an alien community, or those peculiar people who immerse themselves in remote and mystical experiences of prayer. In fact, quite the contrary is true. Spirituality is really something for everybody and indeed is part of us all anyway: for it is in Him that we live and move and have our being.² Spirituality means simply 'a pathway to God', or to put it another way, Spirituality is the way we relate in our uniqueness to whatever is most important in our lives. Of course, that means no two people are going to do this thing in the same way. The particular values that are mine and how I live them out in my life, balancing work, leisure, prayer and answering the demands of other people and the world, will be different from the values and the balance at which you arrive. So Spirituality is to do with who we are and who God is in our lives. It is to do ultimately with the fact that we are created as we are in the image of God and that we share the privilege of a unique journey with God in His creation.

All too often we are hijacked by the world of today, moulded into its thinking and philosophies. Often this happens without our being consciously aware of the changes that are taking place, but we become used to the world's thought patterns, of success standards, of morality, of dependence on psychologies and the latest analysis of current trends of the late twentieth century. My Bible tells me not to fall into this trap and to be conformed to the patterns and standards of this present world, but to allow myself to be continually transformed by the inward and creative spirit of God, as I daily seek to become more and more like Him.³

I agree, it's a tall order, but I believe it is the only way to life and freedom. Even more it is a way which does not depend on me, and on my ability, but totally on the sufficient grace of God, who loves me: to be able to say as a child, it's not up to me, but it's a gift from my heavenly Father whose love for me is totally beyond me and my understanding;⁴ to be able to say with Paul, what kind of a person am

I, that God has called?⁵ The world's judgement of me – and because I have been affected by that world, my judgement of myself, too, – may be extremely negative. That is the trigger that springs the trap of so much of today's stress and deadly tensions that jog so many of our lives, not least the lives of Christian Ministers. Yet God has chosen me and loves me as I am and longs to continue the journey with me into a fuller and freer life. For it is by God's act that I am in Jesus Christ.⁶

If we begin here, then we can continue to travel our journey in the Spirit and with a freedom that the world longs to know. A journey that will attract to itself others who are the children of the Kingdom. But that is, I know, a big 'if'. How can we in the rush of life, of ministry, of family, of all that calls to be part of our busy journey; how can we tap into that inner reality, that is the real me and that ultimately is of God and God's gift to me?

I am convinced that in Jesus we see the clear example of our Lord withdrawing to be alone with the Father in prayer. In the business and fullness of his ministry this was an imperative for Jesus – to be alone with the Father.⁷ Spirituality is the workshop of prayer and we are continually being invited to be part of that thrilling experience. For it is in all our life that God is present and communicating with us. Our prayer life is that environment in which that communicating God makes himself known to us in forgiving love and creative grace.

Before we can effectively lead others in their pilgrimage of faith we need, as ministers, to reflect on how our own relationship with the Lord has been growing and developing, as we too have been engaged in our journey of faith with Him. All relationships, both human and divine, depend on contact and trust in order that we can grow together. It is in prayer that the dynamic of that relationship with God exists and it is thorough prayer that we are able to develop and grow as we progress on our journey with Him. Prayer at its heart is "really no more and no less than being present to God as fully as we are able"⁸ Are we, am I, growing in my journey with the Lord and can I see that movement of faith and trust in my life over a period of time?

A Companion on the Way

This is where the role of a Spiritual Director becomes invaluable. I know that the title Spiritual Director has unhelpful initial vibes for many of us. Indeed, over the years, folk have tried to come up with different titles, such as, Guide, Companion, Soul Friend, Spiritual Father or Mother, Fellow Pilgrim, even Usher, but eventually we come back to Spiritual Director. For that is what it is all about. Not in terms of handing over the responsibility of my life's journey to some expert, but rather in sharing the experience of my spiritual journey and exploring the way together with another in mutual trust and freedom. Martin Thornton in his book on Spiritual Direction says: "spiritual direction spells two arm chairs and no desk and no couch!"⁹ The role of a Spiritual Director is the privileged one of accompanying someone else in their journey of faith with the Lord. it is the Holy Spirit who is the real Director, hence the name, and the one who accompanies and shares the journey with another is the one who is called upon to listen, to affirm and to explore the possibilities and challenges of the ongoing journey with the Lord. "The director is less a person who supplies answers than one who suggests questions for the the directee to think and pray about...to be used as signposts rather than props."¹⁰

**THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY PLC.
1 MERCHANT STREET
LONDON E3 4LY
Telephone No: 081-980-9411**

To the Readers of the Fraternal

Dear Friends,

At the time of writing we are busy preparing for the printers the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 18th November 1990. In company with all general insurers we have experienced a costly year with claims arising from the January/February storms and insurance claims for private houses resulting from a prolonged period of below average rainfall.

Our underwriting loss amounted to nearly £70,000 but thanks to investment earnings from our reserves it has been possible after paying dividends, covenanted grants and corporation tax to transfer a modest sum of £24,000 to reserves.

These reserves are of course the strength of the Company on which our clients rely and the reason why they can insure with us with confidence. The dividends total £3,897 of which £3,415 is paid to the Associations as shareholders and the remainder to the holders of the original shares issued over eighty years ago when the Company was formed. Our grants to Baptist Causes totalled £35,000 and as these were covenanted the recipients recovered tax, thereby increasing the value of the gifts to £46,667.

However it should not be thought that the Company supports the denomination at the expense of its clients. Over the years our total distribution of dividends and grants to our constituency has been rather less than the average percentage of profits distributed by Insurance Companies to shareholders and the underwriting loss indicates how keenly we pitch our premium rates for the Churches and members.

Yours sincerely,

M.E. PURVER

Writing in *The Way Supplement* Patrick Purnell begins a useful article on Spiritual Direction in this helpful way:

“Spiritual Direction is a way in which Christians help each other on their pilgrim journey to the fullness of the Kingdom of God. It is a service which one pilgrim offers a fellow pilgrim. Both the spiritual director and the one who seeks direction are journeying: both are searching for the living God.

The conversation, therefore, between the director and his/her companion is about travelling and searching: about seeking the right way, trying different approaches, retracing one’s steps from dead ends and finding the right places to make inquiries: and the searching and the seeking and the inquiry are about the will of God and the dynamic of the journey is the Holy Spirit.

The relationship between the director and his/her companion is rooted in Christian friendship. There is a deep mutuality involved in sharing a common search and in seeking to deepen each other’s faith.”¹¹

It is ten years since I was first asked by my Spiritual Director: “Where has God been at work in your life over the past month?” I remember feeling totally at a loss for an answer. In fact I felt it was almost an improper question to be asking me. I was hard pressed, I know, to come up with any answer. Not because God had not been at work in my life, but because I had not been aware of his presence. After all I was a busy Baptist Minister and there were so many demands on my life. Like Martha, I just had no time to give, to reflect and to listen in prayer with the Lord. It was through my Spiritual Director that I began to learn of that “one thing that is needed” that Jesus speaks about.¹²

Spiritual Direction is about growth. It is not just to do with problem solving, the ambulance syndrome,¹³ the counselling mode. It is to do with an individual’s growing love and freedom in the Lord, that is rooted in a deeper and deeper relationship with God in the dynamic power of the living Spirit. It is to do with wholeness, involving the whole of life and the whole person.

In spiritual direction we begin then with a belief that we are in a personal relationship with God and that God communicates with us in his love. We are invited to share this journey of faith with Him. To know that He cares for me and calls me to follow Him in a ministry that shares with others the incredible riches of the Kingdom. Together with the scriptures and starting with the “now” of where we are, we give time to our prayers and embark with renewed confidence on the journey of life, not alone but with a saviour and friend – the living Lord. It is that religious experience that, in Barry and Connolly’s word, is “the foodstuff” in the kitchen of Spiritual Direction.¹⁴

William Barry and William Connolly define spiritual direction most helpfully in their book *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, a book I most warmly recommend to anyone interested in exploring this dimension of Christian experience. This is how they put it:

"We define Christian spiritual direction, as help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship. The focus of this type of spiritual direction is on an experience, not ideas, and specifically on religious experience, i.e., any experience of the mysterious Other whom we call God. Moreover, this experience is viewed, not as an isolated event, but as an expression of the ongoing personal relationship God has established with each one of us"¹⁵

It is out of my own experience that I warmly commend the role of spiritual direction in our lives as Christian ministers. To have the privilege of sharing the experience of God's journeying with us in our lives, with another pilgrim, in a direct and purposeful way, is a truly liberating experience. In his book, *Spiritual Direction for Every Christian*, Gordon Jeff works from the assumption that some kind of spiritual direction is helpful for every Christian person.¹⁶ In fact we are all involved in our ministries in accompanying others in their pilgrimage. But there is an invaluable gift to be received from God through the sharing of one's inner journey with another who is prepared to be your Spiritual Director and to journey with you over a period of time.

Henri Nouwen in his study entitled *Reaching Out* suggests that there are three requirements for any spiritual journey, "a contemplative reading of the Word of God; a silent listening to the voice of God; and a trusting obedience to a spiritual guide".¹⁷ In the final analysis that guide is the Holy Spirit; in practice it is of invaluable help to have another share the challenge of journeying with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Will Thompson

Footnotes

- (1) John 10:10
- (2) Acts 17:28
- (3) Romans 12:2
- (4) Luke 18:17
- (5) 1 Corinthians 1:26
- (6) 1 Corinthians 1:30
- (7) Matthew 14:23, 26:36f, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16
- (8) Philip Sheldrake *Personal Prayer and Spiritual Growth: Spirituality and Human Wholeness* B.C.C p30
- (9) Martin Thornton *Spiritual Direction- A Practical Introduction*. S.P.C.K. p126
- (10) Gordon Jeff *Spiritual Direction for Every Christian* S.P.C.K. pp 16 & 17
- (11) *The Way Supplement* No 54 Autumn 1985: Patrick Purnell *Spiritual Direction as a Process*

- (12) Luke 10:42
- (13) Martin Thornton, op.cit. ch2
- (14) William A. Barry and William J. Connolly *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* Harper and Row, p.8
- (15) ibid p.8
- (16) Gordon Jeff, op. cit. p.3
- (17) Henri J.M. Nouwen *Reaching Out* Doubleday p.96

Current B.M.F. Issues

So where do you expect to live? Church manses are contingent. On behalf of Baptist ministers and spouses, we are working at this question as attitudes change. On behalf of widows of ministers who die in service, we have approached the Area Superintendents who with ready understanding incorporated into the "Terms of Appointment" the provision of "security of occupation for nine months from the minister's death". For several years we have been monitoring the increasing number of ministers who are buying their own house, with or without church part-share. A Working Group is considering a "Theology of Pay, Housing and Conditions of Service in the Baptist Ministry". Some are buying a home on a mortgage and renting it out so that there is an option in a pastoral crisis or on retirement. The Retired Baptist Ministers' Housing Society considered our requests with sympathy and have responded as far as possible within the Society's terms of reference, and within the limited number of houses and gifts of money available to the Society in any one year. The Committee have been most grateful to Mr P. Cooke F.C.A., for coming to explain the new developments in the Baptist Ministers' Pension Fund (Superannuation) and for his prompt action in providing better payments for the older widow(er) and better funding. This will continue to be the concern of the Committee as, with Revd Bill Hancock, more thought is given to the preparation for retirement and the pastoral care of retired ministers. Pastoral care of all ministers and their families comes into the on-going writing of letters by our Correspondents and our Treasurer's administration of our Benevolent Fund.

So how do you expect to work? Some years ago our then chairman, Revd Douglas Sparkes, followed up the frequent requests from ministers for another successor to E. Payne & S. Winward's *Orders and Prayers for Church Worship*. We discovered that the Revd Bernard Green was also looking for a way to answer this increasingly urgent stream of requests. The result of consultations and the Baptist Union Working Group is seen in the new *Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship* (OUP £9.95). Reactions will be considered carefully by the B.M.F. Committee. The difficulties being faced by ministers who are women are being taken seriously within our present agenda. It would be encouraging to have the same success in this as in these other matters. Revd Paul Mortimore has shared with the Committee his concern for the future of lay preachers etc. The climate in which we work and the resources available to make our ministry effective are changing as the Inland Revenue and some churches take a less charitable view of expenses incurred in the necessary performance of our vocation. Low stipends have been justified by varying, and sometimes arbitrary, arrangements for pay-

ing heating, lighting, car expenses etc without these being subject to Income Tax. The new climate means that these will be treated as they are for any other professional group. (The subscription to the B.M.F. is now recognised as a professional subscription and so tax-allowable.) We are grateful that through the Baptist Union a more realistic standard for stipends has been set. Mr P. Cooke FCA, has written a very helpful "Guidance Notes" on these matters.

At the heart of all our activity is the remembrance of each other in prayer. Anyone of us can be drawn into an Elijah-type "I am the only one left" syndrome. Our correspondents for Europe and the USA & Commonwealth help to pastor other remote Baptist ministers through the pages of this magazine, our *Fraternal*.

Vic Sumner

"Mere Christianity" Revisited

Mere Christianity is not a new book. It originated as a series of broadcast talks during the Second World War, appeared in book form in 1952, and is now re-issued by Collins.

In his preface to the present volume Walter Hooper writes: "Men and women of every shade of faith or opinion will find in his summary of "mere" Christianity no vague spiritual exhortation but a positive gathering of basic facts that affect their lives and the sometimes puzzling universe in which they live."

To know something of the man and his background is to appreciate the more what he wrote and why. For years C.S. Lewis was an atheist and in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, he describes his conversion: "In the Trinity term of 1929 I gave in and admitted that God was God...perhaps the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England!". No doubt he was helped by this experience to understand indifference and even opposition to the Christian message. As a writer with a clear and penetrating style, his books come across with an appeal which is a blend of true testimony and expert presentation.

Book 1: Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe.

Lewis starts with the premise that there is a "Law of Human Nature" which applies to men and women all over the world. We know that we **ought** to behave in a certain way but in fact we **don't**. Some might question whether over the forty-odd years since Lewis wrote, our modern affluent and permissive society has to some extent blurred the knowledge of that "Law". Yet he is right up-to-date when he goes on to underline the fact that we are to blame for not behaving as we expect others to behave.

As he moves on from this "Law of Human Nature" to the universe we live in, he gives the picture of a man in blue uniform delivering little paper packets to houses. Since the packets left for us contain letters, it is reasonable to suppose that packets left for others contain letters, too. In the universe the only "packet" we are allowed to open is Man. When I open that particular Man called "Myself", then I discover that I don't exist on my own, but that Somebody or Something wants me to behave in a certain way.

Progress is “getting nearer to the place where you want to be”. “But’, says Lewis, “If you’ve taken the wrong turning, to go forward does not get you any nearer... in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man”.

So far God has not been mentioned – only “Somebody” or “Something” behind the moral law. This “Somebody” has made the universe, and is intensely interested in right conduct.

Christianity doesn’t begin to make sense until these facts have been faced. Dismay and despair have to be felt before the comfort can be reached that the Christian faith offers.

Book 2: What Christians Believe

C.S. Lewis is a true fundamentalist – he gets right down to basics. The five sections of Book 2 cover a vast area of doctrine, ranging from Christianity versus Dualism to the “original” sin of selfishness; and from freewill to what Jesus Christ came to do. Always Lewis is logically realistic, avoiding religious clichés and technical language almost entirely.

let me illustrate this with some quotations:

“Where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong... there’s only one answer to a sum...but some of the wrong answers are much nearer being right than others”.

“A man can accept what Christ has done without knowing how it works; indeed he certainly won’t know how it works *until* he’s accepted it.”

“If you think of a debt, there’s plenty of point in a person who has some assets paying it on behalf of someone who hasn’t”.

Lewis avoids “stained-glass language” in his explanation of repentance:

“Realising that you’ve been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor – that’s the only way out of our ‘hole’”.

The very act of repentance, essential as it is, is only possible with God’s help. This is available to us simply because God surrendered His will, and suffered and died when He became a man. So, as we share in the humility and suffering of Christ, we also share in His conquest of death and find a new life.

It is when C.S. Lewis goes on to mention the three things that spread this new Christ life to us (baptism, belief and the Lord’s Supper), that we might wish to take issue with him.

Whereas the New Testament links repentance, faith and baptism together in the progress that *issues* in new life in Christ, we would perhaps question how far baptism and the Lord’s Supper in any way *impart* that new life.

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A RE-AWAKENING

Many Baptist churches are re-discovering the benefits of an active Men's Fellowship. It provides a stepping-stone for uncommitted men to enter the Church; it provides fellowship and friendship for men in the church; and it provides opportunities for local, national and international outreach.

The Baptist Men's Movement is in the forefront of this renewed activity. It can provide:

- assistance in forming new men's groups;
- participation in auxiliary activities in relation to local and world needs through Tools with a Mission, Operation Agri, Tapes for the Blind, etc.;
- personal membership and direct links with other Baptist men;
- regular regional and national conferences on key topics.

**Details from the local BMM Regional Commissioner or
from the Secretary BMM, Kingsley, Pontesbury,
Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY5 0QH.
(0743 790377)**



But this sounds like good theology to me – “The Christian doesn’t think that God will love us because we’re good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.”

Book 3: Christian Behaviour

For many people, the whole subject of Morality is unpopular and misunderstood. Lewis leads us through this apparent minefield with a sure step that suggests that he has read his map correctly.

“Morality...seems to be concerned with fair play and harmony between individuals, with tidying up or harmonising the things inside each individual. and with the general purpose of human life as a whole.”

Some space is given to the four “cardinal” virtues: Prudence, Temperance (or Self-Control), Justice and Fortitude. The distinction is made between ‘doing some particular just or temperate action and being a just or temperate man’. God is not looking simply for obedience to a set of rules; what He really wants are people of a particular sort.

“A Christian Society is not going to arrive until most of us really want it: and we are not going to want it until we become fully Christian”.

Another aspect of morality involves the psychological approach. I confess to finding myself somewhat out of my depth here, but listen to an example of Lewis’s insights:

“Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before.”.

In the light of our current permissiveness, Lewis is quite traditional when he writes about sex and marriage:

“Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence ...Christianity teaches that marriage is for life”.

Forgiveness is dealt with in the same penetrating and positive fashion:

“Everyone says that forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive”

What is called “Charity” (Love) distinguishes clearly between “liking” and “loving” a person.

“ If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less”.

Lewis’s explanation of Hope is fresh and helpful:

“Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world”.

He suggests three ways of dealing with this longing. The “Fool” puts the blame on life itself that his object is unattainable; the “Sensible Man” decides that the whole idea is an illusion and abandons trying to ‘find the rainbow’s end’. But the Christian says, “If I find in myself a desire no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

Faith is viewed from two aspects: first of all simply as Belief – accepting as true the doctrines of Christianity:

“Faith is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods...We have to be constantly reminded of what we believe”.

But then Faith is more:

“There are a great many things that cannot be understood until after you have got a certain distance along the Christian road”.

We have to discover our own spiritual bankruptcy. There is a vital moment when we turn to God and say: “You must do this. I can’t”.

Book 4: Beyond Personality – First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity

When C.S. Lewis tackles Theology he is down-to-earth and up-to-date.

“If a man has once looked at the Atlantic and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he will be turning from something more real to something less real...The map is based on what people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic...If you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary”.

So he introduces us to the “map” of Theology. He starts with “the popular idea of Christianity: Jesus Christ was a great moral teacher and if only we took His advice we ought to be able to establish a better social order”. But “If Christianity only means one more bit of good advice, then Christianity is of no importance.”

At the very centre of Theology is the fact that Christ is the Son of God in a special sense...But the Christian message is (in part) that we can become “Sons of God” – we can have spiritual life – God’s life, the life that is in Christ.

In introducing the idea of the Trinity, Lewis once again is practical:

“There isn’t any good in **talking** about a three-personal Being. ...The thing that matters is being actually drawn into that three-personal life”

The Christian tries to get into touch with God through prayer.

“What prompts him to pray is also God, so to speak, inside him. God is the goal, God is the motive power, and God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal”.

The threefold Being is both in Time and beyond Time.

“Time is a straight line along which we have to travel... God is the whole page on which the line is drawn... God, from above or outside, or all round, contains the whole line and sees it all”.

The words “God is love” have no meaning unless “God contains at least two “Persons”. Love is something one **person** has for another **person**. The union between the Father and the Son is such a live, concrete thing that this union itself is also a “Person”.

“God is love...but this “spirit” of love is, from all eternity, a love going on between the Father and the Son”.

To use the words “Our Father” in prayer is to put ourselves in the place of Sons of God – “dressing up as Christ”.

“The moment you realise “here am I dressing up as Christ”...God looks at you as if you were a little Christ: Christ stands beside you to turn you into one”.

“The moment you put yourself in My hand, that is what you are in for. Nothing less or other than that, whatever suffering it may cost you in your earthly life...whatever it costs Me. I will not rest nor let you rest until you are literally perfect”.

This prospect of eternal perfection in Christ is given considerable emphasis in the New Testament. We don't hear much about it in contemporary pulpit ministry; yet Christians ought to be looking forward, for we are “the people of the future”.

Why are all Christians not nicer people than all non-Christians? We know many kind, generous, patient, pleasant pagans, and we have met some cantankerous Christians! Lewis insists that God's purpose for mankind is not just producing “nicer” people, but “new” people.

“It costs God nothing, so far as we know, to create nice things; but to convert rebellious wills cost Him the crucifixion”.

I found Lewis's closing chapter the least convincing. Even so, he does get across the idea that it is only when people turn to Christ and give themselves up to His Personality that they begin to have real personalities of their own. “In a sense our “real” selves are all waiting for us in Him”

Here is a book to read and ponder and pray over, a book that will fascinate and frustrate us, a book that will challenge and compel us to a deeper and more committed relationship with the Father Who has expressed Himself so fully in His Son, who comes to live in us by His Holy Spirit.

Kenneth Toms

Publishing details: Collins, 1988, 200pp, £10.95

With acknowledgement to Collins for permission to quote from this book.

Book Reviews

Mission and Meaninglessness by Peter Cotterell (SPCK, 1990, 344pp, £12.95)

Thanks must be given that out of the more overtly Biblical wing of the Church there has come a book which takes seriously the whole of the Bible and the human condition. Peter Cotterell begins with the assertion that life is meaningless and that everyone searches for some meaning to inject into or tease out from it.

According to Cotterell life is characterised by "Dukkha", the "general unsatisfactoriness of ordinary empirical existence, the sense that things are not as they should be". Christianity like other world views attempts to provide a solution to that unsatisfactoriness. He finds plenty of reasons why non-Christian solutions are of no use. World religions are inadequate because they are human constructions. Marxism because it leaves God out of account altogether. Liberation Theology because it is biblically flawed by its over emphasis on the Exodus (recently modified) and the Church Growth Movement because of its attempts to form homegenous group Churches.

The solution to the "dukkha" of life is the Biblical understanding of the will of God for mankind. The Old Testament gives instructions for ordering a society in order to prevent injustice. The New Testament shows how God would have each individual receive from Him sufficient grace to live without "dukkha" by following the teaching of Jesus and receiving the benefits which Jesus promised to all his followers in this life and the next.

The book is well researched. It provides evidence for all its assertions about both Biblical teaching and non-Christian world views. It is a refreshing book because it takes seriously the difficulties people have with life and applies Biblical teaching to the problems. Everyone who needs to have their sights set on what the Christian message is would do well to read it.

Barrie Smith

Holding in Trust by Michael Jacobs: (SPCK, 1989, 200pp., £6.95)

The Director of Pastoral Care and Counselling for the Dioceses of Derby, Lincoln and Southwell, describes and commends the growing practice of ministerial appraisal in the Church of England. Written from the perspective of an episcopal tradition, the book nevertheless contains ideas capable of adaptation in any denomination where care of the ministry is high on the agenda.

When such appraisal is regarded as a threat, if not a "fearful expectation of judgement", there is an understandable reluctance to accept it. But when it is seen positively as a way to a clearer perception of the role of the minister, and as a means of developing that role effectively, skilled and regular appraisal is a valuable discipline. Not only is it helpful to the appraised but also to his/her immediate family, colleagues and church.

The theological basis of appraisal is found in the concept of accountability. All who are called to be "stewards of the mysteries of God" possess responsibilities and resources to be held in trust, as Gospel parables indicate, against the day of the master's return. Michael Jacobs draws attention to assessment programmes common to industrial and commercial management structures as well as to non-profit making organisations such as the Social Services and Universities. Clearly, an ecclesiastical framework is very different, but underlying principles are equally applicable.

Appraisal of the ministry must take account of the context in which ministry is exercised, namely, the local church. In this connection the author discusses methods and benefits of local church audits similar to those which are part of the Action in Mission plan now operating in many Baptist churches. Pastors, AIM evaluators, members of AIM working groups and other church leaders will find in this volume not only good ideas but sound advice.

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