

**Requiem Healing** by Michael Mitton and Russ Parker. (London, DLT [Daybreak], 1991). x + 148 pp.; £5.95.

Reviewed by the Revd Neil Broadbent of the Minstead Community, colleague to Dr R.K. McAll.

How good it is that two evangelical Anglican clergy have pursued — or been led into — a deeper understanding of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. With autobiographical detail, down-to-earth pastoral practice and much theological heart-searching, this book explores a Christian attitude to the dead.

The introduction well expresses their starting point: "Warning! No evangelicals allowed in here. Prominent leaders have explored this area and found it to be dangerous! Go no further!" In the following 138 pages these two intrepid explorers boldly go where no known evangelicals have published before. Mr Parker opens with a look at feelings for the dead of the living. Public and private tragedies introduce bereavement and loss. Drs Kiibler-Ross, Moody and Rawlings are brought in on the para-medical front. There is no mention of Margot Grey's more balanced book *Return from the Dead*. Whilst seeking to avoid errors of "sentimentalism . . . sensationalism . . . and spiritualism" (p. 19), near-death experiences are acknowledged to have produced a less anxious approach to death. Prayer for the departed has hitherto been rejected by evangelical Christians because it seems to be "offering a second chance of salvation to the deceased and so implies that the ministry of the church at prayer is more effective than that of the atoning death of Jesus upon the cross" (p. 23). Can you follow that?

From scripture, Saul and the medium of Endor, the Transfiguration, the healing of Lazarus, the cloud of witnesses, 1 Pet. 3.19, 4.6 and 1 Cor. 15.2<sup>c</sup>) receive evangelical commentary, and the authors conclude that there are divinely-allowed crossings of the boundary of death.

Within the body of faith, the living and the dead may meet.

A helpful chapter on "prayers, purgatory and protestants" supports prayer for the dead, calls for humility and looks for "some sort of purifying process in paradise" (p. 65). Purgatory and heresy are placed alongside protestants and prejudice which allows for sitting on the theological fence.

Admirable reflection upon personal experience of "a man who wasn't there" looks at alternative understandings of ghosts. They allow that "hauntings and encounters with the dead are fairly common" (p. 81). The psychically-gifted need to offer their gifts to the Lordship of Jesus — as the CFPSS teaches — and this may yield great fruits, whilst in practice some such may find themselves being asked to repent of their ability and be cut free from this gift (p. 82).

Helpful teaching on the inner experiences of funerals introduces the work of my colleague, Dr Kenneth McAll, and his knowledge of healing the haunted through the celebration of a funeral in the context of the Eucharist, i.e. a requiem. The possession syndrome, as the psychiatric literature calls it, is enunciated and Dr McAll's favourite teaching points are passed on. How to diagnose someone as haunted is wisely omitted. The authors turn to the Jesus of scripture in looking at ministry to the unquiet dead, the forgotten dead, those who died unprepared and their sins, curses or afflictions. Lazarus and the liturgy are invoked to show that the Holy Communion is the best context for prayer for the healing of the dead.

The pastoral wisdom, the plain speaking, the prayerfulness and the authors' desire to be loyal to the Lord Jesus, to scripture and to church tradition shine throughout this book. The work this book discusses, not to mention the integrity and courage of its authors, deserves high praise. If I have a gripe it is that repeated declarations of, ". . . but that doesn't mean to say I'm

not a dedicated evangelical ..." annoyed me; a purely personal reaction. I pray that this title may be widely found on church bookstalls and that you will commend this book to your minister or priest. Better still, buy him a copy; and read it before handing it on.