

EXAMINER'S REPORT

**Bishop John V. Taylor: Poet, Priest & Prophet:
Christian Mission in the Global Village**

**Thesis Submitted for the Doctor of Philosophy
Monash University
Melbourne**

David Graeme Wood

B.A. (Melbourne), M.A. (Honours), B.D. (Melbourne College of Divinity)

I recommend that the candidate be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy without further examination.

This thesis is an outstanding piece of research and writing, distinguished by: thorough use of primary materials and interviews; a sympathetic portrayal of a significant Christian leader; a deep and wide-ranging engagement with current missiology, christology and ecclesiology; clear demonstration of how biography and theology are interwoven; fine critical skills; an ability to mount detailed and cogent argument; and a real gift for lively and yet carefully nuanced writing.

In summary this research adds significantly to the discipline of missiology not only by uncovering and bringing together previously unpublished understandings of John V. Taylor, but also by presenting as it goes a passionate, sophisticated, balanced and well-informed approach to Christian mission. Two related themes which are particularly well treated are christology and the theology of non-Christian religions. The thesis is a model of the humble, open and inclusive model of mission so clearly shown to be embodied in John Taylor. It is an eloquent apologia for an incarnational approach to mission which Anglicans have often contributed to the wider Christian church.

The thesis is marked by a lively interaction between the theology of John Taylor and that of the candidate, the latter being developed mostly in sympathy with Taylor but as a distinguishable voice. The thesis also makes appropriate links with the theology of major theologians such as Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The central questions addressed by the thesis were the extent to which Taylor made an original contribution to theology and missiology, and to what extent Taylor's Ugandan experience influenced his later thought. It would have been good to have found an explicit summary of the candidate's conclusions at the end of the thesis.

Although chapter five is devoted to Bonhoeffer's theology in order to demonstrate that he deeply influenced Taylor, it contains no footnoted evidence of Bonhoeffer's ideas appearing in Taylor's works. The links are made from time to time later in the thesis, but the Bonhoeffer chapter is the least integrated in the thesis.

At times Taylor's weaknesses in thought or character seemed to call for a little more robust critique, but overall the candidate showed sufficient critical distance to satisfy me. Any hankering in me for a more sober estimate of Taylor was eclipsed by the sense that the thesis is remarkable in the way it gets inside the mind and passion of Taylor and uncovers his significance as a Christian leader.

I enclose a list of minor comments (noting occasional typographical errors and raising bibliographical queries) for the candidate's benefit if he intends to publish the thesis. None of them merits discussion in the body of this report.

I have never before so enjoyed the reading of a thesis. In fact I was not able to put it down. I commend the candidate on his diligence, clarity of insight and maturity of thought. I also commend him for achieving beauty in prose (it positively soars at times) and for expressing his values and aspirations so integrally within an academic work. In my judgment, this thesis is rare in that it would take little editing to make it a thoroughly readable book for a wider audience.

Professor Ross Langmead

B.A., M.Ed., M.A., B.D.(Hons), D.Theol.
Professor of Missiology,
Whitley College,
University of Melbourne

31 July 2000

Monash University

Examiner's Report on PhD Thesis

Name: Fr David G. Wood
Title: Bishop John V. Taylor: Poet, Priest & Prophet:
Christian Mission in the Global Village
Examiner: Canon Graham R. Kings
formerly Westminster College Cambridge
currently Vicar of Islington

After examination of the thesis I report that in my opinion the thesis makes a significant contribution to knowledge, makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the subject with which it deals, demonstrates the candidate's capacity to carry out independent research, contains material worthy of publication, and that the format and literary presentation of the thesis are satisfactory.

I recommend that the candidate be awarded the degree without further examination subject to insertion in the thesis of amendments in the enclosed list to the satisfaction of the Head of Department.

This thesis has been a delight to read and subject to the amendments I am very happy to recommend the award of the PhD without further examination. The candidate has provided a very fine example of 'biographical theology', showing clearly the background and shape of Taylor's developing missionary thought. It is very well researched, considered and presented. I have made detailed notes for my own academic work and future preaching.

Strengths

- Great diligence in researching published and unpublished sources e.g. the Rose Window articles while Taylor was Bishop of Winchester, the lecture to Aston Course students, the BBC TV Bristol interview 1982, and the Michael Ramsey papers at Lambeth.
- Insightful use of Taylor's poetry.
- Helpful explanatory footnotes e.g. p.25 n.21 (rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer), and p.64 n.51 (on the 'Death of God' theology).
- Well rounded humour e.g. being so concerned with finances that Taylor even started adding up the numbers on the chapel hymn board.
- The sympathetic treatment of the psychological crisis after returning to Britain from Mukono p.50ff.
- The background influence of Bonhoeffer and the Honest to God debate and Charles Williams' concept of 'co-inherence'.
- The critique of *The Go-Between God* concerning 'what was the Spirit doing at Calvary'.
- P.117 n.43 - good description of MRI and response to Toronto.
- Willingness to be critical eg. of Taylor's administration at Winchester and some staff relations.
- The political contexts eg. Chapter IX concerning Winchester p.135.
- Particular descriptions eg. of Taylor in the last paragraph of p.154.
- Particular phrases applied in new ways eg. the scandal of particularity p.160.
- Perceptive description and appreciation of Taylor's theological critique of the impassibility of God.

Weaknesses

- P.3. The old missionary confidence may have gone in 'mainline' mission agencies, but in many North American and Korean mission agencies it is still there. The whole AD 2000 and Beyond movement has been influential in fundamentalist circles.
- P.7. Taylor criticised the concept of 'global village', yet the footnote is not

- sufficient in making the case of that phrase used prominently in the title.
- P.9. Is Kraemer really close to the *Anglican* tradition of missiology? Is Taylor developing his thought from both Kraemer and Warren? Is not the line of development more from Kraemer to Lesslie Newbigin (with Barth greatly influencing both) and from Warren to Taylor? P.126 has more nuanced reflections on Kraemer.
- P.19. overstatement? That Taylor's humble theology is the *only* theologising open to us today. Would Taylor have agreed?
- Style - doesn't etc. throughout should be written out in full ie. does not ...
- P.56. Is it an overstatement to say that Bonhoeffer *completely* rejected the traditional God of western theism?
- P.57. The phrase 'Jesus must displace God and take priority over God in any theologising...' presumably refers to the 'God of the philosophers'.
- P.74. *Primal Vision* was not really part of the IMC project but was part of Warren's publishing project - the Christian Presence series.
- Fuller treatment could have been given to Taylor's sociological books (*Buganda* and *Copperbelt*), especially since Bonhoeffer also stressed the importance of sociology. The identity of Dorothea Lehmann (*Christians in the Copperbelt*) could have been described.
- A critique of the theology of secularization could have been given. In attacking the phrase 'missio dei' in *Uncancelled Mandate* was not Taylor developing his thinking?
- Taylor's colleagues (regional secretaries) at CMS could have been named - he inherited and gathered quite a distinguished team.
- Is the line between research and gossip crossed when reporting aspects of his ministry in Winchester? Is pp.165-66 needed in the thesis? At this point, is this verging on the line Humphrey Carpenter took with Robert Runcie's taped interviews? May be worth omitting if published.
- P.177. Taylor is described as 'centrist' rather than 'evangelical' or 'catholic' - maybe liberal evangelical is nearer his own evaluation?
- Should not Chapter X include some conclusions and suggestions for further study?

Dr Graham Kings

31 January 2001