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The Fraternal

January 1990

ISSN 0950-1703

Vol. 229

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Editorial

It had more than a little of the parable about it. Situated on top of a very steep hill overlooking Western Bay, it was a killing climb. And love's labour's lost. For the ancient Norman tower was forested with scaffolding and the door stoutly padlocked. But why, one wondered, was St. Nicholas built at all? Even in days when faith burned brighter and hardship dogged relentlessly, it stretched the imagination to see, particularly the aged, clawing their way up to Mattins and arriving in one piece. The bench half way up merely reinforced the whole unlikely scenario.

A light on a hill? Of course! This has undoubtedly provided the rationale for the planting of countless churches and chapels in equally elevated and inaccessible locations. And the parable takes shape at just this point. By analogy, what is it about local church life that results in its inaccessibility to the great mass of the population? (Refer to growing mounds of sociological analysis, Church Growth thinking and biblical insights). But in particular one is concerned with the inherent tension set up by the local church endeavouring to maintain its ethical Kingdom values, whilst at the same time holding out that accepting, non-judgmental welcome which is at the very heart of the gospel. One senses in an amoral society that many church communities these days are involved in balancing with integrity these two realities: neither condoning everything, nor condemning everyone.

Immediately there are two applications. The first is the outsider who turns back at the church door because of the moral imperatives of the faith. The second is the insider who morally fails both Christ and that community to which they are committed. Each may well feel, from their different positions, that the Church has something of the inaccessible about it, for one has been unable to grasp it, while the other has not been able to hold on. As a pastor, if, like the Apostle Paul, your moral dilemmas far exceed your doctrinal ones, what criteria do you apply? What stance do you adopt? Contributions to this issue will be welcomed

Staying with morality, we welcome an article from Ginnie Baumann of Shelter which, for a generation, has kept the basic human requirement of a home before the nation. In a grossly worsening U.K. situation Ginnie pinpoints the causes of homelessness, its social consequences and how, as pastors, we can positively respond. Every European Baptist Congress is an event. None more so than Budapest last July in the context of the great democratisation groundswell. The first such congress in Eastern Europe, it attracted over 5,000 visitors from over 22 countries. Fred Harrison, formerly lay pastor at Newthorpe (Notts), shares this rich experience. Next, comes the third and final contribution on developments in N.T. exegesis.

The physical exhaustion which characterised our more manual and artisan past has been superceded by the exhaustion of the mind. Statistics from the world of industry and commerce suggest that stress and nervous collapse, once confined to top management, is creeping right through the career structure. And, clearly, we are not immune. Indeed, the very nature of ministry may render us more vulnerable. Keith Roberts, from his extensive research, indicates some pointers to 'Health in the Ministry'. The meaning of persons is acutely focussed in the Church's attitude to the mentally handicapped. The report which follows, from the B.U. Working Group, helps to identify stereotyped reactions and the needs and rights of these members of our community.

Homelessness: A Moral Issue

The statistics read like the headlines of some natural disaster – ‘Two million people homeless’, ‘Thousands of families being put up in “temporary” accomodation’, ‘Children’s health in jeopardy’. But the cause of this particular disaster is not an ‘act of God’, a hurricane or a drought. The most striking aspect of the tragedy of homelessness is that it could be solved. It is unnecessary. The fact that it persists, and that new laws are making decent homes yet more remote from those in greatest need, is above all a moral question – a question of human choice and preference. When should the voice of the Church intervene? What should be its message?

Aspects of Homelessness.

First we must see the problem clearly. Clergy are well-placed to know the dimensions of homelessness. The effects of poor housing are brought to your attention – by the roofless stranger on your doorstep asking you as a Christian for help, by the older teenager in the youth club, desperate to leave home, but with no prospects of raising the rent, or by the once-happy couple in your congregation whose marriage is cracking under an insupportable mortgage. Far apart in many ways, these people represent the real losers in our present housing lottery.

Alongside these occasional brushes with people enduring poor housing, let me add some examples from Shelter’s experience. In the Bayswater area of London, Shelter gives support to the Homeless Families project which assists people staying in Bed and Breakfast accomodation. Here, over a thousand families are kept in hotel rooms, often for months or even years, until they can move into a council house.

The impact on young children of living in one room of a run-down hotel is dramatic. Sharing a kitchen with up to a dozen other families, it is almost impossible to provide them with a healthy diet. Toddlers have trouble learning to walk in a room where the only space is around the bed. The co-ordinator of the Bayswater Drop-in centre outlined a few of the difficulties “Parents sometimes keep children off the floor because of mice and cockroaches. The central heating is on the whole time in some places. So many have bronchial problems and some have become asthmatic. One child has been diagnosed as clinically depressed.”

Even older children are sometimes restricted to the room because parents are afraid of unwanted attention from strangers in the hotel. However hard parents try to contain their anxiety and frustration, it is usually felt by the children and the results are apparent when children become withdrawn or disturbed.

Although these people are not literally roofless, they are certainly without adequate shelter. The Faith in the City report defines this as housing which enables people to ‘grow, make choices and become more whole people’. Children of families kept waiting in Bed and Breakfast desperately need these opportunities. This is a moral question.

The Young Homeless

A second example of the moral implications of present housing policies lies in the issue of young homelessness.

Anyone who has visited any of our major cities over the last year will have been shocked by the concentration of young people who clearly have no home but the streets. Shelter estimates that nationally there are 150,000 young people without a home. Shelter asked 600 young homeless people throughout Britain to keep diaries and to answer each day questions like 'What did you eat?', 'How much money do you have?', 'Where did you find to stay?'

Their stories provided a vivid snapshot of what it is like to be young and homeless in Britain today. What they describe is not a short-term, passing crisis. Day after day, as these young people record, they walk the streets for seven, eight, nine hours looking for a job, searching for a place in a hostel... or just passing boring, pointless time. Benefit payments to young, homeless people have been drastically cut, and are now paid in arrears instead of advance. This means that young homeless people have to survive for up to two weeks without money and thereafter are constantly in debt. For a growing number of these people, begging or prostitution has become an economic necessity – a question of survival.

Causes and Response

The unbridgeable gap between the incomes of many young people and what it takes to secure a place to live highlights the major cause of homelessness in general. It can be expressed in surprisingly simple terms: People are homeless because of the lack of *affordable* homes. The immediate reasons for their homelessness may be eviction for rent arrears, family break-up or simply growing up and leaving home, but these are set in the context of a dramatic reduction of affordable homes. In the mid-70's, over 100,000 new homes were built each year by local authorities. Budgets for 1990/91 aim for completion of just 6,000.

At the same time, the less well-off are being excluded from private sector renting. The 1989 Housing Act makes new tenancies on 'fair rents' a thing of the past. Whether people can afford it or not, new places to rent will be at rates set by the market. Will policies like these turn the tide on the housing crisis?

I have tried to show that homelessness affects a huge section of our society in ways that are physical, emotional and spiritual. Christians must surely question housing policies that ignore and even magnify the plight of those most in need. The risk is that unless we speak up for our values of compassion and justice, we may grow more tolerant of, and less outraged by, the extent of homelessness in our midst.

Finding the right response at the level of your own church needs careful research, prayer and reflection. Here are a few suggestions:-

- You could start by finding out about your local situation. Even in the most prosperous places, you will find people whose needs are hidden. Make contact with the local authority housing department and local housing associations.

What is the policy of your council on providing for the homeless? Arrange group visits to hostels and to voluntary organisations with homeless people.

- Focus on housing as part of your programme of church meetings (e.g. youth clubs, women's meetings). Use videos and other resources to stimulate and inform.

- Raise funds for local housing schemes and for Shelter projects.

- Send a representative along from your church to Shelter's local group or to other housing campaigns.

Ginny Baumann

Useful resources:

A Life to be lived – Homelessness and pastoral care: by Patrick Logan. Price £4.95 from UNLEASH, 131 Camberwell Road, London SE5 0HF. Tel: 01-701-4319

A bad start in life – Children, health and housing. From Shelter, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9HU. Tel: 01-253-0202. Price £3.50

Raising the roof on housing myths. From Shelter, price £4.95

One day I'll have my own place to stay. Young homeless Diaries project from Shelter, price £2.50

I'm not asking for Buckingham Palace: 30 minute video for hire £10. from Shelter. Interviews with homeless and badly housed people.

Budapest in Retrospect: E.B.F. Congress.

This, the first European Baptist Congress to be held in Eastern Europe, opened in the evening with addresses of welcome from religious leaders of various denominations and also a speech of welcome by Mátyás Szurös, President of the Hungarian Parliament. During his address he spoke of two principles for which the Baptists stand which, he said, are working towards a united Europe: fellowship, and the conviction that it is the right and duty of everyone to share in Government. He spoke of the Baptist belief in the salvation of the total person, physically and spiritually. He then spoke of legislation being passed to permit greater religious liberty, the closure of the government office for regulating religious affairs – the activities of which have caused great resentment for a long time, the restoration of church property and the restoration to the churches of their former schools. Some of these schools had a high reputation and certain previous and present leaders of government received their liberal education at them. When the speech was over the Hungarians present (and they were naturally in the majority) gave the speaker a standing ovation. These reforms, if they come to pass, will represent an immense political change in Hungary which is paralleled by the changes which seem to be taking place in some other Eastern

European countries. Only three years or so ago we would have thought such happenings impossible. They may open the way for great spiritual advance.

The Hungarian leaders felt it necessary to be discreet in their speeches both in what they said and in what they did not say. Some visitors felt that one speaker at least was too discreet. This may be so, but it is the Hungarians who face the situation, not we from other countries and we must be careful in making judgments. It may be said, however, that some visitors felt that too many of the speakers came from the West and that we should have been able to hear more of the situation from the lips of the Hungarian Baptist leaders themselves.

An official guide, Paul by name, was provided for the party by the Hungarian authorities. He came with us on all our journeys and gave us a good deal of interesting information about the city. For part of each afternoon we had free time and, as our party had the use of the coach, we were taken to places of interest in the city, accompanied by Paul. These excursions included the trip on the Danube, a visit to the 'Fisherman's Bastion', a former fortification situated near the former fish market and an excellent point from which to view the city, and a visit to the principal shopping area. In one of the shops my wife bought a book of views of Budapest and I bought two records. One of them was a series of Bach piano concertos. It was being played when we were in the shop and sounded so attractive that I enquired what it was, and the price. It was £1! I could hardly believe my ears. I bought it at once, also another classical record at £1.25. I now realise how certain organisations can make special offers in Britain of sets of records (produced abroad) at three or four times that price and still remain profitably in business!

The meetings in the Sports Stadium ended on Saturday afternoon with women's and men's rallies in separate parts of the building, the women's in the stadium and the men's in another enormous room called the 'Ball Hall'. Arthur Bonser showed slides on men's work; a men's choir from Russia sang. Their forte was bass and it sounded a bit like what I have always thought Boris Godunof might sound like. The main speaker was Ronald Messenger. His address "Man in the Family" i.e. the man's place in marriage, was excellent, but I fear those responsible tried to include too much in the meeting, forgetting, perhaps, that translation takes time, and many, including myself, had to leave before the end.

The Billy Graham Meeting

On Saturday evening the Billy Graham evangelistic meeting had been arranged. I avoid using an adjective describing the size of the gathering as I cannot think of one which is adequate. To say it was 'large' would be laughable. To say it was 'enormous' is hardly enough. Perhaps 'gigantic' would be better. It was held in what must be one of the world's largest meeting places, the Budapest People's Stadium, not far from the Congress Sports Stadium. All Saturday afternoon people were streaming in. The members of our party, including the drivers, made their way there rather more than an hour before the meeting was due to begin. We approached it along with crowds of other people by way of a track through a public park lined with massive statues of muscular workers engaged in manual work or vigorous sports. There were many entrance gates and we had to queue to get in. The terraces of the stadium towered up on all sides against the sky like the ramparts of a massive fortress – or perhaps they might be compared



WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

York House 409 Barking Road,
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Tel. No: 01-476 5065

Patron: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

Dear Fellow Ministers,

“O honour higher, truer far
Than earthly fame can bring
Thus to be used in work like this,
So long by such a King”.

I know that these words are a bit dated these days, and that they originally applied to the general witness of the Church. It seems to me, however, that they might well be applied to the work of the Mission.

We have been serving the Lord through our fellows for no less than 85 years, and although much has changed over that period, there is still a profound need in the human heart for a sense of meaning and personal worth, and there is still a universal longing for that elusive but priceless gift of peace of mind. God, in His grace, has used the West Ham Central Mission to help to meet these deep needs in so many lives.

But may I put another slant on the words “Thus to be used”. We all of us long to be used by God. We also want to be *used* by *you*. We have gained much experience and at least some expertise over the years. The mission is increasingly being used as a RESOURCE for ministers and churches, deacons and leaders.

If we can be of help with any personal or pastoral problem, we should be more than happy to do so. We want to bring support and encouragement to those who labour with us in the gospel, — if you want to “use” us, please do not hesitate to get in touch. We are *in* the Master’s Service and at *your* service! God bless and use you.

Yours in His service,

Trevor W. Davis

Superintendent Minister.

with the rocky cliffs of a huge steep-sided valley, an amphitheatre in a mountain group. The people on the high seats on the far side seemed so small that we could hardly distinguish them as individuals. We were told afterwards that there were more people present than there ever had been before at any event in this stadium, about 90,000 in all.

Soon all the seats were full and people began to sit on the grass of the arena below. White bands were rolled out to limit the area so used, but the area was constantly extended until, by the time the meeting began, over half the area – big enough to accommodate several football pitches – was filled. People had come from all parts of Hungary to attend the meeting. The railway authorities had announced that those who travelled by rail and had their tickets stamped at the stadium would be allowed to travel home free. This in a land which has an autocratic Communist rule and, of all places, in Budapest where, about thirty years ago the tanks were rolling in the streets ruthlessly crushing an attempt by the Hungarian people to regain their liberty! There were those in Budapest who said “There are Nicodemuses in high places!” Perhaps they were right.

My wife and I tried to make contact with the people around us. On the seat behind was a group of teenagers. On our left was an elderly woman who went and bought quite a pile of Billy Graham’s books. Two German Baptist deaconesses sat in front of us. We managed a varying amount of conversation with them all. On my right was an elderly couple of whom the wife spoke a little, very little, English. She managed, with difficulty, to convey to me the statement that *the Magyar people had been without God, without priests and without clergy for thirty years, but throughout all this period they had had God in their hearts.*

There was the sound of clapping and we saw a mechanically propelled wheel chair moving across the grass with a small group of people clustering round it. It was Joni Eareckson, the young woman who suffered a swimming accident (twenty-two years ago that very day) and was almost completely paralysed as a result. She takes part frequently in the Billy Graham missions. At the beginning of the meeting the leaders of the various churches in Hungary, the Catholic Cardinal, the Lutheran Bishop, the Methodist Superintendent Minister and the President of the Baptist Union, who were on the platform, spoke in support of Billy Graham and his message. All that was said was perfectly amplified and came over clearly in the cool night air.

After the introductory speeches came the singing of hymns. The hymn sheets were in Hungarian. Some of us tried to sing the Hungarian words but I, at least, had no idea how to pronounce them so we sang whatever verses we could remember in whatever language we knew, with a good many la-la-las interposed. Joni Aereckson sang a solo and spoke very movingly of her experiences and her Christian faith and then Billy Graham gave his address. Everything was interpreted into Hungarian of course. Toward the end people seemed to be leaving, and I began to wonder if the speaker had not gone on just a little too long. He drew his talk to a close, however, and began inviting his hearers to respond. The invitation was expressed in simple terms with no great emotional pressure. Such expressions were used as “reaffirm your baptismal vows” and “take upon yourself the vows made at your baptism” and “become a better citizen”. This way of putting it no doubt had in view the fact that the majority of Hungarians are nominally Roman Catholics or Lutherans. The reference to citizenship may have implied an assurance to the authorities that being a Christian was likely also to include being a good citizen.

Immediately large numbers of the people sitting on the grass got up and began literally to run forward. Others streamed down from the seats and the whole grassy area was soon full of people. Billy Graham announced that they had not expected a response of this order, but that fresh supplies of literature were available and would be handed out. Many of the people around us had gone forward including the lady who had bought the books, and some of the young people. When the meeting closed we had a further brief conversation with the German deaconesses before we left the stadium. They commented on the very evident hunger for God in Hungary. What the lady next to me had said had been shown to be true. We felt we had witnessed a tremendous response to a simple gospel challenge on a scale completely unusual, even in a Billy Graham crusade. In Britain this summer, numbers of the order of 5,000 responded at some of the meetings. At Budapest that evening the number responding was estimated at 29,000. This, coupled with the expectation of genuine political developments, promised much for the future.

Sunday at Pestimre

Arrangements had been made for us to take part in the service at a Hungarian Baptist Church the following day, Sunday. Pestimre is about 30km from Budapest and our driver had some difficulty in finding it. When we arrived the service had already begun so most of us had to crowd into the gallery at the rear which was distinctly hot. Two other parties from abroad had also come to Pestimre, one from North London led by a Baptist minister and the other group of about sixteen from Waren on Lake Müritz, East Germany, of whom ten were young people. The London minister preached and his sermon was translated into Hungarian but not into German. The Hungarian congregation was quite a good one (numerically) and was of all ages. We gained the impression of a live, active church. The service was a Communion Service observed in the Hungarian way. This was not very different from the order of service in the average British Baptist church. One difference was that when first the bread was brought to the communicants, all stood until they had received it and then sat down, one by one. This was repeated when the wine was brought. Also, we stood for prayers and sat for the hymns, as is usual on the Continent.

At the close of the service proceedings became less formal, greetings were exchanged and gifts handed over. It had been suggested that members of the party brought gifts of goods manufactured in their own district. Some of these gifts had already been given to recipients at the women's rally. My wife and I took some specimens of Nottingham lace. When we were purchasing these we noticed a square of lace whose design was a representation of the Last Supper. We wondered whether this would be acceptable to our Hungarian friends, and after some hesitation, bought it. We had produced it on the way and had given it to our leader, Derek Keenan, to present to the minister, if he thought fit. He did so and it appeared to give much pleasure. It was proposed to frame it and hang it in a room on the premises which was part of the minister's living quarters, but which was also often used for church purposes. One of the Hungarian friends afterwards asked me if it were made in a "Christian" factory, or a factory where all were Christians. I had to tell him, of course, that it was made in an ordinary Nottingham commercial lace factory and those who made it may or may not have been committed Christians. Other members of the party had also brought gifts of things made in their own districts and also packages of tea and coffee and

toilet articles which are expensive and difficult to get in Hungary. They were handed over and accepted with much pleasure, often the recipients receiving them with tears in their eyes.

Hungary is more prosperous than some East European countries but it is not a rich country. As an example of income levels we were told that a long distance lorry driver is paid about £10 a week. Many prices are lower than in the West but by no means as low as my gramophone record was. Other prices are much higher, a small jar of instant coffee, for example, costs nearly £4. Cars are a luxury which few can afford. To obtain a new one means waiting for a period of years and the price would be high. Used cars stay on the road a long time and are not very reliable. Many visitors also took with them used clothes (but in reasonable condition) to be left with the Hungarian churches. They will be used mainly to help refugees coming from Romania who are in great poverty.

After the service, we, including the drivers who had also been at the service, were taken to a large co-operative farm where a very well prepared, three course lunch had been made ready for us – about a hundred were present altogether. It was delightfully served on long tables decked with vases each containing a single large bloom. To present such a single bloom is a Hungarian custom, and after the meal the ladies among the guests were each given one. At the meal I found myself sitting next to a group of attractive young people from East Germany whose joy in their faith was obvious. Some of us felt that our hosts had provided food for us better than they could normally afford to eat themselves. Their kindness and very evident welcome was almost embarrassing. I may be pardoned for mentioning that Derek Keenan managed to persuade the church leaders to accept a sum of money from the party, but this was certainly not expected when the meal was prepared. As was said publicly many times, we from the West found ourselves very much drawn to our Hungarian fellow-Christians, as we experienced their welcome and their generosity.

After the meal there was once again light-hearted exchanges of greetings and some of the visitors from the West, who held responsible office in British church life, were introduced and they themselves said a few words. This was translated into Hungarian and, part of the way through, when it was realised that the visitors from East Germany were being left out, also into German. An incident, which seemed to express the whole spirit of the gathering – and indeed, of the Congress – is worth recounting. A little girl – we think she was the minister's daughter – was running about the dining room, helping wherever she could. She had a placard hung round her neck bearing the words: **I don't speak English but I love Jesus and I love you.** It seemed to express exactly the impression of the Hungarian Baptists we from the West took home with us. I think it sums up also the impression we would have liked most to leave behind in Hungary. "We don't speak Hungarian (did anybody from Britain do so?) but...."

The visit to Hungary and the Congress had been a fascinating experience. We had learned more than we realised about Baptists in Eastern Europe and had been deeply drawn to them. We had also found ourselves drawn to our fellow travellers, finding how much we shared with each other and how much we had enjoyed their company. A useful de-briefing session was held after dinner in the hotel at Regensburg, and short comments from each were taped. For us who were at the receiving end, the visit to the European Baptist Congress, 1989, had been well worth while.



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Fresh Perspectives in New Testament Exegesis: Sociological Interpretation

Among the newer approaches to N.T. study potentially one of the most fruitful is the avenue of Sociology. It justifies itself by arguing that the N.T. like any other literary text cannot be treated, though it often is, as if it existed in a cultural and historical vacuum. It is true that exegesis has always taken some account of the cultural background and its influence upon how a text should be understood. Current sociological interpretation goes much further, applying the methodology developed for contemporary study of society to the N.T. itself. It is this fact which makes the approach new and distinctive. Among those who have developed and applied it rigorously are the American scholars, Meeks and Elliott, the New Zealander, Kee, and the German, Gerd Theissen.

Although the 'sociology of the N.T.' tends to be a rather blanket and indiscriminate concept, two distinct approaches can be discerned within it. One is concerned with merely clarifying the social situation appertaining to a text, the other with the possibility that *social* realities, rather than *theological* ones, might have helped form and shape the convictions of the N.T. Church. The former approach could be called 'social description', the second 'social explanation'. Clearly, it is the second of these which makes the most radical claims and which has excited the most debate. Until its advent it was an unquestioned axiom in N.T. study that we are concerned exclusively with the realm of *ideas*. Now the claim is made that intellectual activity alone was not responsible for the words and deeds of the primitive Church; strong *social* forces were at work to mould and shape the earliest communities.

Some Possible Approaches

Precisely because sociology is concerned with what is typical and recurrent, through the analysis of large amounts of representative data, its application to the N.T. is not straightforward because of the fragmentary nature of the material. For this reason we are very dependent upon *inference* – working from what the text says to what it might imply. Caution is the keyword. For example, while it seems reasonable to infer that because the name 'Christian' was first applied in Antioch (Acts 11:26), Jesus' followers were not ordinarily distinguished from their fellow Jews, is it equally reasonable to infer that those 'straying like lost sheep' in 1 Peter 2:25 represent a rural rather than an urban community? Sometimes a text may reflect some social reality. So from Paul's observation in 1 Cor 1:26: "Not many wise...powerful...noble birth...", we may infer that the N.T. Church was predominantly proletarian in character. On the other hand, a text may challenge, rather than reflect, some social reality. For example, the many references to 'suffering' in Mark's Gospel may represent the writer's way of disturbing a complacent community, rather than reflecting a suffering one, as is frequently assumed.

Further, when something is isolated and emphasized this, we may infer, is because it is unusual, not representing the norm. For example, in Acts, Timothy's mother is described as having a Greek husband and the Roman Governor, Felix, a Jewish wife. The very fact that this is worth noting indicates the rarity of inter-

faith marriages among first century Jews which Christianity reflected and intensified (2 Cor 6). In this way, from fragmentary evidence, something of the social world of the N.T. may be reconstructed.

Another revealing source is the N.T. literature per se. While we cannot exactly equate literary accomplishment with social class, it is likely that the writers, the guardians and interpreters of the tradition, were among the more highly educated in the Church. Though a minority, their influence was disproportionately high in much the same way as was that of the well-off patrons of the house churches. The 27 books they produced, although primarily religious in intent, are at the same time social documents, indicating how much earliest Christianity reflected contemporary society and how much it differed from it. They also tell us something about the outlook, values and perspective of the individual writers. For example, Luke's concern (for reasons of social respectability) to associate the faith with those of high social position – "Greek women of high standing" (Acts 17); "Manaen, a member of the court of Herod" (Acts 13); "An Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister of Candace the queen of the Ethiopians" (Acts 8). Selecting just the letters of Paul, we can see how, in a comparison with the common letter-forms of Graeco-Roman society, Paul broke fresh ground, transmuting the form to serve new purposes. In his hands the letter became the primary means of exercising his authoritative apostleship and teaching (1 Cor. 5:3-4): a quite new literary genre which served sociologically to strengthen the self-identity and cohesion of small, vulnerable sub-cultural groups in Asia Minor and beyond.

The subject can also be approached by way of the norms which characterised the N.T. Church and the ethical directives which predominated, especially in Paul. Their purpose, clearly, is to sharpen the demarcation line between the Church and the world and to intensify the sense of common belonging. We may cite the accepted norm of 'hospitality' (Rom 12:13, 1 Tim 3:2, Heb 13:2) and the frequent ethical injunctions to "love the neighbour" (Rom 13:9, Gal 5:14, Jas 2:8). Another way of helping to achieve this solidarity was to use the language of kinship and affection, so characteristic of Paul, whereby the first century household became the essential model for the Church.

Comparative procedures may also be employed, evaluating the relationship between primitive Christianity and the many other forces which claimed allegiance in the first century. Research has revealed a deeply insecure world, political crises, social upheaval and the overturning of custom and tradition. Many felt marginalised and disinherited. In such a circumstance the competing religious and quasi religious movements offered a sense of identity, of belonging, and a means of acquiring worth. How was it then that, sociologically speaking, Christianity emerged victorious, progressing from a minority sect to a world faith? With others it shared a charismatic leader, a millenarian ethos, and offered spiritual re-birth and a rich community life. Its distinctiveness lay in its indiscriminating appeal and social inclusiveness, which in the class-ridden world of the day was singular. No mystery cult, philosophical school, club or collegia was quite of this nature. And although it made for considerable friction, as in the Pauline churches, the universal nature of the Church helped to ensure its trans-national growth and development.

Social Application

Among the numerous and growing areas of exploration in recent studies, just two may be cited.

(i) Conflict in Corinth

The area of 'conflict' is especially fruitful in revealing how social factors may have been active, even determinative, in Church life. G. Theissen has approached the 'idol meat' issue in Corinth from a sociological standpoint and proposed the following theory.

Generally, the controversy in 1 Cor 8-10 between the 'weak' and the 'strong' is explained in terms of the degree of theological maturity or enlightenment, whereby the 'weak' in faith will scruple at meat possibly offered to idols, fearing contamination. Theissen proposes that the root of the matter may be socio-economic in that while the better-off in the Church would eat meat regularly, the poor would be offered it only in the context of pagan festivals. Thus they would inevitably associate it with idol worship in a way that more affluent church members would not. That is to say, social stratification underlies the issue, rather than theology as such.

(ii) The 'Homeless' in 1 Peter

J.H. Elliott has questioned the received view that the references to 'exiles' and 'strangers' (paroikoi) are figurative, reflecting religious alienation from a heavenly home. He accepts that the ethos of the letter is 'alienation', but that this is a real and literal alienation. The Christians addressed are suffering social alienation, unable to participate fully in their society or receive acceptance from it.

He proposes a community of socially disadvantaged, lower class immigrants, whose alienation is intensified by the exclusive nature of the Jesus community to which they belong. The 'suffering' motif is used positively to clarify the community's identity and reinforce the Church / world interface. At the same time the writer stresses the incalculable benefits of election to a chosen community in which ultimate value is attached to every member and a new dignity, especially important for the marginalised. As a result the 'pilgrimage' in which the addressees are involved is not from earth to heaven, rather from social alienation to social acceptance within those house churches making up the 'household of God'. The tension throughout 1 Peter is socio-religious, not cosmological.

Conclusion

Sociological interpretation of the N.T. is an example of an interdisciplinary approach and as such it invites theological enquiry to take account of concrete social realities. To neglect to do this is to risk inadequate, even wrong, interpretation of the text. A careful use of the approach which does not force sociological models on to the N.T. and which accepts that the text may criticise some social situation as well as reflect it, opens the way to enhancing the fruitfulness of investigation.

Michael V. Jackson

Further Reading

- C. Tuckett: Reading the New Testament, SPCK 1987
- W.A. Meeks: The First urban Christians, Yale University Press 1983
- H.C. Kee: Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective, SCM 1980
- G. Theissen: The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity, T & T Clark 1982

Health in the Ministry

Increasingly the impact of 'life events' and the sheer pressure of some of the patterns of life as lived towards the end of the 20th century is being recognised within society at large, and also within the Christian Community. The titles of a number of books recently published and aimed at the 'Christian Market' highlights this.

"Stress...the Challenge to Christian caring"; "Facing Anxiety and Stress"; "At Ease with Stress"; "Pressure Points".

Even a book with the title, *"The Stress Myth"*, states that:-

"Unquestionably, stress is the most significant health influence at work in civilised society today, and the problem grows more serious every day."

In addition to these more general books, there is also an increasing awareness of the particular problems of stress for those involved in ministry and leadership within the Church.

Books with titles such as; *"Honourably Wounded – Stress Among Christian Workers"; "Living With Stress – A Guide For Ministers And Church Leaders"; "High Calling, High Stress"; "Pastors Under Pressure"; "Clergy Stress – The Hidden Conflicts In Ministry"; "Holding In Trust – The Appraisal Of Ministry"*, all bear eloquent testimony to the needs of pastors.

So the problems are being increasingly recognised. I imagine each person reading this article will know of friends from College days or colleagues in Ministry whose marriages have broken, or who have left pastoral ministry disillusioned, or who are continuing in ministry with all energy and vision gone but who can't leave the ministry because of the need of a roof over their family's head. We might wish to deny these realities but sadly for an increasing number they do seem to be realities right across the denominations.

But what can be done to contribute to a healthier ministry within the Church? Such a ministry is essential if the churches are to be healthy. There seems to be a principle of ministry declared by the apostle Peter in the early chapters of Acts...*"What I have I give to you"*. Because we are the human channels of ministry it is essential that we are growing as human beings and as Christians into healthy people. This in no way denies the reality which Henri Nouwen speaks of in his powerful concept of *"The Wounded Healer"*.

Presuppositions

There are certain presuppositions that I am operating with in this article.

The first is that the health of the ministry is a worthwhile, indeed an essential, goal to pursue. Both for the sake of the minister and of the minister's family (if there is one), and also for the sake of the minister's church.

The second is that the minister carries significant personal responsibility for her or his own health and development. This needs to be stated as it seems that

ministers find it reasonably easy to assume the role of 'Victim'. I know from personal experience the power of such feelings but I also know that such a view leaves the minister often as a passive receiver of life and all that it hands out. Clearly there are some factors over which we have little or no control. Having said that, there are certainly other areas of life and ministry over which we have far more power than we sometimes realise.

The third is complementary to the second. As ministers we do not function as isolated beings. Therefore if health is to be developing in the minister there is a need to operate within a systematic framework, and to discover the impact of the various 'systems', 'networks', and 'relationships' upon the minister.

The fourth is that in an article of this length it is impossible to do justice to the subject. Inevitably it is sketchy and could be accused of being superficial in its treatment of certain factors while omitting other factors altogether. Whether the editor shares my view or not I don't know, but my hope would be that this article could begin a process of dialogue and conversation in the pages of *Fraternal* which could be of some benefit to us as ministers within our denomination. Indeed if insights could be shared which differ from mine, or which come from ministers no longer based in local church pastorates (e.g. area superintendents) that would be all the better.

Self-Awareness

A key area in the developing health of the minister lies in the area of an increasing self-awareness on the minister's part. Apart from this all other support systems will be external to us. To understand more about ourselves and the reasons why we respond or react in certain ways to certain situations, to appreciate why it is that we operate the way we do within the models of ministry that we use is central to developing a healthier ministry. This means getting in touch with our humanity, which for some of us is a difficult task as some of the models of ministry that we have operated with whether consciously or not, tend to deny us our humanity. I wonder how you respond to the following three statements by people who work extensively with unhealthy pastors?

"Many ministers, especially men, have well honed denial and intellectualisation defences. They are not only insensitive to other people's emotions, but they are also unaware of their own. Yet their feelings affect their relationships. They become expressed as perfectionism, as anxiety, as outbursts of anger, as non-verbal hostility and as depression" (Louis McBurney in *"Counselling Christian Workers"*).

"Ordination to the Christian Ministry does not transport any person into another category of human experience. Needs, emotions, feelings remain the same. The basic dishonesty of Christian Ministry today is that many of us have been programmed into pretending that we are different than ordinary mortals, and many members of our congregations play that game so that they can live vicariously through us" (Harold Frey in *"The Pain and Joy of Ministry"*).

"There is a widespread and deeply felt wish to enshrine pastors as heroes. Pastors often share this wish as well. It is rooted in our fear of vulnerability, of creatureliness. The effect of this wish is to force clergy to be unreal with themselves and their parishes. It makes it tough for ministers to express their own needs, expose vulnerability, be reasonably spontaneous about feelings, moods

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To the Readers of the Fraternal.

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The essential purpose of the Policy is to cover the legal liability of the Diaconate and anyone acting on its behalf. Thus, if someone on the Church premises belonging to or invited by an "outside organisation" meets with an accident arising from "negligence" on the part of the Church e.g. a defect in the premises, our Policy provides the Church with protection against a claim from the injured person.

If, on the other hand, an accident arises entirely from the activities of the outside organisation, this cannot give rise to a legal liability on the part of the Church and the organisation should have arranged its own insurance cover.

Judging from the number of letters we receive on this subject this question is of wide concern and I hope the above will be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

M.E. PURVER

and judgements. The pastor often ends up acting a role" (John C. Harris in *"Stress, Power and Ministry"*)

In Paul Beasley-Murray's recent book, *"Pastors Under Pressure"*, he mentions the issue of the 'Image' of the pastor as a basic problem. How others see us...how we perceive ourselves..the models of ministry we operate with, sometimes unquestioningly.

Growth in self-awareness can help us to question some of the assumptions we and others have about ourselves as pastors. It can certainly put us back in touch with our humanity and hopefully help us to explore models of ministry which are more in keeping with the reality of our humanity, rather than those models which seem to assume that we can all be heroes the whole time, or fulfil the frustrated needs of members for an idolised parent figure. These images end up with us denying our humanity and at times appearing to take the place of the Lord Himself. We end up as beings from another planet rather than flesh and blood people.

There are various ways in which such a journey of self-awareness or self-understanding can take place.

Firstly, there is the psychotherapeutic route. I know of a number of pastors, including myself, who have and are benefitting from such a journey. As one writer has said: "This is more of an educational growth experience than a medical necessity".

Secondly, there is the increasingly popular way of spiritual direction. The Diocese of Southwark, I gather, have recently appointed a person to act as Spiritual Director for clergy in the Diocese who want to benefit from such a journey. Another aspect of this dimension is the renewed emphasis on retreat, solitude and reflection.

Thirdly, there is the possibility of becoming part of a self-awareness group. In such a group one can explore oneself, share aspects of oneself in a safe environment, learn to trust others with one's vulnerability, and receive feedback which at times will be affirming, at other times confronting, but at all times hopefully caring. Such groups can be facilitated by people with experience in such groups or could be made of friends in ministry who are intentional in their purposes for meeting in this way.

I've deliberately spent a large amount of time on this first area as to me it seems so basic and has to do with the minister herself or himself rather than with external factors. A growth in self-awareness can contribute significantly to putting aside the view that some have of themselves as a powerless victim. It will usually put ministers in touch with things that trouble them, will strengthen their ability to see that they are ordinary human beings, and will hopefully facilitate an ability to assume more control of their own lives in various ways.

Another area which is initially the responsibility of the minister to raise is to explore approaches to reflective spirituality which is a major need for ministers who are regularly giving out. Remember the words of Richard Foster in *"Celebration of Discipline"*:

"Superficiality is the curse of the age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a

primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people”.

Two other factors which the minister can assume some responsibility for are those of intentional ministry and brotherly relationships. (I did say the article would be sketchy in places!)

Systematic Networks

Now let’s look very briefly at some of the factors which could contribute to the health of the minister from a systematic perspective. I owe much of what follows to some very helpful research done by Barbara Gilbert for the Alban Institute. Her conclusions have been published in “*Who Ministers to Ministers?*”

Part of the minister’s systematic network is the College at which she or he was trained, and the ‘professional’ group that she or he belongs to. (In our case the Baptist Ministers’ Fellowship) Harris suggests that, given the nature and understanding of ministry which is in a situation of ‘change and ferment’, Colleges and Professional Bodies should provide a forum in which the issues can be grappled with. She suggests specifically that:

Colleges and Professional Groups could do more to help ministers define who they are and who they are not. This would involve questioning and examining models of ministry, ordination and especially success in ministry. They also need to address and encourage the ‘whole person’ in ministry. Much training for ministry and subsequent resources put into ongoing equipping for ministry (e.g. our sabbatical scheme) has to do with the academic preparation. There is a need to see also the importance of spiritual formation, personal growth, physical care, and relational development.

Other areas which such groups can be involved in include the need to ‘counteract the cultural ideal of self-sufficiency in ministry’. Colleges, through their faculty members, could increasingly model interdependence, collegiality and the sharing of vulnerability. There are interesting experiments in theological training, but perhaps there is still more space for involving people with ‘hands on expertise from the parish’. This is especially true in terms of people involved in the work of pastoral development. (Should there, for example, be a maximum time away from pastoral ministry in a local church for those who teach pastoral skills to would be ministers?) Finally, Colleges with the encouragement of Professional Groups could develop further programmes of in-service training which ‘supports and challenges the whole person in ministry, and not just the improvement of knowledge and skills’.

Finally, in this area of systemic approach, the Denominational System has a significant role. In Gilbert’s analysis this means fulfilling the functions of firstly permission giver and question raiser. This can be done by modelling humanity and vulnerability on the part of those entrusted with the pastoral support of pastors. It can be done equally by an acknowledgement that there are inbuilt tensions for those who combine the conflicting roles (from the perspective of many ministers) of pastoral carer and line manager who can have a great deal of influence over future career development.

The second area in which the Denomination can have a significant role is in

terms of Facilitating Networks of relationships. I don't know how it is in other parts of the country but in the part of South London that I know best the Fraternal simply doesn't function helpfully. People are looking elsewhere for the networks of relationships which are necessary. It's no good simply telling people that they 'should be involved'. Networks need to be encouraged which actually help to support ministers from their perspective.

A third area is that of acting as advocate. This would relate to very practical areas such as spelling out conditions of settlement (as is already done), encouraging churches to explore with ministers opportunities for personal growth and in-service training. Possibly also making available a range of resources to ministers who are in various significant life and ministry transitions. Linked to this role is the idea of the Denomination as a provider of resources which are relevant to the situation in which the minister is ministering. For example, many London school teachers are very gloomy about the demise of I.L.E.A., I believe very understandably. The I.L.E.A. has a system of Teachers' Resource Centres around the capital which offer a range of support and care for teachers in all subject areas. Could we not have some of our defunct church plant used for such purposes for ministers? Would this be a good use of Home Mission resourcing for the ongoing equipping, on the ground, for ministers?

Well, hopefully, there's something in this article to provoke you to write in response, to talk to your superintendent, to explore possibilities with your association, or to take some other personal initiative which might contribute to the increasing health of ministry!

Keith T. Roberts

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Living in God's Love: Day-Conference on Mental Handicap and the Church.

Some eighty people, not by any means all Baptists, from as far apart as Edinburgh and Havant, gathered at the Chelmsley Hospital Conference Centre, near Birmingham on 6th May 1989. It was a day that proved to be a real meaty sandwich for all of us whether handicapped or otherwise, parents, carers, pastors and students, involved and interested in the work.

The staff of life, the bread of the sandwich as it were, was provided by Richard Kidd, one of our ministers who is also a tutor at the Northern Baptist College in Manchester. With great sensitivity, he conducted a prologue and an epilogue, using Celtic worship material culled from Iona, on which we fed richly, meaning every word of the hymn we sang which ends:

“Lord, your summons echoes true
When you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
And never be the same.
In your company I'll go
Where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
In you and you in me.”

The Workshops

The meat in the sandwich was of six different flavours served up in the workshops of which each conference member could choose two.

From Mark Snell, executive secretary of the Walsingham Homes Trust, a Christian foundation aiming to provide community accommodation for mentally handicapped people, we learned that all people have rights – including the right of choice. To live in a Christian-run home is a legitimate choice – (Walsingham is basically Christian and always will be because of the way it was set up ecumenically) – the problem is not setting up a Christian community, but finding a Christian church that will welcome all people.

Joy Males, a Baptist minister and a nurse, helped us look at sexuality. We found we needed to come to terms with our own first. Then we need to ask, “Is an intelligence test necessary for sexual relationship?” This was the trickiest of all the six workshops and Joy said afterwards that for many it had been a disturbing experience leaving little to report but much to ponder.

A group from Morningside Baptist Church, Edinburgh including Margaret Crozier, Ruth McAlpin and not least, Alex Campbell, himself mentally handicapped, shared their joy in working with adult handicapped people in the church context. They spoke of celebrations, parties, socials, birthdays, – of Prayer, the Lord's Prayer, theme prayers based on experience e.g. God is good, – of Worship, signing and singing and of discussions, on being a Christian, chorus words, Bible words, the meaning of Communion. Then they spoke of all the help they

gave the church – preparing for and clearing up after worship, especially after Communion, acting as door-stewards, modelling, cookery (for other church groups), drama. They made Easter and Christmas cards and sold them for good causes, they put up a poster board and decorated the church with banners. You name it: they did it!

Jill Davies, Special Education Advisor to the Inner London Education Authority, helped us with RE for retarded children, highlighting the needs of the children to feel Jesus' love in church – a warm welcome, a good hug – they must be helped to become an integral part of the church family.

We realised with shame that the Church always tends to separate out all "nuisances" eg. children, whether handicapped or not, so that grown-ups are not disturbed. Every church needs to relearn that Jesus took a little child and put him in the midst of them as a parable of the things they needed to learn. There is a great need to learn to be with and do with, to discover community among children, especially the handicapped, using the gifts they have, every bit as much as there is need to tailor worship to fit their abilities eg. by signing and simple songs and by giving the security of a regular liturgy.

The workshop readily saw the need for "special church friends", or sponsors, who themselves need training. They must know how to foster mutual respect and avoid careless kindness so that there can be personal development of a real relationship with God

George Neal, himself a parent of a mentally handicapped daughter, led a group on the needs of the family, pointing out that families suffer rejection in all sorts of ways, not least by the caring professions. Parents need help to help them talk to each other. Mothers have special needs as do siblings. The Church can play a vital role in answering the deep need to be wanted as a whole family, not to speak of the sheer practical relief of giving time for the family to take a break to go shopping, or for a weekend break or holiday.

It became clear to the group that the Church must make time to go to the family and not expect the family to come to the Church without help and encouragement. Alas, many with experience testified that churches often show up badly vis-à-vis the secular community of neighbours; too busy being holy to be helpful, perhaps.

David Clark, a Baptist Minister and one-time Chaplain to a large institution housing children and adults with all degrees of mental and multiple handicap, led the last workshop concerned with religion and the severely retarded. We began with the trauma at birth – "We felt nothing was possible" said one parent present. We worked through the mourning process from the early stages of recovery when it is possible to say "He's in God's hands, He knows what he is doing" to the amazing later discovery that "We couldn't have learnt to love without him" and finally to "I will not pray for healing – he is himself". We asked ourselves what God do we as Christians proclaim in the presence of such mourning, and how do we proclaim Him by not only our words but our love? Is our proclamation of Christ always credible?

We moved on to look at how we communicate God's love to severely retarded people. One member of the group told us "Never underestimate what a person

can receive and communicate“: it is often we who have failed to develop the antennae necessary to receive the signals of understanding and love. We talked of the importance of awe, beauty, stillness, touch, rhythm, melody, even story, in the communication process, and were finally reminded that being childlike is not being trivial.

The Way Ahead

So we passed our day feeding on the experience of each other and the free and generous help of our leaders, not least Faith Bowers, who in the short business session, told of her intention to stand down as Convener of the Baptist Group after five years devoted service. Without Faith none of this would ever have come to fruition, and we are thankful that she is continuing the work but in another capacity – editing our newsletter; first edition out this Autumn.

We asked conference members to fill in an evaluation form and half of them did and sent it back! From their replies, one thing is clear: there is a real need for meeting and sharing among Christian folk working with mentally handicapped people, both in the community and the churches. The Baptist Union Working Group must soldier on!

In order of emphasis in the replies received to our questionnaire it would seem that we should concentrate on, firstly, Church Education – of ministers and congregation alike – the theology of handicapped – the use of language and labels – the needs of handicap and the needs of the families involved – ways of worship to embrace all abilities – Christian initiation – RE for the MH people – materials for different ability groups – teaching methods – suitable music – play and music therapy.

Next, we should try to tackle Church Involvement – how to make links with MH people in the community and with families, particularly of adult MH children (often over-protected), and the spiritual care of MH people whose parents are not regular worshippers. There is a great need for Christian programmes for adolescents working towards independence, (e.g. the ethics and practice of sexuality), and support for their families.

Thirdly, we should press for Church action, probably ecumenical, to pick up the work being dropped by the NHS et al in these days of privatisation, and to campaign for the needs of the handicapped, not least the young adults needing “hostel” accomodation, and programmes of Further Education, integrated or otherwise.

We will need all the help we can get to pursue these “minority interests” that the churches and the nation may do right by “the least of these, His brethren”.

David A. Clark

(If you would like to become a subscriber to the newsletter, please write to David Clark, 21 Pembroke Croft, Birmingham B28 9EY)

Book Reviews

Theology in the City ed. A Harvey (SPCK, 1989, 144pp, £6.95)

This is a collection of short essays responding to the *Faith in the City* report. Broadly speaking, the contributors agree with the report's conclusions – the multiple deprivation apparent within English conurbations and the apparent irrelevance of the Church. The report posed the challenge for a theology sufficient for the need. This book is not that, but contains some sighters.

Anthony Harvey proposes the need for an alternative theology, freed from monopoly by academic and systematic disciplines. Andrew Hake and Haddon Willmer discuss the implications of the context of community and how differing concepts of organised life shape the demands upon the people in them. Raymond Plant *et al* consider the challenge of the New Right economic and social policies to basic Christian social thought, while Andrew Kirk and Barney Pityana outline possibilities of a native theology of liberation, forged from the experience of the Black Community. The final essay by Dan Cohn-Sherbok centres on the options for a Jewish response.

Timely insights come from Plant, with a critique of the gurus of the New Right and how their followers and the Church speak differing languages. *Faith in the City* did not address this. The concept of 'social justice' is meaningless in the purely market-orientated economy. One person's cry of 'shame' is another's 'inevitable outcome of state interference'. This factor is important for interpreting current church-state disagreements.

Overall, the atmosphere is rather Anglican. The pieces are a mixed bunch. Harvey opens up an area that neither he, nor the others, really explore. The final essay sits uneasily in the collection and it would be worthwhile to have something by a woman about women in the modern urban environment. If an alternative theology is to be fashioned, then these essays are flares in the darkness.

Stephen Copson

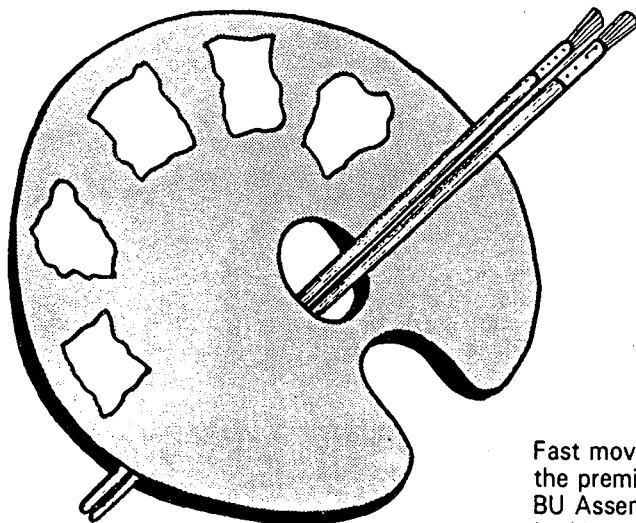
Invisible Network: The Story of Aircare by Frank Wright (Fount, 1989, 175pp, £2.95)

This is a book with three ingredients. It is a biography. Frank Wright who has recently retired from the Anglican ministry gives the background to his deep concern for Pastoral Care. This will be of interest to those of us who have used his previous publications on that theme.

It contains a lot of material used in televised programmes of meditations televised by Granada. They are in the book to assist its main function which is to describe the growth and direction of Aircare. This is a ministry that has developed out of his many years as Religious Adviser to Granada TV. It recognises and reacts to the need that people have to respond to what they see on Television. Telephone numbers are given, counsellors available and, where appropriate, local churches are put in contact with those who desire such contact. What is

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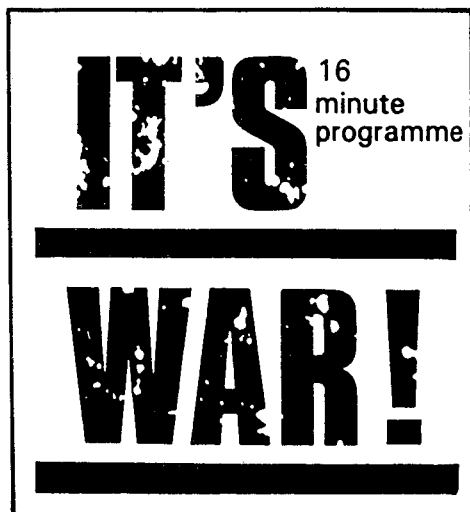
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clear is that people will respond to religious and spiritual themes when presented on the small screen and with an enthusiasm and honesty that is not always evident from listening to our sermons!

Frank Wright is a long way from advocating a 'church of the air', or hard-sell TV evangelism. What he clearly demonstrates is what we all know but find hard to respond to in the Sunday service pattern: that there are people 'out there' who have a need and a faith which can be drawn out by means of television.

As many pundits fear the worse for religious broadcasting in the future, this book is either an epitaph to a dying phenomenon, or it is the sign of things to come. For the story of Aircare demonstrates, when people of the Church are prepared to offer relationship, resourcefulness, energy, time and high standards to broadcasting – and in this day and age money – we will not always be turned away.

John Rackley

Made in Heaven?: Ministry with those Intending Marriage, by Peter Chambers (SPCK, 1988, 192pp, £4.95)

Experts are useful people to have around, but when they try to share their expertise they may meet considerable resistance. Few of us enjoy being put right. Peter Chambers is an expert on ministry with those intending marriage – he is the Bishop's Adviser for Marriage Education in the Church of England. Those of us involved in marrying couples have generally developed our own methods, good or bad, and may not take too kindly to any attempt to help us do it better, Peter Chambers is therefore to be congratulated and thanked for writing a book which avoids this possible conflict, and will be of value to even the prickliest of readers.

This is not a 'how-to' book, full of rules and procedures for carrying out the perfect marriage preparation; though you will find all these in it. This is a book which describes and analyses the many things that may take place around a wedding; a book designed to help us understand what we are doing rather than to tell us what we should be doing. The reader is left to draw his or her own lessons.

Peter Chambers covers the interviews with the couple, establishing rapport, possible preparation courses, planning the service, and follow-up, all within the context of a comprehensive and profound discussion of what getting married is all about. Fifty four pages of appendices and index provide rich resources for working with couples. The book is full of illuminating insight and imaginative practical ideas.

All involved in this area of ministry could read this book with profit. Those who do so may not find that they do things that much differently in the future, but they are likely to do them much better and with a far clearer sense of the value of their work. For those beginning ministry, I cannot imagine a better guide.

Stuart Jenkins

The Evangelicals: by J.D. Allan. (WEF Books, Paternoster Press, 1989, 160pp, £5.95)

The World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) was born in the Netherlands in 1951 as a linking body for evangelicals throughout the world. It now represents evangelical Christians in over 60 countries with a constituency estimated at 100 million. In this book WEF seeks to tell the story of the Evangelicals from the New Testament right up to the present age – “a kaleidoscopic survey of evangelical heritage”. The pages move swiftly from the period of the Early Church to the Reformation, through to the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century in the United Kingdom which marked out evangelicals as a distinct group within the life of the church.

In the chapters that follow we are introduced to a fascinating account of evangelical life and witness in the succeeding years in America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, China, Japan, Russia and Latin America. The closing chapters examine evangelicals and social concern: evangelicals and unity and the reasons for the decline of evangelicals in the first half of this century, ending with the post war revival.

The book makes easy reading, is exceedingly well illustrated, contains excellent brief commentaries by modern day evangelicals, is full of interest and would be a tonic to many a weary soul. If I have any complaint it is with the photographs. They are all black and white, often without identification and in some cases eg “A Calvinist college library today”, are so black as to be indistinguishable.

Jack Ramsbottom

Growing Older by Una Kroll (Fount, 1988, 224pp, £2.95)

Una Kroll draws on her wide experience as a doctor and an Anglican deaconess to give us a sensitive, comprehensive and compassionate survey of a subject which concerns everyone, either approaching later life or involved with friends or relatives already old, or like herself, growing older.

In a moving but unsentimental introduction she tells how much she owes to her husband, 23 years her senior, not far from retirement when they married, but able, through the close companionship they shared, to help her to understand the process of ageing and to live himself to a good old age.

Beginning with a positive opening chapter: *The Pleasure of Growing Older*, she then goes on to deal with what Teilhard de Chardin calls ‘The diminishments’ – physical, psychological, social, spiritual, which growing older must at some stage inevitably bring. With an apt quotation from Benjamin Franklin – “All would live long but none would be old” – she illustrates from her own observation and experience some of these diminishments. Nor does she shrink from describing her first encounter with senile dementia, when, as a medical student she met ‘Rosa’. Looking back at this experience and what it taught her about standing with people “where they stand”, leads her to meditate on the mystery of the suffering of Helen Waddell, whose gifted and lively personality was devastated in later life by an irreversible brain disease.

In her chapter on *Threats to Healthy Ageing*, Una Kroll uses her medical knowledge to describe quite frankly and helpfully the practical physical problems that can develop in later life. She deals most sympathetically with 'mood-related' illnesses – phobias, depressions. But always there is her own good sense and background of counselling experience to bring a breath of hope into what could be rather a gloomy read.

Throughout, the author speaks of her sustaining Christian faith; never in any exclusive way, but rather acknowledging the great variety of approaches people make to the mysteries of life and death.

Her concluding chapter: *Finding the Victories*, speaks again of her husband's approach to these mysteries. It is a chapter full of those practical suggestions mingled with spiritual insights which characterise the book. Every reader will be grateful for the generosity with which Una Kroll shares her rich experience with us.

Ida Robertson

Baptist Union CTP Manuals: F3 Catching the Tide by Derek Tidball (48pp): **F7 Wealth, Work and Leisure:** Various writers (48pp)

Having tutored CTP students for many years, I have had to consult many manuals. These latest are by far the best I have read. The attractive format, layout, and numerous illustrations, many with a humourous cartoon type of picture, appeal immediately to the reader. The topics studied are important for any thinking Christian seriously concerned about his or her witness and life style. The writers and others involved are to be congratulated on producing such excellent material. There are also plenty of suggestions for further reading on the issued raised.

F3 discusses the challenge to the Church of a technological and pluralistic society. The material, moral, religious and spiritual aspects are examined. What is the Christian response in the light of Biblical authority and the Gospel? Changes in the Church itself, such as attitudes to authority and new approaches to worship are looked at, as is the role of the minister in today's society.

Compiled by a group of writers all with experience in Industrial Mission, F7 examines the major problems and values involved with human work – Creation and Use of Wealth, Industrial Relations, Unemployment, Ecology – all are brought under the microscope of Christian truth and responsibility. Finally, help is given in auditing one's own work theologically and biblically, and in examining one's sense of vocation.

Questions and assignments set specifically for CTP students will prove equally searching for anyone prepared to give time to them. It has sometimes surprised me how comparatively little these manuals are used, generally, by churches in House Groups and Bible Study groups, for they provide such splendid study material. All ministers and lay preachers and many others will find these latest productions stimulating, instructive and challenging. There is plenty of sermon material in them too! I hope they will receive the warm and widespread welcome they deserve.

Arthur W. Francis

Holidays 1990

Cottage – Dyfi Valley, Powys

Refurbished, two bedromed, 'Inglenook' cottage on the southern tip of the magnificent Snowdonia National Park in the lovely Dyfi Valley. Fully furnished, sleeps 4/5 cot. Special weekly rates for ministers, missionaries and others in full-time Christian work, for holidays and sabbaticals: £69 May / October, £54 November / April. Bookings from Tuesday to Tuesday. Also available for mini-breaks, November / April at £8 per day.

Contact: Gethin & Denise Abraham-Williams, 10 Millhayes, Great Linford, Milton Keynes, MK14 5EP. (Tel. 0908-661302)

Flat – Peak District

Holiday Flat on the edge of Buxton comprises large lounge with good view, fully fitted kitchen, tiled bathroom with bath and shower, and two double bedrooms. Kitchen has electric cooking, refrigerator, gas central heating unit and hot water unit. Spin drier. Secondary double glazing throughout.

Each bedroom has two single beds; a folding bed and a cot are available. Also the settee in the lounge can convert to a 4-foot bed. Bedding is supplied, but not sheets, pillow cases or towels.

The flat is offered for use on the basis on sharing in the running costs, and treating it kindly! Sorry, no pets!

For more details contact: Rev David Poley or Mrs Moira Poley, 14 King's Way, Harrow, Middx. HA1 1XU (Tel. 01-427-7396)

Caravan – West Sussex

Bookings are now being accepted for the seven-berth fully equipped caravan belonging to the Surrey and North East Hampshire Association sited near Bognor Regis, West Sussex. Priority bookings with special rates for ministers. Details from Mrs Price 24 Weston Lea, West Horsley, Leatherhead, Surrey KT24 6LG (04865 3905)

Bungalow – Mildenhall, Suffolk

Available to Ministers, Missionaries and others in full time Christian work for holidays or Sabbaticals from April – October. (periods of 4-8 weeks during winter months by special arrangement).

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S.A.E. for full details: Mrs E. Parsons, 154 Vernon Ave, Old Basford, Nottingham, NG6 0AL

Bungalow – East Kent

SEACOT: On the coast at Seasalter, continues to be available. It can sleep six. It is not available during normal school holidays. Bookings from Saturday to Saturday, and early booking/enquiry is advised as it normally becomes fully booked very rapidly. It is available all the year round. Relatives and others may accompany by arrangement.

S.A.E. please to the Rev. S. Clark: High Meadows, Fernfield Lane, Hawkinge, Folkestone, Kent. CT18 7AW (Tel. Hawkinge-892580)