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Editorial

It was one of those throwaway remarks which is remembered long afterwards: "We used to believe that ours was the only true religion, but we don't think that anymore". The speaker was a Hindu and to that extent the force of his observation is qualified, since the open-endedness and tolerance of Hinduism, deriving from its world view, has never bred the absolutism which characterises Islam and Christianity. But one sensed that he was referring not only to his own religion, but to that of all the participants in the discussion. Such a comment may seem more and more compelling in the present climate, as the world community struggles to find a way to live together in mutual respect and understanding.

There are echoes here of the past. For we are reminded that Christianity was born into a world in which "relativism" in religion was actively encouraged. It furthered the unity of the Roman Empire to see all gods as essentially different manifestations of the same reality. So Isis reflected Aphrodite and Serapis, Zeus. Gods of East and West were merely mirror images of each other. And because the gods were not "jealous gods", they did not demand exclusive worship. Religious syncretism was the order of the day. But Christianity, born out of the womb of Judaism with its fierce monotheism, would have none of it.

Surely the greatest challenge to the integrity and authenticity of the Christian faith today is its relationship vis-a-vis the other religions. What is the nature of this relationship? Our conception of those "over there" will inevitably determine the nature and purpose of the Christian mission. How is oikoumene, understood in its full sense as the whole created order under God, to be achieved?

A contender growing in strength is New Age philosophy, a syncretism of psychology, astrology, meditation, consciousness-raising and much more. A movement "devoted to making the earth a happy and safe place to live in", it regards God as the sum of all things and in everyone. A guest article from Tony Higton provides a valuable introduction, better equipping us to meet New Age in our ministries. It is frequently observed that there was more genuine theological creativity during the first fifty years of the Church's life than at any time since, particularly in the field of christology. Larry Kreitzer offers a study of one of Matthews's distinctive motifs, Son of David, and its relationship to Son of God.

For some time we have wanted to include in *Fraternal* an article by the late Michael Walker, by way of a tribute. Michael's contribution to the realm of 'spirituality' enriched the life of the Christian family far beyond Baptist boundaries. And for many his Bradford Assembly Bible Studies in 1987 represented the best of him. We are pleased to include a transcript of one of them, "Praying Our Baptism" (our title), which, hopefully, will also serve to deepen our preparation for the Easter experience. What is it like to be young today? Are today's young people less radical than were their parents? What motivates them? And how does an understanding of contemporary youth culture shape the work of evangelism? Steve Flashman, with the insights gleaned over many years in a specialised ministry, is our teacher. Finally, a report of the epoch-making first congress on evangelism in Moscow last October, under the auspices of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. An event unthinkable before the Gorbachev era. Thanks be to God.

The New Age Movement: A Critique

Glastonbury – the very name conjures up mystery and legend: King Arthur, Avalon, intersection of ley lines, cosmic power-centre. Not surprisingly therefore, it has become a centre for the New Age Movement. This Movement must be examined and criticised theologically. But we shall not really understand it unless we appreciate the sincere spiritual quest of many of its adherents and the compelling mystical impact the Movement has on them.

Recently, I spoke alongside other Christian and some New Age speakers at a Seminar on the New Age at the London School of Economics. A video, made by New Agers in 1987, about the “Harmonic Convergence” at Glastonbury Tor and various other sacred sites throughout the world, was shown. It was very professional and, frankly, very beautiful, with breathtaking dawn scenes, inspiring music and a quite poetic commentary. They were celebrating the “birth of unity, the end of conflict”; “a new evolutionary phase”, foretold in ancient Indian prophecies. On this day the “World Healing Festival” began as “the sun rose and greeted the earth – Gaia herself” (Gaia is, of course, the ancient earth goddess). “The heart of the world is calling us together and saying come together, celebrate my awakening.”

“Nothing like this has ever happened before”, continued the commentary, “they listened, they meditated, and radiated love, peace and harmony to others and to the Earth.” And they did. Their faces showed a depth of joy one associates with charismatic celebrations. They hugged one another and sang songs which included hallelujahs.

Last year I went to Glastonbury the day before the summer solstice. The town is overloaded with New Age shops selling books on every conceivable occult, mystical and legendary subject. One majored on crystals -a key factor in New Age healing, divination and magic. There were occult pentagrams (for “psychic self-defence”) and other occult jewelry. In one shop the weird combination of occult symbolism, incense, New Age music and a heavy atmosphere made me glad to leave.

That night I slept in the car until 3.30am, then set out for the Tor for the summer solstice sunrise celebration. I reached the summit at 4.00am and approached the old tower which was silhouetted against the lightening sky. It was filled with people; many others were on the slope behind it.

As I reached the tower I could see the new moon through its archways. And I heard the eerie sound of a single low, resonant note. A young man was playing a didgeridoo. Behind him a single oil lamp flickered.

Someone was burning incense. A kilted Scotsman was beating a small drum with a persistent rapid rhythm. A grop arrived led by a man in a long blue robe. On his head were antlers still rooted in a patch of fur which formed a veil. He carried a staff and a small drum. His companion wore a blue robe and cowl, and carried a staff with a (mystical) crystal on top of it.

Eventually a beautiful sunrise occurred. Several drums beat rapidly. Pipes were blown. Antler-man blew a ram's horn. People danced – Red Indian style. Others got worked up chanting mantras. Another blue-robed man and white-robed woman performed a ritual with a chalice and wine.

Then it was all over, leaving behind it a great emptiness. As I descended the Tor alone, I felt deeply saddened that these people didn't know Jesus.

What is the New Age Movement? I have defined it as "A loose network of groups working for global unity, peace and harmony with nature, on the basis of religious views and experiences founded on Hinduism and related eastern religions or occultism".

As I said, the New Age Movement must be criticised theologically and I shall seek briefly to contrast it with biblical theology.

1. Theology of God. The New Age Movement is based on Pantheism which depersonalises God and makes both good and evil part of God.

One of the most effective ways in which New Age thinking is infiltrating the Church is through the work of Matthew Fox, a Dominican theologian from California. His Creation-Centred Theology caused the Vatican to silence him for a year recently. He has lectured in various countries and numerous Christians, including clergy and ministers, have been won over to his radical views.

He writes: "Pantheism, which is a declared heresy because it robs God of transcendence, states that 'everything is God and God is everything'. Pantheism, on the other hand, is altogether orthodox and very fit for orthopraxis as well, for it slips in the little Greek word 'en' and this means, 'God is in everything and everything is in God'".¹

But Fox does not seem to teach transcendence as well as immanence, in spite of the fact that it is a major aspect of dialectic – a concept of which he is fond. So he says, "C. Jung has written that there are two ways to lose your soul. One of these is to worship a god outside you. If he is correct then a lot of churchgoers in the West have been losing their souls for generations, to the extent that they have attended religious events where prayer is addressed to a god outside. The idea that god is 'out there' is probably the ultimate dualism, divorcing as it does God and humanity, and reducing religion to a childish state of pleasing or pleading with a God 'out there'.² This is reminiscent of the "Christian Buddhism" of Don Cupitt.

By contrast, biblical theology teaches both transcendence and immanence. God is other than the universe, but active at every point in it. Created things and secondary causes have a real existence exterior to God, but they are not self-sufficient.

The New Age Movement stresses the "god within" and encourages manipulation of the "divine" through meditation and other techniques, rather than worship of a transcendent / immanent God.

2. Christology. Alice Bailey, a leader in the Theosophical Society, which is vitally important in the New Age Movement, wrote much about "the Christ" and often seems to be describing Jesus. But then she says, "the Christ used the body of the initiate Jesus, taking possession of it at the time of the Baptism."³

This adoptionist position, typical of New Age thinking, separates “the Christ” (a superior spiritual being) from Jesus. In fact the descriptions of the Christ sound uncannily like the NT descriptions of Antichrist. True, the NT speaks of the cosmic aspect of Christology, but this is always referring to Jesus, the only incarnation of God.

Bailey also wants “a recognition of the claims of Christ (no matter by what name he may be called in the East or West”.⁴ He will not be the messiah of the Jews. “He will not come to convert the ‘heathen’ world, for in the eyes of the Christ and of His true disciples, no such world exists....The major effects of His appearance will surely be to demonstrate in every land the effects of a *spirit of inclusiveness* – an inclusiveness which will be channelled or expressed through Him. All who seek right human relations will be gathered automatically to Him, whether they are one of the great world religions or not: all who see no true or basic difference between religion and religion, or between man and man or nation and nation will rally to Him. Those who embody the spirit of exclusiveness and separativeness will stand automatically and equally revealed and all men will know them for what they are”.⁵

This New Age syncretism is extensively infiltrating the Church, with interfaith worship, marginalising or excluding the name of Jesus. It undermines the fundamental Christian truth that Jesus is the only Way of salvation, the only mediator between God and man.

The last sentence of the Bailey quote sounds ominous and could suggest a threat of persecution against those holding an “exclusivist” position like traditional biblical Christology.

3. Atonement. There really is no place for atonement in most New Age thought. As we shall see, the Movement devalues the concept of sin. Instead every individual is encouraged to discover and manipulate the god within.

Matthew Fox is very critical of what he calls the Fall / Redemption tradition as profoundly introspective, preoccupied with personal salvation and creating fear. He continues, “One meaning of salvationis the awakening to our divinity. To recover our divinity and the doctrine of our deification and divinisation is itself salvific...ours is a created divinity.”⁶ He maintains our divinity is shown in creativity.

The New Age Movement uses various psychotechnologies to transform consciousness, including transcendental and similar forms of meditation, yoga, re-birthing (an induced re-living of birth experience).

All of this conflicts with the centrality of the Cross and substitutionary atonement, and with new birth by the Holy Spirit through a faith commitment to Jesus Christ.

4. Man and Sin. Marilyn Ferguson, a leading New Ager, writes, “Human nature is neither good nor bad, but open to continuous transformation and transference.”⁷

Matthew Fox strongly criticises the doctrine of the Fall which he says has done great harm. Amazingly, in view of Paul’s teaching, Fox writes, “Until we understand the very shaky biblical grounds on which original sin doctrine is based we

will never let go of it as our starting point for belief enough to let the true biblical starting point – that of...original blessing into our lives.”⁸ Genesis does, of course, teach “original blessing”. But to denigrate the doctrine of the Fall, as Fox does, is to be untrue to the NT and to undermine the gospel. Fox’s determination to affirm and exult in God’s creation leads him to this position. Hence “creation-centred theology”. As we have seen, the New Age Movement is earth-centred and even revives the Gaia (earth goddess) theology.

5. Demonology The New Age encourages centring (letting one’s mind go blank) and channelling (a new word for mediumship). But it also commends Wicca (witchcraft) which has a new respectability today, and even Luciferianism. The Findhorn Community (a key New Age foundation in Scotland) professes communication with nature spirits and the god Pan.

All of this is seen as wholesome. And it “works”. But why? Traditional biblical theology sees these activities as laying a person open to demonic influence or possession. Satan can, after all, transform himself into an angel of light. We should not condemn New Agers for being unaware of the dangers. The Church needs compassionately to warn and deliver them.

6. Conclusion. The growth of the New Age Movement is partly a condemnation of the Church. People seek an experience of God and we frequently offer religious formalism. They seek the supernatural, in healing etc., and we frequently offer a rationalistic religion. They seek a warm, caring community and we frequently offer a closed shop or a divided, factional institution.

Only a local church which is experiencing the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in conversion, healing etc., and is a loving community, united for intercession and evangelism, will be any antidote to the New Age. This is why I do not just criticise New Age beliefs but, with my colleagues, major on providing resources to enable local churches to become such a community.

However, the New Age Movement can counterfeit much Christian experience. The real answer is, therefore, a renewed confidence in Scripture as the supreme revelation of God, second to Jesus. This contrasts with Fox’s view when he quotes Thomas Berry with approval; “The universe is the primary revelation of the divine, the primary scripture, the primary locus of divine-human communion.”⁹

We must, then, proclaim to New Ages the biblical gospel that the transcendent immanent God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ sent his unique divine / human Son to die for our sins, thus making atonement, the eternal benefits of which are received through a faith commitment to Jesus Christ.

Tony Higton.

Notes

1. Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing* (Bear & Co., Santa Fe, 1983), p.90
2. *Ibid.*, p89
3. Alice A Bailey, *Serving Humanity* (Lucis Publishing Co., New York, 1972), p399
4. *Ibid.*, p.378
5. *Ibid.*, p.75
6. Fox, *Op. cit.*, p.235
7. M. Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Paladin Grafton Books, London, 1988) p.30

8. Fox, Op. cit., p.47

9. Fox, Op. cit., p.36

A teaching pack on New Age is available from: Christian Impact, 79 Maid Marian Way, Nottingham, NG1 6AE. The pack consists of a tape, two booklets, a chart and leader's notes. It costs £9.50 75p post and packing. Also, *What is New Age?* to which Tony Higton has contributed. Published by Hodder & Stoughton last year at £2.99. Editor.

Son of David in Matthew

Matthew's usage of the title "Son of David" gives an important clue into the Messianic identity of Jesus Christ for Matthew, more than any other Gospel writer, applies the term to Him. We find eleven references in Matthew (1:1,20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30,31; 21:9,15; and 22: 42,45), while Mark has two (10:47-48 and 12:35-37), Luke has two (18:38-39 and 20:41-44), and John omits the title completely. Let us see if we can discover the reason for Matthew's affinity for the term.

Background for the Concept of the Davidic Messiah

Since the rule of Zerubbabel in the late sixth century B.C., there had been no Davidic power in Palestine. How is it that the anticipation of the Messiah becomes linked with the covenantal promises of David's throne in the Old Testament? We are fortunate to have at our disposal the Pharisaic collection of writings known as the Psalms of Solomon. It appears they were written in reaction to the Hasmonean Dynasty's assumption of the title of King and serve to revive the hopes of the restoration of the true monarchy, the Davidic line. It is in the Psalms of Solomon that we first encounter in Jewish literature the title "Son of David" in connection with the coming Deliverer. A good example of this is Psalms of Solomon 17:23, 32-36;

"See, Lord; raise up for them their king, the Son of David,
In a time which thou knowest, O God
That He may reign over Israel thy servant,
And gird him with strength to destroy the unjust rulers...
He will possess the nations, to serve him under his yoke,
And he will glorify the Lord with the praise of all earth.
He will cleanse Jerusalem in holiness, as it was from the
beginning,
That the nations may come from the ends of the earth to see his
glory,
Bearing gifts for her sons that were utterly weakened,
And to see the glory of the Lord wherewith God has glorified her.
A righteous king, one taught by God, is he who rules over them,
And there will be no unrighteousness among them all his days,
For all will be holy, and their king is the Lord Messiah".

As F.F. Bruce so alertly points out,¹ the last phrase in the Psalm is identical with the title used in the angelic announcement to the shepherds in the nativity story of Luke. Thus we can see common heritage being called upon in the New Testament writings.

The Pharisees were not the only group to express their opposition of the Hasmonean dynasty, nor were they alone in the development of expectations of a Davidic Messiah to counter the corruption of that dynasty. We can see the same phenomenon in the writings of the Qumran Essenes, as in this passage from 4q Florilegium, an interpretation of the Davidic foundation passage in 1 Samuel 7: 1-14:

“The “he” is the shoot of David who will arise with the Interpreter of the Law who will reign in Zion in the Last Days. As it is written, “I shall raise up the fallen hut of David” (Amos 9:11) – the fallen hut of David is he who shall arise to save Israel.”

It is with such a background that Matthew attempts to communicate to us the truth of the Davidic Messiah come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He does so cautiously, however, drawing upon an already established tradition while filling that understanding with a wealth of new meaning.

Matthew’s Uses of “Son of David”

Matthew uses the title “Son of David” in a variety of contexts. The most obvious one is immediately seen when one reads the introductory statement of Matthew 1:1 where Jesus is declared to be the “Son of David, Son of Abraham”. We could term this usage as a genealogical one. Matthew takes great pains to tie Jesus in to the lineage of David, even to the point of giving us a partial genealogy running from Abraham through David to Jesus Himself. We cannot overlook the importance Matthew attaches to the Davidic lineage of Joseph, as in Matthew 1:20, where it is clearly stated that Joseph was a Davidid. Joseph’s acceptance of the child to be born to his betrothed wife is of crucial importance in establishing that genealogical link with the House of David. As Raymond Brown says:

“The Sonship of David will be the special theme of Matthew’s first chapter; for not only is the Davidic theme lucidly clear in the genealogy itself, but it reappears in the angelic revelation to Joseph who is addressed as “son of David”. It is imperative in Matthew’s mind that Joseph, a Davidid, accepts Jesus as his son.”²

Once we grasp how important this genealogical relationship is with David we have a clue to understanding the cryptogram Matthew gives us in 1:17. Joachim Jeremias suggests that the number 14 carries a subtle allusion to David, where the Hebrew letters of his name total that figure: 4 6 4.³

A second very important use that Matthew makes of the title “Son of David” is in portraying Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy. Two passages will serve to illustrate this point: one from the birth narrative and one from the triumphant entry into Jerusalem. In Matthew 2:5-6 the Davidic sonship theme is continued and prophecy interjected to further explain the significance of the Birth of the Christ child. Matthew openly quotes from Micah 5:2

“And you, Bethlehem, Land of Judah
Are by no means least of the Leaders of Judah;
For out of you shall come forth a Ruler
Who will shepherd my people Israel”.



WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

York House, 409 Barking Road
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Patron: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

Dear Fellow Ministers,

It is with mixed feelings that I write this letter. On the one hand, we give thanks to God for all that we have been enabled to do during 1990. Many lives have been touched, relationships enriched and homes and families blessed through the Mission's work. We give thanks to God for all that has been achieved by His grace, and for all who have been involved in this ministry.

At the same time, 1990 will be remembered as the year in which Rest-a-While, our home for the Elderly, closed. For years we have maintained the work there by calling upon our limited reserves. Sadly, 'all good things must come to an end'; and we reached the point when there was no possibility of continuing. I am pleased to say that, as I write this in November 1990, appropriate places have been found for most of our residents, and the rest will be accommodated before very long. Please pray for them, and for all others who have been affected by the closure of Rest-a-While.

The work at Greenwoods and Bodey House continues. I know that you will remember those ministries in your prayers and commend them to your people.

We are seeking God's will for the future use of York House, and for the overall shape of the Mission's work in the future. Please pray with us that His guidance may be clearly given, and that The West Ham Central Mission may be used in the coming days to proclaim and to manifest the Saviour's healing and restoring love.

Yours in His service,

Trevor W. Davis
(Superintendent Minister)

The significant thing is that David's birthplace was Bethlehem; Micah was speaking of a Davidic king. In applying the text to the birth of Jesus Matthew is declaring that the Davidic ruler has come!

The second illustration of Matthew's use of "Son of David" as fulfilment of prophecy involves the crowd's reaction to Jesus in Matthew 21:9ff. The very manner in which Jesus enters the city is reminiscent of prophecy (Zechariah 9:9). The crowd is overjoyed at the scene and responds with a thunderous quotation of Psalm 118.

A third way in which Matthew utilizes the "Son of David" concept is the healing ministry of Jesus to the common people. He does this in a variety of passages: 9:27, the healing of two blind men; 15:22, the appeal of a canaanite woman for the healing of her daughter; 20:30-31, two blind men healed after begging for mercy by the Son of David. It is interesting to note that such healings are directed to the "undesirables" of Jewish society and are generally personalistic in nature. The healings serve as announcement of the arrival of the Davidic king, even though Israel fails to see the significance. As Kingsbury says:

"Accordingly, Jesus as the Son of David, says Matthew, is one who heals selected "no-accounts" in Israel and shows himself in Jerusalem to be the humble King. But, continues Matthew, Israel not only does not receive Jesus as the Son of David, it does not even recognize him to be such."⁴

Son of David and Son of God

We should note that even though Matthew does make frequent use of the title "Son of David" it is by no means the most important Christological title used of Jesus. "Son of David" is never found on the lips of Jesus' disciples nor is it ever used by Jesus in direct reference to himself. To understand the importance of the title we must look at the way it is compared with "Son of God" in the Gospel.

In his massive work, *The Birth of the Messiah* Raymond Brown speaks to this issue as it focusses on the Virgin Birth narratives in Matthew and Luke. The birth of Jesus involves the creative action of the Holy Spirit rather than the sexual union of a man and thus points to Jesus as being the Son of God as well as the Son of David. We could even say that the title "Son of David" is subsumed under that of "Son of God". In a classic paragraph Brown sums up the relationship:

"This combined story fitted perfectly into Matthew's overall purpose. The strains of Davidic and divine sonship that emerged he used to gloss a genealogy...(which) traced Jesus from Abraham through David to Joseph, but Matthew concluded it in such a way that Jesus could be seen to be descended from David without it being said that he was begotten from Joseph. It was perfectly fitting that the child named after Joshua who was to save his people from their sins should echo in his origins..."⁵

Jesus' birth in the Davidic lineage is overshadowed by the significance of his birth through the agency of the Holy Spirit. We have ample evidence in the New Testament of such a relationship between the two titles. Perhaps the clearest is found in Romans 1:3-4 where Paul says of Jesus:

“Concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of Holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Here the emphasis is upon the resurrection as being the act of declaration or the pronouncement of Jesus' Divine Sonship. We must note that the Davidic lineage is assumed even though it is secondary to the main thrust of the verse. The very language of the passage is strongly reminiscent of the Davidic passage of Psalms 2 which is often used in reference to Jesus (as in the Baptism narratives). We find a similar passage of Paul's in 2 Timothy 2:8 where Davidic descent and resurrection are brought together:

“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, a descendant of David, according to my gospel.”

With that understanding behind us we can now begin to examine the most difficult of Matthew's passages involving the “Son of David”. This passage involves Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees over the relationship between the Messiah and the great king David (Mt 22:41 – 46 – Mk 12:35 – 37a – Luke 20:41 – 44). When we examine the parallels closely we quickly realise that Matthew expands the setting from the much simpler Lucan and Marcan accounts. The question in Matthew becomes much more direct. “What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is He?” Kingsbury⁶ feels this is in order to pave the way for Matthew's parallel question in verse 45: “If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?” In any case the whole passage is much more direct in its Matthean setting. Matthew in this passage also has the Pharisees display their ignorance as to the relationship between the Messiah and David for they are said to be unable to answer him a word and to have been intimidated from that time forth (verse 46).

What are **we** to think of this passage? Do we have the spiritual insight to catch Jesus' meaning. How is it that Jesus can be both the Son of and Lord of David? I think that George Eldon Ladd hits it right on the head when he says:

“Jesus is accusing the scribal experts of an inadequate understanding of the Messiah. He is indeed David's Son; but that is not enough. He was the Messiah, but not the warlike conqueror of contemporary Jewish hopes. He avoided the title because of its nationalistic implications to the Jews; on occasion he accepted the title but reinterpreted it.”⁷

Here, too, we have a reason for the disciples' refusal to address Jesus by the title “Son of David”, in spite of the fact that it was genealogically true, such an address failed to explain the Lordship of Jesus over David. The title simply did not strike deep enough at the reality of who Jesus Christ was and therefore was bypassed for a variety of other terms (such as Son of Man, Kurios, etc). We should not fail to notice that the title “Son of David” is nowhere found in the Gospel after this reference in 22:45. The plain truth is that throughout the Passion narratives and the glory of the Resurrection Jesus is not spoken of once as being the “Son of David”. One almost gets the impression that the early Church had moved beyond

such a narrow explanation for the Christ events and opted instead for titles which emphasized the universality of the Christian Gospel and strove to relay the message of this Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham to “all the nations, making disciples and baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

In summary, we may say that Matthew was utilising the prevalent traditions of the Davidic Messiah of the Jewish people in weaving them within his Gospel narratives. He is careful to establish Jesus’ genealogical tie to the House of David through Joseph, portraying Jesus as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, and the One through whom the needy and afflicted are healed. Most importantly, the “Son of David” must also be realised to be also the Lord of David. It is that truth which reveals the Messianic secret of Jesus.

Larry Kreitzer

Footnotes

1. F.F. Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1969) p77
2. Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1979) p67
3. The acrostic contained in this verse defies any definitive exegesis. Joachim Jeremias handles this verse in connection with his article on **Moses** in the Fourth Volume of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p867
4. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) pp100-101
5. Raymond Brown, op cit. p163
6. Kingsbury, op cit. p101
7. George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975) pp 143-144

Praying Our Baptism

Scripture: Romans 6. 1-11

It’s already been remarked that it must be a long time, if ever, that we met in Lent, and probably, if we did meet in Lent, it was so far back our forefathers didn’t realise it was Lent! But usually we come in the Easter season, our ears still ringing with the allelujahs of Easter. Assembly is St. James Park and the flowers and the trees with their new verdure. This year it’s different. Nevertheless, for some of us it is a homecoming. For those of us who, a few miles from here, spent some of the happiest years of our life, in Rawdon College, this is indeed coming home. And for me who in the years since have walked the dales and the fells of this most lovely of counties, even in the mist, it is good to be back in Yorkshire.

But because it is Lent, I want us to think about the Cross and to link the Cross with the theme that Margaret has set before us, the theme of Prayer and Action.

Down Into the Waters

I want us to begin this morning where we all begin in our vocation as cross-carrying Christians: in the waters of baptism. In the early centuries of the Church



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this season of Lent was a season of preparation for baptism. And one of our own scholars, Raymond Burnish, in a splendid book, *The Meaning of Baptism*, has described what happened in the preparation and in the rites of baptism during that time. He tells us how, during Lent, the candidates prepared; they were taught the meaning of their baptism. Then it came to Holy Week and there were the vigils of preparation for the sacrament itself. Good Friday. Then, on Holy Saturday night, in the darkness of the night, the candidates were stripped of all their clothes, coming naked to their baptism, anointed completely with oil, then down into the waters. And rising from the waters as Easter Day came, as Chrysostom said, the candidates were led to the awesome table, heavy laden with countless flavours, where they taste of the Master's body and blood, and become a dwelling place for the Spirit.

It is the genius of Paul that saw in baptism the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It had been a token of absolution, a washing away of sin. But Paul saw it as a death. Here at the very heart of the sacrament of baptism was that call to discipleship, that meaning of being a Christian: to die, to be buried, and to rise with Christ. And to be baptised was to be incorporated in that one great salvific event by which God had redeemed the world; to be gathered into Christ; to become part of his death; to go down into the waters and to be buried with him; and then to be raised to newness of life. You see how he racks out the verbs: "we were *baptised* into his death; we were *buried*; we *lay dead*!".

It all sounds a bit different to when the church secretary announces that so and so will witness to their faith in the waters of baptism next week. Because baptism was about what God in Christ had done and of which we, by faith, became a part. And the witness to the congregation was not the witness of the faith of the candidate so much as a witness to this love which God had revealed and given to all mankind in the Cross and Resurrection.

Baptism: a Sign of Forgiveness

So let us look at our union with Christ in baptism and its consequences for the life of prayer. First of all our union with Christ in baptism is a union of love with the Father made possible by his forgiveness: we are forgiven. As Paul reminds us, we are set free from sin. When you go into the waters of baptism, he says, you are set free, emancipated, set free from that foul enemy which burdens us with guilt; that enemy which stalks and blights our hopes; that enemy which clouds the face of God and disfigures our humanity. He says, you have been set free. You have been forgiven. You have been received in mercy. You who were once a people without mercy are now a people who have received mercy. You are restored and cleansed: "'tis mercy all, immense and free; for, O my God, it found out me!". In the swirling waters of baptism we are made one in that forgiveness which Christ has effected for us on the Cross. But how often we leave it there. Forgiven at the beginning, but we fail to realise that we go on and on being forgiven.

I sometimes think that there is a perfect place for anyone considering becoming a Christian to stand. Stand on the edges of the Church for the rest of your life and Sunday by Sunday they'll assure you God loves you, and God will forgive you, and God will love you to the end of time; will forgive you to the end of time. But stepping inside becomes a bit tougher. We begin to look at the small print:

“well, well – yes – of course we are a forgiving people, but you’re one of us now and there are certain standards we have to live up to”. Certainly do. But, you know, these days I sit more in the pew than I did before, and I find in the pew, even though I’ve been in this Christian faith forty years, I still want to hear that God has forgiven me. I want to hear it as fresh and as new as of the first day when, like Saul Kane, “the waters rushing from the rain were singing Christ is risen again”. Justification by faith is not a doctrinal sort of equation. The doctrine of justification by faith, as Luther says, is simul justus et peccator – always justified, always a sinner. And so, when we carry this cross, this cross we’re called to bear, this cross is a sign that we are forgiven, we are forgiven.

Baptism: a Sign of Union with Christ

And secondly, baptism is a union with Christ by faith. And who would dare, who would dare become a Christian except by faith? For in baptism Jesus calls us to embrace that for which we have that most profound aversion and from which we spend our lives running away: “Come and die”, he says, “Come and die”. I find it difficult to know how you can ever make the Christian faith popular. Come and die. Come and embrace this enemy; this imposer of time limits; this enemy who fences in the pasture of our dreams; this thief of our dearest loves; this messenger of our mortality; this last enemy whose harbinger and whose prophet is pain. Come and die! But when you have done that, what else is there left to face? What enemy remains? If you have died with Christ, then surely all has been overcome. To die with Christ is to walk with him on the road to Calvary; to walk with him where there are no te deums ringing in the ears; to walk with him in the cruelty and the darkness and the shouting of his enemies; to walk with him and to endure the terrible silence of God. It is as John of the Cross said: “the way of naked faith”. Naked faith. But believing that out of one’s willingness to die, God will bring a resurrection, believing that death finally has no dominion over us. If I can quote some words from our Welsh poet Dylan Thomas; “And death shall have no dominion. Dead men naked shall be one with the man in the wind and the west moon; where their bones are picked clean and clean bones gone, they shall have stars at elbow and foot; though they go mad, they shall be sane, though they sink through the sea, they shall rise again, though lovers be lost, love shall not; and death shall have no dominion”.

Way of Emptiness

For the consequences of this union with Christ, and acceptance of his death and resurrection are two-fold for our prayers. First of all, prayer is a way of emptiness, a way of emptiness. Death and burial are states which can be reversed by the grace of God. But we have to go through the process of dying, and this process of dying, this spirituality which is based on the process of dying to oneself, is not something that occurs very frequently in the spirituality of the modern Church. Our emphases are quite different. Our emphases are on self-fulfilment, the ideal of the robust, enormously successful, enormously fulfilled Christian. We may even say that a Christian should never be ill. There’s even a church in North London, according to “Sunday”, that has two thousand members and rests upon the premiss that God means us to prosper financially – financially! Haply, the Book of Job was never written, but there we are. There is a rumour that the church is yet to be dedicated, but when it is it is to be dedicated to the blessed Margaret. Not, alas, our president, not quite that height. There was a time in Luther’s career when he was immured in the Wartburg castle and

rumours came to him of what was happening in Wittenberg; the prophets had come, the prophets who promised immediate joy, immediate happiness, direct access through the Spirit to God, all things. And so his aide, Melancthon, wrote to Luther and said, "What am I to do?" And back came Luther's sombre reply: "Do not listen if they speak of the glorified Jesus unless you have first heard of the crucified Jesus. You shall enquire whether they have suffered spiritual distress and the divine birth, death and hell".

The spirituality of emptiness is the spirituality of the desert, it is the way that Jesus went, emptying himself of every possibility except this one possibility of bringing in the Kingdom of God by God's chosen way. It is the spirituality of those who embrace the Cross, the spirituality of Paul, when in the desert of Arabia, and that inner desert where he affirmed that "When I am weak, then I am strong". It is the way charted by countless men and women of prayer, by Francis who embraced poverty literally, and by that most austere of spiritual masters, St. John of the Cross, who told us that we must let go of all comforts, let go of all consolations, let go of all concepts, let go until we stand in the nakedness of faith, and have nothing but faith, until in our emptiness and need we cry out to God, and, he said, then, then when you are empty, then you stand at the very threshold of the divine glory. And there are men and women in our churches who have never read a word of the spiritual classics, who know what it is to be starved of bread, who know what it is to hunger and thirst for righteousness, who know what it is to experience the poverty of the spirit, who know what it is out of deep restlessness to yearn for God, and yearning for God, he comes to them on the third day.

Way of Obedience

And secondly, prayer is a way of obedience. The ways of obedience of which I am speaking are not massive tests of obedience. They are not sort of 'A' level questions that we pose to one another: would we die for Christ? Would we go to the ends of the earth? Does the Lord mean us to enter full-time Christian service? The questions are closer and simpler: will I live to his glory for the rest of this day? – just this day. That's a simple test of obedience. We sometimes make the Christian life a sort of sequence of epic events, when its true glories are found in the commonplace. It was Luther, and I'm afraid I will return to Luther more than once, it was Luther who said that there is one vocation for all Christian people; there are not sort of different levels of vocations; we're all called, he said, we're all called to holiness. And his words were echoed in an unlikely quarter.

My favourite saint is one who lived at the end of the last century. A little petty bourgeois French girl, who at the age of fifteen, went into a Carmelite convent and died of T.B. at the age of twenty three: Thérèse. And it was said of Thérèse of Lisieux, as she neared the end of her life, that one of her sisters in religion said, "What on earth will they say about Thérèse when she's dead? She's done nothing". And she did nothing. She did nothing to change the world. She wrote letters. But with all her heart and being and passion she believed that the next moment, and what had to be done in the next moment, was what Christ had called her to do, and was a way of loving him. Holiness is a democratic calling. As some said of Thérèse of Lisieux: "She democratised holiness". And holiness is democratic. We're all called to holiness.

THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY P.L.C.
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To the Readers of the Fraternal.

Dear Friends,

Writing this letter as we near the end of 1990 I find myself reflecting that the Company has completed a full year in these premises. We moved from Baptist Church House in 1989 on 16th September and with our friends in Baptist Housing Association and London Baptist Association held the Inauguration Service on 22nd November.

I am very pleased that we have retained every member of our staff during the ensuing year. This enabled us to be fully operational immediately and to cope with the added workload of the January and February storms maintaining a speed of response which earned us many appreciative comments.

We have fewer personal callers at these offices but then the numbers visiting us in Baptist Church House were very small. Our clients are spread throughout the United Kingdom and over the years we have been able to provide a service almost entirely by correspondence and telephone. For obvious reasons we cannot support a large field staff operating throughout the country, but Church Officers are always welcome to telephone us to review the Church insurances. Because these can be longer than average discussions we are happy to accept reverse charge calls.

Having settled in at Bow we are now concentrating on improving our service, in particular our documentation, and we are hoping for a period of stability to bring to fruition plans which have been in our minds for a number of years.

Yours sincerely,

M.E. PURVER

Yet sometimes, recently, it seems in our Protestant world, we are set on restoring hierarchies, hierarchies that divide and judge people by their commitment. We talk about “minimal and maximal Christians”; “once blest and twice blest Christians”; “once baptized and twice baptized Christians”; “born again believers and ...Christians”. And the trouble is that some of our people are becoming intimidated by stories of ecstasy and special blessings and the paper-back trade in high flying testimony. And one thing I think we need to do in our churches is to give our people back their confidence so that they can trust their experience; they can trust what God has done for them; they can trust what he meant to them in their times of bereavement; they can trust what he meant to them in their daily work; they can trust him in what they have done and in what they experience and in what they have learned. For as Christians we are called to turn the commonplace and the transcendent into the single, seamless garment of Christian holiness. Those of you who are pastors will know what it is to witness and to share the struggles and the disappointments of your people. Let us not have hierarchies where people feel that somehow they are of less value than someone else; people should be cherished and loved in the Christian community and encouraged to see all their Christian life as something which they can offer to God as one glad offering of thanksgiving – that they may know that they are called and even though, at the end, just as of Thérèse they said: “What on earth will we say about Thérèse?”, their testimony and their memory will live on in the hearts of those who loved them and who, through them, saw the glory and the beauty of Jesus Christ.

So we are called to a way of life which is transfigured by prayer. During this Passiontide we make our baptismal vows, and as we look back at our baptism, as you look back this Easter, say: “Lord, let me die with you, let me lie with you, let me rise with you, and, Lord, what lies before me in the next moment, let that be the sphere of Christian holiness. Amen”

Michael J. Walker

Contemporary Youth Culture and Communication

A Birds Eye View of Influences

In the fascinating, frightening and turbulent years of adolescence, there is a whole new world of discovery that has delights and dangers in store at every turn of events. The influence of the youth sub – culture has been growing in impact since the 1950’s when Rock and Roll, with people like Bill Haley and the Comets and Elvis Presley, turned the world of ‘youth’ upside down with an altar call to a new revolution.

Spurred on by the thought of a new area of commercial conquest, the “hidden persuaders” in the disguise of record companies, fashion designers, marketing managers and religious gurus, cashed in on the new spending power of the young adolescent, and injected a whole new set of confused data into the minds of these fragile, developing people. To complicate the scenario even further, modern thinkers like Sartre, Albert Camus and Herbert Marcuse, were building

an invisible foundation that would form the basis of a world view destined to dominate attitudes and lifestyles for generations to come.

The circular thought forms of these modern philosophers have introduced a fatalistic outlook on life which has not only resulted in the predominance of the "Me" culture, but also produced a huge spiritual vacuum. If there is no ultimate meaning to life, and we are all caught up in a vast cosmic accident, let's take on board every "experience" that will lend even a temporary meaning to our existence.

Undoubtedly the school of thought led by Dr Spock, the child psychologist, has also contributed to the massive build up of ideas which have created the backdrop for the youth sub – culture of the nineties. The misleading assumption, which he later modified, that children learn by self expression, created a generation of young people bent on kicking the establishment and any form of authority. Fletcher's "Situation Ethics" added fuel to the fire of the newly liberated voice of youth which has been shouting its war cry for four decades: "If it feels good, do it!"

So it is important to understand some of the background which contributes to the formulation of youth culture. The habits, fashions, attitudes, creative expression and general development of this culture, is directly related to the surrounding panorama of circumstances created by commercial viability, cross – cultural fertilisation from East to West, the felt needs of individuals in a world of uncertainty and the drama of global events which translate into the mini worlds of individuals caught up in the flow of the inevitable.

Some Significant Developments in the Eighties

The trouble with taking a close look at the outward trappings which go to make up the expression of youth culture, is that as soon as you think you've pinned it down, you've been left behind by the next "thing" to be, do and say.

In the eighties, the cultural expressions of youth sped past at a bewildering rate, forming a blurred picture. This in itself illustrates the frantic search for identity which has characterised youth development for centuries. With the rapid growth of information technology, and the appetite of the media for sensationalism, many of the minor "fads" that began in insignificant London clubs, became the talk of the nation within days of the news machine breaking the story. One illustration of this would be the rapid growth in popularity of the so called "acid house parties". Like many other "new" ideas of the eighties, this was simply a re-working of the old "hippie" ideals of the sixties brought into the eighties mode by clever images and by promoting the old cliches of "anything goes", "be yourself", "let it all hang out!" etc.

Stock, Aitken and Waterman, dominated the music charts as they penned disposable pop hits with relentless regularity, becoming the most successful British pop production team ever. The popularity of 'nightclubbing' took off overnight, as 10,000 young adults regularly sought out the 'right' places to be seen. With the average life span of a successful pop band being only two years, many artists have found a new lease of life in the rejuvenated club circuit.

Designer drugs like "Ecstasy", which heightens the sense of touch, boosts confidence and instils an inner calm, became the "in" drug to take and threatened to become the first introductory step to mainstream drug taking. Britain's

15 to 18 year olds are spending £250-£300 million each year on alcohol, the abuse of which has become a bigger headache than the problems associated with drugs. With the advent of AIDS, and the ensuing adjustments many have made in their social life, sexual promiscuity has become less of a threat in relationships. The perennial problem however, is the complete lack of moral sense conveyed in the propaganda surrounding the issue. The government's £15 million advertising campaign simply warned about the necessity of wearing a condom, not the importance of caring relationships based on mutual respect and the timeless principles of committed relationships in the context of marriage.

Young people are crying out for someone to make a stand in the nation. A stand for truth, justice, peace and morality. This cry for help is not the blatant, outward and vocal kind, but an inner realisation of needs untouched by the humanistic philosophy of our society.

Does this surprise you? In conversations with teenagers in secondary schools all over the country, we are finding an openness to the spiritual dimensions of life. There is more cynicism inside the church about spiritual realities than outside. Although the gods of a materialistic age stand tall in the priorities of millions, their credibility is diminishing as more and more realise the superficiality of life based on these criteria.

If we do not move in on this exciting development of openness to God, the Enemy will continue to produce attractive counterfeits. One obvious example of this has been the subtle invasion taking place over many years which has surfaced and taken captive large chunks of the media, the arts and the fashion scene. The name of the invader, "The New Age Movement". In simple terms this is a cross between Eastern mystic thought and humanism. The philosophy admits there is a spiritual dimension to life which individuals need to discover, but the search for reality comes as we discover those dimensions within ourselves.

What is Happening to Young People on a Personal Level

During adolescent years there are rapid changes going on. The big wide world suddenly becomes a viable option. The opposite sex begins to create vibes you never thought could possibly exist. Life seems to offer a new set of possibilities, but the pains and struggles of these years of change can be a breeding ground for insecurity, fear and loneliness.

There is a natural instability in young people that happens as new experience and discoveries come in rapid succession. Cyclical emotions can create a feeling of "lostness", and only close loving relationships and true acceptance can bring them through this time undamaged. Because of the nature of these developments, there is a high vulnerability factor which lends itself to auto – suggestion and manipulation. Unreliable impressions given through negative encounters with peer group pressure or media manipulation can lead to false assumptions, wrong decisions and wrong actions.

There is a natural seeking after independence and the struggle to survive in the jungle of prejudice and adult exploitation. Physical attractiveness, intellectual capability, material wealth and physical performance go to the top of the agenda of priorities. "Don't let spots ruin your social life!" is one advertising slogan that seems to sum up the fears of rejection that can be a predominant factor controlling reactions and responses to situations.

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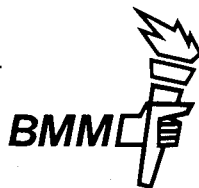
MANPOWER

In most Baptist churches women outnumber men by 2 or 3 to 1. Is this because men of today fail to see any relevance in church activities? Or is it because successful women's meetings have had a snowball effect?

Should the men in your church be mobilised to become a more effective force with active outreach attracting others into the church? The Baptist Men's Movement would like to help and can provide:

- assistance in forming an active men's group;
- participation in auxiliary activities in relation to world needs;
- personal membership and direct association with Baptist men throughout England and Wales;
- regular regional and national conferences for men.

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



The pressures to get involved in sexual encounters is still a major factor in the agenda of adolescence.

Communicating the Gospel in the Youth Sub – Culture

1. We need to close the communication gap

Please explain the following taken from a standard church hymn book: “angel strains”; “train filled the temple”; “I have tried the broken cisterns, Lord, but Ah the waters failed!”; “wormwood and gall”; “our mortal frame”; “Thou didn’t note my working breast”; “heavenly lay”; “His chosen band”; “thine eye diffused a quickening ray”; “publish abroad” etc etc. If we are serious about communicating to people with no religious framework, we must examine what we are saying to people, and more importantly, what they are understanding and receiving from our attempts to communicate. We must learn from our Lord Himself, who communicated very visually, in the language common to the people.

2. We need to close the credibility gap

We can no longer survive by saying one thing and doing another. The Church must be seen to be involved at every level of society, including the difficult and demanding areas of life occupied by our young people. Bob Geldof raised vast sums of money for needy millions. Where was the Church? Zeferelli made the best and most biblical life of Jesus which touched the lives of millions, but he is not a Christian. Where was the Church?

If we believe in the promises of God, then we have the resources and the capability to take on the forces of darkness and take over enemy territory in the Name of God.

There are three main “hooks” we can use in our communication to youth;

1. *There is a search for meaning.* We can help young people discover a new meaning to life that does not drift around in a circle, but goes somewhere. Let us offer them achievable targets based on a relationship with Jesus.

2. *There is a lack of authority.* Young people need definite boundaries in order to survive. We can show them the love of a heavenly Father, who set boundaries because of His love for people. There is a built in security in this relationship that can be found nowhere else.

3. *There is a lack of relationship.* Most relationships have conditions attached. Jesus takes us as we are. He comes to where we are in order to take us to where He is. That is the tremendous adventure of following Him. So we need to show a spiritual reality, an honesty and a love that mirrors His love.

When we can demonstrate the relevance and reality of our life with God based on the truth of His Word and rooted in sound, tested frameworks of faith, we can begin to make inroads into youth culture that will have a devastating effect on the forces of darkness.

Steve Flashman

Resources

Books

Closing the Gap (Techniques of communication) Kingsway.
The theft of the Purple Plug (Young teens fiction) Kingsway

Records

Rewind A compilation of his first three LP records
The Fuse is Still Burning 1987 (Anfield Music)
Icy Hearts 1990 (Soapbox Music)

All the above available from SOAPBOX, 14 Cranbrook Terrace, Cranleigh, Surrey

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Moscow Congress on Evangelism: A Report

Held under the auspices of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, whose International Director is Tom Houston, this was the first such congress since the Russian Revolution. It took place on October 22-26, last year.

Eight hundred delegates from all the Christian groups in the country participated, including Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Methodist and Adventist, some from registered groups, others from unregistered. There were also one hundred and fifty non-Soviets from twenty four countries.

Opening the Congress, Tom Houston reminded the delegates that it was all about the evangelization of the Soviet Union and all the republics within it. He challenged them to help bring re-birth to the nation, for "only the Christian gospel will provide the work ethic that will enable people to do their work as to the Lord and become the motivation that drives this country to a successful economy" and "the only thing that could combat the spirit of greed and replace it with a spirit of service and generosity that will make people cooperative, rather than competitive".

The Congress examined evangelism in a variety of ways, including reaching unreached groups, nominal Christians, business people and young people. The mass media was examined, also spiritual discipleship, church leadership and organising new churches.

As it progressed, the delegates became more aware of the "ground we have to recover after seventy years of captivity". Those from the more needy areas – Siberia, the Caucasus and Central Asia – were often in tears as they called for help from Christians in stronger areas.

At the close of the Congress there was agreement on a two-page Moscow Declaration in which they gave thanks that the Church had survived "through the dark red night of atheistic rule in the USSR". And believers were remembered "who had died, were bereaved, suffered imprisonment, cruelty, discrimination, separation, threats and oppression" during those years.

Richard Worthing-Davies, Executive Director of the British and Foreign Bible Society, described the Congress as "an event that will live with me all my life – to see and experience the evangelistic zeal of Christians from every corner of the Soviet Union, and to learn first-hand of their courage and endurance under an evil and chilling history of persecution was a challenge to everyone outside the Soviet Union".

(Taken from the news letter released at the conclusion of the Congress)

Book Reviews

Jesus the Saviour by I. Howard Marshall (SPCK, 1990, 329pp, £9.95)

This is a collection of articles and essays in New Testament Theology published in various places over the last twenty years and now brought conveniently together. As such it will be of interest primarily to students, who will find here useful summaries of on-going debates on many topics including the significance of apocalyptic, the Son of Man, the development of christology, the kingdom of God, redemption and reconciliation. There is also a firm rejection of Calvinistic

understandings of predestination and perseverance. Some of these articles will evoke memories of your college days, and those on the Son of Man in particular have a rather dated feel, but anyone wanting an introduction to the study of New Testament christology will find here evangelical scholarship at its best. The tone is warm, the language is clear and the argumentation is rigorous and patient.

Howard Marshall is revealed by this collection of essays as a learned man who has read everything published on the topics he deals with and who shows us the strengths and weaknesses of the different views the student will meet. The result is a clear but courteous verdict in favour of traditional understandings of the person and work of Christ reached after a fair and thorough sifting of the evidence and the arguments. Marshall, in the words of Paul to Timothy (2 Tim 4:5), keeps his head in all situations and does the work of an evangelist.

It ought to figure prominently on tutors' reading lists and would be an ideal gift from the church to its theological students, among whom it will strengthen the faint-hearted and steady the headstrong.

Alastair Campbell

Accept This Offering by Kenneth Stevenson: (SPCK, 1989, 96pp., £3.95)

Sub-titled "The Eucharist as Sacrifice Today", the basic thesis of the book is that "sacrifice...lies at the very heart of what we do at the Lord's Table", and that current variations of faith and practice in the Churches are signs of life and hope. In fact, the subject matter is wider than the summary suggests.

The analysis of some liturgical texts may not interest some Baptists, who are likely to be more interested in what he says about preaching and prayer. "Preaching is a sacrifice because it means speaking the good news of the gospel despite knowing that you are going to get it wrong" (p27) because not everyone's needs will be met.

He goes on to discuss intercession which, he argues, is replete with the sacrificial aspects of the Christian life, and is essentially about relationships. Also thanksgiving, in which he argues for short eucharistic prayers which are selective in their subject-matter, rather than long ones which try to say everything – and fail!

On the crucial question of whether the act of remembering Jesus at the Lord's Table involves offering the bread and wine to God, he recognizes the historical differences on this point between Protestants and Roman Catholics and pleads, here as elsewhere, for a wider appreciation of the language of paradox.

He turns, finally, to the question of how the Eucharist should end, and suggests that "the psychology of the conclusion is to help the people of God come down from the mountain to the plain, in joyful thanksgiving" (p83) which makes the choice of hymns crucial – as always!

This is an interesting book, whose subject-matter in parts will not be familiar, or perhaps conducive, to some Baptists, but those who read it will be made to think about the meaning of the Eucharist and more, and not least, how we articulate that meaning in words.

John V. Matthews

Dynamic Leadership, by Paul Beasley-Murray (MARC, 1990, 224pp, £6.99)

Convinced that churches are dying for lack of leadership, Paul Beasley-Murray enthusiastically addresses the topic of Dynamic Leadership. For him a good leader is a man or a woman who “works as a senior partner with other members to achieve the task, build the team and meet individual needs”. Building on this definition he goes on to suggest what good leadership looks like in practice.

If a church is to achieve its missionary tasks of evangelism and social action, then the leader will need to master the art of goal setting. The role of the pastor-leader is to mobilise the church to reach those goals. In practical terms this means that the leader will need to know how best to introduce change and how to make Church Meetings effective.

Focussing upon the church’s leadership team, Paul Beasley-Murray concentrates on the ministry of deacons, giving only a brief glance in the direction of elders. I suspect that a wider use of what he calls “multi-directional ministry teams” could help to overcome the stifling effect of many of our current leadership structures.

This book is not a management manual, but an impassioned plea for Christian leadership. For “if pastors are to be successful in their role as leaders they will need to be God’s men and women”. It advocates a leadership style modelled on the servant ministry of Jesus, and contains suggestions to help leaders develop their relationship with God.

The Principal of Spurgeon’s College writes here for a mainly Baptist audience. For those embarking on Christian ministry the book contains a wealth of sound advice. Moving recently to a new situation, it has stimulated my thinking about my own priorities.

The “blurb” on the back of the book claims that “Reading this book could change your church for ever”. In spite of that it is indeed something worth reading, learning from and acting upon.

Peter Stevenson

City of God? by Nicholas Bradbury (SPCK, 1989, 224pp, £6.95)

My hunch is that few readers of *Fraternal* will have purchased this book already; I have to say that I can’t honestly advise them to do so now. It depends what you want to read about, of course, and Bradbury’s book does contain both humorous and insightful passages. But the overall subjects of his volume’s three sections are all dealt with, better, separately, elsewhere.

City of God?, sub-titled “Pastoral Care in the Inner City”, is understandably – but still awfully – irredeemably Anglican. It is parochial (both senses) and pedestrian; a pastiche which makes no reference at all to the work of Augustine, or even the question mark which seems to have been pointlessly added to the saint’s original title.

Briefly, Bradbury's book describes, in the first 47 pages, the "Predicament" of the inner city. (But I say that folk who **really** want to know about it must visit, for at least a week, and read *Faith in the City* for fuller statistics). There then follow 57 pages on "The Primary Task of the Inner City Church". (But Bradbury really means 'Anglican Parish Church': and Avery Dulles' *Models of the Church* is a much better – and cheaper – analysis of the kinds of community we Christians are called to be). Finally, there are 86 pages on "Management (sic!) and Development of an Inner City Church's Ministry". But this is bitty stuff, rambling and frustratingly reasonable – epitomized for me by Bradbury's suggestion that the "**first** pastoral question" (my emphasis) is the reconciliation of the politically passive with the politically most committed, within a church congregation. I would have thought a prior question in that context might be why the gospel demands of truth, justice and love are apparently not being heard by the politically passive!

Another reviewer of this work has found it "refreshing to read a book which is theologically alert yet grounded in grass-root pastoral and church concerns". For this reviewer, however, *City of God?* brings the refreshment only of Anglican porridge; its theological 'alertness' is skimmingly superficial and suspiciously non-committal; and the inner cities in any case are places not so much of 'grass-roots' as of 'rubber hitting the road' (Dave Cave) and the passing-by rich and powerful grinding down the poor yet further. What the churches need here (as indeed they need everywhere) is to hear the gospel of, from, and for the poor; and to receive, together with all the people of the UPA's, the justice and fulness of life that is their right, as well as ours.

Alec Balfe-Mitchell

Bonhoeffer's Heritage by Edwin Robertson: (Hodder and Stoughton, 1989, 240pp., £8.95)

In this work Mr Robertson draws on his expertise as a Bonhoeffer scholar to flesh out an outline for a book prepared by the German theologian in his last months in prison. He then relates that thinking to the years of history that have elapsed since Bonhoeffer's death.

The proposed book was to address the problems of the age as Bonhoeffer perceived them. He felt that humanity was "coming of age", and was developing beyond a need of religion. The Church had moved into a period of stagnation. The recipient of the outline, Eberhard Bethge, labelled his friend's questions as a search for an "authentic theology", that is, a theology that can be applied to every area of human existence and redefine Christianity for the second half of the twentieth century.

Mr Robertson takes Bonhoeffer's proposed outline as a framework for his own work, sub-titled, "The Christian Way in a World without Religion", and unpacks the background to Bonhoeffer's thinking. He thus makes concepts such as a "religionless Christianity" approachable to the reader. In view of the changes which history has wrought since Bonhoeffer's lifetime, we are then challenged to consider the ways in which his vision may have been realised already and how it could still be realised.

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This is a big task for a relatively short book (240 pages) and it says much for Mr Robertson that he is able to communicate so much so concisely. There is much stimulating reading here. However, it is not always obvious whether the stimulus emanates from the pen of Bonhoeffer or from the heart of Robertson. It appears that by attempting to remain true to Bonhoeffer, Mr Robertson had to suppress some of his own original thinking. Perhaps he should consider a companion volume where his own ideas can be more freely expressed – with of course, acknowledgement of his indebtedness to Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Rachel Harrison

Deliverance ed. by Michael Perry (SPCK, 1989, 145pp, £4.95)

This book is the outcome of the Christian Exorcism Study Group. It is the sanest study of the subject so far, and divides into two parts. The first section is a description of deliverance ministry under such headings as poltergeists, ghosts, occultism, satanism, sects and cults. The chapter on counsel for the counsellor is extremely important for avoiding pitfalls, and knowing how to handle opportunities. Each chapter contains illustrative analysis of various cases.

The second section of the book is based on the use of liturgical material, team work, and tradition in the experience of the Church. The whole book is almost a scientific approach to the unscientific. The book constantly stresses the need to look for natural explanations before leaping into supernatural areas and exorcism. It describes the casual charismatic attitude as far too flippant. At the other extreme most churches err even more by dismissing the whole area of the occult. It is a very necessary text book for those pastoral situations that occasionally confront us.

The pastoral guidelines are excellent, including spiritual preparation, team work, and the assurance of Christ's complete authority and our confidence in Him. The methods seem a little too tidy, too time-consuming and organised. Unfortunately, pastoral situations are seldom tidy and make immediate demands, and one cannot readily find a doctor, psychiatrist, bishop or superintendent willing to cooperate. I was therefore surprised that there was no mention of binding any spirit as a prelude to exorcism.

It is a valuable book because it speaks of a serious legitimate ministry we might rarely find, and makes it clear that such a ministry is no game for dramatic effect by amateurs. The book does stress the need for a pastoral caring group constantly praying, studying and ready to act. Also that theological training should go beyond the present psychological and pastoral approaches. There are deeper levels of ministry that we would do well to be prepared for. An important book for all ministers.

Leonard C. Wilson