

The baby and the baptismal water

Bridget Nichols has questions about a review of initiation

The Journey of Christian Initiation: Theological and pastoral perspectives

Paul Avis, editor

Church House Publishing £16.99

(978-0-7151-4237-0)

Church House Publishing £15.30

"JOURNEY" has been the Church of England's metaphor of choice for the unfolding relationship with God inaugurated in baptism at least since work began to produce the *Common Worship* rites of baptism and confirmation. This collection of essays by members of the Faith and Order Commission frequently applies the metaphor more narrowly to baptism itself.

The motive is an honourable determination to account for the ritual separation of baptism and confirmation in Anglican practice, as a way of progressing in ecumenical conversations towards eucharistic hospitality and the recognition of non-episcopal confirmation. If the Churches could see their theology and practice of initiation as the same journey undertaken by different routes, Paul Avis suggests, a more irenic note might prevail.

The casualty of this view, along with other arguments for baptism as the foundation sacrament but not

complete initiation (Harriet Harris), or the nuances of the 1549 Prayer Book confirmation rite's "Send down thy Spirit" compared with 1552's "Strengthen with thy Spirit" (Martin Davie), is baptism. Presented as a process, or a journey that proceeds towards confirmation, its strongest claim can be only ever that it is a rite of initiation, but not the rite of initiation.

It would require a much longer response than this to deal adequately with the many questions raised in consequence. To name just three: first, baptism has, historically been seen as part of a process, but as the end and not the beginning. While this model is based on adult baptism, it is important, for as long as it is maintained, to be honest about its nature.

A second question is that of perception. Those — especially the unchurched — who bring children for baptism understand what happens as an initiation. Attention to the speech acts of the *Common Worship* rite would confirm their impression.

Third, more discussion of the faith of the Church to balance the focus on individual faith might have distinguished the process culminating in baptism from the journey that is the Christian life: "Baptism", as the 1662 Prayer Book reminds us, "doth represent unto us our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him."

Dr Bridget Nichols is Lay Chaplain to the Bishop of Ely.



Before the desecration: the altar at St Hilary Parish Church, Cornwall, decorated for Easter, before 1932, when Kensittes removed ornaments that had been declared illegal by a consistory court, and "systematically wrecked the interior . . . in the most brutal fashion". From *Tumult and Joy: A short history of St Hilary* by Christopher Tyne (£3 plus £1 p&p from him at 87 Temple Avenue, Temple Newam, Leeds LS15 0JS)

Deeds, not drum kits

Jennie Hogan looks at spreading the faith

Every Person Ministry: Reaching out in Christ

Teresa Morgan

SPCK £9.99

(978-0-281-06447-2)

Church Times Bookshop £9

Everyday Church: Mission by being good neighbours

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis

IVP £9.99

(978-1-84474-520-3)

Church Times Bookshop £9

TRANSFORMING the church is the objective of each of these books. *Every Person Ministry* — not the catchiest title — is the concise, mild-mannered fruit of a parish course. Laity-empowerment is explored through basic themes such as listening, friendship, and prayer.

It is soon apparent that the book is an extended report of the course, and it quickly becomes repetitive and dull. Regular anecdotes and obvious quotations are respectively indulgent and unimaginative. Certain reflections are astute; the chapter on forgiveness is the highlight. It may well serve as a resource for other parish groups. The author, a parish priest, clearly learned much from the course: she admits that she realised that she "hadn't needed to get ordained at all".

For the authors of *Everyday Church*, such an epiphany would be food for their ceaseless striving. Urgency rebounds on every page with a force normally reserved for the avant-garde. It is unsurprising, because this is cutting-edge, post-post-modern mission. The facts and stark figures about church attendance are presented in the first chapter: we can presume nothing any more; we must think differently about mission. Peter's First Epistle forms the bedrock of their argument, chosen, they say, for its intoxicating vision of church.

There is no doubt: the authors have reflected upon and, indeed, practised new ways of mission. Happily, however, the first instruction comes only at page 50. "Be winsome, be yourself," they suggest. Quaint, perhaps; but their message is extravagantly simple: ditch the PowerPoint and the drum kits, teach people about Christ, and embody Christ in everyday life in collaboration, in communities.

There is no mention of either liturgy or sacraments, and yet the theme throughout is nothing if not incarnational. Evangelical certainty penetrates every page. Building, sharing, including: three elements for mission. Everyone has something to learn here.

The Revd Jennie Hogan is Chaplain at Goodenough College, London.

No coward soul

David Atkinson finds a wide-ranging study pastorally motivated

The Battle for the Soul: A comparative analysis in an age of doubt

Robert Crawford

Palgrave Macmillan £55

(978-0-230-60944-0)

Church Times Bookshop £49.50

THIS beautifully produced — if expensive — book addresses the question of the soul. What does it mean? Is it immortal? Can we hope for life after death? How does belief in immortality sit with the concept of resurrection?

Robert Crawford, who has been a university teacher in London, the United States, and Africa, and, I think, is now retired in Sussex (at least, he thanks the libraries in Worthing and Goring for their help), explores the meaning of "soul" in Jewish and Christian faiths, in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. Then he outlines some philosophical themes: dualism, empiricism, and materialism, followed by a couple of chapters on Darwin and neo-Darwinians.

Given such a wide range of interests, the discussion is inevitably fairly cursory in places, and there is a great deal of A says this, but B says that. Kant gets a paragraph; so does Freud; Jung manages only six lines. Some of the background scholarship is fairly dated (there is some dependence on Wheeler Robinson for the chapter on *The Jewish Soul*, and William Barclay is quoted for some New Testament views), but, in the later chapters, Richard Dawkins is given an extended critique, Richard Swinburne a mention, and the valuable work of Nancey Murphy and her colleagues on "non-reductive physicalism" is right up to date.

At the level of an introduction to the thought of six great world religions, this is a very helpful survey.

There is much more in these first chapters than simply the question of the soul, the self, or the mind (Crawford sometimes seems to use the terms interchangeably). But I found the broad and, therefore, inevitably too thin discussion of some of the huge themes in the philosophy of mind less satisfying.

The pastoral motivation is clear throughout, and Crawford's conclusion is worth quoting: "One thing seems sure that whether it is the resurrection of the body as hoped for in the Semitic religions, or the immortality of the soul as portrayed in the Indian religions, we will be in the right condition to enjoy what God has prepared for us."

Dr Atkinson is an Hon. Assistant Bishop in the diocese of Southwark.

new titles just published

Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the great gospel conspiracy by C. E. Hill (OUP, £8.99 (£8.10); 978-0-19-964029-4). Paperback.

The Sacred in the Modern World: A cultural sociological approach by Gordon Lynch (OUP, £30 (£27); 978-0-19-955701-1).

Equality, Freedom and Religion by Roger Trigg (OUP, £25 (£22.50); 978-0-19-957685-2).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906-1945: Martyr, thinker, man of resistance by Ferdinand Schlingensiefen (T. & T. Clark, £14.99 (£13.50); 978-0-567-49319-4).

My Brother, the Pope by Georg Ratzinger (Ignatius, £16.99 (£15.30); 978-1-58617-704-1).

Selected by Aude Pasquier, of the Church House Bookshop, which operates the Church Times Bookshop.

Widow's wonder

William Countryman on a tale of the 1820s

Mrs Mattingly's Miracle: The prince, the widow, and the cure that shocked Washington City

Nancy Lusignan Schultz

Yale University Press £20

(978-0-300-11846-9)

Church Times Bookshop £18

IN 1824, Ann Mattingly, member of an old Maryland Roman Catholic family and sister of Washington's mayor, was on her death-bed. Friends who had heard of miraculous healings in Europe by a German priest and aristocrat, Alexander Hohenlohe, appealed to him, and launched a novena of intercession. It concluded with a mass in Washington in the early hours of the morning, timed to coincide with that of the prince in Bamberg. Having, with difficulty, received the sacrament, Mrs Mattingly was visibly restored to health.

Americans were largely unprepared to deal with such an occurrence. Protestant and Enlightenment influences made them sceptical of modern miracles. Even for Roman Catholics, it was startling (the phenomenon of Lourdes was still decades away), and the Church's leadership (mostly drawn from English families that had arrived before the Revolution) was nervous about public reaction. While some

saw the miracle as a vindication of the Church, others feared that it only made it seem foreign — a problematic quality in an era of newfound American assertiveness on the world scene.

Professor Schultz has retrieved a forgotten story through energetic archival work, and she connects the event well with important currents of its time. Unfortunately, her desire to produce a full-blooded narrative from sketchy sources has encouraged a certain amount of historical over-reaching, from admittedly fictive "adumbrations" introducing each chapter to a rather free hand at filling in the thoughts and feelings of her characters.

As a result, she has not quite produced either the good story some readers will want or the cautious history others look for. Still, patient readers will encounter here an intriguing event, recounted in the context of the very different world in which it was played out.

The Revd Dr William Countryman is Sherman E. Johnson Professor in Biblical Studies at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific and the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, USA.

GEORGE COURTAULD has compiled **The Pocket Book of What, When and Who on Earth: Fascinating facts about Christianity** (Bene Factum, £9.99 (£9); 978-1-903071-37-3): a gift hardback to dip into.