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EDITORIAL

All the major Christian denominations are facing a decline in the numbers of men offering themselves for the Church's ordained ministry. Most Christians deplore this trend, but a minority welcomes it, not in itself but because the decline is partly forcing, partly enabling the Church to escape from undue clerical domination. For the laity are just as truly members of the Church as are the clergy; and though the clergy have an essential function to fulfil in the Church's life, this function is not to dominate but to serve, as the words minister and ministry imply. Indeed, it could be said that the function of the clergy is to service the Church, to keep it in good working order, to labour to make it possible for the Church to be and to act as God's People, a People with a double orientation, towards God and towards mankind.

Those who hope that the drop in the number of ordinands will lead to a declericalizing of the Church look for inspiration to its first days. In the days of the Apostles and for some time after, when the Church was expanding rapidly, it lacked most of the institutions and the organization that the modern Christian takes for granted. There were no cathedrals or parish churches, there were no theological colleges and no clerical class, there was not even a New Testament. The first Christians found themselves caught up in a vigorous and growing movement with a minimum of organization. There were apostolic and missionary leaders some of whose duties have descended to the modern bishop. There were also local leaders, men respected in the local Christian community and ordained by the Church. This local Church was seen to be a brotherhood of believers who despite unpopularity and persecution were all the time attracting new members by the quality of their lives.

It was inevitable probably that a movement growing in numbers, wealth and influence should build churches and develop institutions. Organization was needed to give unity, order and stability to the many congregations dispersed throughout the Roman Empire to which Christians belonged. But the institutionalizing of the Church which may have saved it from splitting into a hundred independent movements brought loss as well as gain. One of the changes which, however inevitable it may have seemed at the time, we now see to have been unfortunate, was the clericalizing of the Church, which more and more became an organization run by the clergy on behalf of the laity, whose main duty was to defend it with their swords and support it with their gifts. Today we still hear the phrase entering the Church used to mean not being baptized, as it ought to mean, but becoming a clergyman.

We believe that all who have the cause of Christianity at heart should work to encourage the growth of a vigorous laity, especially at the grass roots level of the local congregation. As G. K. Chesterton

remarked, "If an idea is to be made real it must become local". The Church can never become a powerful influence for right living unless its lay members are determined to make it so. It will never effectively bear witness to the gospel unless the laity recognise their responsibility for this. And only when men and women are fully engaged in working for the kingdom will the Church again become the happy brotherhood which exerted a powerful attraction on all who came in contact with it. An invigorated laity will not mean any lessening of the importance of the clergy; rather it will make the true function of the clergy plain. For the Church lives and draws its inspiration from its faith in the God who has disclosed himself in Jesus Christ. For this reason every Christian community needs men trained in the knowledge of God and the exposition of the gospel, men who can not only lead the Church's worship and proclaim the gospel but can show its bearing on contemporary issues. In short, what the laity need if they are to fulfil their mission is theologians in the sense of men versed in the things of God and able to guide others in the ways of prayer. There have always been lay men and women qualified to do this, but this is the special function of the clergy.

Theology in the sense of the science of God and the ways of responding to God has from the first been an especial concern of NEW FIRE. In the current issue we print accounts of two experiments designed to make the Church more effective at the local level. Derek Palmer describes the working of Quest, a scheme for training teenagers in the Christian life. The training is supervised mainly by lay leaders and the whole congregation is concerned in it. By means of it the young are made to feel themselves welcome members of the Church and helped to realize their responsibility towards their neighbourhood and its needs. In another article Donald Reeves describes a method of training clergy designed to equip them for their rôle as servants and leaders in the local Christian community. If the laity are to take a Christian initiative over matters of local concern they must be helped to see these issues in the light of the gospel. The clergy cannot bring their theological insight effectively to bear on local problems unless they have thoroughly familiarized themselves with the problems and the way they affect the lives of people in the locality. The Urban Ministry Project seeks to help ordinands and clergy to acquire the kind of social awareness and expertise that their ministry demands.

CHRISTOPHER BRYANT, S.S.J.E.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST?

The New Religions

by Jacob Needleman

Allen Lane: The Penguin Press. London. 1972. 243 pp. £2.75.

This book is described by Professor Needleman as a portrait of the contemporary search for religious meaning "insofar as it is turning hundreds of thousands of Americans toward the religions of the East and toward the mystical core of all religion. It is an attempt to enter into what has been called "the spiritual explosion" and to see what light exists there amid all its movement and energy" (p. xi). In Professor Needleman's view the Eastern teachings currently establishing themselves in America could very likely transform the religious life and consciousness of the Western world. In this context the book offers a diagnosis of the present crisis of Western religion and examines the principles of the spiritual life as such. The basis for the discussion of these wider issues, however, is a detailed survey of some of the new religious movements now flourishing in California, where in 1962 Professor Needleman came to teach philosophy in San Francisco State College.

The unobtrusively personal note on which the book opens gives point to much of what Professor Needleman has to say in the sequel. It was in California that his own somewhat negative attitudes towards religion were overturned, as he came to recognize the depth of some of the new religious teachings and the sincerity with which so many people, particularly young people, were seeking in these teachings a spiritual orientation for their lives. But California has more than merely a personal significance for Professor Needleman. He claims that despite its relentless materialism, of which most of the "thousand strange cults, sects and fads" are themselves manifestations, there is something about California, which makes "so many of its people . . . so much more accessible to the cosmic dimension of human life" than most people elsewhere in the West, whose lives are dominated by European intellectualism with its idea of the autonomy of the human mind. And of the few movements which have a genuine religious intent, "some may be channels through which timeless traditions are speaking anew to modern man" (p. 37). What is indeed striking about the "new religions" is the extent to which their appeal lies in their claim to represent "timeless traditions".

Professor Needleman has selected six movements for detailed examination: Zen Center, set under its Japanese master Shunryu Suzuki, who came to San Francisco in 1959; the movement based upon the person and teachings of Meher Baba, an Indian guru claiming divine status who "dropped the body" in 1969 and whose disciples call themselves "Baba-lovers"; Subud, a system founded in Java by Muhammad Subuh in the late 'twenties

which penetrated the West in the late 'fifties; the Transcendental Meditation of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; the teaching of Krishnamurti, who in 1929 threw off the rôle of avatar and world-teacher in which he had been nurtured by the Theosophical Society in India since the age of thirteen; and the Vajrayana Buddhism taught by lamas of the Tibetan diaspora, but in particular the work of Tarthang Tulku, who arrived in California in 1969 and now runs the Tibetan Nyingmapa Meditation Center in Berkeley. To each of these movements a full chapter is devoted. Mindful that the teachings involved are deliberately presented in ways that resist neat conceptual formulation, Professor Needleman allows the "doctrine" of each movement "to emerge within a description of the teaching's existential impact" (p. 22). Extensive quotations are given from statements made by the leaders and followers of these movements. Not the least value of this book is that the mainly descriptive approach of these seven central chapters leaves the reader free to reach his own conclusions. In another chapter are briefly reviewed some important ideas often associated with the new religions: astrology, reincarnation, the idea of the sacramental universe (as exemplified in North American Indian religion), the religious function of civilization, and western esotericism. There is also a very short chapter on the ideas of the Russian teacher Gurdjieff.

Professor Needleman's treatment of these ideas and movements constitutes an object lesson in how to respect other people's beliefs and how to learn from them by taking them seriously. Consequently, valuable insights emerge throughout the book: for example, in the reasons given for saying that "astrology can open relationships, rather than close them" (p. 194); in the observation, with reference to the strenuous exercises performed by the disciples of Tarthang Tulku, that "for most Americans, sincerity begins with the body" (p. 186); and in the suggestion that "all esoteric ideas must be *new* (or 'scandalous') to the mind", since "our minds are, by their very nature, *exoteric*", preferring "the security of old formulations . . . to the personal earthquake which the intelligence of the heart can set in motion" (p. 206). A crucial distinction is drawn between belief, a trust in the ordinary mind as a medium of truth, and faith, a state of being, based upon self-knowledge, in which the confusion of the ordinary mind is laid bare. "Faith cannot be shaken; it is the result of being shaken" (p. 224). Professor Needleman also demonstrates how the sympathetic study of other religions can contribute to the renewal of our own religions. The study of North American Indian religion, for example, could revitalize in our own traditions "the idea of an organic universe which continually speaks to us, if we would but seek for a way to listen to it" (p. 202). This book is a work of comparative religion in the most constructive sense.

In his introductory chapter Professor Needleman exposes the roots of the present crisis of Western religion. Reduced to mere ethical or legal systems through the loss of the cosmic elements in

their teachings, "our tormented religions" have sought to become "relevant to the times" by involvement in a range of secular ideas and activities which are themselves failing to meet men's real needs. "Men turn to religion and find, to their ultimate dismay, that religion turns to them, to their sciences, their ideas of action and accomplishment, and their language" (p. 10). Three closely linked factors mark the decline of western religion and its difference from the new religions: first, "the exclusion of the mind from the religious process"; secondly, a forgetfulness of "the instrumental nature of religious forms", which, where they do survive, have been adapted to preserve rather than transform ordinary human desires; and thirdly, the underestimation of human possibility consequent upon the rejection of religion as an empty fraud and an inefficient means of fulfilling even secular ends in comparison with the techniques of modern psychology. That the latter have appeared so revolutionary is itself indicative of the extent to which the original "psychospiritual instrumentality" of religious practices has been neglected, save in a few monastic communities which have themselves been pushed from the very centre to the very periphery of religious life. The result is tragically ironic: "What modern psychology offered as an improvement of human life was precisely that quality of life which drove men originally to the instrumentalities of religion, the only addition being the conviction that this was the highest quality of life one could realistically expect" (p. 19). But this conviction is again being questioned, vigorously so in California, and the wheel may turn full circle.

While optimistic that the newly transplanted religions could bring our religious wilderness once more to life, Professor Needleman is wise enough to consider also the possibility that they might wither from the same blight that has afflicted our own religions. For the new religions will prove fruitful only if they engage their followers in a way that enables them to understand the nature of the human condition they have set themselves to transform; otherwise the nature of the various techniques and experiences which are the alleged means of this transformation will also be misunderstood, and thus turned into mere objects of belief rather than instruments of self-knowledge. To this danger the followers of even the most practical of the new movements may succumb. Of the followers of Zen Center, for example, Professor Needleman comments: "Much of their lives seems dominated by a *belief in zazen*". "I saw in these young people the use of zazen to improve their lives, a goal which seems totally unobjectionable only if one forgets that many of them had not as yet even experienced their lives" (p. 223). But since our lives are lived "between experiences", any form of inner development must be combined with the search for a more complete outer life, particularly here in the West, where the decline in the place and value of work has led to a preoccupation with "experience". We have lost sight of the relationship between "ordinary work" and "spiritual work", of the idea that "the energy of God touches man only with the exhaustion of human

energy" (p. 219). A corresponding danger is that the distrust of the "isolated intellect" so rightly fostered by the new religions may lead people disillusioned with western intellectualism to reject even the positive rôle of the intellect in the religious life; it is possible that for a society like our own a spiritual discipline can be "too practical in that it provides experiences without the means to understand or value them" (p. 225). In sum, we may risk missing the point of much that is of value in the new religious teachings because in the West "we are starved for an intelligent way to take life as a task" (p. 215).

Professor Needleman emphasizes that it is not the validity of the new religions in themselves that he is questioning, but rather their chances of proving effective in their new American setting. Readers will no doubt elaborate for themselves on many of the questions raised. One question likely to arise in regard to the six movements examined in detail by Professor Needleman is whether all of these are properly regarded as religious or spiritual paths in the first place. Such a question might focus in particular on Transcendental Meditation and the teaching of Krishnamurti. In the absence of any elucidation from Krishnamurti himself (who rejects as useless not merely the idea of religion but even that of spiritual authority), it is difficult to see the point of the freedom to which his method of "instantaneous self-observation" is directed, although it is easy to imagine that cerebrally overactive or overconfident types might find a certain relief and even a perverse enjoyment in the conceptual iconoclasm and intellectual face-slapping of his curious talks and dialogues.

Transcendental Meditation, with its aim of making people healthier and happier in their ordinary lives, is reminiscent of some of the mind-cure and positive thinking methods once so popular in America. The effortless mantra yoga technique in question undoubtedly "works", but however unobjectionable its results may be in themselves, it is still worth asking, whether from a spiritual point of view, the method does not run the risk of quietism, based as it is "on the same pleasure principle that other disciplines have diagnosed as the source of human fractioning and confusion" (p. 137). As Professor Needleman asks, "to what in a man does the idea of easy spiritual progress appeal?" (p. 138).

Subud and the Meher Baba movement, both forms of theism, undoubtedly count as religions. What may be doubted is the extent to which either of them is effective as a spiritual path. With regard to Subud, like Professor Needleman one may be "struck by the enormous discrepancy between the grandeur of the teaching and the complacency of the following" (p. 219). Nothing is demanded of followers other than their twice-weekly participation in a half-hour exercise called *latihan*, during which they surrender themselves to the Power of God. This exercise can certainly release in participants a special kind of force or energy; cases of healing are also reported. But the quietism of Subud does not require that the energy released be controlled in any way, still less that it be channelled into any form of

“spiritual work”. For some followers, one suspects, *latihan* involves little more than release from tensions and inhibitions. Sometimes it can produce unpleasant psychological effects and even chronic mental illness. Of course, the specialized techniques of all religions have been open to various abuses and dangers: hence the need for their proper supervision by a *guru*, or spiritual master. How faithfully are the new religious movements in the West maintaining the timeless tradition of the guru? The idea of placing oneself in the hands of someone to whom complete obedience and respect are due surely cannot win easy acceptance among young people reared in the Western tradition of individualism.

Devotion to a spiritual master is, of course, the very basis of the Meher Baba movement. Moreover, this devotion has often effected striking changes in the lives of devotees. It is well known that many young converts have renounced drugs because of Meher Baba's strictures against their use. In this and in other ways the Meher Baba movement has been instrumental in the resocialization of some of the more maladjusted among its followers. Indeed, it is quite likely that, where the majority of their followers are concerned, the main success of many of the new religious movements has been in the secular rather than in the specifically religious sphere. If so, these movements are certainly not to be despised, especially where they encourage such virtues as love and active concern for others. “It is dangerous,” writes C. S. Lewis, “to press upon a man the duty of getting beyond earthly love when his real difficulty lies in getting so far.” Nevertheless the followers of any religion worthy of the name should never be allowed to forget that their ultimate aims lie beyond any achievements in the secular sphere. One reason why this is liable to be forgotten by followers of some of the new religions is because these religions lack sufficient doctrinal underpinning.

Much can be learned about the correct value between secular and spiritual values in the religious life from Vajrayana and Zen Buddhism—aptly characterised by Professor Needleman as “complete Buddhism” and “essential Buddhism” respectively. Fundamental to both forms is the principle of “skill-in-means”, a way of consciously adapting precepts and practices to variations in the abilities and circumstances of followers. Zen Center has certainly proved that Zen Buddhism can be adapted to the conditions of American life, although the real success of the movement must depend ultimately upon the quality of its disciples. Tibetan Buddhism abroad is admittedly in a more vulnerable position, being unable to draw fresh resources from its spiritual homeland. As Professor Needleman so skilfully points out, the success of Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet was due very largely to the fact that the whole of Tibetan society was ordered within a religious perspective. It remains to be seen whether the isolated lamas and their Western disciples will be able to create an appropriate setting for the distinctive teachings of Tibetan Buddhism.

One wonders whether Professor Needleman has not overestimated

the dimensions of the current "spiritual explosion", or at least exaggerated its significance for the future of Western religion. He writes, for instance, that "the contemporary disillusionment with religion has revealed itself to be a *religious* disillusionment" (p. xi). But is this really so? Most observers seem to think that on the whole the disillusionment represents a movement away from religion as such, as part of the well-known phenomenon of secularization. It is interesting to compare Professor Needleman's account with the more cautious observations made by Peter Berger in his *A Rumour of Angels* (1969), a work subtitled "Modern Society and the Discovery of the Supernatural". Berger considers it impossible to predict "whether any such discovery will remain the property of more or less isolated cognitive minorities, or whether it may also have an impact of larger historical dimensions". For often "what looked like a mighty wave of history was only a marginal eddy in the stream of events".

But even if the disillusionment with religion had a specifically religious character, those disillusioned would not necessarily be aware of the true nature of their disillusionment. Nor would a widespread spiritual hunger, if it existed, necessarily find the means for its true satisfaction. Symptoms of spiritual hunger are far from being signs of spiritual renewal. This is why, if we are to take the claims of religion at all seriously, we must face up to the question of the intrinsic validity of the teachings of the new religions.

The chief value of this book is that it attempts not merely to understand these teachings, but also, more importantly, to assess their significance for the religious life of the Western world. And on one point in particular Professor Needleman is surely right: "the new religions pose absolutely no threat to the old—unless the reassessment of man's inward potential and psychological fallibility is understood as a threat" (p. 8). Throughout the book we are reminded that there is nothing of value in the new religions which has not also been present within a part of our own traditions. "Perhaps the East has to come West . . . for the West to rediscover the sense of its own religion" (p. 13). Perhaps, too, the new religions will prove, ironically, to be but ephemeral catalysts in such a process of rediscovery. Apart from this, whether any of the new movements incorporate genuine spiritual paths, and if so how these stand in relation to the "timeless traditions", are weighty questions which Professor Needleman for one does not presume to answer. Of one thing we can be sure, however: spiritually the world is more untidy and unpredictable than many people, wrapped in the dubious security of the established religions, would like to believe.

PETER MOORE

THEOLOGY AS AN APPLIED ART

The toast-rack I used this morning at breakfast was ingeniously made out of fine white china decorated with yellow flowers—a slim and elegant piece of modelling. Unfortunately, when put to use, the

cold china made the toast damp and soggy, and the slender open design was such that you could not pick up the rack without losing its contents. Bad specimens, however, may provide good examples, and this one will do quite well to illustrate the character of an applied art. In applied art it is not enough to concentrate on imaginative form and pattern; use and action have their claims as well. An object of applied art differs from one of pure art in that the image it presents refers to something concrete beyond itself. It respects demands made upon it by the purposes of man and the facts of the situation. As Lionel Brett has written of the noblest of the applied arts,¹ "From the beginning, architecture has been the child of two parents—Parameters and Images", *parameters* being the conditions laid upon the architect and the forces he has to respect, while *images* are those forms and patterns he chooses, to make his work communicate at a higher level than that of function. Through the image, which cannot, of course, merely defy the parameters, but must respect and unite with them, the building designed acquires presence, aesthetic value and a place among the symbols of society.

In speaking of theology as "an applied art" I mean to say that it also enjoys this double parentage, of external reference and imagination. Theological ideas are not *simply* images. They are not fully defined as *interpretative* images, if by that we mean only that they interpret general experience or the whole of life. Like an architect working to his brief, a theologian must relate his ideas to concrete circumstances, and, if he is a Christian, to the concrete circumstances in which it is witnessed of Jesus that he lived, died and rose again. The theologian brings what images he can and will to this point of reference, to interpret its meaning to himself and to us, and there is no limit set to the kinds or original sources of these images. They may be drawn from art, from social experience, from technology, from mythology, from religion or from metaphysics. They may be rich and subtle or crude and direct. It is not on the basis of such distinctions that we can say they make good or bad theology. The test of a theological image as theology is its adequacy to the testimony we have received concerning Jesus, and its power in our lives as we seek to live by that witness.

I think this analysis may be a salutary one for Christians because for some time in the past, and still to some extent in curiously parallel ways, Christian architects and Christian theologians have been tempted by a false ideal of "purity" in their disciplines. Church buildings have been designed with respect mainly to their symbolic value and hardly at all to the activities they enclose, while certain theologians at least have sought in one way or another to rescue their theory from the possibility of falsification by cutting loose from historical fact. The ideal has been for an imaginative content securely detached from concrete reference. It is worth noting, however, that

¹ Lionel Brett. *Parameters and Images*. Weidenfeld & Nicholson. 1970.

the contrary temptation, towards sheer concrete facticity without imagination, does not really exist. In a certain basic sense everything man creates is applied art, and every real human perception is a work of imagination as well. The socially-trained human being (that is, anyone older than a very small child) naturally organises his perceptions to make them adaptable to human use and human communication, and this he does, well or ill, according to his imaginative capacity. I come downstairs in the morning to a table set out in a certain way and a blend of smells from the kitchen and spontaneously say "breakfast". It would take a real upset to my system for me to have these raw perceptions and not organise them in this way.

Although this is a rather low level of imaginative experience it should not be left out of account. In more subtle or demanding situations than the approach to breakfast it is a virtue of the intellect to be able to organise information about what is perceived. There is a skill in imparting information, necessary to the teacher, preacher, reporter or to anyone who works intellectually with others, whose foundation is a good organising imagination. If information is to be of real human significance it needs to undergo this organising process, whereby through emphasis, selection and order of presentation it is exposed as something patterned, part of our culture and not just a heap of brute facts.

Further, it is this work of organisation and presentation which provides the ground for more original imaginative work. There comes a point at which communication of the fruits of experience must go beyond the mere recounting of observations, however well organised. In the quest for a greater width of meaning, a closer approximation to the universally significant, we draw upon comparisons, metaphors, analogies; we use images, not given with the experience described but brought to it by the mind that conceives them. And this is done, not to avoid the full significance of our actual perceptions, but to make that significance more clear, our understanding of it more penetrating.

It is at this point, when we sense that the image employed has not simply arisen in the process of perception but has somehow been given to it, that we speak of creative imagination. We are conscious, not merely of a situation but of an originality of mind at work upon it, so that it is illuminated beyond the ordinary, its nature is more profoundly observed, or so that the habitual appreciation of the facts has been replaced by a fresh one.

This capacity of the creative imagination to provoke a new understanding is of crucial importance in theology. It is the precise task of theological imagery to demonstrate, in a way that the mind can grasp, the nature of perceptions which remain always beyond habitual definition. A genuine perception of God's action, a genuine reception of the witness to Jesus, that is to say a real act of repentance, of faith and of worship, involves the questioning and transformation of all our habitual stock of images. Such a perception, if we are true to it, may not be organised into an already existing, self-enclosed

world view. It is not a human possession. The imagery in which it is clothed retains a necessary and significant oddness, either in its content or in its manner of presentation. And therefore the theologian, however ingenious, however masterly in his handling of images, remains a witness and not an original author. His true material is not his but God's. Behind the givenness of the illuminating image we must be able to recognise another givenness—the gift by grace of God's revelation to men.

There is, of course, a real possibility that we shall not achieve this recognition. Especially for the person who has grown up in the Christian tradition, for whom every theological image is also by presumption a cultural axiom, it is difficult to detect the sheer gratuitous wonder of the message these images convey. In this respect we need the service of the sceptic who wants to deny us our blandly assumed freedom to speak of God. We need to see within his work the work of the arch-iconoclast who is God himself, the enemy of every idol which seems to secure the knowledge of God to men. We need God's own gift of holy fear, to remind each one of us who dares to speak the things of God that, like Moses, he stands on holy ground. If we could conceive it we should see that theological language is by its very nature a terrifying novelty in the realm of human speech. Its whole concern is to present an alternative to life as we think we know it, and to threaten all our habits of response with demolition, or to offer them a total transformation.

And it is here that the theologian must be allowed to retain his interest in fantasy. Literary fantasy, fairy tales and the like are ambiguous vehicles for theology. Sensitively worked out, they achieve the character of invigorating myth, a witness to God, perhaps, but equally perhaps to the still undiminished gods. With less taste, less discretion, they pander to a love of comfortable falsehood. Nevertheless, and apart from its more variable qualities, fantasy resists the assimilation of its character to the everyday, and it offers a vision of something different, something new. In this it is formally like the gospel, and may on occasion serve the gospel. As to the occasions on which it has done this, opinions may be allowed to differ.

In the thirteenth issue of *NEW FIRE* Alan Ecclestone wrote upon imagination and fantasy with particular reference to Harvey Cox's use of these terms and, at least partly, in response to some earlier remarks of my own.² I greatly welcome his survey of the ways in which the two terms have been distinguished from one another, and particularly the distinction he makes, after Coleridge, between the "counters" of fantasy and the travail of imagination to bring new life to birth. On the basis of such a distinction, for example, we could make a useful appraisal of the way in which theologians have coped with various theological interests. If, say, the doctrine of God's transcendence has survived so much recent confusion and assault it is because it is a far more delicately worked out product of the imagination, interpreting far more kinds of Christian experience, than its de-

tractors were prepared to allow. Our sense of God's personality, again, builds upon so long and varied an experience of repentance, faith, prayer and worship, and emerges through so many mutually supportive acts of imagination, that it possesses an unrivalled force and subtlety. On the other hand, Christian eschatology is hardly more than a set of acceptable conceits, and this because the perceptions we have to work upon are themselves so crude by comparison with other fields.

Nevertheless, I remain doubtful whether this is the vital distinction for the theologian. If it were, the tendency for eschatology to be edged out of doctrinal systems, a tendency which expresses our embarrassment at its low imaginative status, its "fantastic" quality, would have wholly excluded it by now. In fact, the question of the last things, though it be crudely expressed, is a real question about which Christian faith is really concerned, and, sometimes with violent effect, sometimes by more accommodating means, its place in Christian doctrine is again and again secured.

This is to suggest, therefore, that for the theologian the vital distinction here is not that between one quality of imaginative activity and another, but that between all imaginative activity and the concrete perceptions to which our imagination is addressed. Common to our use of all "imagination" words, whether that word itself, or fancy, or fantasy or make-believe or, we may add parable, and myth, is the idea of the human mind conceiving, arranging, comparing, shaping. Within this field certain qualities can be distinguished, and when we attempt to define one term in relation to another, what we really do is to declare an interest in some quality we have recognised and to seek its recognition by others. Harvey Cox is interested in a certain freedom from empirical restraint which he calls "fantasy"; Coleridge is concerned for creativity and "new life" and this concern he attaches to the word "imagination". Neither threatens the perception of the other in intention, even though through the poverty of our vocabulary that may be the result. And if, as Alan Ecclestone says, in making these distinctions "we can do no more than indicate a difference of direction or even of emphasis" it is fair to conclude that, from a vantage point beyond the distinctions, fantasy, imagination and make-believe we are all one thing—that is to say, they are differing qualities of one kind of mental activity.

But theology requires another activity in addition—what I have called "perception" or "external concrete reference"—what in Lionel Brett's scheme consists in the recognition of the parameters which imagination must respect and serve. Within his scheme the products of imagination, fantasy or make-believe all belong to only one of the two parents of applied art—to "images". But images alone do not make applied art, nor do they make theology.

Alan Ecclestone draws attention to this when he says of Harvey Cox, "It is not clear from the exposition of fantasy in the Feast of

² Alan Ecclestone. *Imagination and/or Fantasy*. NEW FIRE, Winter 1972, p. 172.

Fools how the costliness of the genuine laying hold of reality is to be distinguished from paying the price for fakes, or how playing the fool for Christ's sake differs from being a bloody fool by any common-sense standards". It *is* not clear, and must we not say that if it were clear, Cox would have lost what he hopes to gain by his use of fantasy and in particular his image of Christ the clown? For what this image obscures, and by Cox's own testimony is meant to obscure, is the distinction between reality and unreality. It is a projection of "our ironic faith" upon a screen which may turn out to be, ironically, not there. It is a declaration that we will face life with a jest, even if the jest turns out to be upon us. It is an attempt to do theology without reference to concrete facts, and in its way a summary of all such attempts.

This way lies the possibility of being theologians whatever happens, but at the cost of saying nothing for all our ingenious speech. It is as though architects were to lose interest in men and in materials and turn to designing purely hypothetical buildings, according to impossible designs, simply for surrealistic effect. The Christian theologian is not really free to go this way, and the test of real Christian theology is basically the same as that proposed for a real building, or a real toast-rack—does it serve its purpose? Does the theological imagery serve the purpose of witness or proclamation? Does it testify to anything beyond the theologian's mood? Does it require anything to be the case? For the theologian is not a pure artist, presenting images for their own intrinsic interest, or their power to stimulate or console. His art is like that of the architect. He has a brief to work to; there are given circumstances beyond his own devising which he must respect, and the chief among these is the witness we have received concerning Jesus.

KENNETH MASON

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF HUMOUR

Not long ago a lady came into the church asking about something. A member of the congregation who happened to be there suggested she went round to the vicarage. "Oh, I wouldn't like to do that," said the visitor, "I'm afraid I'm not at all religious." "Don't worry," came the reply, "the vicar's not at all religious either." How just right that remark was for the situation. Suppose she had said something like, "I'm sure the vicar will see you, he is always willing to see non-religious people." It sounds so pompous; and it would quickly set up inhibiting barriers in the visitor's mind between the religious and the non-religious. That chance remark brings home the religious dimension of humour and laughter. It was a humorous reply that was able to assert a solidarity of humanity between the unknown visitor, the church member and the vicar. It was humour (and perhaps only humour could do it), which said we are all in the same funny old boat, and which conveyed acceptance.

The Christian faith says that, despite everything, we are accepted by God as we are, and that in this light we are to accept one another; and we are to accept life itself without resentment, self-pity or false heroics. All these forms of acceptance can be beautifully conveyed through humour and laughter. Acceptance without humour all too often can sound patronising; someone condescending to reach down from a great height. When Thomas Carlyle overheard the lady say "I accept the universe" he must have felt like kicking her. In the event he contented himself with saying, "Gad, she'd better". But humour can convey acceptance without humbug or condescension. We see something of this in the cartoons of Andy Capp and his wife. The cartoons themselves are a kind of acceptance of the marriage relationship with all its traumas and difficulties; and within the cartoons the anti-heroine, Andy's wife Flossie, maintains, despite everything, a loving acceptance of her husband. He doesn't work, he drinks too much, he treats his wife as a slave. All this she knows, but instead of letting the knowledge fester into bitter resentment, she offers a sort of creative forgiveness of the situation by turning what she can into a laugh. She isn't just a doormat either. In one strip Andy is seen waking up feeling terrible. He shuffles down the stairs half dressed and unshaven, then slumps down at the bottom, head buried in his hands. Flossie comes up to him with a cup of hot tea and the words, "Cheer up, kid—after all, the day also has to face you."

Recently I visited a young couple, married for only eighteen months, with a young baby. The husband had only a few weeks to live, and he was at home being lovingly nursed by his family. The wife told him he was dying, and when they had got over this terrible moment they were able to joke together; yes, laugh, about the kind of person she might marry when he had gone. Perhaps you will say that this humour was just a desperate cloak thrown over what is unbearable. Certainly some humour is of this kind. As is well known, clowns and humorists are sometimes deeply despairing people; and Father Harry Williams has written well: "Is it to go on always like now, just tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow—a slow procession of dusty, greyish events with a lot of forced laughter, committee laughter, cocktail laughter, and streaks of downright pain". But the laughter that young couple managed to extract from their sad situation was of a very different kind from this. It was an expression of their love for each other, and an acceptance, despite everything, of things as they are. They could have indulged in self-pity, or made expressions of tragic despair, both very understandable reactions, but instead they managed a loving laugh. Every day laughter rings out from one end of the earth to the other; Chinese laughter, African laughter, American laughter, Eskimo laughter. Some of this laughter is cruel, mocking, despairing; but some of it is laughter of a very different kind; it is an expression of loving acceptance by people who instead of despair and resentment have chosen to laugh and make others laugh.

The religious dimension of humour can be looked at from another point of view. If you are able to laugh, it probably means you don't take the wrong things with the wrong kind of seriousness; for humour keeps things in their proper perspective. In the current debate about whether women should be ordained, one man wrote that if our Church were to do this "It would cease to be Christian and would never be able at any time to unite with the Church of Rome". What can one say to nonsense like that? A joke is the only possible response. I like the remark of a Roman Catholic who said that at the next Vatican Council the Bishops would be bringing their wives along with them and at the one after the Pope would bring her husband. A joke like that restores a sense of proportion. Some feel that religion shouldn't be laughed about. In fact it needs to be joked about more than anything in the world. Only God is to be taken with unreserved seriousness. Unfortunately we have a tendency to treat other things with the kind of seriousness that is due to God alone. Our ideas of God and the things of religion often go badly wrong here, and in order to keep itself from blasphemy religion needs plenty of jokes—like the one that once appeared in *Private Eye*. A trendy parson was in the pulpit saying, "Of course God isn't an old man with a long white beard in the sky", and above him was an old-man-with-a-white-beard-kind-of-God looking down and saying, "How does he know?"

Besides religion there is something else that we are liable to take with the wrong kind of seriousness—ourselves. An ability to make jokes about oneself, to laugh at oneself, is an essential aspect of genuine humility. One day Dr. Johnson saw a man strutting down the street as though he owned the world. He went up to him and said in stentorian tones, "Excuse me, sir, are you anybody in particular?" That man strutting up the street is most of us at one time or another. We need to be able to see ourselves doing it and laugh. One night Evelyn Waugh wrote in his diary about a letter he had heard about. "Lady Eden writes to Ann Fleming. The Railses found Evelyn Waugh rather a bore." He then added ruefully: "I thought I had charmed and delighted them." Few of us are so willing to admit the gap that exists between our own idea of ourselves and other people's idea of us.

Godspell opens with a number of people on stage each holding a placard representing one of the world's greatest philosophers, Socrates, Nietzsche, Kant and so on. They all spout away at their philosophies until the sound merges into a single babble, babble, babble. Then from the back of the auditorium comes a spangled harlequin, blowing on a child's musical instrument and singing, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord". Then in comes Jesus as a clown. Jesus as a clown is consciously contrasted with the philosophers, those who take the wrong kind of things with the wrong kind of seriousness. One of the most widely admired men of our time is Jimmy Saville, who goes around in a bright canary tracksuit, a slogan on his back and long blond hair. He doesn't mind people laughing at him as well

as with him; he has that kind of humility. Jesus had a great deal to say about not taking oneself too seriously, and he spent much of his time trying to show people how silly they looked when they did—with the help of a very sharp wit. He told stories, got people involved with the characters, and then with a sudden twist at the end showed people to themselves. They were presented with the choice of laughing at themselves or getting angry with Jesus. If only God is to be taken with unreserved seriousness we need the humility to laugh at both the pretensions of religion and our own petty vanities.

Even nonsense humour has a theological aspect. As the word implies, with this humour we enter a very strange world indeed. The world of *Alice in Wonderland*, for example, where large Cheshire cats grin down from trees; where one minute Alice is six feet tall and the next only a few inches; a world full of odd verses:

The time has come, the Walrus said,
To talk of many things;
Of shoes and ships and ceiling wax,
Of cabbages and kings.
And why the sea is boiling hot
And whether pigs have wings.

Why should many adults as well as children enjoy the zany, the odd, the bizarre, the literally nonsensical? Normally we are at much pains to make our world as rational and predictable as possible. The connections we make between things are the ones hallowed by long usage. We connect kings with crowns and thrones, not with sealing wax and cabbages. G. K. Chesterton, who wrote much nonsense humour, believed that this was a way of looking at existence that was akin to religious humility and wonder. It stops us taking things for granted. Normally we divide the world up into the ordinary and extraordinary. The ordinary is a matter of getting up, going to work, seeing friends, watching TV. The extraordinary might be such things as seeing a volcano erupt, looking down from the top of Everest or surviving forty days in an open boat. But in truth this is a very arbitrary distinction; and the religious man might almost be defined as one for whom nothing is ordinary any more. The poet Walt Whitman once wrote:

Why who makes much of a miracle?
As for me I know nothing else but miracles . . .
To me every hour of light and day is a miracle,
Every cubic inch of space a miracle.

We look at something; we realise with a shock it need not have been, and the fact that it is surges in upon us. And the fact that it has a particular character becomes overwhelming. As G. K. Chesterton wrote: "I do not think that there is anyone who takes quite such a fierce pleasure in things being themselves as I do. The startling wetness of water excites and intoxicates me: the fieriness of fire, the steeliness of steel, the unutterable muddiness of mud." It is interesting that

Chesterton, who took such fierce pleasure in things being themselves, appreciated nonsense humour so much. It is because nonsense questions are a matter of fact, taking things for granted, way of looking at the world, that they evoke in us a sense of the extraordinary nature of the ordinary.

The Spirit of God seeks to open our eyes to the fabulous nature of the world about us; to make us feel that nothing is ordinary any more, for, like Alice, we are in a wonderland. Nonsense humour can be a valuable ally in prising our eyes open to behold and exciting our minds to marvel.

RICHARD HARRIES

THE REDISCOVERY OF TECHNIQUES — 2

In an earlier essay, I wrote of the widespread discovery, by modern, Western man, of three very old and obvious truths:

1. The reality of the psychically perceived "inner dimension" of creation;
2. The possibility of conscious participation in this psychically perceived inner dimension; and
3. That meditational techniques provide a well-trying and effective means of penetrating the threshold of consciousness without recourse to drugs.

I went on to speak of the communication breakdown between theologically trained minds and the rapidly emerging "Meditation Movement" and the consequential failure both to relate meditational technique to Christian devotion and to distinguish adequately between spirituality and psychism.

In this essay, and in the essay which will follow it, I shall begin to consider some of these meditational techniques themselves, and to seek to relate them to specifically Christian understandings.

Meditation is essentially a matter of *technique*. The word "meditation" is used loosely, but properly understood it is not prayer in itself; it can be done prayerfully, and if done prayerfully it can lead into contemplation which is its normal and proper prayerful intention. But in the realm of prayer terminologies are never very satisfactory, and the term "Contemplative Meditation" is probably the best to describe the kind of techniques which we shall be considering, when they are performed with prayerful intent.

Techniques can be gathered under two main headings; these are the "Psycho-Physical" and the "Psycho-Spiritual"; in this essay I shall consider the former and attend to the latter at another time.

Psycho-Physical Techniques

These are essentially three in number:

1. *Posture* (in Sanscrit, "Asana"). The Western ideas of correct posture for prayer are much clouded by our somewhat unbalanced

devotion to the Passion. It has long been popularly regarded as almost essential either to kneel, or to stand for prayer. But the Holy Spirit came upon the Church when they were all *sitting*, and in fact there can be no necessary sacred posture for a Christian who is himself a Temple of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, there is one, perfectly natural, psycho-physical necessity for all men: unless the head and spinal column are erect and aligned, recollection is exceedingly difficult to maintain, and with some people, impossible.

Asana, therefore, has to do with the attainment of a correct and natural posture which will allow interior silence to be attained readily. There is much esoteric tradition behind all this, and it is by no means to be discounted, but suffice it to say that for the average Western European, the best posture for meditation is likely to be one in which he is seated upright on a low stool, and preferably with the legs crossed at the ankles. The reason for this latter requirement need not detain us. It is sufficient that it "works".

With Asana goes relaxation. Such are the tensions of modern, Western life that it is necessary for women in pregnancy to undergo training in systematic relaxation of muscles in order to be able to perform without excessive trauma the most natural of all human functions, that of childbirth. By the same token, we do well to recognise that the systematic relaxation of muscles is a well-nigh essential prerequisite if true interior silence is to be attained—and maintained. This is, after all, only good manners to "Brother Ass" who wishes to pray too!

2. *Breathing* (in Sanscrit, "Pranayama"). A rough and ready rendering of the Sanscrit word is "deep and regular breathing", but it really means "identification with the life-force". In Eastern meditation, breath control is regarded as an essential psycho-physical preliminary to the attainment of interior silence. Deep and regular breathing is a profoundly relaxing exercise, but by no means is this the sum total of Pranayama.

Pranayama involves the use of the pictorial imagination, and in the imagination, a sea of colour is breathed in until the whole being is, in imagination, identified with the colour. The psycho-physical effects of colour are profound, and a conscious identification with colour, by the combined use of the respiratory system and the pictorial imagination, can have a deeply harmonising, and either relaxing or stimulating effect. "Prana" is the "life force", the divine radiance. Pranayama is an exercise in identification with the divine radiance (and may thus be likened to the waters of Baptism). The relative unfamiliarity of these ideas to Western Christians must not tempt them to scepticism, for identification with colour is a regular feature of Yogic and Occult meditation, and is among the many valuable re-discoveries made, in the West, by the much misunderstood Rudolf Steiner. It is a potent technique.

The whole Eastern approach to Pranayama has been misunderstood in the West, even by those who practise Eastern techniques. The

secret of the whole thing is *not* merely deep and regular breathing, or even colour-identification, but rather it is the turning on of a kind of psychic spotlight within the consciousness which observes the natural rhythms of the body and conforms to them. It is at this point that the very real psycho-physical effects of Pranayama begin to be made manifest.

Pranayama is a technique for the attainment of deep, interior silence. It helps to lay the psycho-physical foundations for contemplation and has as its end-in-view, "Samadhi" or, in the language of Western spirituality, "the Prayer of Union".

3. *Tantric Yoga*. The chanting of a word or of a phrase over and over again until a near-hypnotic state has been reached is not an exercise with which Westerners imagine themselves to be familiar. However, it is manifest at football matches, in junior school playgrounds and in some of the Gospel choruses which characterise certain forms of present-day Pentecostal revivalism. As a technique this is potent, and its psycho-physical potency may be employed for good or for ill, in magic or in prayer.

In Eastern Tantric Yoga there are a great many Sanscrit words, ending with the letter "M", which are known as *Bijas*. A Bija has its own meaning as a word, but its meditational use is non-rational. It is the *sound*, or rather the particular *vibratory effect* of the Bija which is important. In the chanting of Bijas, the terminal "M" is, as it were, held back (rather as in the English "NG" ending) and made to resonate "within". Its effects are psycho-physical and act upon the nervous system, certain resonated sounds being stimulating and others being pacifying. Some are regarded in Tantric Yoga circles as being positively dangerous. The adept will try out the vibratory effect of a number of Bijas, choose the one most helpful to him and, after a little while, he will come to the point where he is able to *chant it silently*—an exercise of the imagination—when its power to induce interior silence becomes profound. The Bija best-known to Westerners is "OM", the "I AM" (or rather the "He Is" or "It Is"—or even the "Yes") of the Hindu concept of divinity.

The use of Bijas or Mantras (devotional phrases to focus the will) in Group Meditation has the effect of inducing not only a deep, interior silence in individuals, but also a quite astonishing rapport in the group as a whole, as the writer is well able to testify from personal experience. Tantric Yoga, as manifest in the West, is nothing if not eclectic. It borrows from Sanscrit and Arabic equally—and in certain occult traditions, from Hebrew as well. The Arabic "LL" (as in Allah) can have a similar psycho-physical effect as the Sanscrit "M", and the early Jewish, Kabbalistic tradition of meditation upon the letters of the Hebrew alphabet (the Name of God) evidences a strong Tantric Yoga tradition which is indeed to be found under many different names in most of the religions of the world. It is exceedingly probable that the familiar "Amen" had at one time a Tantric Yoga significance!

The West has become narrowly rationalistic and scant attention is paid to actual technique by the great teachers. We are exhorted to prayer, but seldom taught any of the techniques by which recollection can naturally be attained. Asana and Pranayama are invaluable—and for many, essential — preliminaries to deep interior recollection. Tantric Yoga, in one of its many forms, is for some an invaluable aid to the threshold of contemplation, but its teachers are few, its practice haphazard and unrecognised for what it is, and the very idea foreign-seeming to the majority. It must be said, too, that for the naturally contemplative, those to whom interior silence comes readily, the techniques of Tantric Yoga are of no particular value other than in Group Meditations.

Where does all this get us?

The adoption and practice of Psycho-physical techniques is, in itself, *no more than technique*. Asana, Pranayama and even Tantric Yoga are, by themselves, no more than ways of attaining inner peace and harmony—and upon the natural level only. They may be employed as well for selfish ends as for devotional. The magician may use them as readily as the mystic. But for the Christian who seeks to attain contemplation, they effect both the involvement of “the psycho-physical” side of the nature God gave him, and also its consecration in prayer. Upon this foundation of nature, Grace can build and transform. And it were folly—and ungracious—to neglect that sacred vehicle of our Lord’s Incarnation—Brother Ass!

A. E. DUNCAN

WISHFUL THINKING

There were once two goldfish, a lady and a gentleman, who lived in a large bowl on a table which stood in the drawing-room of a handsome house in the country. The lady goldfish was of a rather religious disposition, but the gentleman goldfish prided himself on his culture and inclined towards scepticism. Every evening the owner of the house would come and drop a liberal amount of ants’ eggs into the bowl, so that the goldfish found themselves well provided for. They often discussed the question: where do the ants’ eggs come from? The gentleman was convinced that it could all be explained by natural causes; the temperature of the bowl, he maintained, caused the ants’ eggs to rise to the surface; the drop in temperature at evening caused them to fall again. The lady was not so certain; she liked to believe that there was a kindly providence who dropped them in from outside. This suggestion annoyed the gentleman, who held that nothing could exist outside the bowl: “You see, my dear,” he used to say, “I can provide a natural explanation for the phenomenon. We have no need for your imaginary providence”. “But,” protested the lady, “some evenings I have seen a shape outside the bowl coming and dropping

the eggs in." "Ah," replied the gentleman, "what did this alleged 'shape' look like?" "Well," said the lady, "I suppose it's rather like a very large goldfish; it comes swimming up to the bowl, drops in the eggs, and swims away again." "There you are," explained the gentleman triumphantly, "you say it's like a goldfish. Obviously your subconscious has invented this 'shape' and projected it on to the side of the bowl. You are the victim, my dear, of your own wishful thinking." The lady made no reply, but she was never quite convinced.

The "wishful thinking" argument is very popular nowadays, and is frequently used in order to explain away the validity of religious experience. If the argument was not invented by Freud, he is at least responsible for its wide dissemination. Many a schoolboy who has never read Freud nevertheless thinks he has a conclusive disproof of religious experience in Freud's "wishful thinking" argument. Curiously enough I have never heard it used as an argument against atheism; but it is quite capable of being used that way. If for some people the thought of a benevolent providence affords comfort and solace, for others the thought that there is no power outside themselves, and no danger of their ever being called to account, must afford just as much comfort. I remember when I was a student having regular arguments with an elderly man who took the atheist position. It did not occur to me then, but I have often reflected since that his atheism was an obvious example of wishful thinking. He had led a somewhat useless life, wasted a number of golden opportunities in his youth, become a burden and nuisance to his closest relatives in his middle age; and when I knew him only had a job because someone in an influential position had found it for him and pushed him into it. Obviously for such a man the belief that there was no moral power behind the universe that could face him with awkward questions about himself was an extremely comforting one.

The truth is that the "wishful thinking" argument only applies to one particular conception of God, C. S. Lewis' indulgent grandfather God who only wants everyone to have a good time. It does not apply to the God known in Christianity, and in other contexts outside Christianity for that matter. It does not apply to a God who makes awkward and uncomfortable demands on his worshippers. It does not explain why Dietrich Bonhoeffer went back to Germany just before the war, knowing that at the very least "bonds and imprisonment" awaited him. It does not explain why Socrates' *daemon* told him that he must accept the death sentence of the Athenian Court instead of escaping from prison, as he could have done. It does not explain why Jesus went to the cross deliberately.

Freud has, of course, an explanation for this sort of thing, but it is an outsider's explanation and is totally unconvincing to anyone who knows religion from the inside. At one point in his writings he considers the case of St. Francis, who would appear to have shown disinterested love when he stripped himself of his possessions and went to live among the beggars. He had to, says Freud, because of his

urge for self-immolation. In fact, in behaving as did Francis was giving way to sheer self-indulgence. This is a "heads I win, tails you lose" type of argument and will only convince those who are already convinced that religion is nonsense and who are looking for any argument to explain away instances of disinterested love. Indeed, whenever Freud attempts to speak as from within a religious context he sounds like a tone-deaf man explaining Mozart. Repentance, for example, he explains as being a process whereby the devotee attempts to propitiate the deity. All this tells us is that Freud never experienced genuine repentance.

The debunking of religious experience is fairly widespread by now. It even affects the public media. There was a time when it was not considered good form to make fun of religion in public; but that has all gone by now. There is one T.V. comedian whose stock-in-trade seems to be jokes about God. To anyone who knows any theology they appear to be crude and silly jokes, rather like a schoolboy making jokes about Shakespeare. But, as most of his hearers don't know anything about theology, presumably his jokes about God seem to them devastatingly funny. An interesting feature of this tendency is that jokes about the Christian religion are quite all right. It wouldn't do to make jokes about Islam, of course, Muslims mightn't like it. It must be admitted at the same time that it is not only unbelievers who are anxious to debunk religious experience. I know a university student who has recently come to a mature and tested belief in Christianity. He has a slightly older relative who has also recently been converted, but he has been converted to a very narrow, conservative type of evangelicalism. He cannot persuade himself that his younger relative is really a Christian at all because he has not encountered the precise form of religious experience which the older man claims to have undergone. The student recently showed me a letter which the elder man had written to him: "Either you are going to hell or I am," he had written, "and I know that I am not". This type of convert was neatly pinpointed by Jesus himself: he had become five times more a child of hell than he was in his previous state of agnosticism.

To reject the validity of all religious experience out of hand is, therefore, ignorant and foolish. I know that experts do it every day, explicitly or implicitly, on the media and in the newspapers. But experts do many ignorant and foolish things. This does not mean that all religious experience is equally valid or that there are no criteria for establishing what is more valid and what less. There are criteria, the best general criterion is supplied by Jesus himself: "by their fruits you shall know them". But this is not a litmus paper test; it takes time to apply. Nevertheless, a good question to ask of any religious tradition is what sort of people does it produce. I, for example, would never deny the validity of the religious experience claimed by Hindus, and this is because I have met Mahatma Gandhi's greatest living disciple, Vinoba Bhave. His experience was authenticated by his character. In the deepest sense, religious experience means obedience,

obedience to such call as you have heard. Indeed, I would even go so far as to say that there is only one thing which God requires of every man in all conditions and at all times, and that is obedience to what each man knows to be good and right. He who follows that path must find that it will ultimately lead him to God.

ANTHONY HANSON

TRAINING FOR AN URBAN MINISTRY

Four years ago, the Urban Ministry Project was setting up its first training programme for ten students from Ripon Hall Theological College, Oxford. Each student spent a month in London; half of that time he was either with an active community organisation or some sort of pressure group. They were there to discover how change was taking place in our cities, and how groups were responding to change or even directing it. Their fieldwork was extended by visits to church and secular projects; their experiences provided an agenda for intensive theological work to discover how conviction of faith sustained or judged the way issues were taken up and projects developed. Back at Ripon Hall in the months afterwards the students prepared a Proposal for Ministry—both a statement of his theological purpose and a plan to develop projects arising out of his experience on his placement.

From this modest beginning U.M.P. has established itself as not only providing a necessary dimension to the training of ordinands but an important resource for clergy. So far, seventy clergy have taken part in U.M.P. programmes.

The focus of the clergy-training programmes is the participant's parish or neighbourhood; he is asked to make a systematic examination of the area in which he works. His analysis should be an instant picture of a changing scene. The purpose of the survey is to help the participants discern local, societal issues. In its early days U.M.P. described its activities in an almost private pseudo-sociological, theological language, derived from the Urban Training Centre at Chicago—the parent of all urban training schemes. As U.M.P. has found its feet, so it has been able to discard jargon. But “issue” in U.M.P. terms still has a particular meaning. An issue is more like the problem behind the problem; an issue is a matter of fundamental contention. For example, arguments about the siting of a new primary school in a parish were seen to reveal fundamental differences in attitude towards education or different assumptions about health were the cause of sharp disagreements between a hospital and former patients who wished to set up a Patients Advisory Service. The discernment and recognition of U.M.P. “issues” is the crux of the realigning of the clergy participants' commitments; he has to discover the issues, then decide how, when, and who to join, and to learn to interpret what he

says and does in the light of his understanding of the Gospel, and to the Church.

The participant is asked to complete his survey in three months; this provides the agenda for a ten-day period in London and Morden. With the help of sociologists and theologians each survey is examined in detail; questions are asked about the assumptions and attitudes in the attitudes and opinions expressed in the survey. To help the students to become more aware of "issues", part of each course is spent looking at an issue of current concern—for example, housing, or education, or race relations. The effect of these "issue" seminars with the student's work on the "issues" in his neighbourhood is to sharpen his awareness and response to what is happening round about him. Clergy, too often, assume a sort of professional neutral attitude to social and political matters, which U.M.P. would question as an appropriate rôle for all occasions!

Alongside the discovery of issues is the interpretative theological work. The question is how does a particular theological perspective qualify or enrich commitment to an issue. U.M.P. does not set out to retrain clergy just to be community workers; that is done better professionally in other places. It seems to help clergy and others who may appear at times to be community workers interpret what they say and do in the light of their convictions. This raising of Christian consciousness aims to add a depth and quality to their ministry, as well as providing the opportunity to share their understanding with others.

It would be misleading to give the impression that the ten-day period at Morden is a highly over-intellectualised, abstract training period. The clergy have the chance to visit secular and ministerial projects, to compare and contrast their own style of ministry with each other and with clerical consultants of widely different approaches. An important feature in the raising of Christian consciousness has been the discovery of how non-verbal elements of worship, particularly liturgical dance, can become vital invigorating resources.

A week in St. Peter's, Morden, is prefaced with the three-day Plunge; the student is given 75p and for two nights and three days has the opportunity to absorb new sights and new sounds in London. The Plunge is like a retreat; you discover more about yourself—about being frightened, hungry, bored, lonely, or grateful for offers of help and things you normally take for granted—than about the condition of the homeless. It provides a space for the unfreezing of attitudes, and thus provides the best possible introduction to a concentrated learning experience. The Plunge has been criticised as a gimmick for publicity purposes, and on the grounds of its artificial nature and short period of time. But we have not discovered anything else which can adequately take its place. References to experiences on the Plunge which are shared in a lengthy debriefing session immediately it is over, occur again and again in the training period.

Three months after the ten-day Morden period, the students meet for two days at Ripon Hall, Oxford, and then following a further

three months for another two days. These review sessions are provided to check progress with the help of consultants and to ensure that projects are started. At the session, members of the congregations are invited. The training as it has been described here may seem to be clerically based. Indeed, in the early days, U.M.P. seemed to assume that clergy were expected themselves to initiate projects rather than to join existing ones. But U.M.P. has learnt a good deal in four years, and discussion and consultation are built into the whole nine months' training.

U.M.P. has been going long enough now to assess its value. It has given many clergy confidence and courage to involve themselves and others in local issues in a way not previously thought possible. In these parishes it would be known that the local Church was taking part in local affairs. Sometimes congregations have grown in numbers; sometimes congregations have come to life in the arguments and discussions about the appropriateness or otherwise in setting up a Neighbourhood Council or an Advisory Centre for Immigrants.

But there are important reservations about the "success" of U.M.P.—which together raise vital questions for the Church if it in any way wants to be concerned with directing the course of change (instead of just responding to it or ignoring it altogether).

However radical or revolutionary community development has been, organisation designed to enable a community to help itself has done little or nothing to change the system. The redistribution of power for those who have most of it to those who have little or none has not happened. Local government may, as a result of pressure, become more responsive to the needs of a deprived area, but the system remains intact. The city with its intractable problems continues to dehumanise and destroy the human spirit. It seems inviolate. Political and social change, even vast resources of money and expertise, do not seem to prevail to make a better life. If the Church wishes to pursue genuine alternatives then it has to look elsewhere.

It follows that, while it is certainly right for a local church to help to make a neighbourhood a more humane place to live in, that is not the whole point, nor the end of the matter. The Church has one primary function which is through its message of redemption and salvation to meet man's deepest longings and hopes. And if that gospel is really heard and understood then the Church must stand apart from many of the attitudes and assumptions which lie behind the development of Western society—the accumulation of possessions, the destruction of the natural environment, the life style which the advertisers proclaim as the good life based on keeping up and getting on in the urban jungle. If local churches began to ask questions about their style of life as individuals, as families, as congregations, and if they are faced with taking seriously the gospel, then they will discover that they have it within them to dislocate and undermine some of the ways of thinking and action which prevent wholeness and fullness of life. (It is curious how in wealthy suburban churches, members of the con-

gregation may be busy in caring for others, or raising money for good causes, but do not consider it appropriate to share their gadgets, or their gardens or their cars).

U.M.P. is a unique training organisation in that its staff has to practise what it preaches, since the staff are engaged either in parochial ministry or in teaching at a theological college. It is only as we have begun to look at the issues as rigorously as we can that some of us have seen that if the Church is to be a beacon in any way for the future then it must start, as soon as possible, to search out and develop alternate ways of living.

DONALD REEVES

PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE

“The Bishop will be coming to us for confirmation at the end of May and anyone who would like to be confirmed is invited to the vestry on Thursday evenings beginning on 4th April.” Preparing young people (and increasingly older people as well) for Confirmation has long been the task of the Vicar or (if he has one) the curate, and, on the whole, it is a task which the clergy have thought about and prayed about a great deal. In a recent survey carried out in connection with the Ely Commission’s report on Christian Initiation, it was found that the average series of classes lasted just a little longer than the fictitious one above (average of 8–10 sessions) and that nearly all of them were conducted by the clergy. The main emphasis of the course was on “potted Doctrine”, with special emphasis on Communion and the Confirmation service itself. Most parishes reported that there was virtually no “post-confirmation” training.

For many years we parish clergy have tried to improve this, but our efforts have reaped a meagre harvest. An alarming number of new communicants just “disappear” within weeks of the confirmation and, perhaps even more upsetting, few people look back to their own classes with much enjoyment or understanding. “I feel our Vicar was very nice but quite honestly I can’t remember a thing he said—it just didn’t mean anything to us,” is a typical quote. I can recall my own bitter experience when, green from college, I gave three twelve-year-olds the finest exposition of the Incarnation ever delivered. When I had finished, the one question I received was, “Do I have to wear white?” Quite simply, that was what confirmation meant to her.

In the Ely Report we have tried to tackle this problem; I will leave to others the theological arguments that have surrounded that report, and simply deal with the pastoral and teaching side. It is sufficient to say that the Commission were unanimous that Confirmation should not be the gateway to Communion; nor should it be the occasion for a crash course on doctrine; rather, Confirmation should become a ministry rather than a rite and far greater emphasis should be placed on preparing young people for full Christian life. Confirmation almost certainly has a place at the end of this process when the

young person has had some years of training and communicant life behind him; but our whole emphasis on preparing people for confirmation is wrong; it is Christian life that we need to prepare people for.

Having the privilege of being on the Commission to represent "the parish clergy", I have been able to take up the practical implications of the report and try them out in practice in our own parish here in Swindon. To my great joy I can now report that the training recommendations put forward in that report do work and work well. As yet, of course, we cannot admit people to communion before they are confirmed, but we hope that within a couple of years the Church of England will see that this is at least a possible variant of the traditional order and we shall do so at once.

But this apart, all the other recommendations are now in use and over five years we have begun to acquire a good deal of practical information and experience. Partly springing from our own experience, and partly from the report itself and what others have tried, many parishes are now going over either singly or in groups (including ecumenical groups) to a type of training known as Quest. This was a name chosen in Swindon as a neutral name which did not refer to confirmation but showed that the training for Christian life was an ongoing thing. A short report published by the Ecumenical Parish of Swindon Old Town, *Preparation for the Christian Life* (71 Bath Road, Swindon, 12½p, including postage) has sold thousands of copies and produced many varied and exciting schemes in many different parishes and Churches.

The practice varies from place to place, but the principles behind it are similar, and these are what I want to set out in the remainder of this article. The most important I have already stated, but because of its importance let me spell it out again. We are preparing people for Christian life and not just for one service of Confirmation; our young people are confirmed when they wish to be, and for some this is at the end of Year One of Quest, for others Year Two, and for a few Year Three. We find it most encouraging that about a third of young people (at this stage 14) wish to continue for another year before being confirmed.

The second most important element in Quest is that it is largely led by lay people. We clergy are constantly saying that the Church is bigger than the clergy, but we do not always grasp what this means. Finding lay leaders is not easy, but it is being done in quite a number of places. In our ecumenical parish, when we have Anglican, URC and Methodist Quest groups all working in close co-operation, we have about 25 leaders, and these are mostly people in their twenties and thirties. The clergy are there to train, help and encourage the leaders, but most of the actual work with the children is done by the laity. Training is, of course, essential, but thanks to training we have a group of people who are invaluable in so many ways. It's sad to hear clergy say, "Oh, we couldn't do anything like your Quest; I am far too busy". Do we really want our lay people to help in the work

of the Church or do we just want them in the pews listening to us?

So far our experience shows that we need a child in Quest for at least three years and it is very encouraging that a large number are still there at the end of the three years asking for more. Each year is run as a self-contained group with its own leaders and programme (though in smaller Churches this may not be possible). In Year One we take 13/14-year-olds; in Year Two 14/15, and the final year 15/16, and although it means missing a year we would put a new teenager into the second year if they were nearly 15. During the three years they are in Quest the training team can get to know them and they meet a large number of lay people, so building a bridge for them into the Church life. This is one reason why it is important to have lay people involved in the training. Some people assume that a three years course will put people off. We have not found it so at all. Our first Year One had 23 members—this year it has over 40.

In each year the first loyalty of everyone is to the weekly Family Communion and our only regret is that they can not receive Communion until they choose to be confirmed. But all come to this service. Quest meets on its own on about 15 Monday evenings and for two residential weekends each year. In this way there are fairly long breaks both for the leaders and the children. In common with the Church generally we have come to realise the tremendous value of “getting away together”, and I’m sure our leaders would agree that the weekends we spend together are the most important part of Quest. These vary from long weekends at our Diocesan Youth Centre to a weekend at Coventry, and another one seeing some of the “other” side of life in London. Not only is a lot of the teaching done at these weekends but the fellowship is built up.

The teaching is mostly of an experimental nature and again we have learnt a lot as we have gone along. For four months we will study change—change in us—in our world—our ideas. Change in how man has understood God and how the Church has changed. Around this theme we use visits, rôle plays, drama and music—and the children enjoy what they are learning. Perhaps we can be criticised in that we do not try to give a condensed doctrine course—but in fact almost every aspect of the faith is covered in a practical way and we try to present the great truths of God in ways that will be meaningful to their own age group and experience. If the child grows up in Christ then he or she will want to go on learning and there is much that we cannot give in three years. But if we have bored that child and made religion seem dull and formal, then they won’t be there to learn in future years.

But don’t think that we are just teaching them a vague, wishy-washy Christianity. The aim of Quest is to lead a person to Christ and to see his own life in the life of Christ’s body the Church.

We make a special point in the second year of Quest of linking up the members with older members of the Church who are active in their faith. In the second half of Year Two each member has to

choose one of six practical ways of Church service; these are as follows: Sunday school teacher; server; bell-ringer; visiting house-bound people; doing old people's gardens; and helping in the Chaplain's Department at the local hospital. The last-named is the most popular! For six months they are put in a "cadet" situation with older members and carry out certain very definite functions. They do not have to carry on after the six months unless they wish to, but it is good to see that most do. In this way they meet and work with a large number of adult Christians and they find that Christianity involves sacrifice and actual work. To many of our young people this side of Quest is of the utmost importance.

But in these days of a very mobile society it is not good enough merely to train a person in the way of life of only one parish; they have to learn that the Church is much bigger and more varied than just their own Church and its "peculiar" tradition. In the first place, being an Ecumenical Parish, it is easy to introduce them to the worship and life of the other Churches in the parish, but we go beyond this and at the end of the second year they spend a weekend in a totally different type of parish somewhere away from Swindon. Usually we send them in parties of a leader and four members to different parishes and schools that we know in Bristol. They stay with Church members and attend services and meet clergy and others. They are armed with a questionnaire to help them find out about the other parish and what goes on. They are sometimes critical of what they find, but they also come back with many new ideas and say, "Why don't we do this or that?" Later we invite all the places we have visited back to a weekend here and we repay the hospitality. Now that there are a number of other Quest groups in being we are tending to visit Quest parishes, as this is of great mutual benefit.

I wrote my first published report on Quest after it had been going a mere three years and one's evaluation had to be tentative; even now after five years it is still early days, but because so many other places have now taken up Quest we feel confident in saying that the system works—provided that the clergy and lay leaders are keen to make it work.

DEREK PALMER

CHANGING THE RIVER

Joseph Cardijn, founder of the Young Christian Workers' movement, once said:

"I am not trying to catch fish; I am trying to change the river."

For centuries, Christians have been content with attempts to catch fish, to isolate those individuals who will adhere to the faith. Insofar as we have thought about the "river", the stream of life in which we are caught up, it has been in terms of person-to-person relationships—"I and thou" relationships as Martin Buber expresses it. But the river is a mass society, and if we are to respond to the

process of secularisation—which according to Harvey Cox is “the turning of man’s attention towards this world”—then we have to permeate the depths of that river.

The Christian response called for is said to be “political involvement”. But why? And what does this mean? The demand sounds most imprecise.

The meaning of “politics”

Not a small amount of confusion is caused by different notions of what “politics” entails. For most people, politics centres on government at local and national level, “the establishment”, in other words. Given this understanding, to urge the Christian to engage in politics is to urge him to work either in political parties or in pressure-groups of some kind.

But this notion of politics refers only to politics as a power structure. An alternative is that raised by Aristotle’s “man is by nature a political animal”. Here, politics is seen as the whole of a closely-woven network of multiple interdependence between men, especially as it has emerged in twentieth-century western societies. The Christian’s entry-point into this global system may well be other than political parties and pressure-groups.

In this latter sense, to engage in politics is at base to engage in the struggle to understand and change the quality of human relationships. The entry point may well be involvement with ordinary people and activities as before, but with in addition an attempt to establish the link between these and the macro-political situation. And there always is one. Political involvement means an attempt to grasp the root causes of consequences originally seen.

The New Testament and politics

There have been attempts to show that Jesus was “political” in that he worked directly to change society by the creation of a new movement. Galilee, after all, was a centre of unrest; among his closest disciples was Simon, who according to Luke was a zealot, the name given to militant supporters of national independence among the Jews; above all, the entry in triumph into Jerusalem is seen by Matthew as fulfilling an old prophecy of the king’s coming to Zion and was accompanied by scenes of dangerous popular enthusiasm.

Had he done this, Christ would have been acting true to Biblical tradition, which tells people to “seek justice and correct oppression” (Isaiah 1:17). But though Christ was engaged in the contemporary life of his nation, he nonetheless refused to play the full rôle of Messiah of popular expectations, with all its political connotations.

At the same time, Christ’s vision *was* of the most radical kind. It was not merely confined to a restructuring of society. It extended beyond that to a reorientation of mankind. First and foremost, because we are to love God, we are not to love the world. We are totally to reorder our priorities: “Everyone who humbles himself shall be exalted; everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled”. This is so

that we can live not for ourselves but for others. And such generosity is to be indiscriminating and to the limit of seventy times seven. Notice the emphasis on the meaninglessness of vision and love without resultant involvement. "Faith," we are told by St. James, "does not exist without works."

Exactly what are these works to be? It is imperative to realise that the New Testament does not provide the answers to questions in the form "exactly what?"—it can only be seen as a series of clues to such answers. The Bible will encourage an appreciation of the depths to which love and concern are to be carried, which must be the foundation of the response of the Christian. But the twentieth century world which he faces is characterised by complex interdependencies inconceivable to New Testament writers, and so one cannot expect the Bible to furnish the details or even the exact nature of the response.

C. H. Dodd asks us to see the Bible as

"vivid and startling *illustrations* of the way in which the quality and direction of God's treatment of his children might be reproduced in human relations."

In particular we know how much the early Christians transformed their own communities:

"All . . . shared their belongings one with another. They would sell their property and possessions and distribute the money among all according to what each one needed." (Acts 2: 44-45.)

St. Paul said: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ", and J. A. T. Robinson points out that he uses the same word "politeuesthe" which later in the epistle he is to use of a Christian's citizenship, and which we use for "politics".

Pope Pius said "today charity is political". Charity demands involvement to its fullest extent. We have to be priest, prophet and king: a priest in consecrating the world according to God's plan.

To change man or to change society?

So far it would be difficult for a Christian to disagree. The dichotomy between political and apolitical Christians lies not at the conceptual level, but lies in some having succeeded in entering into the spirit of "political Christianity" and some having failed. The point where verbal disagreement does tend to emerge is when the apolitical Christian makes the point that if Christ's aim was a total transformation of man, then all we have to do is to follow out Christian principles and then these will transform the world.

The political Christian here jumps in with several qualifications. He argues that to suggest that changing man and changing society are alternatives is to make a false dichotomy.

Firstly, changing man without changing society may be impossible anyway. In a very real sense it is a society that makes men what they are. For example, a man brought up in a world where so much is centred on material gain, and where consumerism predominates, inevitably makes his main concern his own material well-being.

Secondly, the hidden assumption is that the Christian should transform individuals, but that it is no part of the work of the Christian to participate in altering the way man organises his communal affairs. But, as this is a democracy, it may be a case of "rendering unto Caesar"—it may be his duty! The trouble is that in countries like ours, though the adult population has full formal power, the democratic processes are very far from the continuous popular involvement necessary to change the structure of society. Once the Christian realises this, he is bound to some extent to find himself engaged in a struggle on a much broader front.

As Laurence Bright has said, Christianity must be "revolutionary" today, because it cannot achieve its aims, operate its principles or indeed exist at all in any meaningful sense without a "quantitative" change in society. Though the Christian mission is broad and general, it needs in every age to find concrete realisation through something more specific.

A Christian politics

To say that Christianity must be made specific is to run the danger of two misunderstandings.

Firstly, there is the danger of believing that the political contribution of Christians should always lie in the communal action of groups composed specifically of Christians. There may be a case for "the Church speaking out", but the major contribution of the Church is for its members as individuals to bring to politics their unique series of contributions. As one example, the Christian vision of hope, which contrasts sharply with the modern spiritual and political crisis in which no one seems to believe in anything. Politics is not merely "the art of the possible"; it should not even be merely an art; it should be a community realising a dream; it is in the area of the dream that there is a Christian contribution to be made.

Secondly, a more likely misunderstanding is the idea that since there is no Christian blueprint, anything goes. Certain stances must surely be incompatible with the spirit of Christ, certain attitudes difficult to reconcile with the perceived situation, certain strategies difficult to reconcile with the actual lessons of experience. Agreed that no final and authoritative interpretation of these points is possible, but all Christians should at least be challenged on all three fronts.

For example, it is difficult to see how a person who is both truly Christian and truly aware can feel satisfied with a society organised on present-day lines in which the key concerns of profit, exploitation, and wants contrast sharply with the Christian alternatives of concern, co-operation and needs. It is uncertain how long it would take to evolve a society not based on self-interest, but it is difficult to justify not attempting to work for one however far away it may be.

Christendom now

It would be wrong to give the impression that the "left Christian" is home and dry. It is too easy to extract from the Christian tradition

those strands that fit in with your own way of living and thinking. On Kierkegaard's assumption that we are all "becoming Christians" and not "being Christians", Christ must be saying something that it hurts to hear. Equally, the vast bulk of Christians neither receive nor transmit the full message of Christ. They certainly do not transmit it. Christians today are either so identified with the world or else so remote from it that, according to John Robinson, in neither case can they speak to it.

To say that they are too identified with the world is to say that their missionary rôle has been lost. Kierkegaard wondered how it was possible to be a Christian in Christendom when the message was so obfuscated with European culture and bourgeois values, in direct contradiction of the command to be in the world yet not of the world.

To say that Christians are too remote from the world is to criticise those who have never really been troubled by the thought that faith had any relevance to life, except to place moral strictures on things that they themselves wouldn't have dreamed of doing anyway. Or the modern version of the same sort who want to make religion relevant to life as long as Christians do not lose their status, their lives, their churches' good name, which means speaking of the love of God and the love of man, without saying anything that will cause dissent.

The challenge for the future

Christians need to start reflecting and to start acting. To use Laurence Bright's words once again, the present stage of vague concern for others and polite "liberal" questions has to be turned into an acute awareness of the causes of concern and the bombshell answers to those questions. And it is not enough for Christians to fill themselves with a white, respectable, paternalistic hope and to pray for a miracle; we have to *make* one and pray for help in that.

No more of this situation where Christians are more inclined to pour oil on troubled waters than to fish in them. We need to throw the oil-drums away. Come to that, we need to throw the fishing-rods away. It is time we tried to change the river.

MICHAEL J. WEBB

INTRODUCING THE CHILDREN TO CHRIST

Gerald Restall, in his article in the Summer issue about Church teaching and new patterns of R.E. in schools, says that the basic question to be asked is, "What aim should the R.E. teacher set himself?" Unfortunately he does little to answer the question, and if he has no answer to it it is not surprising that he senses a "feeling of insecurity about R.E. departments".

Much of the insecurity comes from the attitude of contemporary theorists who say that it is all right to teach about God, provided that we make no claim for His existence. But this is as foolish as expecting

a mother to tell her child all about grandfather, but not to allow an opportunity for a meeting with him. The aim of all R.E. teachers should be to tell the children about God, and to help them to find out about Him, in order to provide the chance for a meeting with Him. The teachers are there to perform the introduction.

Naturally the introduction will be performed in the way most suited to the age and ability of the children being introduced. A good hostess, when introducing strangers to each other, adapts her manner and vocabulary to the people concerned. She tries to find some starting point for a relationship, to stimulate the interest of each in the other, so that when she moves away, there is not a frosty silence, but the beginning of an interesting conversation. This is precisely what the good teacher should do for his children. He should provide the link between God and the child, so that when the child moves away from his care, the introduction which he has performed leads to an independent and fruitful relationship. And his job is easier than that of the hostess introducing strangers, for one of the parties already has intimate knowledge of the people who are being introduced to Him.

One objection which will be raised immediately will be that in a multi-racial society there will be argument as to the identity of the god to whom the children are to be introduced. Gerald Restall speaks of non-Christians moving "to a belief outside their own culture". Surely as Christians we ought boldly to claim that, although we do not know everything about God, yet in Christ we have the fullest revelation of Him? Here we are dealing with what is intended to be a universal religion, not one confined to a particular culture. The teacher should take pains to emphasise the elements in common which Christianity has with other religions, explaining carefully that any truth anywhere is of God. But he should not present Christianity as one among others. He should put it forward as the only true source of light for the world. Christian teachers are in an equivalent position to those whom Plato describes as having received the vision of the Good. They will not return to the world of shadows and pretend that the shadows are of equal value to the light, but educate those living there so that they can turn away from the shadows towards the light.

Another objection which might be raised is that definite teaching about God and introduction to Him will offend humanists. But we would never dream of saying that definite teaching about the roundness of the world ought not to be given in schools for fear of offending children of members of a flat-earth society. Yet the one objection is no more absurd than the other. In education, teacher and pupils together are involved in the study of and the discovery of truth. If truth causes offence, the fault is with the person to whom offence is caused, not in the truth disclosed. In teaching the children about God, we are teaching about ultimate truth, that truth on which all other truth depends. It would be wrong to deprive children of the chance of a glimpse of this truth because of the circumstances in which they have been brought up.

Inevitably some readers have already said, "But this is indoctrination". But here again definite teaching in Mathematics or History would not raise such an objection. If a teacher expresses his opinion that of the theories advanced as to the causes of the Second World War he supports one rather than another, that he believes one rather than the other, he will not be accused of indoctrination. The R.E. teacher cannot and should not refrain from expressing his opinions, and in doing so he will not be exerting overwhelming physical or psychological force. Of course, if by indoctrination they mean a sinister attempt on the part of Christians to force children to believe something against their will, then they are mistaken. No Christian would support the use of methods such as those used in Communist countries in order to induce belief or at least lip-service. There is no question of the will being suspended, or the reason muffled, in R.E.

But if by indoctrination they mean what the Oxford dictionary says, that is, to teach, instruct, or to imbue with a doctrine idea or opinion, then I should agree with them that what I am advocating here is indeed indoctrination, but it is not indoctrination that will result in reduction of freedom, but in greater freedom of choice.

No doubt by now teachers are saying, "Yes, we agree, but how do we introduce the children to Christ?" Here it becomes clear that all R.E. teachers should be Christians themselves, or at least have the desire to be believers. How can the teacher effect the introduction if he does not want to meet Christ himself, or if he does not believe that He exists? How can a teacher teach History with conviction if he thinks it a waste of time and completely false?

It is of first importance that the teacher should be a Christian because the introduction depends not just on what goes on in the R.E. periods, but on the whole of the relationship he has with his children. The general atmosphere of his classroom, and his work throughout the school in other subjects, are involved. But there are special areas in which careful instruction is needed.

First, careful instruction about prayer should be given, and prayer should be a normal part of everyday classroom life. The children need to be taught what prayer is, and they need to be shown how to engage in it and to be given the opportunity to do so, by joining in set prayers, by writing their own, by practising silent prayer, and by experiencing extempore prayer, especially in intercession. There should be regular prayer-times, though spontaneous acts of prayer should not be ruled out, provided that the teacher guards against becoming like the Headmaster in Alan Bennett's *Forty Years On*.

Secondly, careful instruction should be given about the Bible, particularly showing the development of the New Testament from the Old, and discretion will be used as to the suitability of the material chosen and the readiness of the children concerned—though if difficulties are encountered, this is more often an opportunity to elucidate than an indication that the material being tackled is too advanced.

Thirdly, careful instruction should be given in the doctrines of

the Church, that nucleus of agreed doctrine which forms the common basis of the main denominations of Christendom.

With work going on in all these areas, the teacher can feel that he is playing the part of a good host in doing all within his power to effect the introduction, and he can safely leave the results in the hands of God.

D. J. S. LLOYD

PALMISTRY

These hands which are stretched towards the sun
Have grained their pores with the fullness of life.
Once, there was the muscular swing of a job begun,
The grip on the shaping wood, spun on the lathe.
The daily chores for the household I fed,
The strong-fingered caress of a mother's hair.
Clasping the brown-pottery water jug I led
The way towards the fields for simple fare:
Rest and talk, sunshine on the skin.
And when my mind must move, and voice speak out,
The hands may not withstand the life within,
But demonstrate what words cannot bring out.
Hands, empty of all but air, yet grasping,
Modelling the vacant sky into an orderly array.
What may I call myself: man, in the shaping,
Spun on the lathe of God for His sole play?
Or the very tool of God, the divine hand
That brings the grinding fact of reality
Hard into the middle of a torpid land,
And will not be content with sad normality?

NIGEL SUSTINS

Resources for Education

PUTTING IT ON THE WALL

Most teachers are well aware that a picture or poster which is frequently seen will often do an excellent job of teaching for them without any more effort than that of putting it up. The Church too has been well aware of this for centuries—hence our heritage of stained glass from the Middle Ages onward! But often the problem is to find the kind of picture which will “speak” to children—or adults today. A great deal of the best material is at present coming from overseas—from Germany, France, the United States and Italy in particular. It is not cheap, but where there is no R.E. Resource Centre, a Deanery or a number of churches could well build up a library between them so that the outlay is shared and the investment made good use of. Here are a number of suggestions . . .

From Germany, *Paula Jordan* and *Hans Grüger*, working in quite different styles, offer a wide range of Biblical pictures. There are 36 Paula Jordan pictures (20 in. x 27 in.) at £1 each. She uses very striking form with usually one colour only to relieve a black cartoon. These are excellent for use with secondary level children upwards. Grüger, on the other hand, offers a range of 36 pictures (22 in. x 30 in.) in vivid colour reminiscent of stained glass and producing a real impact on the 7-14 age range. These come at £1.83.

The French material is in quite a different and much smaller style. *La Rochette* have produced a very large range of biblical pictures at 20p each (13 in. x 10 in.). These come in bright colours on a black background. They are popular with young seniors, but junior children often do not like the "blank" faces and prefer the series produced by *Vita et Pax* which has a similar format but sketches in the features and uses various coloured backgrounds.

Tableaux Bibliques are painted by *Paul Joudioux* and come in sets of three visuals—a main theme and two friezes or tableaux each containing several scenes at 75p each set. They are fully coloured and each set follows a theme such as "The Rejection of Jesus"—"Living Water"—"Encounter with Christ". The artwork is modern and in full colour.

All these pictures may be obtained through S.P.C.K., and perhaps it is worth referring to their own older series of *Pictures for the Christian Year* (a series of 59 classical art reproductions or photos, 21 in. x 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.). For those who do not know them, they are a set of reproductions of fine art paintings or photographs of sculptures. Twenty-nine are in full colour; the rest monochrome. The art standard is high. The cost is still remarkably low—coloured sheets 15p; monochrome 5p.

The storage and display of "wall" material often presents a problem. Obviously flat storage is preferable and storage cabinets of the types used in drawing offices are ideal and may be bought at considerable cost. A little ingenuity, however, can produce a similar result from dexion and wood, at about a quarter to a third of the price. For smaller collections, art portfolios may be bought at any art supplies shop.

Drawing pins are to be abhorred for the damage they do to the visuals; Blutack and similar products will fix the display firmly to the wall, and may be removed afterwards without causing damage, provided it is handled carefully. In some situations masking tape is equally efficient, though more likely to cause marking on the surface.

GERALD D. RESTALL

BOOK REVIEWS

Contemplative Prayer

Thomas Merton

Darton, Longman and Todd. 90p.

This posthumously published book of Merton's was originally published in Ireland and called *The Climate of Monastic Prayer*, a far more accurate title, since what he is primarily describing is the monastic experience. Of course, some of the problems and agonies which beset monks beset lay people too, but others, particularly the long hours in choir, have little relevance to the rest of us, and I found the change of title misled and disappointed me.

Which is not to say that there are not magnificent things in this book, especially in Merton's introduction, and in the second half of the book, when he has finished discussing monastic squabbles about the rival or complementary rôles of active and contemplative, and gets down to the nitty gritty of prayer.

For Merton, prayer is both the starting-point and the culmination of a voyage of self-discovery, of discovery of the self in relation to God. For me the most moving thing in the book was a quotation, like many of Merton's best quotations, that came from the desert. "A monk asked St. Macarius how to pray. The latter replied: 'It is not necessary to use many words. Only stretch out your arms and say: Lord, have pity on me as you desire and as you well know how! And if the enemy presses you hard, say: Lord, come to my aid!'"

The deceptive simplicity of this masks, as Merton well knew, years of costly living. St. Macarius, scoured of his illusions by the harsh realities of the desert, has reduced his prayer, has been reduced by life, to this single naked cry, in which all the essentials of prayer are concentrated. He has survived all the projections and inflationary ideas that tempt religious man and has come full circle, back to the simplicity of the child, or the "ordinary" man, who knows no more than his desperate need.

It is such people, I believe, who "know" (in the Taoist phrase), and it is because Merton himself has so clearly experienced this creative brokenness that it is possible to trust him in a field where there are few who seem to speak with authority. He charts with great delicacy and skill the kinds of experiences a man or woman (happily not just a monk) may have once prayer becomes not just something they do but the core of life itself.

Merton deals respectfully with the disciplines by which men learn to pray and makes it clear how precious he regards the liturgical prayer of the Church, but this book is not really about either of these things, but about what he calls "prayer of the heart", or what Orthodox call "holding the mind in the heart". In the prayer of the heart, says Merton, "we seek first of all the deepest ground of our identity

in God. We do not reason about dogmas of faith, or "the mysteries". We seek rather to gain a direct existential grasp, a personal experience of the deepest truths of life and faith, finding ourselves in God's truth". In such prayer our intentions are rectified as we pay closer attention to reality; many illusions and fantasies about ourselves have to be discarded.

There is an inevitable surrender in such prayer, as we accept ourselves and our situation as God's will. But before we get to that point there is the difficult discovery of our own meaninglessness. "I cannot discover my 'meaning' if I try to evade the dread which comes from first experiencing my meaninglessness." Merton, alone so far as I know among contemporary writers about prayer, talks about dread as a normal experience. Is it lack of knowledge and information about this that makes prayer a closed road for so many, even among churchgoers? The boredom and aridity of which many complain seem a likely mask for this baffling and incomprehensible fear.

Not so baffling after reading Merton. The process of finding God, he tells us, inevitably raises fear and doubt about our own identity, throwing all our usual defences into jeopardy. " 'Finding our heart' and recovering this awareness of our inmost identity implies the recognition that our external, everyday self is to a great extent a mask and a fabrication. It is not our true self. And indeed our true self is not easy to find. It is hidden in obscurity and 'nothingness', at the centre where we are in direct dependence on God."

Reading these lines I feel as if twentieth-century spirituality has at long last found its tongue and begun to talk about what it is like to be a man, a believing man, *now*. So thoroughly has Merton himself experienced the pains and dilemmas, so simply does he tell us about them, that he robs us of argument. I find myself irritated at times by what I call the "old Merton", and he sometimes disappoints me as a writer (though not in this book), but this is of absolutely no importance compared to the total authenticity of the man. He is to be trusted.

Listen to him on sacrifice which he sees as indispensable for the religious man, yet also tricky to negotiate without fantasies of heroism and superiority. "When sacrifice is an infantile self-dramatization, prayer will also be false and operatic self-display, or maudlin self-pitying introspection. Serious and humble prayer, united with mature love, will unconsciously and spontaneously manifest itself in a habitual spirit of sacrifice and concern for others that is unfailingly generous, though perhaps we may not be aware of the fact. Such a union of prayer and sacrifice is easier to evaluate in others than in ourselves, and when we become aware of this we no longer try to gauge our own progress in the matter."

Merton moves on to the darkest experiences of the man of prayer. In such experiences the ego surrenders its autonomy, and Merton is enough of a contemporary to know that this does not happen to a man willy-nilly, but has in some sense been chosen. "Contemplative

prayer is, in a way, simply the preference for the desert, for emptiness, for poverty. One has begun to know the meaning of contemplation when he intuitively and spontaneously seeks the dark and unknown path of aridity in preference to every other way. The contemplative is one who would rather not know than know. Rather not enjoy than enjoy. Rather not have *proof* that God loves him." Out of some masochistic quirk? No, but out of a blind homing instinct that this is where fulfilment lies. "Only when we are able to 'let go' of everything within us, all desire to see, to know, to taste and to experience the presence of God, do we truly become able to experience that presence with the overwhelming conviction and reality that revolutionize our entire inner life."

If the revolution is what produced a Macarius or a Merton, I am for it. In their darkness I find light, and in this I know I am not alone.

MONICA FURLONG

Change in Focus. A Study of Doctrinal Change and Continuity

Nicholas Lash

Sheed and Ward. 1973. 198 pp. £3.

The most original suggestion in this book is that the problems studied in catholic theology under the description of "doctrinal development" are, fundamentally, the same problems which modern protestant theology discusses in terms of "hermeneutics". It opens a prospect of yet one more area of theology (and one of the most important of all, because it has to do with revelation) in which each can learn from the other and both can come to agreement. Both now pay closer attention to the complexities of doctrinal history, and are more aware of the sociological and psychological factors which need to be taken into consideration in interpreting earlier theological statements. "In the work of men such as Lonergan, Rahner and Schillebeeckx, evolutionary and developmental models of doctrinal history are gradually being replaced by a more episodic view of history, which is more sensitive to the irreducible pluralism of that history, and which pays close attention to the problem of transposing meanings and values from one cultural context to another" (p. 44). Two of the main differences of emphasis are that Lash pays more attention in the argument to the papacy, and protestants tend to see the hermeneutic task as basically the same as that of the preacher interpreting the scriptural revelation to the mind of his age.

There are some memorable things in the book. Revelation is a declaration of love (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*). "How many christians 'believe', in any religiously significant sense, in the ascension?" (p. 55). To ascribe unique normative significance to the *present* belief and understanding of the christian community we might call 'today alone' to distinguish it from 'scripture alone' and 'history alone' (p.

71). Development can be by pruning and purgation of a previous definition, so that what has previously been obligatory to hold . . . can now be called in question or even denied (Bévenot) (p. 146). "Once we admit that certain of our christian predecessors may, because of the cultural discontinuities which separate them from us, be *strangers* to us, we have to ask the question: how do we understand a stranger?"

Lash's positive criteria for the discernible continuity in christian belief and doctrine are these four factors (chapter 7): the unchanging reference of christian doctrine to certain historical events; the pattern of the church's liturgical worship; the fact that the church has always been a structured community; and that there has been a continuity of christian meanings to be found not so much in what has been said as in the concern or intention which have given rise to successive doctrinal statements. This concept of *anamnesis* is the kind of ground on which all christians who are aware of the profound cultural crisis of which Lash speaks (p. ix) can rally. The book supplies a most illuminating guide to Roman Catholic thinking on the subject from Newman to the 1970s.

REGINALD CANT

Every Day God: encountering the holy in world and worship

J. G. Davies

S.C.M. Press. 1973. 386 pp. £3.75.

Nobody can attend to what is written here without being made to think new thoughts about the human predicament and the predicament of the Christian. Professor Davies invites us to join him in an exercise towards clarification, a fresh study of the concept of the holy. To clarify is to distinguish and to distinguish is all too easily and dangerously to divide. Categories seem necessary if we are to be able to think clearly: but categories like aging arteries can harden. There are indications that the author has not wholly extricated himself from the Cartesian *faux-pas*: the category-breaker becomes the category-maker and everything has somehow to be squeezed into the new categories. May it be that his distinction between *sacral* and *secular* as different and conflicting ways of interpreting the universe is too hard a distinction? May it also be that when you take hold of an adjective *holy* and turn it into a substantive *the holy*, you confuse rather than clarify the issue? Professor Davies falls into the same kind of trap into which Rudolf Otto has fallen according to Professor Davies' own analysis. The abstract substantive into which the adjective has been transmuted is then personified and we have the sentence: "The holy meets us in and through . . ."

The consequences for intellect and imagination of the paradigm shift from the mediaeval to the modern cosmology were brilliantly explored by C. S. Lewis in *The Discarded Image*. Professor Davies

seeks to help us to face up to the consequences of this shift both for the way we should think and for the way we should worship. The book is in two parts: the first is about perception, the second about response to what we perceive; the nature of the holy and the worship of the holy. Liturgical revisers please note: "Worship is a vital test case to decide whether or not the encounter with the holy involves a divided or a unified existence," and "worship is the expression of a conviction about the inherent structure of reality . . ." whereby "the worshipper acquires an interpretative scheme and is enabled to perceive meaning in life in the world by being sensitised to the presence of the holy in and through the secular".

With examples drawn from lived experience and from literature, the author seeks to convince us that no matter how "secular" is the "set" of our mind, the real dimensions of the life we are all living will have been inadequately perceived until we perceive the dimension of the holy. Our ability in these times to perceive the holy is hindered and not helped by much of the Christian imagery we have inherited, nor is there much help in modern "so-called Christian writers". T. S. Eliot is commended for his description of man's plight in *The Waste Land* and *The Hollow Men* but rejected for his proposed solution because in the *Four Quartets* he is guilty of "a return to the sacral universe".

What, then, are we offered as the experience of the holy in modern dress? Primarily: "the encounter with the holy is a by-product of our relations with others. It is the depth within the relation and the encounter with it which is inseparable from the relation". But this talk about the holy as the depth of the I-Thou relationship is symbolic talk no less than talk about the Sanctus-song of the Cherubim. And anyhow is it valid just like that, *tout court*? Can we in these post-Freudian days talk about *depth* in human relationships as a "model of the holy" while ignoring the evidence of the lacerating, mutually destructive emotional lesions which are not infrequently *experienced* at depth in human relationships? Deferential towards social anthropologists, Professor Davies ignores Freud, Jung and their psychotherapeutic successors, but does not tell us why.

In criticising Professor Davies' approach to his chosen theme of human wholeness and *shalom*, this reviewer is embarrassed by the knowledge that he has not himself so much as attempted the task to which Professor Davies has devoted long, agonising hours, wrestling as a twentieth-century Jacob. The author's concern is to find new ways of enabling human response to life as it comes which illuminate the presence of the holy and its claims but do not "involve a rupture in man's being". He sees the mission of the Church as promoting "hope out of God's future, based upon a recognition of his ceaseless struggle for the humanization of our race". Had he been able to use the traditional word-symbol GOD in the rest of the book with the ease and freedom with which he uses it in the chapter on *Mission and Worship*, might he not have avoided the awkwardness of personal-

ising the impersonal concept of *the holy*, keeping the word *holy* as an adjective expressive of the very being of GOD, and adopting for the rest his own synonym for holiness, namely *God-relatedness*? I have to confess that the *idea of the holy* moves me to worship no more in Professor Davies' presentation than it did in the earlier study by Rudolf Otto. On the other hand I can never hear or read the opening verses of Isaiah VI without being stirred to penitence and deeper desire: but presumably this is because the "set" of my feeling intellect and imagination is still influenced by the discarded image of a "sacral universe" and not yet liquidated by the moderns.

It would be helpful to this reviewer if not also to other readers of NEW FIRE if somebody would take up the theme of the life and death of symbols (starting perhaps with Professor Davies' seemingly curt dismissal of Eliot's *Four Quartets*) and explore the continuing validity and evocative power of symbols which none the less were given birth in a pre-Copernican understanding of the universe.

SYDNEY EVANS

A Reader in Religious and Moral Education

Eric Lord and Charles Bailey (ed.)

S.C.M. 1973. Paperback, pp. 246. £1.50.

God-Alive

Alun Richards, Edna Lambert and Les George

S.C.M. 1973. Hardback, pp. 160. £2.25.

Experience True and False

Peter Lomas

Allen Lane. 1973. Hardback, pp. 160. £2.25.

The first of these books is an anthology taken from 37 publications and 35 different authors, with brief editorial comment. Almost all the writers are professional theorists of education, and the book succeeds in a relatively short space in giving a fair representation of current educational thought in England on these topics, along with a number of excerpts from American publications. The extracts are necessarily brief, and may occasionally do injustice to the writers. "Conscience is indeed a conditioned reflex" no doubt represents Eysenck all right; but "Conscience can only be derived from society" must be less than fair to Norman Bull. But the book will be undoubtedly useful to College students, who will be able to decide for themselves which of these writers are worth following up and which are not. I am left with two principal reflections.

The first is that, despite the skill of the editors in presenting a varied selection of views in a well-ordered whole, the general quality

of the writing, with a few honourable exceptions, is one of extreme dullness. There are only a few writers here who have achieved distinction in other fields, and one is once more left with the question: "Do authors of books on education ever themselves read anything else?" "Those who desire this dreadful literature can find it," said William James: much of this book would have confirmed him in that view. Some of it really is dreadful. "The need for moral standards are in part emotional as well as intellectual." The author of this gem was once Principal of a College of Education; he is now a Professor of Education. (It is not a misprint; I have looked up the original.) Writing like this can only confirm the suspicions of those who see something phoney in the claims of Education to be a serious academic subject. *Quis educabit ipsos educatores?*

My second point is more serious. Only very occasionally in this book does one find any awareness that education is something that goes on between human beings, and that the health of that relationship is at least as important as the organization of the syllabus or the detailed analysis of method and technique. "In promoting moral conduct, then, we are concerned with achieving objectives conducive to its attainment. Chiefly, these objectives are . . ." There is, particularly in the latter half of the book, a great deal of chopping up into manageable and teachable items of a process that ultimately depends on the growth of something far more intangible, something that will all too easily slip through the net of these subtle schematizations. A symptom here is the regularity with which that weary topic "indoctrination" keeps cropping up. (A pity, incidentally, that Basil Mitchell's masterly Appendix to the Durham Report on this subject only receives a bare mention.) When shall we be ready to face the implications of Buber's insistence that in any situation that is genuinely educational the teacher, whether we like it or not, is master and the pupil, whether he knows it or not, is apprentice?

Relationships of this kind are the subject of the third of these books. First, though, a word or two about the second, subtitled "Inherited ideas rethought in cartoon form". To judge from the words ("Mind is only cells functioning; what jails us is the resistance to change of our psychic self-pattern") it is aimed at Sixth-formers; but I doubt if they will respond to it quite as its authors would wish. The "rethinking" is typical of middle-class, middle-of-the-road protestantism, touched up here and there with pseudo-scientific jargon; the "art" never rises above the level of the deodorant commercial. I can think of no book better calculated to bring religious education into ridicule and contempt.

Peter Lomas' book, *Experience True and False*, makes no overt reference to educational problems. He is concerned with psychotherapy. Is it (to quote the blurb) a technique which can be described, learnt and practised, or is it a relationship in which techniques play a part but ordinary human qualities are the crucial factors? I am, of course, not qualified to judge his critique of Freud and the contem-

porary trends in psycho-analysis; but his main contention that the psychotherapeutic process is "less an attempt to treat a sick person than to find one's way through the false ways in which a person may live, and help him to experience his life more truly" will surely ring a bell for many teachers, particularly of religious and moral education. Whether or not he is right to stress the essential ordinariness of the psychoanalytic encounter, that is surely not the only situation in which it is important to recognize the degree to which people "search for truth, meaning and relationship"; to recognize, too, that the failure to do this is "a denigration of the patient comparable to that which adults make of children and which widens the gap between the generations".

In our increasingly plural society it is right that religious education should widen its scope to include the study of other religions; but this may easily become little more than a historical, literary or anthropological exercise unless with it, or through it, there comes some sense of what it means to be religious. To this, the search for truth, meaning and relationship is central. Educationists in this country have too long neglected the writers of the school of existential psychology—Rogers, Laing, Rollo May and others—who have appreciated the importance of this impulse, and the consequences of its frustration. In this book I would particularly mention the profoundly moving poem quoted on pp. 94f., written by a fourteen-year-old boy shortly before committing suicide; also Lomas' discussion of the idea of "technique" and the place that techniques can have in human relationships (pp. 147f.). "How many," he asks, "of those procedures which have come to be thought of as techniques are really natural modes of relating which have atrophied in our society?" H'm.

EDWARD ROBINSON

Modern Eucharistic Agreement

S.P.C.K. 1973. vi + 90pp. 65p.

Is it possible for Christians of different traditions to reach agreement about the Eucharist, without reducing the content to a lowest common denominator? The reactions of some writers to the Agreed Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, published late in 1971, would seem to indicate a widespread fear that it is not possible. The fear—one might call it the Polegate Syndrome—found in both ultramontane Roman circles and ultra-Genevan Anglican ones expresses itself in a refusal to believe that Catholic and Protestant can agree on anything, and that if they do agree, then the truth must have been compromised.

But such a reaction fails to appreciate the methodology of the Agreed Statement, and especially the basic fact that the participants, whilst officially appointed by their respective churches, attempted not to compare formularies or official positions, but to reach a common definition of what they all believed about the Eucharist. It is not,

and does not claim to be, a full agreement: it is "substantial agreement", and covers the underlying doctrine of salvation, and the two central ideas of eucharistic theology, those of sacrifice and real presence. It is not, as Bishop McAdoo points out in his introduction to this book, another doctrinal statement handed down from on high, but an attempt to express in fresh language a common faith, so that it can be seen to be common in a way that the old sectarian formularies do not permit.

Yet, however important to Anglicans and Roman Catholics this statement might be, it is not the only such agreement to have been published in recent years. *Modern Eucharistic Agreement* contains three other documents of similar importance, together with the introduction by the Bishop of Ossory already mentioned. It is striking to note the similarities between these statements and the Windsor Agreement. Bishop McAdoo underlines the resemblances, particularly those of approach, which are to be found between all these documents. It is also interesting to compare the signatures at the end of each of the documents. The only name to appear in more than one list is that of Fr. George Tavard: the implication of this is that this new and more hopeful method of ecumenical encounter is not the property of a few whose bonnets buzz with the same species of bee, but is widely seen by theologians (as opposed to ecclesiastical politicians) as the only sound and honest means of approach to one another. Compromise is out, and a genuine radicalism is in.

One wants to ask, however, whether in the final analysis they have been radical enough. In all the documents space is devoted to what Bishop Alan Clark (in commenting on the Windsor Agreement) has called "the pivotal doctrines of eucharistic faith", namely, those of sacrifice and real presence. All statements say that Christ is present in the Eucharist. The Group of Les Dombes rather tentatively says that he is objectively present. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic statement accepts that he is present "in his body and blood, under the signs of bread and wine", but adopts a *via negationis*, devoting a good deal of space to what is not meant by the eucharistic presence. Only the Windsor Agreement comes anywhere near to asking *why* we talk of Christ's presence: the other statements appear to take "This is my body . . . this is my blood" as sufficient ground for the doctrine. The Windsor Agreement emphasises not the bread and wine, but the eating and drinking—the encounter with Christ, present and life-giving. This surely is the way forward.

In the two documents from Louvain and Les Dombes, the theme of eucharistic sacrifice is barely mentioned, though in each a section is devoted to "The Eucharist: memorial (*anamnesis*) of Christ". The Windsor Agreement, too, uses the idea of *anamnesis* in discussing the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of Christ. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement does not, and is the most unsatisfactory at this point, listing four "major points of divergence". This view of memorial is surely essential to any advance. And yet one wonders whether a more radi-

cal break with the whole notion of sacrifice may not be necessary, for we have begun to see in the Eucharist a memorial of more than the death of Christ, but of his whole life, death and resurrection. It is not simply his death which brings man and God together. Until we have a doctrine of atonement which moves away from presuppositions about the sacrificial system of Israel, the Eucharistic sacrifice will continue to be a problem, though the idea of *anamnesis* is an advance from the old entrenchments around the idea of repetition.

It is perhaps because I am an Anglican that I find the Windsor Statement the most interesting of the four. Although it is the shortest, it seems to have a greater theological profundity than the others. We may look forward with anticipation to the publication of the same group's statement on the Ministry in due course.

All the statements are worthy of study, and it is useful to have them in one small convenient book, with the excellent introduction of Bishop McAdoo. Whilst it may be rather strong meat for a parish study group, it would be excellent material for study by clergy fraternals. Intelligent reading and discussion of introduction, statements and Bishop Alan Clark's foreword may even help to cure a few cases of the Polegate Syndrome.

J. L. MARSHALL

Praying the Lord's Prayer Today

by Kenneth Slack

S.C.M. Press. 1973. 123 pp. 50p.

This paperback by the new Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church is to be heartily recommended. No man in the pew could read it without gaining a deeper understanding of the original meaning of the prayer and new insights into his use of it today.

Dr. Slack explains the genesis of his book. First, he was stimulated by Gerhard Ebeling's *The Lord's Prayer in Today's World*, but he realised that the approach of the German scholar-preacher needed drastic modification for the British situation. Secondly, he had come to realise the illumination which biblical scholarship had brought to the prayer. T. W. Manson's few pages in *The Sayings of Jesus* and Ernst Lohmeyer's much more detailed study in *The Lord's Prayer* are both frequently quoted. Thirdly, he had been asked by a member of his congregation to give a series of sermons on prayer. The present little book is distantly related to those discourses and bears here and there the mark of the pulpit style.

I have deliberately set out in some detail Dr. Slack's own account of how the book came into being, for this helps to explain at once its usefulness and its limitations. The present reviewer found something in every chapter to enlighten or spur him. But the book in no way replaces Professor C. F. Evans' *The Lord's Prayer*, which alike in distinction of style and profundity of content is in a class all its own

and which more fully passes on to the ordinary christian some of the discoveries of biblical study.

When that has been said, and it must be said, there are riches indeed to be found here. On God's fatherhood: "it has to do not with creation, but with loving redemption. Sonship is not a fact of nature; it is a gift of grace and a living relationship" (p. 27); on hallowing the Name: "we know, God, what you are like—now let us see it in action" (p. 42); on the Kingdom: "Christ himself, who was the total territory of the kingdom, is the ground of this sustaining confidence" (p. 57); on the will of God: "it is a will to be done as well as to be borne" (p. 72); and so on. There are bracing discussions of the meaning of "daily" bread, of "the evil" and of "temptation" or "test". But does nobody now, except Sister Penelope, C.S.M.V., make out a case for C. C. Torreys suggestion from a double meaning of the original Aramaic, "do not let us fail in the test"?

DEREK ALLEN

The Fourth Lesson in the Daily Office

Book One

Christopher Campling (ed.)

Darton, Longman & Todd. 1973. pp. 367 + xxviii.

The *Fourth Lesson*, as the name implies, is an attempt to provide an additional lesson to be read in the course of the daily office, for which only three lessons are now prescribed in the Series II (Revised) order. It is a new departure in that it is an attempt to provide passages from Christian writing, chosen to illustrate the themes of the day or week, which are specifically designed to be incorporated in the office, and it is in this close relationship to the office that it goes beyond earlier collections of devotional readings. Any reviewer is therefore bound to comment not only on the selection of readings but also on the principle of setting other Christian writings on the same level as the Bible.

There will undoubtedly be some for whom any apparent infringement of the special status of the Bible will mean that the idea of non-biblical lessons is to be rejected out of hand. But, as Mr. Campling reminds us in his introduction, Christian revelation is not "revelation from a book" but "revelation through the Spirit summed up in a Person". The Bible enjoys its special status because of its historical position as a witness to that revelation, but later writing which meditates and reflects upon that revelation can often provide us with new perspectives and insights into that revelation. By reminding us of the ways in which the love of God has been recognised and been made real in a whole variety of human situations simply because those situations were seen in relationship to that supreme making real of the love of God in Jesus Christ, it encourages us to discover the same possibility in our own circumstances, whatever they may be. It is part

of the reality of the common and continuing life of the Spirit in the Church which we call the communion of saints.

Opinions will, of course, differ as to which writings should be included in such a selection, and, as anyone who has tried to select non-Biblical readings knows, there are many works of deep Christian insight which are just not susceptible of being cut up into short, pithy extracts: the argument or the style of writing just will not allow it. Mr. Campling's selection, which is the first of two volumes—the second will be linked to Year Two of the lectionary, is wide-ranging both in the number of authors represented and the style and subject-matter of the works from which the passages have been taken. Thus we have passages from the biography of Bonhoeffer and Leslie Newbiggin's missionary diary; from Traherne's *Centuries* and the Lady Julian of Norwich; from theologians like Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr; and from Christians in such different traditions as those represented by Kierkegaard, Von Hügel and Spurgeon. If there is criticism to be made it would perhaps be that there are some contemporary writers, such as Harry Williams and John Baker, who seem to have been included in relatively full passages almost immediately, whilst the great treasure-house of mediaeval spirituality is barely touched, and the Fathers do not appear at all. Aelred Squire's recent book, *Asking the Fathers*, has reminded us again of the profound insights into human nature and the Christian life which these early writings offer, and since the selection of passages is not limited to contemporary writers it is surprising that they should be so little represented. Whilst it is true that it is often difficult to make a selection from them which is immediately intelligible to the ordinary Christian reader, it is by no means impossible, and the difficulties are no greater than with some parts of the Bible. I would hope, therefore, that in the second volume we might be given some passages from, for example, Augustine, Bernard, Teresa and William of St. Thierry, to mention but a few.

But this is really a minor criticism, for the selection we have been offered provides much food for thought and there is nothing which is inappropriate or out of place. The collection is to be warmly commended as one which offers both an introduction to many outstanding Christian writers and a genuine enrichment of the pattern of daily worship.

GEOFFREY ROWELL

Unadopted Road: The Story of Benifold

by F. Norman James

available from the British Council of Church Publications Dept.,
10 Eaton Gate, London SW1W 9BT. 65 pp. 20p, postage 4p.

Benifold was purchased for use as an ecumenical centre of prayer and meeting at the end of 1962. Seven years later it was sold. Inevi-

tably the reader asks himself: Why was its period of activity so short? Was it a failure?

Mr. James, whose inspiration led to the Benifold project and who was warden during those seven years, says there are three reasons why he and the Governors decided to close. The first was financial—to have paid its way the house would have had to have been expensively enlarged. The second was that the location was inconvenient. And the third was that the kind of work Benifold set out to do was soon accepted on a wide scale throughout the country.

In 1962 the idea of a residential ecumenical centre was novel. Christians were only just moving towards the idea of talking and praying together. Vatican II had only just assembled. But by 1969 ecumenical conferences had become commonplace. Even at diocesan and deanery levels in the Church of England, it was by then normal to think in ecumenical terms when organising conferences and training courses.

So Mr. James and the Governors had the grace and humility to recognize that what they had begun and devoted themselves to—the story told in this book—must end. The decision was taken, but not without personal sacrifice. “It is easy to say that we must be willing to let things die in order to rise into new life,” he writes. “That profound truth has too often become a shallow cliché. I hesitate to use it of Benifold except to say that if new life does spring from this decision to close it will be because of the faith of those involved and the will of God which we have so falteringly tried to follow.”

Benifold's life was short because what it stood for was so successful. It provided a place of encounter between Christians, and they went away to meet again elsewhere—in their ordinary life and work. Far from being a failure, Benifold's prayers were answered. The Body of Christ is now slowly being manifested in England as one in the Holy Spirit once more. Would that all God's people were willing to close down their projects when the Lord calls them to go beyond the original concept to another and greater one!

JOHN GUNSTONE

Leave Your Life Alone

by Dom Hubert van Zeller

Sheed and Ward. London, 1973. 127 pp. Hardback £1.75.

Dom Hubert reveals the intention of his book when he writes:

“The intention of this book is to show that life is better left in God's hands than held in our own keeping—the Lord rules me and I shall want for nothing.” p. 81.

And he does not swerve from this purpose as he leads the reader through ten chapters dealing with such matters as authority, children as models, the Divine Simplicity, and as a climax *Life in Relation to Heaven*.

Of course, it had to come. This is a riposte to the many attacks on Christian spirituality during the past years and a call to Christians to return to base, to the fundamentals. Dom Hubert sounds the call very well in a series of lucid paragraphs which often remind one of Austin Farrer's achievement in *Crown of the Year*, without his astringent wit that could make even the most ordinary statement sparkle.

But one wonders whether it is all as simple as these lucid paragraphs suggest.

In giving us free-will and making us sons rather than slaves, God makes it clear that He does not intend to manage our lives on His own. He intends that we shall share the responsibility and be His fellow-workers. However badly we do this we cannot abandon our share of the responsibility. Dom Hubert does not seem to take this co-operation sufficiently into account.

Again, in calling us back to the old traditions he seems to underestimate the Word of the Lord in our present state of protest. There is a Word of the Lord in the present rejection of so much of the traditional spirituality which Dom Hubert either will not hear or hears inadequately. Nor does he give a fair account of the message which other forms of spirituality have to give us at this time. His account of the Yoga method of concentration is both flippant and inaccurate.

"To many, however (to me for one) there is more self-consciousness in sitting with one's eyes shut, one's hands limp in the lap, one's muscles slack from the feet up, one's brain gently sloshing this way and that until a text or a holy thought comes ashore on the tide than there ever was in the bad old days when one was given points for meditation, composition of place, conclusions and resolutions." p. 30.

It is a pity that he has not listened more carefully and reported more accurately for this kind of approach weakens his argument and alienates the more thoughtful of our oriental brothers who have so much to share with us, not so much in a return to base as in a vigorous assault upon the enemy.

H. E. W. SLADE, S.S.J.E.

Tears of Silence

by Jean Vanier

Darton, Longman and Todd. 94 pp. 51 illustrations. £1.10.

This book cannot be "read"; it needs to be pondered, to be allowed to make its own impact. The author is trying to express in a series of photographs and short meditative comments the insights into human life that have come to him through his life and work with mentally handicapped people. So, deprived people are not objects of compassion, utterly unlike "us" who are "normal", and who dispense charity from an invulnerable grandstand seat, but need to be recognised as persons and as part of us. Despair is born not of *being* deprived, *being* weak, but of the apathy and sense of worthlessness that

come from being treated as less than a person. Further, we can ourselves be people only to the extent that we can give ourselves away in a reciprocity of love and sharing wherein our own handicaps—our desperate clinging to security, our fear, our inability to communicate—can also be healed.

Jean Vanier disclaims the title poetry for his meditations, yet juxtaposed as they are to very ordinary but powerful photographs, their strength lies, like that of poetry, in their capacity to evoke feeling—in the true empathetic rather than sentimental sense of that word. The autistic child rejects a paintbrush and a chance of creativity, the curled-up heap of humanity lies alone under the trees of a deserted park, and respectable ladies come out from some gathering well insulated against both the cold and the laying bare of their own inner poverty. Yet we have not only images of human misery and isolation which could play and prey upon our emotions in a one-sided or morbid way: we are shown also joy, as a child recognises love and caring in a handclasp, or a mother holds her naked baby close in warmth to herself.

Time, and a willingness to be disturbed, are needed if we are to discover and receive all that is here. We are not allowed to exclude from total reality the dimension of the mysteries of alienation, depression and darkness, though the world we live in often wants to do just this. We are shown the *delicacy* of love which neither withdraws from nor overwhelms that which is loved, and we have to accept an unsought personal responsibility for the quality of our being, for, “in some mysterious way the quality of my presence, my look, brings to you life—or death”. Further, without God being rammed at us on every page, it is proclaimed that the source and sustenance of our love must be found in the Spirit of God who is to live—not merely to be apprehended intellectually—in us all. To repeat: this book cannot be read, it stands as a call to deeper love and prayer.

MARY ANNE, Dss., C.S.A.

I believe, you believe

Richard Westley

Sheed and Ward. 104 pages. 95p.

This book is written by a Roman Catholic layman, an American professor, for Roman Catholics, especially for those who are perplexed at finding themselves in a situation in which Roman Catholics are divided on many important matters such as birth control, celibacy, authority, doctrinal and liturgical reforms and so on. Dr. Westley outlines briefly the traditional Roman Catholic doctrines concerning such fundamental issues as man, the world, the Christian mission, the Church, the priesthood, the Mass and the Pope. Beside the traditional doctrines he sets in juxtaposition newer and contemporary views of these essential questions, and goes on to point out why he himself

inclines towards the contemporary views. The book speaks more directly to Roman Catholic readers and others would want to substitute other questions than many of those suggested for discussion, but the epilogue and the prayer in the form of a soliloquy at the end of each chapter supply many hard questions for any Christian, who is caught up in the tensions of contemporary thought and life, to ask himself. The least convincing parts of the book, at least to a non-Roman Catholic reviewer, are the parts where the traditional doctrines are re-stated. The trouble is not that they are Catholic doctrines but that the language in which they are re-stated falls between two stools—it lacks both the precision and the context of traditional theological expression and also the creativity of contemporary writing. However, a fine example of creative writing is the author's exposition of contemporary Christian spirituality (despite the use of awkward phrases like "lay spiritualities") in the Chapter on lay people and the Church. This book could serve a valuable ecumenical purpose not only for explaining the present tensions within the Roman Catholic Church, but also by challenging all Christians to consider the reality and the seriousness of their common predicament, the seriousness of which can be measured by the fact that "so many evidently religious people actually do think of renewal as a threat".

E. L. KENDALL

The Call of the Desert

by Peter Anson

S.P.C.K. 220 pp. Paperback £1.50.

This is a republication of a book that first appeared in 1964, as a revised version of the author's *The Quest of Solitude*, published in 1932. He is himself now a choir-oblate of the Reformed Cistercians of Caldey Island. It is written with the same thoroughness and attention to detail that characterised his *The Call of the Cloister*. Every conceivable type of hermit life down the centuries is mentioned and listed—even the most obscure and bizarre. He even includes the "ornamental hermits" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when some landowner would construct a hermitage to adorn his estate and then advertise for a suitable person to come and occupy it, the terms of service being very carefully laid down in the agreement and a suitable salary paid! This was all part of the "olde worlde" romanticism of the time, rather like having a fictitious "Old Uncle Tom Cobley" to roam the countryside round Widdecombe in the age of cars and jet aeroplanes.

A very useful preface is contributed by Fr. Paul Ziegler, O.S.B., of Quarr Abbey, discussing why the urge to search for God in solitude is so constant a feature of man's spiritual life. In the course of his enquiry he says: "The solitary life of the Christian hermit is the answer to a divine call to hand over to the love of God not only all one's action but all one's being, and to do it with such completeness

that all natural appetites—including the longing for the warmth of a human presence, the longing for someone one might be good to—must henceforth turn to God alone to find their satisfaction. . . . Without a deep conviction that the call of the desert is the call of God no hermit could live his life.”

This is well said, and the remainder of the book illustrates how this call has been responded to by an amazing variety of persons in an astonishing variety of circumstances all through history.

F. DALBY, S.S.J.E.

Aelred of Rievaulx

by Aelred Squire, O.P.

S.P.C.K. 77 pp. £1.50.

What a remarkable stirring of monastic and spiritual life took place in the twelfth century, and not least in the growth of the Cistercian Order. Fr. Aelred Squire gives us a study of one of the most attractive leaders of the time, Aelred, abbot of Rievaulx for twenty years.

Aelred was of a well-known Anglo-Saxon family in Northumbria, and was brought up at the court of King David of Scotland. The chapter “Knights and Kings” tells of his connection with and interest in the historical personages of the day, evidenced by his writings on the Kings and on the Battle of the Standard.

At St. Bernard’s behest he wrote *The Mirror of Charity*, a study of Christian love and a justification of the monastic and Cistercian way of life. Aelred had a deeply affectionate heart, and from his own experience could understand the problems and difficulties of the young monks. His book, *Spiritual Friendship*, is the fruit of this experience.

Fr. Squire well reveals Aelred’s bringing his whole life under the yoke of Christ, and applies to him an apt quotation from John Keats: “A man’s life of any worth is a continual allegory—and very few eyes can see the Mystery of his life—a life like the scriptures, figurative”.

GERALD TRIFFITT, S.S.J.E.

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