

Relationships are hurtful  
in this broken world of pain,  
We need your special, perfect love  
To wash away the stain.

Your love is pure and honest  
in this world of sin and strife,  
Oh help us Lord to walk with you  
and bring this love to life.

To bring this love to others,  
so they each may see your face,  
That you will fill their emptiness  
with your most Blessed Grace.

You are my Heavenly Father,  
You have said I am your son,  
My thanks lie deep within my heart,  
for all that you have done.

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NO. 24

by Hilda Marlin

No. 24 felt triumphant, and a little sly. Those people in the ward, those nurses, those doctors in their long white coats, their listening devices around their necks, they didn't know. The patients, sunk into or against their pillows, their wandering hands, their glassy eyes, they didn't know. Except no.22 who died last week, she might have known. She'd only been a silent hump in the bed. Doctors and nurses had bent over her and she had whispered back and was still again. Her food went into her veins. Then they put screens around her bed and carried her out. She'd never had visitors and nobody missed her. The present 22 was chattering all the time and had a large family, visiting.

Well, all that, it did not really matter. That's what she knew now. The others, they were all seeing her as she'd seen the one who

died last week. That's all they COULD see. She was lying still like that now, eyes closed. It was a laugh, really, for she felt ever so well, much better than she'd felt for a long time. It was as if life were pouring into her, instead of draining away. Yes, that other life was ebbing. The voices were getting fainter, screens were being put around her, too, now. She vaguely heard it. She also heard what they were saying.

"Another stroke. It finished her this time. Well, she hadn't much to live for, had she?"

"And her son never came. They rang him up, but he said he was too busy and to order flowers for her."

"Isn't that AWFUL!"

No, it wasn't awful, she thought. She quite understood. She'd hated him, never wanted him. They MADE her have him... They were so moral in those days. Well, she supposed it had been wrong of her, all of it. Marrying for money, brushing off the child's affection, devoting herself to her own pleasures. Of course she hadn't been happy... she saw it now clearly... she hadn't deserved it. Funny that she wasn't afraid. She should be fearing Hell, but she didn't. That was all part of the world she was leaving, the unreal world, the story in which she had been living, the game she had played. Something else was awaiting her, something exciting and wonderful, even though it would hurt. Yes, she saw that too, it was going to hurt. Because she saw clearer and clearer and she knew that when she saw completely she wouldn't like herself, oh dear, no. She was going to feel sorry. But the life that was approaching could not be denied, it had to be received. The hospital was gone now as well as all those old actions of hers of which she'd be ashamed by and by... But first she had to welcome this, that was coming... that was filling her with... with... was it music?...

"God..." she whispered. "God...."

"She is gone," said the nurse, pressing her eyelids down.

"What was it she said at the end?"

"Oh, she was probably swearing.... They say she swore terribly under the anaesthetic, when she had her operation. The nurses in the theatre were shocked."

"Well, let's wheel her to the morgue; Mrs. O'Reilly is waiting for this bed."

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A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation edited by R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (SCM 1990; £35)

Review by Jennifer Sprague

Rarely (since the Newnes' Pictorial Knowledge of my childhood) have I got hold of a more fascinating reference book. Up to date and erudite without being obscure, entries in the Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation range from "Abraham" and "Acts of the Apostles", via Christology, Hermeneutics, Holistic Interpretation, Folklore, Masoretic Text, Metaphysical Poets, Rhetorical Criticism, Structuralism, the Synoptic Problem, Tetragrammaton, the Tübingen School, and Verbal Inspiration, to "Zephaniah".

Well-known contributors include not only the editors, but also Henry Chadwick, John Drury, James Dunn, Alastair Hunter and Dennis Nineham. There are several women contributors, including Morna Hooker, whose "Pauline Pieces", was reviewed in DTV Vol.10 No.3 by David Yates, and Frances Young, professor of theology at Birmingham University and author of several books, including "Sacrifice and the Death of Christ" and "Can These Dry Bones Live?". There are articles by Hyam Maccoby on Antisemitism and by W.J. Hollenweger on the Black Christian Interpretation.

The book is fully cross-referenced, with asterisks in the text and lists of related articles at the end of each entry, so that one is led from "Beatitudes" to "eschatology", from thence to "Dante", back again to "allegorical interpretation", and on through a never-ending maze of fascination. There are also lists of relevant books.

Now at last I know what "redaction criticism" means! In a clear