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A table of contents for *The Fraternal / Baptist Ministers Journal* can be found here:

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CONTENTS

Editorial	3
Ministerial Training at Northern College	4
by the Revd. Michael Taylor, M.A., B.D., S.T.M., Principal, Northern College	
Ministry to the Unemployed	12
by the Revd. Kenneth Walker, Minister, Pangwydr Baptist Church, Swansea	
Book Reviews	18
Ministry in Brixton	19
by the Revd. Stuart H. Cook, B.Sc., B.D., Minister, Kenyon Baptist Church, Brixton, London	
Of Interest to You	25

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Editorial

In this edition we continue our series on the present state of training in our various Baptist colleges. Ministers whose theological education was completed a decade or two ago can only feel envy at both the variety and the content of training on offer to the men and women preparing for service in the Baptist ministry. Even degree courses offer a range of options that far exceed anything that was available in former years. Further, brave and imaginative schemes such as the Alternative Pattern of Training described by Michael Taylor, offer to a wide range of students, not least those who are seeking to enter our ministry in their maturer years, a course admirably suited to their needs.

The other two articles in this edition reflect the growing diversity of ministry that is required even from those whose work is based on the traditional pastoral ministry of the local church. Kenneth Walker has had to face the problem of unemployment in his own part of South Wales whilst Stuart Cook has ministered in Brixton since 1972 and witnessed the growing tensions whose eruption earlier this year so stunned the rest of us. Their articles provide us with a realistic basis for our prayers as we identify with their problems and intercede on their behalf.

Sometimes the direction of our current church strategy seduces us into losing sight of mutual concern and prayer for one another. The market-oriented evangelistic methodology so warmly advocated amongst us now can so easily breed competitiveness. Success becomes everything, and those who 'succeed' cannot always understand the battles that have to be fought by those who apparently do not. There are still areas of these islands where the church has to chart its progress in modest terms, and where faithfulness is the most needed fruit of the Spirit.

MINISTERIAL TRAINING at NORTHERN COLLEGE

Since most of this article will be devoted to a modest experiment called APT (Alternative Pattern of Training), still barely three years old, let me make it clear at the outset that it is not the only pattern of training for ministry offered by the Northern College. It co-exists with two others: a more traditional and a non-residential pattern; and they will be joined by a third in the Autumn of 1981. The more traditional pattern accounts for just under half of our students. In addition we are heavily involved in lay training or adult Christian education as a sponsoring member of the Manchester Christian Institute, and in an ecumenical scheme for training the pastors of black-led churches in the city.

I will first describe the main features of the Alternative Pattern of Training, then explain the ideas behind it, and finally discuss some of the issues it has raised and the criticism levelled against it.

I. APT normally lasts for three years, never less and occasionally more. The course runs for 46 weeks of the year and it is worth noting that the time spent in training is comparable with a four year course along traditional lines. All the students admitted so far except one have been married. We expect them to have had good experience of working in Baptist churches and to have exercised already some of the leadership that ministry requires. No rigid entrance requirements are laid down as far as academic qualifications are concerned, so that those who have none learn and teach alongside fellow students with professional qualifications and degrees, including one graduate in theology. The demands made by the course rule it out as a soft option for the less able.

For much of the year the pattern of training has three main ingredients. First students are placed with Baptist congregations right from the start. The local church provides free accommodation or a housing allowance, expenses and a small living allowance supplemented either by social security payments or a local authority grant. The churches working with us are generally small and could not otherwise afford a minister, but there is increasing variety. One student is part of a team serving a group of churches; another is assistant to the minister of a large church with special responsibility for a smaller village church nearby. Students are working in the inner city, suburbia and in rural areas, not far from the college in Manchester and as far away as North Wales, Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Nottingham.

We divide the week into twenty-one 'time-blocks' (a morning, afternoon or evening). Five of these are free. Eight are spent practising ministry in the local church. This includes taking major responsibility for one service but not two on a Sunday, and making an appropriate contribution to the full range of church activities from pastoral care to evangelism and social

action. At this local level the student is supported not only by the congregation but by an experienced neighbouring Baptist minister as adviser, and a group of five lay people from the student's church.

The second and third main ingredients of APT are the University Certificate in Religious Studies and college-based work. They account for the remaining eight time-blocks in a week. Three of them are spent at home on private study. The other five bring the students to Manchester every Tuesday for 4.00 p.m. They stay overnight with staff or students on the traditional residential course and return home late on Wednesday night.

We rely on the University Certificate in Religious Studies — the second main ingredient - to provide a grounding in the basic theological disciplines. Over the first two years students take about twelve courses of fifteen teaching hours each. These are mostly evening classes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays though some take the form of residential weekends. Continuous assessment is at first year undergraduate level and is based on two pieces of written work for each course. In the third year students write a dissertation under tutorial supervision. Since the college supplies a substantial number of students for the CRS courses it is invited to take part in planning time. We have asked for courses which give students a reasonably clear map of the terrain complemented by courses which teach them how to explore and exploit for theological purposes one particular area. Thirty hours of introduction to the New Testament will be complemented by a study of a single book or the New Testament teaching about God. Fifteen hours on how to make moral decisions in general will be complemented by a thoroughgoing attempt to make a decision about a contemporary moral problem. A bold attempt to outline and give shape to the history of the church or the history of Christian thought will be complemented by a closer look at say the Reformation or the Atonement. The CRS courses and the dissertation work (since students have to report on it to fellow students and staff) bring our students into contact with other adults involved in theological education who are not preparing for ordination. Since the Certificate is run by the Extra-Mural Department and is therefore open to all, it provides a framework within which the less academically experienced and less able students can make steady progress as well as opportunities for others to produce essays and dissertations at a more advanced level. Where a student has already graduated in theology the CRS is replaced by the Diploma or MA in Social and Pastoral Theology. This creates some timetabling difficulties and has the disadvantage of removing a student from the APT group which gains a great deal from being and growing together.

We hope that the third main ingredient of APT pulls the other two together. Every week when the students come to Manchester they bring report sheets which record how they have spent their twenty-one time-blocks, what they have been doing in their churches, what issues have been thrown up by their experiences and where they have felt the need for help and training. These reports are discussed in a year group with a tutor. To some extent they are evaluated and help is given there and then, if only because it cannot always wait. Usually however a careful note is made of

training needs which are then discussed with all the students and staff and built in to a training programme on Wednesday afternoons. Training is therefore seen to arise out of the realities of trying to practise ministry; it is flexible and arranged on an ad hoc basis. From time to time, and especially at the end of the second year, a student's record is checked to see what important areas have been neglected. Some of the training is also done more systematically. For example many issues related to pastoral care will be dealt with as and when they are thrown up by pastoral practice, but an attempt is made to set out systematically some of the theories and skills associated with counselling and pastoral visiting. The same could be said of worship or preaching or community work: issues are dealt with in training session because experience demands it, and theoretical frameworks are provided to add understanding and a sense of perspective.

The evaluation of a student's ministerial practice is taken further on two occasions in each year. In the first, one and a half hours are spent on a 'major report'. It is presented to all the students and staff with the adviser present. It is divided up into seven or eight areas such as worship, evangelism, administration, pastoral work, community involvement, of which the student chooses four to deal with on any one occasion. Under each heading there are questions about what has been done in that area, what role the student has played in it, how far the student and the church are satisfied and what should be the immediate aims over the next six months. Students not only answer these questions themselves prior to making their report, but must also go over them with their group of five lay people and record their comments as well.

On the second occasion when students are assessed they meet with two members of staff, their adviser and one other student of their choice and the group looks not only at their ministerial practice but their academic work and personal formation. After both of these major reports a member of staff visits the church where a student is placed to discuss with the lay support group the goals which have now been set for the next period of training and how the group can best help the student to achieve them.

Evaluation and goal-setting is not all that different from what has been called 'praxis', namely critical reflection on committed practice with a view to discovering the next form that obedience should take. Such reflection is the heart of 'doing theology' which takes amongst other things the resources of the Christian faith, laid out for the student in the basic CRS course, and uses them to interpret, evaluate and find a sense of direction for the practice of ministry to which the same student is committed in the local congregation. Forming a person to be such a reflective theologian, rather than teaching a person a lot about theology, is what theological education is ultimately about. So in the practice of theology during weekly and major reporting sessions and on several other occasions throughout the course, the different ingredients of APT are integrated and begin to make sense of one another.

Before leaving this descriptive section I ought to mention one or two other features of the course. There are four residential weeks each year at the

college, two in September, one after Christmas and one at Easter, in addition to those required for CRS purposes; and students have a two week placement in the early Summer. One placement is with the social services, another spent working in a hospital, not just with the chaplain. There are regular course meetings when students and staff try to evaluate the course itself and make plans for the future; and visits are not only made by staff to the churches but by representatives of the churches and especially by the lay support groups to the college. Sometimes over eighty of us have shared a meal and spent an evening discussing our partnership in ministerial training when lay people have far outnumbered college based staff and students.

II. What are the ideas or ideals behind the course? I want to mention four.

First APT is an attempt to respond to the needs of married people with families. More and more applicants are of this type and on the whole this is a welcome trend. It seems more sensible to support and encourage people who have already emerged as leaders in our churches than to suppose that a course of training can make a leader for the church. But we all know that the difficulties facing married students can be almost insuperable. APT does not pretend to resolve them but, with the provision of family accommodation and a modest income, to tip the balance in favour of training as a possibility. Maybe as a denomination we have yet to learn how to accept our responsibility for the men and women whom local churches, associations, colleges and to some extent the Union agree should be trained for our ministry and then leave to the mercies of local authorities, inadequate scholarship funds and their own personal resources.

But APT can hardly be accounted for simply on these grounds. Other colleges besides our own have long supported married students in training by linking them with a local church and housing them in the manse. After that they have basically shared with residential students in existing courses; APT students do not.

This is where a second idea, that of integration becomes important. I have already discussed one aspect of it. We believe that theological education involves helping one another to become theologians, reflecting critically on our committed practice. In the past and to a considerable extent today, traditional residential patterns taught students quite a lot about other people's theologies but gave them scarcely a clue as to what to do with it all. You could not help them to put it to work even if you wanted to as long as committed practice only followed after a rather static and unusable approach to theology had been fixed in people's minds, or the experience of ministry during training was so limited or devoid of responsibility that it was more like playing games than coping with reality. In the theological workshop of APT we want to make it clear from the start that the theology of the church mapped out in the CRS course is nothing more nor less than the articulation of what Christians have made of their practice and their experience in the past, and is one of the major resources with which their ongoing practice and experiences in the present must now be tested, illuminated, understood and transformed. Theology is not just there to be learnt but to be used and integrated with practice.

Another aspect of integration underlying the course has to do with the interrelation of learning and practice. There are a number of important points which we, like others, had tried to take into account in traditional training but with only limited success. Maybe they could be taken into account more successfully by a rather different approach. They included: the contribution that practice (in this case the practice of ministry and of reflection on practice) makes to learning without denying that people learn from books and lectures and arguments as well; the way we are motivated to acquire knowledge and skills by experienced needs rather than the advice of an experienced teacher; the need to test theoretical learning against practice and to develop theories not in the abstract but out of practical experience; and the way in which some areas of the course, especially certain skills, are learned more efficiently if they can be used immediately. No-one should read into all this a trendy over-emphasis on practical training even if until comparatively recently it has suffered from neglect. Nor do we want merely to correct an imbalance but to achieve a more fruitful interaction between what is done in the local church and what is done in seminar, classroom and study.

Turning to a third idea underlying APT, one hesitates to drag in the overworked concept of 'contextual training' — overworked that is in some circles where ministerial formation is discussed but still very much underdone in many places where ministerial formation is practised. A college such as ours, closely linked to a university, is an excellent context for the kind of academic learning once denied to dissenters and which we have rightly learned to prize; but is it the right context in which to prepare men and women for ministry especially when once their initial training is over most will be pitch-forked into the fray largely on their own? Isn't it all too easy in a college to get out of touch with the untidy realities of Christian mission; to give ultimate significance to the relatively unimportant (such as heated doctrinal controversies) and wish that the people in the churches could all be as well informed about these matters as we are; to decide for ourselves what kind of ministry the churches need and pay scant attention to what they say they want — however much we may disagree with them; to prepare people for a task that doesn't really exist in quite that form and leave them somewhat unprepared for the tasks they will actually have to face; to encourage ways of praying and ordering one's life that can work reasonably well in here but which will have to be fought for all over again 'out there'? Of course colleges have taken much of this to heart and have established more and more links with the ongoing life of the churches. We wondered if that was quite enough. Should the primary base or context of training be the college community using the churches as outside resources, or should the primary base be the local congregation with the college as the outside resource? Maybe the centre needs to shift.

Which brings me to a fourth and final idea behind APT and it has to do with partnership, or fellowship or collegueship in training. Who should train people for ministry? A good deal of what we do is based on the assumption that it should be the staff of a theological college, though their qualifications are somewhat curious since hardly any of them have any training

themselves as educationalists, and many have long ceased to practise as ministers. If such folk have something to contribute there are others who seem qualified to make a different but equally important contribution. Amongst them are the members of local Christian congregations. As I have explained, through the support group we have tried to give them an active part in training which may also help to break down the wrong kind of separation between ordained and lay. If part of the distinctive task of separated ministry is to enable men and women to be the people of God, a minister cannot discover what that means without their help and candid advice. The minister does not by virtue of a college course 'know best'. Another group that needs to be given a more responsible share in the training are the students themselves. One of our central concerns is to take no major decisions about the course except in consultation with them. No longer wet behind the ears they have their own particular insights, experience, skills and expertise to share with the rest and sufficient maturity to take a large measure of control over their training. College staff do not always 'know best'. As partnership grows so the concept of a 'college' changes. It is no longer an institution of staff and students where those who know inform those who don't. It is a community of men and women preparing for ministry, practising ministry, on the receiving end of ministry, given responsibility to oversee ministerial training: Staff, students, ministers and lay people, all with something to teach and all with something to learn.

III. I have written about some of our ideas or ideals. I hasten to add that we rarely live up to them and I hope they serve to undermine rather than promote any sense of self-satisfaction. I have often criticised a student's major report for its tendency to answer 'Yes' to the question: "Are you satisfied with the contribution you have made to this particular area of the church's work?" I must try to avoid making the same mistake. So I turn finally to some of the issues raised by our tiny experiment and the criticisms levelled against it. It is much too soon to pretend that we have taken them fully into account, so I catalogue them rather briefly.

We are aware of criticism not to say hostile criticism from certain quarters on the grounds that the course lacks academic rigour and allows people to enter the ministry as collegiate candidates without really going to college! Both comments home in on important issues which I have already referred to. As a matter of fact the so-called 'academic' content of APT and certainly the teaching-contact hours spent on the basic theological disciplines compare favourably with those in other courses and very favourably indeed with those in the non-residential courses which Anglicans regard as perfectly adequate for training large numbers of their clergy. But that is not the point. We are as concerned as anyone else that training for ministry should be rigorous and thorough but our criteria may be different. If certain people's academic requirements are not met by APT they not only need to support their case on factual grounds but also show us why they should be met in every pattern of training; just as we must be prepared to argue the case for the rigours we require, which we may find sadly lacking in them.

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The point about not going to college has about it a touch of resentment which I understand; the justification for it however is not 'we had to spend three or four years in a residential institution so why shouldn't everyone else?' but 'why shouldn't more of us have the opportunity to prepare ourselves for ministry in a rather more satisfactory and attractive way'. Any suspicion that APT students have an easier time of it than the rest can easily be dispelled, though of course there would be nothing intrinsically wrong if they did!

Four issues bother me far more than the two just mentioned. First, when the main base for training is moved from the residential institution to the local church it is an open invitation to the church to make its presence felt and one which it quite rightly accepts. This is not all gain, and I am not here thinking only of the demands the church makes on the student, which have constantly to be watched and kept in check. I am thinking of how parochial rather than local the context of training can become. At worst a student can be theologising about and equipping himself or herself to deal with a relatively trivial agenda.

A second and related point is that APT can easily become over preoccupied with the church simply because so many churches are over preoccupied with themselves. If one is convinced, as I am, that Christian mission is fundamentally about the Kingdom and not the church, about social change and human development not church growth, it is an uphill struggle to save students from being wholly immersed in church affairs and turn their own minds and the minds of their churches to the task of transforming the communities of which they are a part, local, national and international into something nearer to what we believe God's Kingdom is like.

Third it is one thing to talk about theological reflection, drawing on the resources of faith to interpret and give direction to practical obedience; it is another thing to do it. Very few people appear to have a natural (or supernatural) flair for making fruitful connections between the issues which arise out of mission and ministry and the Christian tradition. It seems to require poetic and prophetic gifts which are in short supply. But I find it hard to accept that the crucial business of critical and creative reflection on practice is a no-go area for the vast majority. We work hard therefore at standard procedures which anyone can use to get their theologising off the ground. We are not always successful but it is not often that, once applied in a disciplined way, they do not enrich our consideration of what we are doing and what ought to be done next.

And fourth I am bothered by the fact that we may be getting no further with APT than an improved way of training people for existing patterns of ministry. It could merely reinforce where we need change. I suspect that whereas every Christian congregation needs a leader, the leadership of most Christian congregations, including many which now have full-time ministers, is not a full-time job. To make it into one encourages the church to use its limited financial and personal resources in a rather selfish way and encourages ministers to fill their time with activities that are not as easily

justified as we tend to assume. Men and women who are trained on APT are forced into full-time ministry since having given up their jobs to go to 'college' they cannot easily return. We need an alternative pattern of training for an alternative pattern of ministry and it is this concern that has spurred us on to prepare a new course for Christian leadership which will help people to train whilst remaining in their jobs and continuing as leaders in their churches.

Finally let me re-iterate what I said at the start. APT is not the only pattern of training we are committed to at Northern. It is the one I was asked to write about. We believe that this and the residential pattern can co-exist. Better than co-existing, they can fruitfully interact. We have for example already transformed the style of the fourth year of residential training into something very similar to APT; and we would like to discover how to make APT as effective in opening people up to new ways of believing and worshipping as is residential training. In the end any sharp division between the two may be difficult to maintain. We would certainly not complain if students could enjoy the best of both and we could as it were have our residential cake and eat it on an APT picnic or our APT sandwiches and consume them at a residential feast. Meanwhile we are enjoying our search for even better patterns of training and the growing company of churches, lay folk, ministers and ordinands that we keep.

Michael H Taylor

MINISTRY TO THE UNEMPLOYED

As I look up from my study table, I have ahead of me on the wall a glimpse into Lowry's Salford with the smoking chimneys of its many workplaces. As I turn to the left I look out through the window across the Swansea Bay to the industrial town of Port Talbot and see very little smoke at all. No doubt this has much to do with changed patterns of industry, and perhaps it also has something to do with an increasing awareness and concern about the effects of pollution. But for me, the contrast of these scenes has become a symbol. It points me to the large and growing number of people who are not working.

When the unemployed are at least metaphorically on the other side of the world it is possible to turn a blind eye, but when they or their families are in your congregation, the problem will not go away. However, how to react to it is not immediately clear. We are accustomed to minister to the sick, the lonely and the bereaved among others, but for many of us the unemployed are beginning to pose a particular problem.

For one thing, whether or not we are always as busy as we think we are, we do as ministers keep fairly well occupied and find it difficult to imagine having no work to do. For the most part, we have a secure job which makes it hard for us to understand the perpetual fear of redundancy with which so many live. We can do our best to alleviate the frustration, boredom and

despair that is felt by the unemployed, but clearly it is jobs that are wanted. Quite apart from the stigma still unjustifiably attached to being jobless there are the emotional needs that work has fulfilled. A job is a means of security, gives a sense of belonging, and is a source of esteem to most people — no amount of counselling from a minister can compensate for that.

In general it seems our church life has had little to say to, and has barely reflected, the world of work. This may be less reprehensible than it appears at first sight. As for my own church, less than 25% of the membership is engaged in full-time paid employment. A typical figure may well be about 35%, though one friend in South Wales reckons to have less than 10% working full-time. Despite this, there is for the most part only a low level of signed-on unemployment, and that is mainly among people who are not members, but are connected loosely with the church possibly through their wives or children. The predominant atmosphere of our church life is retired, or female, or both. Again in the case of my own church we have three meetings a week for ladies, Brownies (the future of the Sisterhood?), and a men's meeting at which all the men are retired, mostly between 35 and 45 years older than I (their chairman) am! In all honesty, questions of work and the lack of it cannot be said to have a high priority with us.

The first task for the minister in a situation such as this must be one of education. Old attitudes die hard. On the phone just now I have been told, 'You talk about unemployment, but go into town on Saturday morning and see the money being spent'. I could almost hear 'If anyone will not work, let him not eat.' Worse luck for the 75% of my church members who are not paying their way, though I hasten to add they are not all 'living in idleness, mere busybodies'. I often hear it said that there is work there if only the unemployed would look for it, move to it, or set up on their own, though people in South Wales are rather tired of this kind of advice. Regarding setting up on your own, it was recognised in New Testament times that not everyone could be expected to do this. Jesus' parable of the labourers in the vineyard has labourers 'standing idle in the market place'. Why? 'Because', they say, 'no one has hired us.' There is every reason to suppose their work was acceptable when they were given it, and no implication that they were layabouts or good-for-nothing. However, as we help our people to see that the unemployed are not an alien workshy race, we will have some setbacks, because it will be seen that some are not as constant as others in their attempts to get work, some will not get up in the morning; others if they are fortunate enough to have some will seem irresponsible in spending redundancy money. What we must never forget though is that where there are not enough jobs to go round, it is society that is allowing and even fastening such attitudes. Our first task, and this concerns us all, whether unemployment is an issue in our locality or not, is that of helping to promote understanding of the plight of the unemployed among our own people who may well have inherited a range of views which neither reflect their professed Christian faith, nor represent an honest appraisal of the situation.

Secondly, there is the question of how we will relate to the unemployed people in our congregation. To any such among the wider contacts of our church, the minister may at first, if he is not already a trusted person, appear

as a threatening figure. It is not easy to break down the widely held view of the minister as a symbol of decency and the upholder of the established order of things. The archetypal minister with whom we are all familiar (and he probably lives at least in part in our manse) is seen primarily as a judge of swearing, drinking, smoking and of half the jokes told; he will be greatly concerned with the maintenance of church structures and the values of home and family. While we may wish to view our ministry in terms of bringing good tidings to the afflicted, binding up the broken hearted, being a friend to the needy and the outcast, we are not seen in this light unless and until we have earned it. We must be ready for our interest and concern not to be appreciated, there being a high likelihood of this if we now breeze in where we showed little interest before. Further, in the eyes of many, the local minister has no obvious reason to be concerned about unemployment other than where it involves those he would naturally deal with about personal matters anyway. Yet, offered sensitively, our willingness to stand with, and spend time with someone who will have lost some of the vital human relationships of life, the sense of belonging to a production team, or the opportunity to provide a valued service, can have a greater significance than we may ever realise. At a practical level the minister if he has familiarised himself with procedures, may be able to offer sound advice when someone is made redundant. A helpful booklet here, which could usefully be put in the hands of such a person is "Redundant! a personal survival kit", published by the Newport and Gwent Industrial Mission. Voluntary work may be commended, or especially where the person without work is involved in church life, there may be tasks here they can undertake, but this is not always taken up enthusiastically, and may be seen as little more than 'keeping me off the streets'. Beyond this the minister's involvement may be limited to writing countless references which, needless to say, he should do unhesitatingly.

Thirdly, there is some thinking to do, and I raise two matters for consideration.

The unemployment figures stand, at the time of writing, at something over 2½ million, about a million more than 12 months ago. Behind this lies a political decision. It may be felt to be a right or a wrong decision, but many would argue that unemployment on this, or on an even greater scale was inevitable sooner or later in any case. We simply do not need everyone who would like to have one, to have a job. There are too many people in the labour market at a time when because machines and electronic technology have become so much more reliable, efficient and faster, and therefore cheaper, the people are just not needed. If this is so, what are the people who are not needed to do? It would be possible to spread the work rather more thinly between more people, but in any case as work becomes a less significant factor in the lives of many, a change in thinking will be necessary. The Protestant work-ethic recently came under the scrutiny of the 'Morning Star' with the headline 'Unemployment rocks church to foundations!' That may seem to you and me a rather extravagant claim, but clearly if there is to be less work around, we are going to have to put less emphasis on having a

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M.E. PURVER
General Manager

job for a sense of well-being, status and security, and satisfy these needs from somewhere else. In 'Work or What?' (see below) research into a new 'life ethic' in place of the work ethic is proposed. This is certainly worth pursuing even though it is by no means clear yet that we must inevitably have large-scale unemployment from now on.

As we have suggested, a main concern of the minister with regard to unemployment is the promotion of understanding and compassion. The effects of unemployment are much wider than the number of jobless and their families. There are these families divided because the breadwinner has only been able to find a job, say, in the Middle East. There are those with deep roots in a neighbourhood who have been compelled to move to impersonal cities where they never settle (a particular problem for South Wales). There is, of course, the effect on the general morale of the country, not to mention the additional burden on public money at a time of the withdrawal of many services. And up to now this article has only thought about the situation in our own country. If we widen our scope, the recommendations of the 'North-South' report will have to be considered. This will challenge any national short-term solutions that may be advocated; it may demand a fall in our standard of living and it will demand much greater flexibility in industry if the necessary restructuring is to take place.

Most of us will probably feel we can leave the issue of unemployment here with a sense of having done what is required of us. For those who are more committed, they can bring it forward at Association level, or get involved more deeply in local action, such as investigating the possibilities of job creation. One recent attempt in Swansea to focus attention on youth unemployment was an afternoon conference entitled 'Is there life after school?' organised by Rev. Peter Idris Taylor. He brought together a team of young adults involved in careers guidance, job creation schemes, and pastoral situations to look at the issue with school-leavers and others interested. Attendance was not large, but awareness was increased. Last year the East Glamorgan English Baptist Association put on a well-attended day conference in Cardiff on unemployment bringing together experts from the media, the EEC, Industrial Mission and representatives from many churches.

The main value of such conferences is their educational function. Further sources of information are documents from Industrial Mission as for example those of the Church of England Church Synod Board of Social Responsibility's Industrial Committee, and notably the document mentioned above 'Work or What?' a British Council of Churches Britain Today and Tomorrow programme booklet published by the Church Information Office in 1977. If you would like a copy of the Newport and Gwent Industrial Mission's booklet referred to earlier, it can be obtained from Mr F. Newman, 89 Chepstow Rd, Newport, Gwent. NPT 8BY price £1.50 + 25p for post and package.

Kenneth S. Walker

WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

409, Barking Road, Plaistow, London, E13 8AL

Dear Fellow Ministers,

“Change marches onward: may all change be blest!,,

I imagine that among the readers of Fraternal there are those who wish with all their hearts that ‘change’ *did* “march onward”. We have all experienced that resistance to change; that clinging to the status quo which characterises the life of any human institution, not least the Church. Effective ministry involves the ability to initiate and encourage change, without undervaluing or squandering the capital that has been handed down to us.

The problem which many, if not all of us, are now facing is quite a different one, and, in some ways, even more difficult to cope with. We are not now dealing with the frustration which comes from “resistance to change” — now we are confronted by change which is so rapid, and so unpredictable that it leaves us feeling confused and all but powerless.

We may not have appreciated it at the time, but the last twenty or thirty years have been years of comparatively “easy money”. Our people were able, and usually willing, to provide the financial resources needed for both local and wider ministries. Now unemployment and recession are taking their toll. Money is not so easily obtained either from our own people — or from Local and National Government.

All this leads us, or rather drives us, to rethink much of what we are doing. Perhaps the Lord is calling us to simpler ways, not only of living but also of serving. As far as the West Ham Central Mission is concerned, we are looking at all our operations and structures — and seeking God’s will for the future of our work. Please pray for us, as we pray, with thanksgiving, for you, that the Lord may mould us and use us to His glory.

Yours in His Service,

Trevor W. Davis
Superintendent

BOOK REVIEWS

Last Supper and Lord's Supper by *I. Howard Marshall*, Paternoster Press, 192 pp. £4.20

Paul's Idea of Community by *Robert Banks*, Paternoster Press, 208 pp., £4.40

Both these books from Paternoster are to be warmly welcomed. They deal with topics of vital interest in the contemporary church and provide us with some biblical sign-posts as we endeavour to re-assess our understanding of the eucharist and our common life in Christ. They are both written in a concise style and both deal judiciously with the biblical material; only in the closing pages does each book endeavour to relate its material to the current debate within the church.

The New Testament evidence for the early church's practice and belief in the eucharist, and the way in which the communal life of the church was organised and lived, is sketchy and sometimes contradictory. Very different understandings of the sacrament and of the nature of the church have emerged from study of the same scriptural sources. The nature of the evidence on the one hand compels us to piece together as best we can a picture of the life lived by the church out of which the New Testament sprang and, on the other, to judge the validity of many of the sacramental and ecclesiological developments of the decades immediately following the New Testament era. What the sketchy evidence of the New Testament should deter us from doing is investing our theology of church and sacrament with too much dogmatism. The claim of any group of Christians that their eucharistic celebration and their style of corporate church life is an exact replica of the New Testament times is too presumptuous by half. Further, it begs too many questions. To which new Testament model is the group being true? and what of those who follow a different, yet equally valid, model.

Howard Marshall's book should help us all to break away from the clammy hand of Zwinglianism and to discover something of the joy of the early church as it met together and broke bread. Thanksgiving for sacrifice, the sense of fellowship with the Risen Lord and the air of messianic banquet that pervaded the Lord's Supper are elements in an experience we desperately need to re-discover for ourselves.

Robert Banks' book is a challenge to the church to seek a richer expression of community in its life in Christ. The Pauline ideal, far from having failed, has never been fully attempted, either by the churches to which he wrote, or in the subsequent experience of the historic church. It is in the church as we know it and in the churches to which we belong that we need so much to learn what it means to live in true community. It would be tragic if failure on our part served to strengthen the claustrophobic and fundamentalist alternative of the house churches.

MINISTRY IN BRIXTON

In my last month in Theological College I preached at a Church where it was announced that I had been called to a Church in Brixton. A lady spoke to me at the door afterwards. "Brixham, that's a nice place to begin." I explained that in fact it was Brixton, not Brixham. "Ah", she said, "That's a different matter!" How different I have discovered during the last eight and a half years.

I have found it helpful to share with others working in inner city areas and so it was that in April of this year I attended the inaugural Conference of the Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission. As we broke into small groups for sharing and prayer Michael Eastman of Frontier Youth Trust said: "There are people here concerned for Brixton." I had heard police sirens the afternoon before but what trouble there was had been out of our immediate area. I did not realize how deep that concern would become.

Driving back into Brixton in the early evening there was a hold-up in the traffic and then as we drove along the main Brixton Road we saw boys — 9, 10, 11 year olds — looting in the broken shop front of Burton's. Looking up a side street we saw fire engines and police vans and realized that this was a serious confrontation. I arrived home to find my wife relieved that I had arrived home safely and earlier than anticipated.

The Saturday night's events were just out of our area and like the rest of Britain we watched the grim events unfold on our television screen. My wife and I were particularly concerned for one of our members, who is a youth worker and who runs a children's house for 'latchkey' children in the area most affected. Providentially she had taken our young people to help with a North London Church's Caribbean Evening. Coming back to Brixton in the Church minibus they had difficulty in getting in because of police road blocks. The first thing that they knew of the trouble was when two boy friends asked for a lift because they said that police were picking up black teenagers on sight.

We went to bed that night with some apprehension. The main disturbance proved to be black teenagers who came up the road having looted the local Hi-Fi shop. Going out the next morning I discovered that instead of there being hardly anybody about, as is usual at 9 o'clock on a Sunday morning, Brixton was now a tourist attraction, even though the police had closed the roads through and stopped the Tube.

The Church met together as usual for worship at 11 am, but the time was the only thing that was usual. Our organist never arrived because he could not get in, even from a short distance, with the Church minibus, because of the roadblock. As a Church we are half black and half white and very representative of the local community. The only way that I can describe how we felt is that we were sick at heart.

What could I say in the sermon? It was the beginning of Holy Week and I felt we needed the words of Pilate: "What is truth?" As Christians we could not accept any simple explanations of what had happened. Various groups would find in the Brixton riot ammunition for their point of view but as Christians we wanted the truth.

At 6 pm we met for prayer and at 6.30pm for the Evening Service. We greatly appreciated the presence of Douglas Sparkes, our Area Superintendent who had come to identify with us. By now the trouble had come near the Church building, though not with the ferocity of the night before. Youths — black and white — were in running battles with the Police, shop windows were broken, a car was burnt near my house. I went home as quickly as possible to see that my family was safe. My elder daughter, aged 5, was apprehensive for about a week, asking where I was, and what time I would be back, every time I went out.

The trouble in our area seemed to have two causes. The police had virtually sealed off Brixton so everyone was waiting for something to happen and it did! I and other members saw people finding their way in from outside Brixton and some had obviously come for "sport" with the police.

We were grateful for the prayer and concern of people. We received about thirty phone calls in two days. The next few days were quiet but uneasy. People seemed more friendly. There was but one topic of conversation. All the time the police helicopter hovered overhead giving us a headache. The media men came. The sightseers came. One could almost hold a 'spot the personality-incognito' competition. As Easter weekend approached many shops and banks boarded up in anticipation of trouble. We prayed for rain to cool things down and gradually normality returned.

Good Friday was the annual march of witness by Brixton Churches. There was an escort of police and of an Australian T.V. crew making a "positive" documentary about Brixton. A bishop joined us. We ate hot-cross buns outside the Catholic Church. A B.B.C. Radio reporter searched among the crowd for clergymen to interview. Many of us signed a statement on behalf of the Brixton Council of Churches.

MEN'S MOVEMENT **Baptist**
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I am writing this article in the week that the Scarman Enquiry has begun in Brixton. The police waiting in their coaches and the television cameras around the Town Hall bring back some of the feelings of April 10/12. To write about ministry in Brixton meant that I had to write about the riots because I see them as a culmination of a process building up over a period of years. My years in Brixton have convinced me of the following factors: (Any quotations are from the Brixton Churches' statement.)

1. Police/Community relations

I was brought up to respect the police but there has been a minority of police in Brixton who have forfeited that respect.

"It does need to be frankly recognised that the riot of Brixton, was, before all else, an outbreak of anger directed at the police. It has become increasingly apparent for some time that there has been a serious breakdown of trust and understanding between the police and the black community, yet nowhere near enough has been done to try and respond to that fact. It was documented most clearly by the Report of the Lambeth Enquiry into Community/Police Relations published earlier this year. Whatever questions of fact might be raised, its evidence of feeling was overwhelming. The police declined to respond in any way to this disturbing document. We regret that dialogue between the police and the community has been so infrequent and so unproductive."

On the other hand the police had the unenviable task of dealing with the ever present evil of street crime. As a Church we reflect the problems. We have had older members mugged and we have had members' children wrongly arrested by the police.

It is in this area of police/community relations that most light should be shed in Lord Scarman's Enquiry.

2. Social Factors.

Brixton, like most inner city areas is a place of stress due to bad housing, unemployment and education problems. My Church is set in an area with no

real open spaces for children to play and that was one reason we submitted an (unsuccessful) application to Inner City Partnership for £147,000 to create a youth centre, a nursery and an old people's luncheon club on our premises.

"We recognise that there are stresses long term and immediate which have helped produce anger and resentment in many people, both black and white, and can understand many such feelings. We believe that appropriate and creative means must be found for the expression of that anger. Riot and public disorder, however, are not an acceptable means of such expression."

Such stresses are increased by the pressures of a consumer society that screams from the hoardings and television screens that you need this or that for the good life. On the Saturday night of the riot a senior police officer summed it up in one word: Frustration.

3. Political pressures.

These are inherent in the Nationality Bill and fuelled by intemperate speeches about race. Groups from both political extremes seek to muddy the waters. The far left sees cannon fodder for the revolution. The far right sees scapegoats for a society changing in ways it itself barely understands.

I attended a protest meeting a few days after the riot. I felt at home in that it was like a revivalist meeting, complete with Offerings (for the Defence Fund!). The problem was the marxist rhetoric with its use of stereotypes; but stereotypes come from other sources too.

"A significant part of the background ... is the way our area is often presented in the media — under the stereotype of a crime-ridden ghetto —without any references to the reality of the situation, the true balance of population, the many good and positive features of community life here. The popular press in particular need to accept responsibility for the part they can play in adding to the strains and problems of an area like ours. The creation of such a false stereotype prejudices the attitudes of those who come into such an area not only to police, but also to work, to trade, to administer —and it adds to the social deprivation by discouraging business and property investment."

All three factors are shot through with human sin. The riot coming as it did at the beginning of Holy Week was an illustration of what we see only too well in the death of Jesus, what people can do in a crowd — whether it is the crowd that stoned and fire bombed the police or the group of police who beat up a black man in my road.

“As members of the Brixton Council of Churches we are not surprised but ashamed that as a nation and as Churches we have allowed attitudes to be taken and politics pursued, which led to the eruption in Brixton over the weekend 10-12th April ... The mistakes and wrongs that are past need to be honestly admitted, but there is no value in long recriminations. What Brixton needs now is healing and reconstruction. We put our trust in the Easter promise that it is always possible for good to grow out of ill, and love to overcome fear and hatred; it is to this we must remain committed.”

What are the positive sides of ministry in Brixton? It has been exciting to have been part of building up a multi-racial congregation with shared leadership. It was thrilling to see a lady member give two years full time to the Church as pastoral assistant. It has been encouraging to see a few young people come to know the Lord and older West Indians commit themselves to him again. From a personal family point of view we have gained so much in being part of Kenyon Baptist Church in Brixton.

The challenges are many. We are encouraged by being a multi-racial congregation and believing that we have a oneness in Christ, but how marginal are we to the life of Brixton? A minister's wife in a nearby similar area speaking of National Front activity said to me: “I feel so helpless to do anything about these problems.” Sometimes even the simple things seem so hard in inner city areas like ours and it is so easy to lose vision. How we long for more resources — personnel, financial and spiritual.

Being in Brixton during the riot was for me a dark experience. Somehow a community divided against itself seems particularly tragic. It gave my wife and me a fresh understanding of the continuing tragedy of Northern Ireland. It brought home to me afresh, what we all know, the pressure that our ministry puts on our families.

I must finish, however, with some words of Lesslie Newbiggin which have lived with me for some time now:

“Let me simply make here a personal confession. I have tried to understand many of the different faiths and ideologies which are on offer in our supermarket culture. I have felt the force of some of them. And yet when I am faced with the overwhelming power of evil in the world around me, in the Church and in myself, when the sheer dark meaninglessness of so much of what happens bears down upon me, I know of no place to which I can turn, no place where the full reality of evil has been measured, met and mastered, except in the cross of the risen and sovereign Lord of all, the resurrection of the one who went down under the load of sin into the very pit of hell. There and there alone, is the place where hope is born out of the agony and travail of the world’s suffering. The Church exists to be the bearer of that hope in the life of the world.”

Stuart H. Cook