Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in secular ministry

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To help ourselves and others to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in our work, and to see and tell the Christian story there.

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Editorial

I had settled on the running order for this edition of MaW when the anticipated offering from the north Midlands arrived, with the interesting title "Whither CHRISM?" Reading through (making a few very small edits) I quickly realised this piece deserved promoting! Ruth Stables and her fellows have posed some challenging questions for us and suggested a number of answers, at the same time leaving plenty of room for reflection by each reader. The only thing missing is that they don't tell us what sorts of beer The Hedgehog serves.

It was also good to hear from Michael Powell and read his excellent article on the inter-relatedness of themes in Biblical theology and in building. I was reminded of a story that has probably developed with the telling, but is said to be true. In the 1960s Manchester City Corporation embarked on a massive slum clearance programme of inner-city areas. Whole communities were up-rooted and dumped in new estates, such as Hattersley (recently featuring on the BBC), Langley and Darn Hill. New housing was thrown up in the cleared areas, especially Hulme and Moss Side. The architects won an award for their Mediterranean style designs. It is said that as Working Class folk were moved into the new flats one of the architects stormed into the City Planning Office and demanded to know why *that sort of people* were being put into his beautiful creations. As Mancunians will know, the new housing proved to be disastrous – it looked good, but flat roofs and neighbours above, below and on either side did not suit either the climate or the Northern temperament. Most have now been demolished, and more 'traditional' housing built, where people feel like human beings, not battery hens. Thank you Michael for reminding us that the built environment is an important expression of how we value one another.

Phil Aspinall, who bravely and efficiently took over from me as Secretary, brings us up to date with this year's AGM and with International developments. The latter have been an important part of 'forming' CHRISM over the years and we owe a great deal to the encouragement and wisdom brought by colleagues in other parts of the world. Phil will be at the Tentmakers conference in the USA when this edition goes out; I wonder when he will get to Oz?

Also included is the second of the two pieces I promised (or is that threatened?) elaborating on some of the ideas of the US Sociologist Peter Berger. I've had some feedback on the first one – largely requests to explain further some of the concepts. I've made a couple of simplifications in the second as a result, and I'm still open to comments and feedback!

Speaking of feedback, the original intention of the 'Newsletter', as it then was, centred on being an information exchange among and between Ministers in Secular Employment. Over the past few years there have been requests for more heavy-weight theology, and I think we have succeeded in eliciting some meaty contributions. But the Journal is still very much an information exchange and relies on your contributions to keep it relevant and focussed. Any feedback and / or contribution you can make can only keep it so and help it to be even more effective. My mailbox (physical and electronic) is always open.

Rob

Reflections on Michael Ranken

Phil Aspinall

One of the most striking moments of Michael's funeral was the reading of some of the tributes that had been emailed in after shortly after his death. But what was most compelling – and a real testimony to the life of someone who had made MSE their whole being – was that these were comments from people who had known Michael in the work context, as customers and colleagues. These responses clearly demonstrated the mark Michael has made on the industry and on individuals.

I am grateful to Ron Kill, Michael's partner at Micron Laboratories, for allowing us to reproduce these reflections.

"I first met him about 14 years ago when he bounded into my pasta factory to inspect it with a big smile on his face and I remember thinking "why aren't they all like him?" Over the years that we worked together he, unintentionally, taught me many good things

because despite being a priest, Michael was not a 'preacher'."

"Michael and I came from very different traditions but we also shared a great deal. I always felt inspired by his deep commitment to his faith, by which he lived his life, and by the way he could also accept and respect the beliefs of others, provided he felt they were sincere. I remember with fondness the many conversations we had over the years on our journeys together and on the occasions when we met socially - it was always a joy to be able to talk with him."

"During my short time with Micron he was winding down towards a belated retirement. However he was a warm, genuine person and I agree, I wish there were more like him."

"He was one of a few people who changed my views on religion. I was raised an atheist and was very dismissive for years of religious people as deluded fools. But Michael and other like him are far from deluded. Quite the reverse. He understood what it meant to lead a good life oneself and help to light up the lives of others."

"Michael was a unique person with a fantastic knowledge but very down to earth way of putting it across. ....I still think of him & what he would say about things."

"I'm left with a picture of him tootling through Hythe and content with his day's work as he always seemed to be when I met him. A true gentle man."

"Although I never met Michael in the flesh, his reputation preceded him and he will be fondly remembered by many in the industry for many years to come."

"Michael had a major influence on my life and career. I will never forget him."

"I only met him a couple of times, but he came across as one of the good guys."

Whither CHRISM?
Some further reflections

K. Ruth Stables

Back in November 2001, at Sutton Courtenay, those of us present looked again at the role of CHRISM (not <u>again</u> do I hear some of you say!). Some of us were even asked to go away and do some more reflecting!

For some time a small group of people interested in ministry in the workplace (in its widest sense) had been meeting together in a pub in Lichfield called The Hedgehog. We were: a very recently retired MSE, a very busy working MSE, two very committed lay people undertaking ministry in the workplace, an OLM, a lay Roman Catholic, a Reader and a soon to be retired MSE. Not all of the above came to the meetings but all have seen at least the penultimate draft of this paper. We called ourselves "The Hedgehog Group" (asking prickly questions at the edge of church!)

So - what did we talk about? – and where did we get to? Well we certainly didn't find all the answers but I hope this paper stimulates more discussion – what do *YOU* think?

Should CHRISM be for ordained or lay people?

Very firmly and clearly we felt it should be for both. CHRISM must develop this strength.

However, we were sad that lay people sense it is mainly for those who are ordained – but all is not doom and gloom! One lay person said: "It's quite cheering. I feel more supported when I meet you lot than back in the parish. It's a level playing field in this Group – we have a common aim, the same vision, there's no split."

Inevitably in our discussions, we strayed from thinking simply about CHRISM and reflected about wider ministerial issues. For example, the most difficult question posed to MSEs constantly is: "why do you have to be ordained?" And from one lay person seeking ordination came the comment "the answer that God has called you doesn't

count if you want to be an MSE."

How do MSEs link with OLMs (Ordained Local Ministers)?

Perhaps the important question here is how the person in the work-place sees MSEs and OLMs. I suspect the differences really don't matter out there at the sharp end so why do they matter to us? Do we try to make too much of the distinctions and if so why? Yes, I know, in church terms, MSEs are work-based NSMs and can minister throughout the church and OLMs can only minister within their own parish with its mandated team to support them. But I guess that doesn't mean too much to people on the shop-floor to whom church may be a strange place anyway!

I sense that the more meaningful distinction may be between minis-ters who see themselves as parish-based and those who see them-selves as work-based. It's the context of ministry that counts. But we should not forget that even those who see themselves as work-based also have roots in a parish and those who see themselves as mainly parish-based frequently meet and have contacts with those who work! As one person said: "in an ideal world, we would not wrestle with all these distinctions – the context would define our ministry."

Perhaps though MSEs work more at the edge, more in the neighbourhood, more in the workplace, and not so ostensibly in church.

And what about Readers?

Many Readers have a real ministry at work and are often seen as very accessible – perhaps akin to lay preachers in the Methodist church. People talk about "lay preachers" in work conversations, but not about MSEs. Why not?

Ministry and mission in the workplace

Isn't it a great privilege and opportunity to have an unpaid ministry, which is recognised somehow (MSE, OLM, Reader) and is outside in

the world of work as well as held within the structures in the church?

Does this make such ministers a potential threat to those whose salaries are paid by the church and have to wrestle with buildings, and the necessities of church administration?

Perhaps members of CHRISM have a kind of freedom that is less available to our paid colleagues. I shall certainly never forget one stipendiary clergyperson saying to me after 24 hours at one of our CHRISM weekends:" I've never been to a weekend like this before. It's wonderful. You are all so free." Those of us undertaking ministry in the workplace can both "be" and "do" from within the structures of society. As one person said: "you cannot have one without the other. The response to "being" is in the "doing". It is the context of our "doing" that distinguishes ministers in the workplace.

Although people from outside the church and at work always want to know if MSEs are "proper Vicars", the defining difference for an MSE seems to be that you are "one of them." You are not from "outside" like a parish clergyperson or an Industrial Missioner.

Are there 3 overlapping circles? – what is the minister's own perception of his/her ministry? Is what is written below helpful or not?

> ~ parish-based clergy whose role is primarily pastoral;

> ~ MSEs (and OLMs and Readers too) whose role is pastoral but is also alongside in the workplace and often working deeply within the structures;

> ~ Industrial Missioners whose role is in the workplace and who are usually paid by the church to be there and whose role is also to comment and reflect on the wider social and economic dimensions of work and to work and campaign in the structures of society.

The boundaries are fuzzy – and perhaps they always will be. The differences cannot, and should not, be too closely defined.

The role of MSEs in the workplace

By virtue of their priesthood, MSEs have a representative role. They are ministers of Word and Sacrament. They are recognised and authorised as ministers of the wider church. The Church is visible in that place through them.

Theirs is a servant leadership from within the structures where they work and they have the freedom to "preach the Gospel" appropriately from that place.

Those with whom they work will put expectations of what it means to be a "Vicar" upon them and they work alongside their colleagues to fulfil the objectives of their employer. How they do their job will be a large part of their Christian witness.

 MSEs are likely to be good communicators and passionate and prophetic.

 MSEs will be in the privileged position of working alongside people of other faiths and none.

MSEs, by their very presence in the workplace, can act as a source of encouragement and support to other Christians in the place of work.

- and the role of OLMs and Readers in the workplace?

Much of the above applies to OLMs and Readers too. OLMs are ministers of Word and Sacrament only in their parish and Readers are ministers primarily of the Word.

Do stipendiary clergy see OLMs who have secular jobs as ministers in the workplace? – and do OLMs want to be seen in that way? Our experience suggests that many don't.

Apart from that, where are the dividing lines and, as I said earlier, does it matter to the person at work?
What do we really mean by "the priesthood of all believers"?

Should the next question be: what is the nature of <u>priesthood </u>in secular work? Isn't it more important to use the title "priest" and not worry further about more defining and restricting titles, which only get in the way?

Why do MSEs (Workplace Ministers) need CHRISM?

The secular world, particularly the public sector, works very much as a team. It can be very isolating in the church to be a Workplace Minister. I shall always be grateful for the support and challenges I received through my involvement with CHRISM.

MSEs (in the widest sense of the words) have very different jobs in a range of contexts. There is richness in sharing.

Should MSEs be Workplace Chaplains?

We made comparisons with the work of a Hospital/Prison Chaplain i.e. a person also employed by the organisation. A Workplace Chaplain need not be ordained (some Hospital Chaplains are lay people).

The context would be comparable but an MSE is employed to do their job, which is secular in nature e.g. teaching English. They are not employed primarily as ministers of the Gospel, but you cannot stop being a priest – we are not "part-time" priests.

The issue may be that people expect the "chaplain" to fulfil certain functions. MSEs, by and large, do not fulfil defined priestly "functions" as such at work e.g. giving Communion to the sick, taking a service – being pastoral and ministering to the structures is much less easy to define. Words don't help! MSEs are paid for the job they do for their secular employer. Our priesthood runs through us like lettering through a stick of rock and contributes to the overall wholeness of whatever is our context.

To sum up …

I see two main contexts, which overlap:

Parish focus	Work focus
Stipendiary clergy	-----
NSM	MSE
OLM	OLM
Reader	Reader

CHRISM needs to raise the awareness of OLM, Reader and MSE ministry in the workplace. The OLM mandate should include the place of work *if* the OLM wants a particular emphasis on their ministry in their place of work. Likewise, Readers could be encouraged to view their prime place of ministry as their workplace.

Overall, the important task for CHRISM is to concentrate on supporting ministry in the workplace (whatever it is called) and looking at what unites rather than divides in building the Kingdom. I believe that is what CHRISM is there for.

Should CHRISM now look at what it means to be in ministry and the context in which that ministry is undertaken?

What do you think?

K. Ruth Stables,
on behalf of The Hedgehog Group
6th October 2003

MSEs and Chaplains

Many thanks to those who have replied to the request in the last Journal about the relationship between MSEs and Chaplains. The responses so far show a clear split between two types of Chaplaincy – but I would not want to draw any conclusions unless there are more! If can help fill out the information requested then please let me have a response by the end of November.

Rob

Built Environment and Biblical Theology: making connections, discerning relationships

Michael Powell

In the October 1999 edition of *Ministers-at-Work*, I summarised the first stage of what has turned out to be a long but highly rewarding programme of work. My starting point then was that if we claim relevance and authority for the Bible in relation to all areas of life, those of us who are secularly orientated 'Ministers of the Word' need to discover what such relevance actually is for our particular secular fields. In my case, the field is Built Environment. This article continues the story.

My aim for the second stage of my self-imposed task has been:
To relate 'Biblical Theology' to 'Built Environment' using specific biblical texts and built environment locations and by means of 'picture' and 'disclosure' models.

I have taken 'Biblical Theology' to mean either the simple biblical text or the complex structures and meanings discerned by scholarship and accessible to users of the biblical text in English. Similarly, I have taken 'Built Environment' to mean either the simple activity of building or the complex stories and meanings embodied in both particular buildings and entities such as villages, towns or rural and lightly-built areas. On the biblical side, I chose, with my supervisor's help, to work mainly with Psalms 8, 19 and 48; Genesis 1-11 linked with the prologue to John's Gospel; the whole of Nehemiah; John 8-9 and 14-16; and Revelation 20-22. These biblical materials were chosen because they dealt with such matters as creation, buildings and structures, cities, light and relationships. On the built environment side, with my other supervisor's help, I chose for detailed study (a) the Borough of Chelmsford where I live, which comprises the town Chelmsford itself, a network of villages, and the 1970's town of South Woodham Ferrers developed from an village, and (b) a fascinating part of north west Tasmania, where my daughter lives and where I was able to spend a six months (unpaid!) study period. This part of Tasmania comprises riverside townships, the City of Devonport and adjoining rural and highland heritage areas. Chelmsford and

Tasmania made a good pair as they were alike in some ways but significantly different in others. This very specific materials base in both Biblical theology and Built Environment was widened somewhat to include some general works in, for example, aesthetic, environmental and contextual theologies, and Built Environment themes such as sustainability and the cost/worth/value nexus.

The first major need was to find a heuristic or revelatory way of relating Built Environment and Biblical Theology, the two fields of my life and ministry and basic facets of the life of the world, one of which existed on paper and the other in bricks and mortar. My first realisation was that good material was readily available to enable Built Environment to be treated mainly by means of pre-existing texts. Chelmsford had a substantial Borough history, a Development Plan currently undergoing public consultation and a variety of place-related publications, some of which had been produced to mark the Millennium. Tasmanian material consisted of studies of Aborigine concepts of home and place, reviews of European activity since the mid-nineteenth century, reflections on the Centenary of Australian Federation (1901-2001), and current debates on what should be regarded as valuable heritage. To the textual material I added some observational material of my own. The parallel discovery was that scholarly commentaries on biblical material can be highly relevant to Built Environment. For example, I was able to assemble a set of commentaries on Nehemiah which included those of experts in history, language, archaeology, the personal profiling of Nehemiah, and the symbolic significance of the Jerusalem wall project to the modern world. Commentaries on John's Gospel included substantial works on symbolism and light and on the sociological background.

Relevance and resonance by themselves do not provide a sufficient basis for establishing relationship; I had to find an integrating model. Various musings and much doodling prompted me to think about Sydney Opera House. Its two main auditoria, the Concert Hall and the Opera Theatre, lie side by side, each with its majestic, sail-like superstructure. I wondered, 'Was one of these Built Environment and the other Biblical Theology?' Delving into the story of the design revealed something much more important and interesting. The architect, Jorn Utzon, had assumed that the concrete sails would be para-

bolic. Over five years, that presented two insurmountable problems to the engineering design team. First, the structural analysis could not be done and second, each sail would have to be of different shape from all the others, a nightmare to try to build and completely uneconomic. There had to be a seismic change. This came with Utzon's realisation that he could jettison the variable parabola and substitute a uniform sphere. Each sail then became simply a cut from a sphere of constant diameter. Eureka, the design had been made buildable. Eureka for me was that Built Environment and Building Theology need not be seen as adjoining auditoria but as different cuts from one, single sphere of human knowledge, experience and understanding.

In spite of this breakthrough, what I had was very concrete and static, literally and metaphorically. By coincidence, theological texts I was reading on space, time and light - fundamentals of both creation theology and architecture - were telling me about Robert Grosseteste, the 13th century philosopher, physicist and theologian, who had visualised creation in terms of a spherical world emanating from a single point of light. This, I believed, was it! I could visualise Built Environments at the surface of a living sphere and Biblical Theology at the centre. For practical 'Ministers of the Word' like members of CHRISM, Biblical Theology must seek relevance and application. It is like a centrifugal force, throwing out its ideas from a centre to a periphery where they illuminate and relate to what is there. Conversely, Built Environment can be seen as working centripetally, whirring down into a centre to encounter its own depth and meaning in, for example, Biblical Theology. Without doubt, with these complementary centrifugal and centripetal dynamics, this had become a truly dynamic model!

The second and critical need was to find a good way of using this dynamic model to unleash the riches that, I was becoming daily more aware, were inherent in the two millennia of Chelmsford's story, in the 35,000 year human story in Tasmania and its most recent 150 years, in what my selections from Psalms, Genesis, Nehemiah, John, and Revelation, were bursting to say about Built Environment and in my wider reading in the Biblical Theology and Built Environment fields. After much experimentation, I decided I could

create a balanced, back-to-back set of ten detailed studies as fol-
lows:

CENTRIFUGAL TRAJECTORIES		CENTRIPETAL TRAJECTORIES	
Biblical text / Built Environment theme		*Built Environment theme / Biblical text*	
Psalms	Wonder and beauty	Traversing Places and Times	Psalms
Genesis and John 1	Beginning	Resources	Genesis and John 1
Nehemiah	Significance	Types and Purposes	Nehemiah
John's Gospel	Identity	Cost and Worth	John's Gospel
Revelation	Becoming	Home	Revelation

These trajectories need brief explanation. Starting with the Bible and
the centrifugal dynamic, the Psalms I was studying were pointing me
to Wonder and Beauty; I could find that, albeit in a low key way, in
Chelmsford and Tasmania and Built Environment discourse generally.
Similarly, Genesis and John's Prologue were talking to me about
'beginning'; Nehemiah about the highly significant, meaningful wall
around Jerusalem ; John about the identity of Jesus, the man born
blind and the disciples; and Revelation about the 'becoming' of the
world. I realised that Chelmsford and Tasmania have 'beginnings',
their significant, characteristic structures such as bridges, key groups
of people such as, in both cases, prisoners, and plans for their
'becoming', in Chelmsford's case plans for growth and in Tasmania's
embryo plans for making sense of story and heritage.

On the centripetal side, some of the Built Environment texts trav-
ersed a territory, explaining the stories embodied in the buildings of
a street or structures along a canal; the Psalms traversed Jerusalem.
Other Built Environment stories were rich in detail about how re-
sources of land, timber for construction and other materials had
been acquired and deployed; Genesis speaks of these same re-
sources. In order to understand an English town or a Tasmanian ru-
ral area, we create typologies of buildings which can liberate or en-

close our thinking; Nehemiah gives similar details of Susa and Jerusalem. Built Environment stories often consider issues of cost and may end with destruction or high continuing worth; those same concepts are part of the underlying substance of John's Gospel. Homes range from isolated homesteads of the rural poor in Tasmania, through Devonport's rise to City status with homes for 25000 people, to Chelmsford's vigorous and contentious ongoing expansion to meet current targets for homes in south east England; in the closing chapters of Revelation, the home of God comes to be with human beings.

This has been a 'bottom up' piece of work. I started with two locations that were fully accessible to me and which are ordinary in nature. Chelmsford has been an ordinary market town, an ordinary industrial town and an ordinary county town, and now is an ordinary commuter town. Its surrounding villages are beautiful in their way but essentially ordinary. The part of Tasmania I studied gave me everyday insights into the sorrows and joys of its ancient origins and its recent colonial history, and enabled me to feel the poignancy of its basic civic questions about the future roles of ports, World Heritage Areas and remote streets that exhibit strange mixes of gothic, classical and Australian vernacular building styles. While Chelmsford and north west Tasmania are highly particular, their ordinariness is typical of many places. Similarly, the work in Biblical Theology was very practical and basic. It required no special language or archaeological skills, merely the ability to discover and relate the accessible work of experts.

It seems to me that, more than anything else, it is this ordinariness that gives generalisability to the work. It seems likely that one could take any coherent set of biblical materials and any reasonably balanced pair of built environments, with relevant texts, and discover similar kinds of centrifugal and centripetal forces at work between them. More widely, it might be possible, using this approach, to relate fields other than Built Environment to Biblical Theology and Built Environment to religious texts other than the Bible, such as the Koran. Both may be able to help move us forward in our single but pluralistic world.

At this point in what is a continuing journey, I am confident that

Built Environment and Biblical Theology **do** belong together and that it can be comprehensively demonstrated that this is so. I find this is a measure of vindication of the MSE role and task, particularly the Ministry of the Word in relation to secular contexts.

MSE and Consulting

Phil Aspinall

Having spent nearly four years now working as a consultant, and part of that time self-employed, I thought I ought to respond to the request in Journal 86, in the hope of stimulating further debate.

The key reason why it is important that there are MSEs working as consultants, is that this is what increasingly a large number of people find themselves doing these days. Previously large employers are shedding more and more people, and then finding that they have to resource their activities by using external consultants (many of whom may be the people they have just made redundant !) This is certainly true of my own area in the chemicals, processing and oil & gas industries.

It is part of the calling of an MSE to reflect upon their work situation – its problems and its joys, its tensions and its opportunities – and to articulate the realities of the presence of God (and all the other good things embodied in the CHRISM mission statement). So I am grateful that the question raised about consulting gives us the opportunity to do this, and may enable us to explore ways to give sense and meaning to others who share a vocation to consultancy.

Consulting is perhaps rather too narrow a focus. So let us not forget that there is, in parallel, a growth in the use of agency staff in many aspects of life and business. These temporary workers may not know where or whether they will be in paid work from one week to the next and are often receiving the lowest possible pay and conditions. There may be parallels to be drawn here – professionals may find there way into consultancy; manual workers are transformed into agency staff. (See my article on the German meeting for an example of agency work).

So how are we to make sense of our role? An important thing that many MSEs have stressed is their exploration of God in their work (not work place) – to focus on our ministry in our secular employment. This exploration of what it means to minister is also made easier if we are not wedded to the idea that he role of the MSE is somehow to transpose the image of the parish priest into the workplace (to "be the Vicar"). I do think that this is a very difficult model to sustain, as it implies a status in the workplace that we do not have – we are there, after all, to do our job like everyone else.

As a consultant (and particularly if self-employed) we are detached from any permanent community. The same is true of agency staff, who may never meet a fellow employee of their own firm. And yet, it is a significant feature of much consultancy work that we are for long or short periods, and often at short notice, plunged into a community, or have to create one for a particular job. We arrive at a client's site and immediately have to work out the group's dynamics, personalities, political factions – no "settling into the parish for 6 months before I make any changes" here. It is, I think a clear ministerial function to be able to achieve this. It is also true that this is not ministry to a captive group of people – they have choices !

What models might we draw from this ? The tired old cliché "I'm a consultant, I'm here to help" may in fact point us to the key – that a consultant is there as a servant. We could clearly spell out a diaconal role in a spirit of service, in the help and support we give to others. It may undoubtedly be that the work we actually do speaks of the new life of the Kingdom of God – the "conversions" that I see in my work on the safety of chemical processes often bears this out. And great sensitivity is often required, for example, following an incident when working with the victim's colleagues. But there is also a priestly role in this work of consultancy – interpreting the reality of others, and acting as a mediator; recognising, and, indeed, celebrating the sacraments of grace at work in the changes which see taking place. This may sound far removed from trying to replicate pastoral parish ministry in the workplace. We also have the liberating perspective of being priest without having to be the leader.

As I write this, I look around for models which might inform this pattern of our itinerant existence – dropping into communities and then moving on, often sharing very deeply with the client's workplace issues. What comes to mind is the image of the Friar. May be this is something to expand on further!

But the bottom line is that for an MSE to work as a consultant reflects the reality of many peoples' lives in the working world today. It gives us an opportunity to reflect upon it, and opens up yet more models of what it means to minister in work.

WANTED: a priest who's a fisherman.

Durham diocese recently advertised for a priest to follow in the footsteps of Peter, James and John, and combine fishing with parish duties.

The vicarage in Gainford backs on to the River Tees and has its own fishing rights. The post is a house-for-duty one, covering the parishes of St Mary's, Gainford, and St Andrew's, Winston, suitable for an active, retired NSM or someone wanting to study in nearby Durham.

The Archdeacon of Auckland, Ian Jagger, in charge of recruitment, said that stressing the attractions of the rural post was a deliberate policy: advertisements last summer had failed to attract any applicants. "The North, generally, and the North-East particularly, continues to find it hard to attract new clergy to the area. The house in Gainford is quite delightful — the river at the back, and a walled courtyard looking on to the village green, at the front."

Andrew Brown, who is a fisherman as well as a journalist, says that Trinity College, Cambridge, which is the patron of St Mary's, Gainford, has historically been associated with a number of livings that have fishing rights. "This post could be an absolutely fantastic perk, particularly if it is upstream on the River Tees. It is a rather gorgeous part of the country, where one could catch trout, grayling, and even salmon."

Rumours, Reality and Angels – part 2

Rob Fox

In the April edition of the Journal I looked, in the book he co-wrote with Thomas Luckmann, *"The Social Construction of Reality"* (SCR), at the way in which the sociologist Peter Berger had viewed reality as a social construct. In this second article I want to look briefly at how Berger applies these ideas to religion in two subsequent books, *"The Social Reality of Religion"* (SRR) and *"A Rumour of Angels"* (aRoA), then to draw out some lessons for MSE. I would again like to issue a health warning: I have reflected on and developed many of Berger's themes and ideas, so what follows is often an interpretation of Berger. I will try and flag up what is more from me!

The central tenet of *"The Social Reality of Religion"* is that because religions manifest themselves through reality building and maintaining institutions and communities, that which is 'real' in religious terms is objectively real because a coherent and identifiable body of people accept it as such. This does not mean that this is the only test of 'reality', however. As Berger has already posited, the social construction of reality is a – he would argue the - major test. Reality is social in its context and 'religion has played a strategic part in the human enterprise of world-building' (SRR, p.28). The main challenge to religious definitions of reality comes from the increasing number and variety of world-views on offer and the demands on the individual to inhabit several reality worlds, if not at the same time then jostling with each other.

The modern individual exists in a plurality of often competing and contradictory reality worlds, migrating back and forth between them. Each world has its own plausibility structures, supporting the individual in the tension of maintaining these worlds in some kind of balance. CHRISM is just such a plausibility structure, concerned with creating and affirming the identity of MSE. As such it is what Berger calls a 'cognitive community', acting – to some extent – to from and affirm the way in which members conceive of MSE. The extent to which it so acts is a function of how each member feels themselves to be and acts as a member of that community.

In *"A Rumour of Angels"* Berger addresses the question of transcendent reality, which is defined as that which I perceive as being real over and above that which is socially real. I know as 'real' the God of the Old and New Testaments and in the reality of what He is and has done. A Taoist however knows as 'real' the immanence of the ancestors and their role in day-to-day life. As I pointed up in the first article, this raises the question of how far we can be free from social dimensions of reality and knowledge so as to 'know' that which we perceive as transcendent is not actually general or local reality. 'We apprehend the reality of everyday life as an ordered reality ... that appears objectified ... constituted by an order of objects that have been designated *as* objects before my appearance on the scene' (SCR, p.35). Reality appears external to us, with an existence independent of us. It acts upon us rather than we on it. We share objectifications with others, which enables us to carry out social interaction with them. It gives both temporal and spatial structure to everyday life.

What is absolutely real for me and others with whom I affirm reality may not be seen as absolutely real by members of another cognitive communities. We notice these differences in understanding reality when we come into contact with members of those communities; contact that implicitly challenges our understanding of reality.

In terms of religious groups, our understanding of transcendent reality usually shares its general shape and many of its details with members of other groups, sufficient to recognise their reality as kindred to ours – even if we disagree on some details. A Methodist can recognise that a Baptist shares a broadly similar reality world, although even with the broad Christian reality spectrum this commonality is often strained. We can agree on certain key elements of reality with members of Jewish or Islamic communities, sharing a monotheistic outlook from, ultimately, a common community source. We may be much less comfortable though with the reality worlds of say a Hindu, a Buddhist or worshipper of nature spirits. What we do share with all 'other' reality constructing and affirming groups however is that each experiences a local reality – that which distinguishes and characterises the group, a general reality – that which distinguishes and characterises the wider nexus or society of groups

each considers itself to be allied to, and a transcendental reality – that which it holds to be absolutely real and true.

Irrespective of all other reasons for and claims to truth, religious truth is real because it is socially constructed and affirmed, therefore it is worthy of acceptance on those terms.

To digress for a moment. A key feature of MSEs is that they, by definition:
- are authorised (in some way) by and representative of a religious cognitive community;
- are trained (to some extent) to think theologically; and
- encounter other reality worlds and cognitive communities in day-to-day situations that are not within the cognitive boundaries of their own religious community.

Consequently MSEs are in a strong position to mediate between differing religious cognitive communities and to support others in meeting the challenges to their own faith and understanding of reality prompted by such encounters.

In *"A Rumour of Angels"* Berger turns his attention to commenting on the contemporary situation of religion – the apparent departure of the supernatural from modern society. Two comments ought to be made here. Firstly, this phenomenon was restricted to 'modern' society, and therefore to the developed world. Secondly, there has been a resurgence of interest in 'spirituality' in 'modern' society over the past 20 years, generally seen in individualistic terms and not centred on either traditional religious forms or on coherent social groups. Berger noted that most sociology of religion has focussed on the activities of the traditional religious institutions and pointed to the presence of spirituality outside these.

For Berger the supernatural denotes 'a fundamental category of religion, namely the assertion of belief that there is *an other reality*' (aRoA, p.14). Religion posits a supernatural in the midst of the everyday, taken-for-granted world. Or, in terms familiar to CHRISM members:

To help ourselves and others to celebrate the presence of God into the things of the earth and the holiness of life in our work, and to

see and tell the Christian story there.

Those who hold that there is a transcendent reality form a cognitive minority, whose view of the world differs significantly from that generally taken from granted. It may be true that the majority in Britain today would not yet agree with Nietzsche that 'God is dead', but they act as if they do. The world-view of those who continue to subscribe to the general view of reality we call 'Christian' find themselves increasingly cognitively marginalised *in this view.* Local realities, affirmed by each religious group, may be even more different to the general reality accepted in 'secular' society.

There are, I consider, three types of response to this (Berger had the first two): defiance, surrender and accommodation. Defiance leads to hunkering down in a cognitive bunker and steadfastly opposing other reality views. This is often seen as a sectarian response, though large, international, churches are not immune. It also locks the group into a single position; as Berger puts it: 'in religion as in politics, if one once starts to clobber the opposition, one stops clobbering at one's peril' (aRoA, p.27). Surrender means here to abandon the 'old' reality view and embrace the secularised world-view, seen (or thought) to be held by a cognitive majority. 'Modernity is swallowed hook, line and sinker, and the repast is accompanied by a sense of awe worthy of Holy Communion' (aRoR, p.34). Accommodation can take a number of forms, from compartmentalising different reality worlds (seeking to manage the consequent stresses) to modifying those elements of the 'old' reality that cannot be readily conformed to the new. This is what Rudolph Bultmann and Paul Tillich referred to as the intellectual adjustment of the Christian tradition with philosophical truth.

Berger was convinced that 'the traditional lore, and in most cases the institution in charge of this lore as well, can … be presented as still or again "relevant" to modern man' (aRoA, p.35). He also sees the sociology of knowledge – his specialist field – as posing the specifically contemporary challenge to theology because it posits that the plausibility of views of reality depends on the social support they receive. Note here that Berger is concerned with *plausibility*. Put simply, the extent to which a view of reality is accepted is related to

the level of social support it receives – a circular argument but none-theless insightful. If a view of reality is *thought* to have wide social support it will enlist further support. Conversely if a view of reality is *thought* to be losing acceptance, it will lose it!

Let me be controversial (though not as much as I could be): the 'pro' side debate in the UK on the legalisation of cannabis emphasises the apparent growth in support for legalisation, implicitly saying 'This is a view of reality whose time has come, subscribe to it if you do not want to be left behind'. Those who point out the medical and social effects of legalisation are rubbished as 'old-fashioned', 'out-of-date'. Whichever position wins, it will be that which gains most vocal sup-port, not that with the more cogent case.

Berger notes that each 'new' reality view seeks to supplant older views by relativizing it, which he calls a 'hidden *double standard* ... the *past*, out of which ... tradition comes, is relativized in terms of this or that socio-historical analysis. The *present,* however, remains strangely immune from relativization ... the New Testament writers are seen as afflicted with false consciousness rooted in their time but the contemporary analyst takes the consciousness of *his* time as an unmixed intellectual blessing. The electricity and radio users are placed intellectually above the Apostle Paul. This is rather funny. More importantly, in the sociology of knowledge, it is an extraordi-narily one-sided way of looking at things' (aRoA, p.58).

Each time and social group has it's own plausibility structure and reality maintaining mechanisms. Once we understand this then any appeal to an alleged 'modern' consciousness loses its persuasive-ness. We find ourselves on a level playing field rather than looking down from the cognitive hill we confidently assume we command. As Berger puts it, 'one has the terrible suspicion that the Apostle Paul may have been one-up cognitively after all' (aRoA, p.58).

We do not have to agree with contemporary consciousness. Modern views of reality may not be capable of conceiving the existence of angels or demons, but that does not answer the question of whether they go on existing despite our inability to conceive them. I recall a philosophy lecture on the linguistic theories of A J Ayer, held in awe

for some years a generation ago, and the reaction to my pointing out that they did not stand up to Ayer's own tests. The assault was quickly relativized away by a philosophy lecturer: how could a mere student challenge the ideas of the great Professor. But which was right? As Berger puts it: 'the relativizers are relativized, the debunkers are debunked – indeed, relativization itself is somehow liquidated' (aRoA, p. 59).

Berger suggested the following 'arguments' for the continued vitality of the transcendent in modern society. He saw it as the task of theology to seek out 'signals of transcendence' within the empirical world (in particular 'prototypical human gestures' that point beyond 'natural' reality).

The argument from *order*, that common human characteristic. Ordering itself is an act of faith and expression of belief in something greater than ourselves, a reflection of the orderliness of the universe. Every ordering gesture becomes a signal of transcendence. The mother who says to her child "It will be alright" is declaring her faith in the transcendent.

The argument from *play*. Play is part of basic human existence. It sets up its own universe, in which all other time and reality is suspended.

The argument from *hope*. 'Human existence is always oriented towards the future' (aRoA, p.80) and puts its hope in the future being 'better' than the past or present. Hope is a prominent ingredient of most theodicices.

The argument from *damnation*. All human societies have a strong sense of what is permissible (though this may differ) and what so offends this that that the only adequate response is a curse of supernatural dimensions. The doer puts themself not just outside human society but outside that which it holds to transcend it; "hell is too good for him."

The argument from *humour*. Humour is an incongruity, a fundamental discrepancy from reality, in which the rules and norms of re-

ality are set aside. In the Feast of Fools the 'normal' was turned on its head; we do not laugh *at* Don Quixote but warm to him as doing what we would love to! If you have never read the full version of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, including the chapter on ecstasy, please do. As Berger puts it: 'human life gains the greatest part of its richness from its capacity for ecstasy ... any experience of stepping outside the taken-for-granted reality of everyday life, any openness to the mystery that surround us on all sides' (aRoA, p.96). If we lose the ability to laugh, especially at ourselves, we are confronted only by stark 'reality', and it appals us.

To return to a point implied earlier, each age is immediate to God. Therefore each 'must be carefully looked at for whatever signals of transcendence might be uniquely its own' (aRoA, p.100). This is just what Paul did in the Areopagus. This is just the task that faces MSEs today. We look for the signals of transcendence in our places and draw attention to them. So what strengths and weaknesses do we have as MSEs in this task?

Firstly, to re-emphasise the point made earlier on that CHRISM is a reality affirming structure, maintaining a 'local reality' that belongs within the umbrella of the common Christian 'general reality'. It is, I think, wise to see that local reality in broad terms: how we each con-ceive of MSE, its identity and task, will differ, however we share a core belief in and commitment to ministry in the workplace, recog-nise some distinctive signs of MSE, have our own knowledge set and our own language (or jargon) to describe what we do. We recognise one another in and through these. The existence of this local reality is itself in tension with other local realities – both within and without the Christian general reality, and in particular with local realities that define Christian ministry differently. To some within the Churches we will be seen as a threat because we do not conform in every re-spect to their reality structures.

Secondly, the MSE inhabits the world 'out there', on the same terms and in the same way as those outside the reality structures of the Churches. This again is a potential threat to these, but it is also a strength in that the MSEs are making the same transitions between reality worlds as most of those within the Churches. Who better

placed therefore to stand alongside and support those who find it difficult to hold different realities in balance?

Thirdly, because MSEs are trained to think theologically, they are well placed to see the signs of transcendence in the taken-for-granted world. MSEs can relate differently from those within less open local reality structures to the cares, concerns and experiences of everyday life across a wide range of circumstances. To plagiarize Heineken: MSEs can reach the parts others cannot!

Finally, MSEs are also 'there', already alongside people in the working environment, when they are needed. We can be spoken to as a work colleague or as a 'vicar', or both.

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http://www.theology.ie/thinkers/berger.htm

CHRISM Annual General Meeting 2003

The CHRISM AGM took place during the summer conference in Cornwall. Phil Aspinall summarises some of the highlights:

- Peter Johnson (Presiding Moderator) thanked the committee for a most enjoyable year, and commended the collaborative style of working which he found so dissimilar to most clergy group-ings. He thanked Phil for keeping the committee informed and on track, Keith for his oversight of the finances and the clarity with which he presented issues, and Stan for his many years of service in a variety of roles.

  He reported that progress had been made in all three areas, highlighted last year, where CHRISM gives support and re-sources for members:
  - as individuals through the weekends together, and particu-larly in the reflective weekend in which the contributions gelled and brought the group together ,
  - in our home, work and church, through the resources and mutual support, which often happens remotely form the committee
  - as we interact with work place and church institutions, par-ticularly in the links with the Anglican hierarchy and John Gladwin, the Chair of the Ministry Committee of the House of Bishops.

  He had particularly promoted the idea of prayer, and has val-ued the membership list as a source for intercessions – a prac-tice he commends.

- Keith Holt (CHRISET Trustee) reported a stronger financial po-sition than he had anticipated, with an increase in total funds to £ 4929 at the end of 2002 (compared to £ 4564 in 2001). This includes a first claim for Gift Aid, Keith rejoiced, and was there-fore happy to hand the finances over to Richard Dobell, and to recommend that the subscription remain at the same level.

- Elizabeth Bonham reported an increase in paid membership to

102 in 2002 (including 8 students) and noted 110 (including 10 students) already paid for 2003.

- The Meeting unanimously invited Rowan Williams, The Archbishop of Canterbury, to become the new Patron of CHRISM

- Elections to the committee. The Committee now comprises:

Presiding Moderator	Jean Skinner
Incoming Moderator	Felicity Smith
Outgoing Moderator	Peter Johnson
Secretary	Phil Aspinall
Journal Editor	Rob Fox
Committee Members	Keith Holt
	Peter King
	Margaret Joachim
	Dorrie Johnson (co-opted)
CHRISM rep to CHRISET	Margaret Joachim
CHRISET representative	Richard Dobell
Membership Secretary	Elizabeth Bonham

- Jean Skinner (new Presiding Moderator) thanked Peter for his cheerful leadership and highlighted the importance of committee meetings as a way of keeping in touch with fellow MSEs. Two key issues had arisen from this weekend: to provide prayer and worship materials (from resources already developed) for individual MSEs and for use in services in the wider church, and to assemble the history of MSEs and CHRISM, to capture the picture.

- We said farewell and a big 'thank you' to Ailleen Walker, who has contributed a much valued perspective to CHRISM, and wish her well in her continuing Industrial Mission work in Humberside.

  We go from strength to strength !

To Go in the Same

Phil Aspinall

The Germans have adopted a new catch phrase. You are, no doubt, familiar with the formula of the French Worker Priests and the Mission de France: "Etre avec" – to be with. This philosophy allows several possible interpretations. At one level it implies a decision to be alongside others, to accompany, but with a hint of coming in from the outside. At another level, it is an existential decision – to make a choice to exist totally with others – to *be* in the strongest sense. But the new German phrase seems to take this a step further. In Gleich gehen.

"To go in the same" implies movement – to be caught up in the same processes, subject to the same changes, under the same pressures. It is a phrase which resonates with MSE – we choose to stay in our same work, in the same place, the same home – to choose the same place as our colleagues.

This was the theme of the Spring meeting of the German working brothers and sisters, held as usual in a monastery outside Frankfurt. The group of about 30 comprised the usual mixture of worker-priests, Little Sisters and lay members committed to a faith of social integration and social action.

The debate this year was informed by Simone Weil – in the form of a paper on her experience in a metal works in the 1920's. Even the Germans found it a difficult paper – too dense with ideas – so I was quite pleased with my limited powers of translation! Her experience taught her that the theoretical philosophy and social analysis of the times – and of those in the Workers Movement – had lost touch with the real needs, expectations and desires of working people. Instead, she looked for a practical approach, based on what was later to be called the "humanisation of work" – collaboration and consultation at all levels, teamwork and collaboration, the reform of mechanistic work. But she particularly stressed the recognition that political theory, which did not account for people, would only lead to new hierarchies and concentrations of power – leading to the continued suppression of working people.

This connected with the second theme of the weekend: "to think where I am". This was almost set in opposition to "going in the same" – as this approach recognises that many who take up the call to be worker brothers and sisters are there as outsiders and cannot, truly, go the same way. Nevertheless, there is a duty to reflect, analyse and think through the situations encountered at work. Many of us would recognise this as also the calling of MSEs – but it must always be set against the tensions, pressures and stress of simply existing in the workplace and doing the work (as some of us are often painfully aware).

The reflections of the German group were many and varied. I have included some of the pithier examples, in the hope that they might stimulate further thought:

I live this life as a worker [in a machinery factory] and as a commuter – subject to the short time working and the redundancies.

Who has a place in Society and who does not? It is not the big schemes that make life better – it is the little things in the workplace.

What do I take with me to my workplace? My reading in the underground makes me think – but all I can take is Joy!

It is in relationship with others that I get my status (place in life) and social outlook.

The key is to live at the same level as others, not to help from outside – we should make our living space together. "To look with the eyes of the lowest and to live at their level"

We can observe and comment and analyse – but what does it look like to **them** ? What would our colleagues say of **their** experiences? (We must not just focus on our own experiences).

Do people accept what is imposed upon them? – How do we make people more aware, raise their consciousness, and help them mobilise to protest?

"To go the same" is to have children like other people do [spoken by someone present with her 10-month-old baby]. It is good to be away from the endless trivia colleagues at work talk about.

The text [of Simone Weil] speaks of new processes I have experienced in work which make it better and which have stayed with us, despite many changes in ownership: planning and organising together, consultation, flexibility.

Old doctrines, old models do not deal with the current problems in work and society. What is the effective resistance to "neo-liberal political systems"?

It is important to gain a perspective of working life at such a level [of the workers] – but because of our backgrounds, our training, our philosophy, we are **not** the same. "I cannot **be** a worker".

We need to see who are the modern slaves in our new systems. Humanising influences are all very well, but the managers and work directives are driven from above.

What does it mean to be radical in our search for the Kingdom of God? – Is it only looking for the good signs or is it **in** the act of resistance, of forcing change?

With this emphasis on the practical, some of the key issues are best demonstrated by giving the stories told by two of the people present.

- Helene is a Little Sister who tried to find a job when she moved to the Hanover house. She had no success, so joined an Agency, and has now worked at the same client's site (a chemical and pharmaceutical distributor) for 7 months. She is given menial and tough tasks, and does not know until the Thursday of each week if she will be working the following week. Her pay is very low – and especially when compared to the manual employees of the client firm. "To go in the same" is to live the life of the agency staff – who these days are all around us and are, perhaps, the new slaves. But she has no

connection or community with them – they work at other customers' locations!

- Thomas used to work in the warehouse of a large catalogue shop distributor. But because of his involvement in the politics of the place he became chair of the Works Council, a full time post. He does much to facilitate the consultation and communication process – particularly at the present, when they are faced with an amalgamation of two firms – with the resulting uncertainty, restructurings and redundancies. Even his job may be redundant, as two Works Councils combine. But he can no longer say that he "goes in the same" as his colleagues, the labourers in the warehouse. Because of his intellectual and organisational skills, he is now set apart and in a leadership role. This may be what it means to be a Priest in his work – but it is not "to go in the same".

There may be parallels to be drawn here for MSEs who, because of their priestly caste, find themselves drawn out of the same role as their colleagues, to take on a co-ordinating function or a consulting/ support role.

You may gather that the Frankfurt weekend was challenging – but it was also filled with hope and joy, enthusiastic singing, encouraging worship and meditations – and above all the enduring fellowship of this wonderful group of people. If you are half-competent in German, come and join them next time!

International Meetings

Phil Aspinall

The Autumn meeting of the German group 17th - 19th October in Frankfurt, coincides with the celebration of 50 years of the Little Sisters in Germany. Their Spring meeting will be 14th - 16th May, 2004.

Saturday 22nd November at the University in Louvain is the Institution of the national archive of the Worker Priest movement in Belgium. This will be followed on the Sunday with an International Co-ordination meeting. (I do hope to go to this).

Church Watch

The United Reformed Church has a well-developed scheme for recognition, training and deployment of Lay Preachers. Many of the features of this ministry, as described in official URC policy, show how aspects of MSE are an integral part.

Firstly, "Lay Preaching affirms that Ministry is the work of the whole people of God." Lay preachers in the United Reformed Church are drawn from a variety of backgrounds, situations, and ages. Some of them belonged to the church for many years before becoming a lay preacher; others were more recent members. Some felt a specific 'call' to lay preaching; others 'drifted into it' because of a need in their local congregation. The "lay person is in a unique position alongside the 'person in the pew' to reflect the needs of members of the congregation. Often their daily work is outside the church, mixing with people who are not associated with the church, and because of this the lay preacher can bring a different perspective to worship and has a rich source of experience to use for illustration. When Jesus taught people about God he used incidents from everyday work situations to make the message REAL for his listeners."

Because they live in the same environment as the congregation, lay preachers are able to relate to the lives of our people. "We experience similar pressures - though these differ from the pressures of a full time stipendiary minister." One of the expectations the Church has for lay preachers is: "To have the ability to be able to reflect, in worship, the experiences of their own world of work and leisure."

In common with other Churches, there is an inward-looking emphasis in the descriptions of lay preacher ministry. Notwithstanding this, lay preachers have an important role to play as MSEs. Such ministries would benefit the Churches even more if this were more actively supported.

Sarum College - study and employment

Sarum College runs a Politics and Theology Programme, both as a full course and for 'one-term study'.

The full programme offers education and training for lay people for service in the community and especially in public life and politics. It operates by distance learning and part-time, so opens up to all opportunities to study the churches' social and political teaching and to address the difficult questions about the relation of Christian faith to politics. The range of options is wide and the timetable very flexible. Recent contributors at the start-of-term residential weekend conferences have included MPs from the three main parties.

Archishop Rowan Williams, Honorary Fellow of Sarum College, "We really need an intelligent forum for looking at this crucial intellectual and practical frontier, and the Sarum initiative is a wonderful contribution."

John Battle, Labour MP and Faith Advisor to the Prime Minister, "This sounds like an excellent and stimulating course, combining vision with practicality as good politics must."

Rev Steve Chalke, Founder of Faithworks, "For any Christian who wants to get involved in politics - at whatever level - Sarum College's Politics and Theology course provides an unbeatable opportunity for serious grounding and preparation."

Students' comments: "An excellent course, well thought-out." "A pleasure so far... the content, organisation and staff input have been great." "Very worthwhile. Stretching but rewarding."

For full details, including profiles of students and outlines of course staff, see the on-line prospectus at:
www.sarum.ac.uk/society/prospect.htm

The following specific modules will be available for one-term study from September 2003 (over 12 weeks or, by agreement, up to 24 weeks).

EDUCATION POLICY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH
History, world-views and education, teaching and learning, faith schools, religious education.

MEDICAL ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY
The beginning and end of human life, genetic manipulation, resource allocation.

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES
Liberalism, conservatism, socialism, nationalism, etc., in the light of Christian theology.

POLITICAL ACTION
How politics in Britain works, campaigning, the media, parties and pressure groups, prayer and politics.

For information on one-term study of these modules, go to www.sarum.ac.uk/society and click on 'One-term study'.

Michael Ranken and Psalm 119
A challenge from Jim Cummins

Rob,

I love that extract from MdeF newsletter and Michael's rendering of it -"Your law makes wine of the grape" etc.; but I cannot, not for the life of me as they say, see how it can possibly be derived from Psalm 119.   It sounds to me more like Proverbs or Wisdom poetry. So far I have failed to track it down.

So, a challenge to you readers - whence cometh this beautiful poetic insight?

Yours with best wishes,
Jim.

NSM becomes Bishop

A Non-Stipendiary priest has been elected the ninth Bishop of Caledonia, the largest and most northerly diocese in British Columbia, in Canada. *(I have an Aunt in that diocese! Ed.).*

The Revd Bill Anderson, who is 51, was for 20 years a social worker. Since 1997 he has been an associate with a consultancy firm that specialises in organisational development, stress-management and team-building.

"I've no idea whether I'm the first non-stipendiary to become a bishop, but it's been commented that working in the civil service for most of your career is a rather unusual path to the episcopate," Mr Anderson said on Tuesday. He was one of ten candidates, and was elected on the 11th ballot in a system that allows for 20 ballots.

"This is a really large diocese, geographically, and it is very difficult to look after. There's so much travelling, and so many local concerns that make demands on a person. I wasn't sure how easily they would reach a consensus on who that person should be," he said.

One of Caledonia's chief priorities is the care and well-being of the clergy, many of whom work in isolation. "If you don't take steps to deal with that kind of stuff, people get hurt by being neglected," Mr Anderson said. "Supervisors in government suffered the same kind of problem. It's important to find ways of bringing people together so they have a sense of community; and I believe my experience will be helpful there.

Having lived here for the past 25 years, I know a lot of the people, and they're good people. Congregations might struggle in terms of the economy, but they're really dedicated and want to do the right thing in their communities to build up the Church.

"I just figure I'm the luckiest guy in the world to have this chance to work with them."

CPAS Paper on MSE

CPAS Resource Sheet 15, *Ministers in secular employment*, is still in print and available, price 90p, from:
>Ministry and Vocation
>Church Pastoral Aid Society
>Athena Drive
>Tachbrook Park
>Warwick CV34 6NG

125 years of ICF

The Industrial Christian Fellowship is 125 years old this year and to mark this an Anniversary Lecture will be given by Nigel Wright, Principal of Spurgeon's College and President of the Baptist Union, 2002-3, entitled: *"Participating without possessing: the public and the private in Christian discipleship."*

The venue is St. Ethelburga's Church, 78 Bishopsgate, London (near Liverpool Street Station). The date: Wednesday 26 November. Refreshments from 17.45, lecture at 18.30, followed by the AGM at 20.00.

Admission is free, but please apply for a ticket to:
Terry Drummond,
St. Matthew's House,
100 George Street,
Croydon, CR0 1PE,
 0208 681 5496;
 e-mail terry.drummond@dswark.org.uk

ICF goes on line

The Industrial Christian Fellowship has launched its own website, at www.icf-online.org, packed with news, links and worship materials aimed at Christians wanting to relate their faith to the world of work.

ICF Chairman (and former Moderator of CHRISM) Michael Fass says: "ICF ... works to encourage individuals to deepen their understanding of God's purpose in the work environment." The website lists a series of UK-wide events and publications designed to support this.

MODEM's new Chairman ...

... is Bishop Christopher Mayfield, who retired last year as Bishop of Manchester and who has contributed thoughtful articles to this Journal. We wish him well in this important position.

DIARY DATES

St. Paul's Conference

MODEM and the Ridley Hall Foundation are among the sponsors of a conference on **28 November** at St. Paul's Cathedral on Christian faith and public life.

Ridley Hall Foundation

'Application of Christian Virtues in Business' Conference is to be held on 26 to 28 March 2004. Further details from RHF.

CABE

7th CABE Paper, 'Building Trust in Business', is to be given by Philippa Foster Back, Director of the Institute of Business Ethics, on Thursday 12 February 2004, at SPCK's premises at Faith House, Tufton Street, London, SW1.

'A Christian Perspective on Ethical Business Practice' - an initiative is being launched in the form of a series of seminars in 2004 focusing on the relevance of the Christian virtues to business practice.

Gift Aid

Thank you to all members of CHRISM who complete a Gift Aid declaration—it greatly helps our finances. Any declaration you have signed in the past three years is still valid.

If you have not done so yet, then please consider whether you can. If you are a standard or higher rate UK income tax payer then for each 78 pence paid to CHRISM the Treasury pay us 22 pence, the standard rate income tax. It also extends the ceiling of the standard rate of income tax by the amount of all the Gift Aid donations you make during the tax year—so less of any income normally in the higher rate tax band is so taxed.

The finances of CHRISM, including collection of subscriptions, are handled by CHRISET (Christians in Secular Employment Trust), which is a Registered Charity.

Can you help?

Scott Taylor and Emma Bell, the sociologists whose paper on Spirituality in the Workplace was featured in the Journal last October (and another of whose papers is planned for inclusion in the next edition) are about to undertake some further research and have asked if CHRISM may be able to help,

They are now moving on to a study of people who leave conventional full-time careers in order to pursue a second career, that fits better with their beliefs. As part of this study, they are seeking to interview people who have moved into homeopathic practice, organic farming and craftspeople (art and pottery, primarily). If you fall into this group, or something similar, and would consider helping, please contact the Editor in the first instance.

They are organizing three workshops to take place over the 3 year course of the research, in London (the Grubb Institute), Birmingham (at Woodbrooke), and Scotland (hopefully with the Findhorn Foundation). It would be ideal if CHRISM members could come along to contribute either directly or indirectly to these events.

CHRISM REFLECTIVE WEEKEND 2004

Friday 13th – Sunday 15th February 2004.

St Francis' House, Hemmingford Grey, Cambridgeshire

Making a Difference ?

A time to explore what difference, if any, our ministry makes to our work and our workplace.

The weekend will follow a similar format to previous years, providing time for quite reflection and discussion with fellow MSEs.

Please sign up by returning the enclosed registration form. The whole weekend will cost £90 per person. Single and double rooms are available. Space is limited, so please register as soon as possible.

CHRISM

CHRistians In Secular Ministry

Our faith imposes on us a right and a duty to throw ourselves into the things of the earth   Teilhard de Chardin