

Editorial

To see our own reflection in a mirror, we need to stand back from the glass and it is often the case that the further back we stand, the more we are able to see. This quarter's edition of the *Epworth Review* takes a look at some of the practical, theological and ethical considerations of 'other world' perspectives.

Martyn Atkins addressed the 'All Partners' Conference' which preceded Conference of 2010 with a passionate plea for help. The British Methodist Church needed to reimagine mission from a new standpoint. As he points out, 'mission activity used to be mainly 'from here to there' – our Partner Churches' country being the 'there' – but now the movement and migration of peoples present many challenges and opportunities, and mission is now increasingly 'from everywhere to everywhere'.

A significant part of the Church's missionary work has always been the provision of aid. This economic support, however, is not without complications as Stephen Plant demonstrates in his enlightened paper on setting goals for international development. He skilfully charts a course for the Christian seeking to understand how faith might help us to navigate the maze of ethical problems with economic mission by drawing on the work of David H. Kelsey. In particular, Plant elucidates Kelsey's interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in the Gospel of Matthew as set out in his recent and outstanding work on Christian theological anthropology.

Our third paper exploring matters of international concerns tackles the very difficult subject of Zionism and Israel/Palestine. Warren Bardsley's paper will undoubtedly be deemed by some to be controversial, but it is offered as a personal appraisal of a complex theological and historical problem.¹

The recent debates following the report on this subject to the Conference of 2010 has taught the Church that it is important to look in the mirror, even if it is feared that the mirror's imperfections may have distorted the true image. It may be the case that we see ourselves clearest in the image that we project of others.

From international concerns the *Review* moves to consider the practical and theological considerations of the world to come. John Lampard explores the practice of funerals and illustrates how praxis and theology

meet at this crucial juncture. This paper may prove both difficult and even offensive to some who are unused to considering the practicalities of what happens after death. Lampard does not shy away from exploring the theology behind the more practical aspects of dealing with the deceased. He also highlights some of the rather strange ideas behind some current funeral rites. The result is a paper that may well cause many ministers to rethink both their language and their theology of life and death. How we treat the lives and bodies of those we love in life, is undoubtedly a reflection of what we believe.

Our final paper explores the post-apocalyptic world created by Cormac McCarthy in his novel, *The Road*. Gordon Leah's exegesis of this novel enables the underlying theology of hope to be seen as the great triumph of this work. His paper is a superb illustration of best practice in extricating implicit Christian motifs in a work of literature so that it may be seen for what it is – another mirror in which we may see ourselves and the other – and an opportunity to reflect on what we see.

NOTE

- 1 It should be noted that this paper does not have any formal authority within the Methodist Church and its inclusion in this journal should not be taken as any sign of approval or otherwise of the content of this paper by the British Methodist Church.