Are you someone in ministry, and do you find yourself stretched to breaking point? Then this book will help you. Or are you beginning in ministry, and wanting to establish healthy patterns that will sustain you over the long haul? Then here is a source of wisdom and guidance. Maybe you are a seasoned campaigner longing for a deeper walk with God? Then here is nourishing food for the hungry soul.

Ian Cowley writes from a long background of life in Christian ministry and as someone now passionately engaged in seeking to help others thrive in ministry. This short, accessible book is filled to the brim with spiritual insight, but it is in concentrated form. You will need to take time to savour it and to reflect on it, and then find ways to implement it in your life.

Cowley’s contention is that in the increasingly demanding context of 21st Century church a new way of being in ministry is needed, and that is what he terms *contemplative ministry* - ‘the call to an ever deepening relationship of love for God, to lead others into that relationship and to enable them to respond to God in loving service and mission’ (p18).

The author is writing mainly for those ordained in the Anglican church, and the book is a call to return to values of the ordination service, and in particular a life of prayer. He urges fellow ministers to nurture their inner life with God and to be deeply rooted in Christ so that they can sustain themselves in the challenges of ministerial life. The rationale for this is that our *being* must undergird our *doing*, and that to have authority in our leadership we must first be willing to allow God to change and transform us by the Holy Spirit.

This book is never simply theoretical in approach. Cowley provides lots of practical ways by which we can deepen our inner life, and his personal illustrations give vitality to his suggestions. He writes with a warm, compassionate tone which is never idealistic or legalistic. His passion for the contemplative life is clear, but he is humble, honest and sincere as he urges his readers to consider how they live and minister.

This book though is not just about the inner life. The final section, which I found the most engaging, is about his vision for a contemplative church, a community where there is a life of prayer and deepening relationship with God, of servant ministry and living simply for the sake of others. Such a community he suggests will instinctively be missional, and this is where the future of the Church lies. His ideas here are not yet fully formed, and there is surely the need for a second book on *The Contemplative Church*.

Some will be able to integrate Cowley’s teaching into their present ministry smoothly and easily. Others may find to become more contemplative they will have to make significant changes to the foundations of how they live and work. If they do so they will reap enormous benefits.

Buy this book for yourself or someone you know in ministry. It could be a life-saver. It will certainly be a life-giver.

Tony Horsfall