

## The Works Of Canon Michael Perry.

It was a wet Wednesday afternoon as I dashed from the Library to my room at theological college. Under my arm, a slim volume which I rapidly came to treasure. It was *The Resurrection of Man* by our past chairman, Canon Michael Perry. This book had a similar effect on me as G.N.M.Tyrell's book had on Michael when he was a sixth-former: it opened my eyes to a deeper understanding of the doctrine of man and his existence than any amount of customary teaching.

Members of the Fellowship who read Michael Perry's writings may discover, as good scientists say, "there is nothing more practical than a good theory" and that "the best theories are the fruit of much reflection upon practical evidence". For upwards of thirty years our author has sought to bring his scientific and theological trainings and methodologies to bear upon all things psychical and/or fanciful. From the opening pages of *Psychic Studies A Christian's View* we discover we are sharing in the work of a pioneering bridge builder; "There are two opposite dangers in the psychic realm. One is to make the psychic into the centre and mainstay of a person's religion. The other is to ignore it altogether. The first is the temptation of Spiritualism. The second is the temptation of the religious establishment."(p.28) "Psychical studies may not add knowledge to faith in a simplistic way, but they can help to make the leap of faith a great deal more credible."(p.64) His essay on Resurrection weaves theological reflection and psychical arguments so closely together it's hard to spot the joins: "Life after death is no good unless we also believe in life before death. This is for us the meaning of the resurrection which we are bidden to teach and preach But we cannot preach it unless we have lived it first."(p.165)

Readers who particularly interested in life after death may well benefit from the essay "Life after death-What will it be like?" From time to time we may need to be reminded that "facts are sacred but interpretation is free" because "we see in a glass darkly, and dogmatism is the only unpardonable sin."

*God's Within* is subtitled *A critical guide to the New Age*. We may summarise its contents as cautionary tales of human experience. Our author has endeavoured to "enter sympathetically into the thought world of the people who hold New Age ideas.. .to start where they are and then show them a "more excellent way."(p6-7)

Presenting signs and symptoms are shown in the first chapter. Chapter two looks at the major shift in basic world-views occurring in many modern Western folk. The insistence that the human spirit must be free, rediscovering the ancient wisdom and cosmic optimism seem to be fundamental aspects of their questing. "The 80's were about taking responsibility and empowerment. The 90's will be about being powerful and actualising that power in the world."(p.26) Pseudo-science is inflated with psycho-babble in poor attempts to invite us further into paradoxical arguments: "the Universe, although manifest in an infinite number of forms, is nevertheless contained holographically in any particle." (p.27) Oh for the wisdom of the Theologia Germanica, wherein is plainly taught "sin is self-will". On pp.31-6 there is as fine an introductory summary to the New Age as one could hope for. Anyone seriously trying to make sense of Newspeak from a Christian standpoint may wisely invest in this work. The bulk of the chapters are taken up with describing mantic methods, crystal power, mother nature and Gaia, Near Death Experiences, reincarnation teachings including the practise of the successful psychotherapist Dr Roger Woolger, Spiritualism, what "St Bartholomew" has to say today and the great New Age channels Seth, Ramtha and Lazaris. There is even a book in print on homeopathic prescribing which claims to be channeled from a great Master.

“If we are neither fundamentalists nor members of St James’s Piccadilly, nor Companions of the Omega Order, but still want to think about Christianity in the light of New Age concerns, what aspects of Christian doctrine ought we to be exploring?(pp138-9) Pantheism, the non-existence of evil, salvation through acquiring special knowledge (gnosticism): such are still to be countered—even in CFPSS members?—by recalling us to the creeds of the church. Synderesis yes. Sin, I’m all for it: the doctrine that is. But since the Fall no human being has been a holographic representation of the Trinity. The Age of Aquarius may come and go with no greater atonement between God and man until we have fully allowed God “to love the hell out of us” and so save us from our sins. Experience of new life is in Christ and we know the resurrection only after our own crucifixion. “Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Experience shows, though, that “the soul lives where it loves’ and as we do not yet love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul, mind and strength; nor yet our neighbours as ourselves, those who are psychically open may find souls and bodies in all sorts of places they shouldn’t be. When the question of deliverance arises we may turn to Michael who has done a fine job editing the papers and discussions of the Christian Deliverance Study Group. His book *Deliverance Psychic Disturbances and Occult Involvement* is the standard reference on the topic and a second edition, I understand, will be available soon. As always there is a patient and pastorally orientated description and differentiation of terms. Common sense prevails; Occam’s razor is freely wielded, though not listed in the index, and the point is clearly made that neither psychism nor spiritualism saves. Salvation belongs to God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In our efforts to be of use we must not rush in where angels fear to tread nor make a drama out of a crisis. To this end, perhaps chapter 2 “Counsel for the Counsellors” could be reprinted separately and made more easily and widely available?

Teamwork is strongly advised as is contacting the diocesan advisor on the paranormal and keeping the local bishop— or his equivalent— fully informed. Monasteries and convents are to be used in prayer support before, during and after deliverance ministry. Almost all degrees of which the local priest or minister should be encouraged to deal with. The after-care of the local congregation is essential. Sensible guidelines on priest-doctor collaboration are given on pp.118-9.

We are lead through the labyrinthine complexities of poltergeists, “phoneygeists”, ghosts, place memories and the ‘dead but not departed’. Clarifying common confusions between the occult and the psychic, between the spiritual and intuition, between magic and mysticism with discussion of biblical warnings enables the group to move into comment on sects and cults and the relationships between occultism, witchcraft and Satanism. In the appendices we find biblical theology, a too brief look at the Christian tradition of exorcism, diocesan sensibilities and pastoral practicalities, and some helpful liturgical and prayer materials.

Less than one fifth of the book is taken up with possession and exorcism. Again we need to differentiate between facts and interpretation. Those suffering from psychotic illnesses, neurotic disorders, bereavement reactions, charismatic casualties and poltergeists do not need exorcisms. There again schizophrenic symptoms may originate from the unquiet dead and treatment of choice here would be a requiem celebration of the Eucharist involving all parties concerned. A procedure for the greater exorcism of a place is given, but only a lesser exorcism of persons. With the great rarity for need of anything further and the considerable consultation and deliberation required beforehand a proper veil and conclusion is drawn here.

From necessary cleansings to a little gem. *Miracles then and now* show our author in fine form as a discussor of popular beliefs. He scratches where, especially CFPSS, folk itch. What to one person is a miracle is merely mundane to another depending upon their “boggle threshold”. A miracle is an unusual sign which points to the work of God in order that people may turn to God. If it is not significant of God revealing Himself to us then the miracle is only a wonder. Miracles are congruent with sanctity. As our president has said, and the Revd. William Law before him, there is a self-evidentness about true signs be they of the dead or of the miraculous. Nevertheless we are not to rejoice in the psychic but the spiritual. We hope and pray that the psychic can be a trigger for the spiritual so that we not only wonder but worship. A miracle should lead us deeper into the mystery of God for it is a gift (not a guarantee) of love to faith.

In this limited article one has had to leave out Canon Perry’s theological writings, his liturgical books and select but a handful of those most likely to be of interest to the Fellowship. Let us publicly offer a very grateful “Thank you” to Michael for all his fruitful endeavours and close with a piece from our sister publication, the *Christian Parapsychologist*: “That is the work of the CFPSS - to take the poetry of the visionary, and to set it within a wider understanding of Christian orthodoxy than many orthodox Christians had imagined possible. Not by turning the insights of the mystics and the visionaries and the psychics into a system of thought, but by letting their strange ideas act as “hints” whereby some of the marvels of God’s strange world may be revealed to us.”(C.P. Sept.1990 p.257.)

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