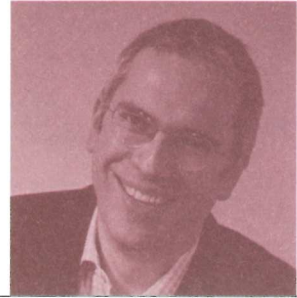


NEWS FROM BIBLE SOCIETY

TRANSMISSION IS PROVIDED FREE BY BIBLE SOCIETY. ON THIS PAGE WE UPDATE YOU ON OTHER PARTS OF OUR MISSION TO 'MAKE THE BIBLE HEARD' WITHIN OUR CULTURE.



SIGNPOSTS FOR HEAVEN

Whilst the subject of heaven is vast, the body of popular literature related to it is relatively small. Think of the subject of prayer and an array of books come to mind. Think of the Bible and a suite of authors are at our fingertips. But less so for heaven. So here are a few of the sources that I've found helpful in navigating this most vivid of landscapes.

Surprised by Hope by NT Wright, the President of Bible Society, was published by SPCK in 2007 and is set to become a standard work on heaven. Not without its critics, it has been the subject of heated debate in the North American Catholic journal *First Things*. But it has also been commended by the Evangelical monthly *Christianity Today*.

The Weight of Glory by CS Lewis is, in fact, just the opening essay in a short collection of essays by this leading Christian apologist. Our lifelong search for divine approval is met in God's gaze on us of divine acceptance. Other essays in the collection are also very valuable. The most recent edition was published by Zondervan in 2001.

Room of Marvels by my good friend James Bryan Smith takes up Lewis's vision of heaven and turns it into a vivid novel which will touch all those who read it. Touching and provocative, Smith uses our imagination to take us to this very real place. In his Afterword Dallas Willard emphasises that 'the central point of reference in all this is Jesus, who lives on both sides of physical death: his and ours.' The B&H Publishing Group reprinted this book in 2007.

Exploring Heaven (HarperSanFrancisco, 2003) by the Quaker Arthur O Roberts is a comprehensive yet approachable survey of many aspects of heaven and answers some of the common questions about where it is located and what eternal life actually means. One chapter called 'Society in Heaven' is particularly relevant to *TransMission* readers.

The Great Divorce, first published in 1945, is one of CS Lewis's greatest works and, through fantasy, takes us on a bus journey from the 'ghostly people' of hell to the thoroughly 'solid people' of heaven. Full of rich imagery, this book is evocative and insightful and should be on the essential reading list of any minister, pastor or priest. Several editions of this classic work have been published, most recently by Fount in 2002.

No doubt there are other writings that I need to be aware of and I welcome readers' responses to my starter

list. What we most need is to grasp this vision of heaven or, rather, to have it grasp us.

THEOS MEETS THE BBC

Bible Society supports the work of Theos, the public theology think tank. Last autumn the BBC Director-General, Mark Thompson, gave a robust defence of the BBC's engagement with religion at the 2008 Theos lecture on 14 October. The event was chaired by Jeremy Vine.

In his speech Mr Thompson said that the relationship between religion and the media was important 'because, quite simply, religion is back. It's not just in the news, but often leads the news.' The assumption when he joined the BBC back in 1979, that the decline and marginalisation of religion was a straightforward corollary of modernism and was inevitable, was in the process of being disproven, he added.

Commenting on a speech given by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2005 on the media where he argued that news media often acted in ways which were 'lethally damaging' to journalism's own reputation, Mr Thompson defended the media and the BBC.

Go to the Theos website (www.theosthinktank.co.uk) to read the speech and listen to the podcast.

RECESSION REFLECTIONS

Bible Society is not immune from the effects of the current economic downturn. While our income has been stable, our reserves have been hammered. So we're asking our donors and supporters to smile on us even more favourably than they have in the past. Thank you for your gifts to support the engagement of the Bible in the public square and the provision of Scriptures to millions of people overseas. The Bible is still 'the Book' and people, communities and nations still need it.

James Catford
Chief Executive