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EDITORIAL

When Dr Billy Graham comes to London in June to conduct the Campaign at Earls Court he will come in different circumstances from those which marked his arrival in 1954 for the Harringay Campaign. Then he was almost unknown in this country and to many he was just another American evangelist. He was the target for much criticism by the Press and not a few leaders of denominations, ministers and others had doubts concerning his mission and the techniques of large scale mass evangelism. Before the campaign was concluded leaders who at first were absent appeared on the Harringay platform, and the Press generally changed its accent from that of criticism to appreciation and acknowledgment that something unusual was happening at Harringay. Dr Graham was received by the Queen at Buckingham Palace and preached at Windsor, and at his last meeting at Wembley the Archbishop of Canterbury gave the final blessing. When he left our shores thousands of people thanked God for His servant through whom they had been led to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Some of these are ministers of our Baptist Churches, others training today in our colleges and many are leaders in the Churches. After years of membership decline we had the joy of an increase for several years following Harringay.

Dr Graham comes to London in June as a world honoured evangelist. He has probably preached the Gospel in person to more people than any other preacher since the days of our Lord. On all continents and in many countries vast multitudes have heard the message of the Gospel through God's servant. Everywhere, whether preaching in his mother tongue, or through an interpreter, or even to an invisible audience by telegraphic cable, the same constant evidence of blessing upon his ministry has appeared. Truly God raised up this man for such a time as this. And we Baptists should rejoice that the same Lord who caused Carey in the 18th century to appear from our communion, and Spurgeon in the 19th century, has given us Billy Graham also to bless the whole body of His Church.

Evangelism is a much misused term. Some narrow its meaning to public evangelistic campaigns. Others give to it such a wide connotation that it becomes meaningless. We should not be chained to either of these positions.

Historically there is a place for public, even mass evangelism in the pattern of the Church. Wesley, Whitfield, Spurgeon, Moody and others, are high examples of God using this medium to convert people and build up His church. We place great store on mass communication today but let us not restrict our enthusiasm in this respect to radio and television. There is still a place for a man with a message to confront people personally and bring them to encounter with Christ. At the same time we are wise to remember that the work of the whole church is evangelism, provided all is inspired by a redemptive purpose.

We received recently a personal message from Billy Graham from his home at Montreat, Carolina, sending greetings to members of the B.M.F., and expressing gratitude for messages he has received indicating the prayerful interest and support of ministers. We understand that a welcome function by the Baptist Union has been arranged, and that the Council of the L.B.A. has sent a message of goodwill and support. We believe the London Campaign is the object of much prayer throughout Britain and that God may bring to London and to Britain a season of mighty blessing. Pray brethren that it may be so.

The following article was written by Henry Bonser only a short while before his death. In publishing it, the Editorial Board would like to pay tribute to the life and work of a fine Minister and denominational leader. We thank our God upon every remembrance of Him.

LETTER TO A PROBATIONER

Dear John,

It is nearly three years since I attended your Induction Service and I trust you have been able to maintain the spiritual glow in spite of the adverse conditions which have prevailed during that period.

Some time ago I visited the scene of my own first pastorate and was forcibly reminded of the changed climate now confronting the Church. At the beginning of the century optimism prevailed. Dr John Clifford, in a characteristic Presidential Address, declared his belief that "Christ is about to take to Himself His right, and reign in His own Church, in the Family, in the training and culture of the Young; in the wide and powerful regions of Trade and Commerce; and in the ordered life of the City and the State." With similar faith and enthusiasm, students flocked to Baslow and Swanwick to acclaim the motto: "The World for Christ in this generation." How we cheered! Victory seemed imminent. In those hopeful days it was comparatively easy to gather a large congregation, attract and win young people and exert an influence in civic circles. What a change in the atmosphere! After more than fifty years of war, disillusionment and frustration, the modern minister has to work in a very different climate. Society has become affluent, material benefits have increased and education has improved; but faith has waned, the influence of the Church has decreased, and moral standards have been lowered. The being and goodness of God, the Commandments, the ethical teaching of Jesus and the relevance of the Church, are openly challenged by many strident voices. A pampered and bewildered generation has been taught that animal impulses, and degrading vices are

really virtues. It is rumoured in 'progressive' circles that Christianity is no longer intellectually respectable. In a condescending mood D. H. Lawrence wrote, "If I had lived in the year four hundred, pray God, I should have been a true and passionate Christian . . . but now I live in nineteen-twenty-four, and the Christian adventure is done." It is amazing that self-styled 'progressive' people can read that passage without amusement. Why did Mr Lawrence select the fourth century for his patronage of Christianity, rather than the first? Was it because persecution had ceased and royal patronage has been bestowed? It is not easy to discern the true and passionate Christian in one who wandered from one exotic clime to another, dreaming of an ideal community. This disdainful attitude towards the Church, however unjustified, is apt to be discouraging to our young people and weaken their interest in the Church. The situation has not been improved by the attitude of some apologists, who have sought to meet intellectual criticism by public admission that the Church is defective in thought and action. Every institution has its weakness and the Church is far from perfect, but I like the Covenant of a northern Church which demands that its members "shall not reveal her nakedness to them that are without." It is not wise strategy to allow a vulnerable materialism to force us on to the defensive. Attack is our best defence.

Such a climate of opinion makes the work of a young minister difficult and dangerous. If the scorn of a sceptical world is aggravated by unjustified criticism and obstruction from within the fellowship, he might be tempted to heed the seductive suggestion that some other occupation could provide more comfort and greater opportunities. However, I believe you have enough grit and faith to view the present situation as an exhilarating challenge and to cry, with Rupert Brooke: "Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour." Even so, the strongest and bravest disciples have periods of depression. It is because I have been in the Slough of Despond that I venture to write to you in this way. It is a message of congratulation rather than sympathy, tinged—I confess—with envy. O to be in the fighting line, at your age and with your equipment! Such regrets are vain, but I do want to send you a word of encouragement and to mention a few simple aids to faith.

History is an effective tonic. This is not the first time the Church has seemed to be in eclipse, but it has always emerged with renewed brightness. When the Visigoths pillaged Rome in 410, Jerome moaned, "The light of the world has gone out;" but Augustine promptly published his famous book, *The City of God*, which sustained Christian faith until brighter days dawned. Again and again, in our own land, sceptics have triumphantly proclaimed the annihilation of the Church and ecclesiastical leaders have lost heart. In the seventeenth century John Howe, who had been domestic chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, declared: "Religion is lost

out of England farther than as it can creep into corners," yet it had crept into a corner at Spitalfields, where the first Baptist Church on English soil gathered to nurture the concept of religious liberty and lay the foundation of our own world-wide denomination. A century later, Bishop Joseph Butler was lamenting the general decay of religion and is said to have declined the Primacy because he thought it was too late to save the Church; yet Wesley and Whitefield were already lighting the fires of revival throughout the land. The woeful predictions of Voltaire and David Hume concerning the early extinction of the Church and the blotting out of Jesus, were revealed as pitiable wishful thinking when Carey sailed for India and initiated the modern missionary movement. Surely these were evidences that God was on the throne, making even the wrath of man to praise Him!

The persistence of the Church amid the manifold changes of the world, is a fact of great significance. The sceptics find it bewildering and a frank contributor to the *Rationalist Press Association Annual* for 1919 confessed: "The Gospel miracles are the veriest trifles compared with the authentic, undeniable miracle of Christianity's mere existence. Subject to a bombardment of unexampled violence from every point of the material and moral universe, it shows never a sign of surrender. Blown sky high to-day, it presents an unbroken and smiling front tomorrow. No other religion, be it remembered, is subjected to anything like the same ordeal. It is the survival of Christianity in the realistic atmosphere of the West that is such an amazing and impressive phenomenon." To us the explanation is obvious. The Church persists because the Church possesses Christ. "My Church," Jesus called it, and added the assurance, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The figure of 'gates' suggests subtle planning and it is worth noting that the strategy of evil which we fight to-day is strangely similar to that employed in the Garden of Eden—doubts regarding God and the promise of fuller life by breaking His commandments. The question of modern youth, "Why shouldn't I?" will be answered by painful experience as it was in the case of our first parents. Meanwhile, the verdict of history stimulates endeavour and assures us of ultimate victory.

Further encouragement comes from the evidence that there is a self-annihilating power in evil—it tends to destroy itself. I doubt the suggestion of Mark Anthony that the good that a man does is less likely to survive than the evil, in spite of the fact that it comes from Shakespeare's quill. While admitting that evil is contagious, it is a disease, bearing within itself the seeds of decay and resulting in death. What is the meaning of the appalling suicide statistics, which include a high proportion of young, educated and wealthy persons? Some time ago a particularly gifted and seemingly successful young man diagnosed the malady of his generation and urged his companions to

“refine to steel . . .

The iron that has entered into our souls.”

Alas! he failed to achieve the goal he set for others and took his own life. Commenting on the tragedy, a national newspaper expressed the opinion that “He went out because he had no anchor for his soul.” In our affluent and expensively educated society there is an alarming increase in crime and a growing discontent. A young hooligan explains his purposeless destruction, to the Magistrate, with a laconic, “I was bored”; a girl tells her Minister, “I gave my conscience chloroform, but it would not stay chloroformed”; a libertine confesses, “It all becomes very disgusting after a while.” No wonder Noel Coward could write, “Nothing left to strive for, love or keep alive for.” But the present failure to find purpose in life cannot last. Those who got alongside tough teenagers in experimental holiday clubs last August found a measure of disillusionment and a vague yearning for an undefined something. If we can learn their language and arouse emotion for an adequate ideal, we might—as Benjamin Kidd contended in his book, *The Science of Power*—create a new mind and a new earth in a single generation. Before we dismiss this idea as a vain dream, we should remember that Hitler did it with a base ideal and that his régime disintegrated because it was evil. This at least is clear, that the growing discontent presents the Church with a great opportunity and the ministry with an inspiring hope.

Well, John, I hope you will not resent this letter as an intrusion. I have not attempted to teach you how to fulfil your ministry, but have simply responded to an urge to send you a word of encouragement as you continue the work I can no longer perform. I still picture you standing among your people, making your vows and proclaiming your belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. I thought then that you looked like a man able to “Plod and keep the passion fresh” and I prayed that you might be given wisdom to discard unimportant impedimenta and unprofitable speculations, making full proof of your ministry. I pray now that you may be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” so that—in this iron age—you may be among the happy warriors who are undismayed by difficulty, “baffled to fight better” and confident in the ultimate triumph of Christ and His Church. The world can give you nothing comparable with the Master’s “Well done” and the Crown of Life.

With every good wish for your highest welfare,

Always yours,

HENRY BONSER

TIME TO THINK

"The peril of the creeds is that they attempt to canalise into a particular form of words, belonging to the age in which they are drawn up, beliefs that cannot be reduced to neat formulae or mathematical equations; and they become instruments of oppression to bind men's minds and consciences in theological chains. As a result creeds nearly always fail in their intentions, and succeed only in dividing instead of uniting."

This editorial in the *Baptist Times* of February 11th, 1965, raised a fundamental question which affects all our thinking about future polity for the denomination: What is the basis upon which our Churches associate together? David Kingdon was quick to reply, and point out several historical inaccuracies in the leader, showing that until the mid-nineteenth century confessions of faith had always played a major part in Baptist polity, and were used as a basis for churches associating together. The Baptist Union, as I have shown in my article in the July 1965 *Fraternal*, started out with a Calvinistic confession of faith, which was whittled down to the present Declaration of Principle, during the 19th century, in spite of considerable opposition. Mr. Kingdon concluded his article: "The issues raised in the editorial need to be discussed and pondered throughout the denomination. It should be realised that those who advocate a more integrated denominational structure will increasingly encounter a demand from conservative-evangelicals for a more adequate basis of faith upon which to associate than the present declaration of principle. Unless this demand is seen as the expression of deep conviction, and not to be written off as unfortunate obscurantism, it will be impossible to associate on the basis of "mutual recognition and trust in one another, as baptised believers in the Lord Jesus Christ". For by refusing to face the necessity for a theological basis upon which to associate our leaders will create just those conditions which will militate against mutual recognition and trust."

Another correspondent to the paper made the following comment on the leader article. "You say that 'they were drawn up to proclaim and show . . . that Baptists affirmed the central beliefs of Christianity'. If for such a purpose our fathers believed it necessary to publish such confessions in their day, how much more important in this age of ecumenical thinking and discussions, especially with 1980 looming nearer, is it that Baptists should declare with conviction and clarity what they mean by those central beliefs?"

The editor was not without support, however. Arthur Davies wrote on March 11th: "I am profoundly thankful, myself, that Baptists provide one section of the Christian Church which is free from those dangers (subscribing personally and publicly to a creed) and which endeavours rather to maintain its purity by seeking for evidence of a transforming experience of God, in the lives of its would be servants."

It was this sharp divergence of opinion, illustrated here from the pages of the *Baptist Times*, which lay behind the following statement in the *Report of the Commission on the Associations*: "For several generations fellowship between those with different theological emphases, different views of Biblical inspiration and different methods of evangelism has been characteristic of the Baptists. It is a fellowship which could be disrupted all too easily. It demands restraint, charity and loyalty on the part of all who share it." (p.vi). In an effort not to rock the boat themselves, the commission virtually side-stepped the vital issue of the confession of faith as basis for provincial and national association. Having quoted selected items from previous confessions of faith, and a most odd array of Scripture texts, the Commission assumed they had theologically justified the principle of association, and that the Union was the association of the associations. This agreed, most of the *Report* was given over to a discussion of organisational matters. The fundamental issue of an adequate basis for the association of Baptist churches together locally and nationally was not answered. The Commission failed to deal with the fact that our present structure of denominational life has been built up on an almost *ad hoc* basis, taking little or no account of New Testament principles, historic Baptist thinking, or the excessive independency which the "voluntary" principle fostered in the 19th century. It is for this reason that despite all the merits of the changes which the commission suggests, it is a red-herring, complicating an already confused situation. The first priority must be to establish what we as Baptists in the 20th century affirm as a central confession of faith, and then to give that faith organisational expression.

II

Writing in the *Baptist Times* during April 1965, Leslie Wenger discussed the possible objections to confessions of faith, drawing on his wide experience of the mission field in India, and pleaded for the acceptance of a confession of faith by the denomination because of its tremendous advantages as an educational tool in the work of instructing candidates for baptism and church membership. He pointed out that there is an essential gospel that a person who wishes to belong to the Church of Christ needs to know before he can intelligently acknowledge Jesus as Lord. A confession of faith can provide such a statement of belief, not as a shackle to bind a person, "but as an acceptable statement of what each person is summoned to make his own in his own way". He continued: "The primary purpose of a creed is not to be a declaration to the outsider, who may not in fact understand the language, nor to be a test to keep people out: it is to help those who are within. . . . In our days we need a creed that will make explicit what is implicit in the simple confession: 'Jesus is Lord', and what was implicit in the *kerygma* and *didache* of the early church and classical creeds.

Nowadays we cannot afford to take anything for granted. Such a creed will make explicit who Jesus was, and what faith in Jesus means for our understanding of God and what he has done. It will make explicit what 'Lord' means, lighting up the areas of life where faith in Jesus makes a difference . . . the peril of creeds lies . . . in the assumption that what was a relevant expression in one age is still adequate in another age. . . . I suggest the present controversy evoked by the *Report on Associations* as to whether there should be a declaration of faith, and if so, how full should it be, would be on the way to solution if the primary purpose of a creed as a guide to instruction were remembered."

Within the pages of the *Baptist Times* during the last few months, in letters and articles, there has been expressed a growing concern for the denomination to take stock of itself at this level. Three major reasons have been presented why we should give ourselves to this task of self-examination, of finding an adequate expression in contemporary language, of our central Christian beliefs. The writers of *Liberty in the Lord*, to which Principal Kingdon was a contributor, represent the views of sincere conservative-evangelicals in the denomination, and we must take seriously the plea for a confession of faith as a basis of associating together, for this is certainly the historic Baptist position. The authors of *The Pattern of the Church* may decry the confessionalism which has developed on a world scale, alongside ecumenism, and the fundamentalism which vilifies the World Council of Churches as the Anti-Christ; but even they must realise that 1980 looms nearer, and if we are to play our part in this fresh initiative towards unity in Britain, then we must be prepared to state what we believe, in a contemporary idiom, to the other branches of the Church of Christ. Not even Baptists can make ecumenical cement out of denominational marshmallow! For too long Baptists have been woolly, vague and indefinite about what they believe, and all too often unable to express their fundamental beliefs in a meaningful way at such gatherings as Nottingham 1964.

But perhaps far more important to the denomination as a whole, and for our witness in the world, is the truly spiritual revival which could come to our churches when faced with the responsibility of giving assent to a confession of faith, and with working out the implications for the Church and for individual members. Leslie Wenger has rightly emphasised the use of the creed as a tool in the Church's task of Christian education. This is the primary purpose of a creed, and it could be a means of real revival. Though such a discussion at denominational level will reveal our differences, it must be honest and fearless. Pray God it will show us what is far greater than our differences; that is, our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Once we have decided upon a common basis for our doctrine, ministry and polity, as Churches, *then*, and only then, shall we be in a position to turn to the second issue confronting us, the organisational expression of our common faith.

III

In matters of organisation, the relationship between the Union and the B.M.S. is of vital importance. There are Baptist churches in the Union which give no support to the B.M.S., and there are others which support the B.M.S. and give no financial assistance to the Home Work Fund. While not prejudging the conclusions which any discussion about a confession of faith would produce, it must be made clear that such discussions affect not only the Union's internal organisation, but also that of the Missionary Society. The B.M.S. is not independent of the Churches, but is a logical extension of British Baptists' concern for the mission of the Church to the whole inhabited earth. There is no doubt whatsoever that if the B.M.S. accepted the proposed confession of faith of the Union, it would go a long way to removing some of the objections which are raised by Churches which do not give it financial support.

For nearly thirty years the union of these two bodies has been mooted: but every time action was imminent, reasons have been given for delaying the venture. Baptists have claimed to believe in the Church as mission, ever since the days of Carey. The church is mission, whether the sphere be the homeland or overseas. It is no more right now, than it was 150 years ago that a church should be able to support the B.M.S., or the Union, or neither, and thus effectively negative, or hideously distort, our Baptist conviction that the Church is mission. Our competing loyalties to Southampton Row and Gloucester Place are irrelevant, and a scandal. For too long sectional and partisan interests have maintained the *status quo*, a position produced by circumstances at the beginning of the 19th century, and not by any deep theological reasoning. While it was the best expedient at that time, there is no need to continue the position, which is not justifiable theologically, financially, or reasonably. The basic theological conviction that the Church is mission underlies the demand for uniting the Union and the Missionary Society. Is it not time that the officers of both the Union and the B.M.S. took a referendum of all the churches in the Union, and those who support the B.M.S., about the desirability and advisability of creating a new mission house, responsible for home and foreign missions, to be housed either in London or the Provinces, and responsible to the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Churches, united upon a common confession of faith? Our Baptist fathers have taught us that the Church is mission and we should at least consider giving organisational expression to that basic conviction.

IV

Acceptance of the Church as mission, means that the Church must accept responsibility for training men and women for the ministry of the Church at home and overseas. The effective support which our denominational colleges receive from the churches in terms of personnel and finance is such that we are forced to admit

that the responsibility for this essential work is carried on by the heroic minority, the majority of Churches and members ignoring their responsibility at this level. A denomination united upon a common confession of faith, would have to face up to the responsibility of training men for the ministry of its churches.

One of the chief functions of a confession of faith is as an educational tool. The acceptance of the confession of faith as a basis of ministerial training in all the colleges would have certain advantages for the ministers and the churches. It would provide a basic unity in the college training of ministers which is at present lacking, and which gives rise to some quite extraordinary divergences among ministers. It would be an expression of the whole range of the Christian faith, and not just a part of it. One of the troubles with academic courses is that they are, of necessity, selective. A man's training for the ministry is very often determined by the B.D. or diploma syllabus. (I always regret that I had to do "Incarnation and Trinity" for London B.D., and never had the opportunity to study the theme "Man, Sin and Grace"). A course based on a confession of faith would also help the men not on degree courses to get an overall picture of Christian doctrine. Men entering college, if adequately instructed in the confession of faith by their own ministers, would have a good base from which to explore the wider realms of academic theology, without being hopelessly lost. One of the tensions encountered by a man in his first pastorate is how to relate his theological insights with the sometimes less than Christian attitudes of his members. It is amazing what passes for orthodoxy in some of our Churches, like the deacon who sincerely held that as a Baptist he was a follower of John the Baptist! A confession of faith in which the minister had been instructed, which was accepted by the local churches, would provide a common ground between minister and congregation, and a basis for growing in understanding of what Christianity is. There are other advantages which might accrue from the colleges accepting the confession of faith as a basic medium for instruction. It might pave the way for a single candidate board, which would deal with all requests for ministerial training and ensure that the applicants would get the training best suited to their capabilities. It might be possible for each college to carry through its teaching of the Confession of faith in the evenings, so that lay pastors and preachers might share with students and staff in seeking to understand what it means to be a follower of Christ. These are some ways in which acceptance of the common confession of faith by the Colleges and the Churches might prove beneficial to the life of the Churches.

There is another way of looking at this matter. If the churches have a common confession of faith, then they must accept responsibility together for financing the ministerial training, and for providing from their congregations men for the ministry. Each church has the responsibility to call out men for the work of the ministry from its own congregation. But this in fact is not being done.

Principal Dykes recently gave it as his opinion that the majority of our churches had never contributed a man to the ministry either at home or overseas. Principal Henton Davies supports him in this contention, from his experiences over the last thirty years, adding that "many candidates, especially since the war, have come to us from non-church sources; then in order to satisfy the requirements of the college and the Union, they have become associated with a local church", which underlines the fact that the Churches are not facing their young men with the call to full-time service. Principal Ithel Jones agrees with these views when he writes: "Mr. Dykes' statement that the vast majority of our churches have never sent a man into the ministry is almost a truism. In the nature of the case, the proportion of ministerial candidates to churches is quite small and we have found here that churches are either prolific or barren in this respect." This conviction is borne out by a careful examination of the men on the 1964 accredited list who were trained at Bristol. Of the 152 men on the 1964 list, 22 came from Bristol churches, 5 from the Baptist church at Bridgwater, 4 from Plymouth, and 3 from Swindon. On the current list of men at Bristol, three are from Queens Road, Coventry, and two from other Coventry churches; and three men are from Morice Baptist Church, Plymouth. It is obvious that one or two churches are contributing many men; the majority are contributing none.

When we turn to the matter of financial help for the colleges, we discover an even more shattering lack of responsibility in the Churches. In the table below are given the facts and figures from the 1964 college reports of our five English Baptist colleges.

	Personal Subscribers and Amount.	Churches donating gifts, and Amount.	LEA grants & Scholarships.	Income from Endowments.
Bristol	224 — £748	142 — £736	£7926	£4430
Rawdon	448 — £706	103 — £1161	£4414	£3438
Manchester	1204 — £1993	194 — £1847	£4227	£3150
Regents	236 — £762	104 — £819	£11528	£8357
Spurgeon's	? — £1947	321 — £2942	£11822	£5030
Totals	2112 — £6256	864 — £7505	£39917	£24411

Certain facts emerge from the table. Only a very small proportion of the 187,402 members of our English Baptist churches support the colleges individually, since about half the subscribers are ministers trained in the colleges. Considerably less than half our English Baptist churches support the colleges, when we realise that several of the 864 churches listed contribute to more than one College. Of the total expended in ministerial training during 1964, over half came from Local Education Authority grants and public scholarships, that is from money contributed in rates to local authorities who pay for the education of men on degree courses in

our colleges. A challenging thought for Free Churchmen who have consistently opposed the grant of public money for denominational training in schools! Two thirds of the remainder comes from the various endowments and trusts which have come to the colleges over the years. The remainder, only one sixth of the total, comes from the churches and their members. If L.E.A. grants and scholarships stopped tomorrow, then on the present standard of giving, the work of the colleges would be halved. This emphasises the need for churches co-operating together upon a common confession of faith, to look long and hard at their responsibilities for ministerial training, in the matter of curriculum, finance and personnel.

V

The foregoing paragraphs raise in an acute form the matter of stewardship. It is obvious that any closely integrated structure such as has been suggested here requires an adequate financial basis. The only way to tackle this is by churches associating together to realise that such association has financial implications. Despite the objections of the ultra-independents among us, and those who will cry out "Presbyterianism" in holy horror, we must ask ourselves whether some such practical co-operation is not intended by such a passage as 2 Corinthians 8-9. That there are churches which give *nothing* to extension work at home or abroad, seems contrary to the Gospel. While not suggesting a "quota arrangement" for all the churches, there is an *inescapable* responsibility for *every* church, whether wealthy or poor, to give *something realistic* for the mission and ministry of the church. This is a most radical suggestion and yet we must seriously consider the financial implications of associating together for the work of the Church, in its mission and ministry, if we are to give meaningful expression to our doctrine of the Church at anything other than the local level.

"Is it justifiable to speak of 'heretical structures'? We speak of heretical doctrines as those which distort the truth of God's relation to us and to the world. Can we also speak of *heretical structures* as those which are not fitted to express God's true relation to the present world?" (Colin Williams, *Where in the World*, p.82). This was a question discussed by a group in Western Europe, when they were talking about the changing forms of the Church's witness, and they concluded that "structures are heretical if they belittle God's mission or action".

Is our present denominational structure heretical in this sense? For too long we have stumbled into disorder, creating a denominational structure which has no basis in the New Testament, historic Baptist principles, or even rational considerations. Have we the courage to call a halt? The denomination is at the crossroads. We need time to think carefully before we make any changes. We have liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ to create a new pattern for the Church in the twentieth century. To cling mistakenly to old ways is as futile as using our liberty for licence. The words of P. T.

Forsyth, written in 1909, seem apposite, indeed prophetic, when we consider our present situation.

“We are in a time when spirituality without positive content seems attractive to many minds. And the numbers may grow of those favouring an undogmatic Christianity which is without apostolic or evangelical substance, but cultivates a certain emulsion of sympathetic mysticism, intuitional belief, and benevolent action. . . . Upon undogmatic, undenominational religion no Church can live. . . . The church betrays its trust and throws its life and its Lord away when it says, ‘Be beautifully spiritual and believe what you like’, or ‘Do blessed good and think as you please’. . . . Deep Christianity is that which not only searches us, but breaks us. And a Christianity which would exclude none has no power to include the world.”

(*The Work of Christ, Preface*, p.xxxii, and p.62).

ROGER HAYDEN

EXPERIMENTS IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

This is a tale of two cities! It begins in a Birmingham suburb and goes on in Luton. Linked by the M1, centred on the car industry, examples of industrial urbanisation and affluence—these places have been the situation for experiments by the Church in the field of Social Responsibility. In both places partnership between Churches and Social Workers has led the Church into new ways, and uncovered possibilities and problems.

The book *Responsibility in the Welfare State?* tells the story of “Southbridge”. The name is a hybrid drawn from Northfield and Longbridge, the places covered by the postal address of Birmingham 31. Here pre-war development and post-war new estates swept over the old village of Northfield. Here seven Churches comprised the Northfield Council of Churches. This was the area chosen for the Birmingham Social Responsibility Project—“A Study of Relationships between the Social Services and the Churches in a City Suburb”.

In 1957 the Executive Secretary, Miss Helen Roberts, began conversations with the leaders of statutory and voluntary social services. She then introduced herself to the “Southbridge” fraternal. Initial uncertainties thawed and we were soon thinking (perhaps for the first time) of the role of the Church in the Welfare State. Discussion moved into action and the experiment proceeded on two lines. A carefully planned survey was made of the area and 253 homes were visited by the professional workers. From the mass of information gathered one fact emerged—“unmet needs”, 65 Households (1 in 4) were in need of help. The needs varied from homes requiring continual help in a situation of difficulty (18)

to Loneliness (36) and homes asking for practical help (3). Since only one house in fifty-five had been within the sample, the extent of "unmet need" confronting seven Churches was overwhelming.

The second line of preparation was for the Churches. Under the title "Our Neighbourhood and its needs" (What does Christian Social Responsibility mean in Southbridge today?), a series of meetings set out specific areas of concern—children, handicapped, old folk, social misfits, strangers, etc. Each of the seven Churches involved sent ten representatives who listened to, then questioned, Social Workers unfolding the local situation. When these meetings ended five study groups continued the thinking at deeper levels.

What happened? Two practical consequences emerged. A growing partnership between Social Workers and Clergy was fostered and focussed by a series of "working lunches". Then came the introduction to the telephone scheme whereby "the Church" could be contacted by any Social Worker through one telephone number. As calls for assistance came in, the lady in charge of the phone relayed the information out to the nearest minister who worked out the best way of helping the home. For this purpose the Anglican parish boundaries were forgotten and the whole area was divided between the seven clergy.

The real significance of "Southbridge" is that it was a germinal scheme. It has only been a partial success locally but it prompted further thinking and experiments throughout the country. Two factors emerged at once as the "Southbridge" scheme went on. It was very difficult to get to the "grass-roots" of the Church and relatively few shared in the scheme. It was obvious that the contemporary structures of the Church hinder this approach: we are so concerned with perpetuating our own "activities" that we have little, if any, energy left for the care of the community.

I moved away from Birmingham as the scheme was getting under way and arrived in Luton in 1961. Here things were very different . . . three times the "Southbridge" population, nearly 60 Churches of all hues, no Council of Churches, and a town that was (unlike "Southbridge") a self-contained unit. How could the Churches work out their method for caring in Luton?

In May, 1962, the Town Fraternal invited me to speak about "Southbridge". The response was immediate and a group of ministers, representing the denominations, was set aside to work out a scheme for Luton. The Town Welfare Officer, a Methodist, joined the group and brought the leading Social Workers with him. Eventually a town-wide meeting was convened and over 250 people from 35 Churches gathered to learn about their town and its need. Three Social Workers—Welfare, Mental Health and Child Care—spoke, and answered a stream of questions. Each person present was given a questionnaire (carefully worked out by the Welfare Department) which offered Christians three paths to work out their belief in service:—

- (i) Opportunity of joining voluntary organisations already at

work, e.g. "Meals-on-wheels", Old People's Visiting Service, Society for the Mentally Handicapped.

(ii) Personal help in terms of time or homes. Help was needed for old folk, handicapped, families with illness and homes with long term problems. Homes were desperately required for unmarried mothers, young people "under care" and children for fostering.

(iii) Discussion groups to consider seven "social issues"—the criminal, the mentally ill, the family, the immigrant, youth, the elderly, and the lonely. The initial response was painfully slow, but now, nearly three years after the launching of the scheme, the results and the failures can be analysed. Nearly 1,000 of the "Personal Service" questionnaires were distributed, many Churches invited Social Workers to speak to them, the clergy were kept in constant touch with the scheme. The immediate response to the three lines of the questionnaire was interesting. Over 60 people have reinforced existing organisations working in the town. Personal help was very slow in forthcoming but in the two years homes have been found for over 50 people in varying kinds of difficulty. The study groups had the greatest response (is talking easier than action?) and worked on the principle of "See, Judge, Act".

Alongside these expected and planned channels other developments have arisen. The partnership between Social Workers and Clergy has gone steadily on. "Bread and Cheese" lunches are held bi-monthly and attract an average of 50. The local authority has acknowledged the concern of the Church by appointing three clergy to the Welfare Consultative Committee and by referring to us the immigration question. At this level immigrant leaders from Pakistan, Ceylon, China and the West Indies have been drawn together with some clergy and social workers and are working towards an International Council. Housing is a problem in a growing town and a Luton Churches Housing Association has been formed. The Council have received a report on the hostel position in the town drawn up by the Senior Probation Officer and two ministers. Clubs have been launched for specific groups. A club for the handicapped and another for the blind are staffed by the Churches who provide transport and a rota of "tea-ladies". A special concern for old folk has led to the grouping of many organisations under an Old People's Welfare Committee; an annual holiday is held at Greenhills, Worthing, and 100 old folk were collected, conveyed and cared for by 40 Church folk working under the Welfare Officers; and a town-wide attempt named "Operation Discovery" was launched to find all the O.A.P.'s (this was only a partial success). With this has gone a steady deepening of the Church concern as various parishes launched "road Stewards" or "Good Neighbour Schemes" on an ecumenical basis. The latest move is an investigation into the possibility of a local "Samaritan's scheme". The project has brought the Churches together and led to the eventual formation of the Luton Council of Churches.

Some things have been done but much has not. There are

several "rocks" which constantly impede progress. They can only be noted: —

(a) Church Structures get in the way. Meetings and activities in many of our Churches have become an end in themselves and prevent us becoming the "Servant-Church".

(b) Social Responsibility is regarded as a peripheral concern. No-one has denied its place but few consider it to be of the essence of Christian faith. It is left to the enthusiasts!

(c) Ministers are the key. If the minister is involved the Church is drawn in; if he is not, nothing happens! This lights up a radical weakness in the modern Church—it is minister-dependent and dominated.

(d) Continuation is difficult. The mobility of professional workers and the inability of Church-folk to accept responsibility throws a heavy burden on a few. Many will watch, some will work, few will accept continuing responsibility.

All this must be seen against the wider background. Experiments are taking place all over the country. The "Servant Church" is a theme that awakens response in many places. The National Council of Social Service has compiled a list of experiments and they indicate a growing response by the Church to the needs and patterns of the society in which we are all set. Already Churches are engaged in the preliminary thinking preceding the British National Conference on Social Welfare. This Conference is a group consisting of some 68 voluntary organisations including the relevant Government Departments and The British Council. The theme for the Conference (April 10th-13th, 1967) is "the Welfare State and the Welfare Society". But each local Christian grouping must carry out its own thinking and plan its own scheme. The principles are universal but the application is painfully local!

COLIN MARCHANT

ON BEING THE CHURCH IN THE NEW SOCIETY

"The old age hangs heavily about us, but the new is a long time showing its outline." So wrote a college friend in a recent letter: we are living in a day of change, and the symptoms of uncertainty are all about us . . . the new morality . . . the spread of mental illness . . . the ferment in the church . . . the clamour of newly emerging nations . . . the growth of state control . . . Change on a world-wide scale is reshaping the whole structure of human life with a swiftness and a momentum which no one man or nation can now halt or control.

The mid-twentieth century indeed has been a period of greater historical change than any previous millenium. There are signs that the church is set for a new reformation to match the rising need, but time is not on our side. "If we fail to command the loyalty of

the intelligent new generation in the next twenty-five years", said Dr. H. C. N. Williams, the Provost of Coventry Cathedral, in a recent sermon, "it will take cosmic disaster or 300 years for the Christian Church to recover the leadership of the mind of man." Let us sketch a rough outline of this new situation.

The map of the world has changed. In the post-war years, all the old colonial empires have crumbled and disappeared. The teenage son of English-speaking man, America, has walked abroad from his father's house to find that the world is not according to the pattern showed him on the political mount—there are giants in the land—one of them, waking China, numbers one quarter of the world's population—and they are bedevilled, as by street urchins, by the new nations tumbling on to the world's stage where they yap and quarrel and scrap; nor will they fall into line—either at a bark of command or at a kneeling reasoned plea.

In many important fields, said Dr. Williams again, the changes in the past two decades have equalled or greatly surpassed all previous changes in the whole of recorded history.

"In the ten years from 1940 to 1950, there have been greater developments in the population of the world, in our ability to make calculations, and in the speed with which we can make them, in our capacity to kill, in our ability to create new fabrics and materials, in our knowledge of the techniques of birth control (and of death control), in overall industrial production, in the speed of travel, in the growth of world communications, and in the staggering implications of the science and technology of cybernetics (i.e. of decision-making apparatus which can control and plan automated work processes)—in that ten years there were greater developments in these fields than in the whole of the previous four thousand years of recorded history. In the fifteen years since that time, the further developments in these fields have been many times greater."

Industry, backed by science and technology, constitutes the most dynamic and explosive force for change in the world today. Let us make no mistake about this. Put a modern factory down in the hinterland of Nigeria, say, and in five years, it will effect more profoundly the attitudes, outlook and social relationships of African villagers than Christian missionary enterprises has done in twenty-five years or more. This sort of thing is happening literally all over the world, even into the animist-inhibited Chittagong hill tracts of East Pakistan, a B.M.S. field, where a paper mill employing 3,000 and a huge hydro-electric scheme have recently got under way.

Technology promises to bring about the first world culture. Already it has produced a world language; a Chinese student and a Ghanain technician can communicate with relative ease on electronics; where they cannot easily communicate is in the realm of human values. One of the fundamental questions that faces us is whether man can survive AS MAN with his technology; for this fantastic, spore-like spread of science, technology and industry is deeply changing human life.

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But a strong neck does not mean that we are stiff-necked—indeed our flexibility in terms of generous settlements is I hope well known and, I would like to think, merited.

Browning wrote (and I introduce this because a friend in the ministry complained at the absence of a quotation in my last letter)

“Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp
Or what's a heaven for?”

This is one of the more lucid of Browning's statements and, of course, in business or Church life we ought to look beyond the immediate to the future and lay down our plans of development accordingly. But at least in insurance the advance must be in terms of cautious strength. The vision may be there but so too must realism.

So we are expanding and we hope very much that more friends in the churches will insure with us.

If you are not insured with us, then what about it?

Yours sincerely,

C. J. L. COLVIN,
General Manager

Science, for example, fundamentally affects the *mind* of man, for its characteristic temper is one of systematic doubt. All the old "absolutes" are gone. Space is no longer a fixed or definable continuum, for everything in it is relative to the motion of the observer, and there is no fixed point of reference anywhere amid the whirling galaxies whence a definitive observation can be made. Time is reduced to an indefinable flux, for our experience of it is conditioned by nothing more accidental than the term of the earth's swing about the sun and on its own axis, and the rate of our own biochemical process—one of the curious effects of relativity upon time is that a man ten years in space would return to find the inhabitants of earth considerably more than ten years older. Objectivity as a respectable concept has fallen on hard times, for it is now recognised that the experimenter is himself an integral ingredient of his experiment so that no dependable constant remains. Causality is no longer an axiom of scientific thinking—scientists now speak of a-causal events in the sub-atomic world, and almost the last remaining stronghold of scientific absolutism is Heisenberg's "Principle of Uncertainty"! Matter does not exist—it happens; and when it is tracked down to its innermost lair, it has been found mysteriously to have disappeared, only to reappear as energy. ALL THIS is what, to quote Holyoake's phrase, has become "the available providence for men." Into whatever limbo the pursuit of scientific intellectualism leads us, this is the frame of mind that has produced results—fast. Between Faraday's discovery of the principle of induction and the production of the first commercial dynamo, there lay a development period of fifty years; between the discovery of the crystalline charge-carrying qualities of the transistor and its commercial production, there lay a development period of just three years. However disturbing, the scientific attitude is self-vindicating: the climate of doubt has become the pre-requisite of progress. It is well to remember this when we stand appalled by youth's failure to be impressed by authority. The spectacular modern world is to them a living testimony that authority is an obstructive bogey.

Or again, consider the effect upon personality which is induced by urban life in a mass society. One of the dominant values which has ruled the growth of industry has been mobility of labour. So manfully has the industrial world striven to achieve this goal, that it is now a statistical fact that the average family in England moves house at least once every five or six years. Like waterfalls, our congregations may retain their general shape, but their contents are for ever changing. This, coupled with the need for the re-training of the worker in new skills, which follows in the wake of automation and redundancy, calls for a new flexibility in the personality of the worker—not only in his mental or manual abilities, but in his ability to make relationships with new people—neighbours, work-mates and bosses. "ADAPT OR PERISH"—long one of the

slogans of evolution—has become a pressing rule of life. The consequences of all this for morality, for the shrivelling ability to make lasting friendships in any depth, and the waning sense of social responsibility or significance, are simply staggering. The ethics by which a man feels himself to be ruled is no longer the relatively rigid structure of a traditional society, but a “situational” ethic. One has to ‘fit in’ with a fresh community whose own standards are in a state of constant flux because the people who constitute that community are for ever changing. In the ten years 1951 to 1961, for example, half a million people moved out of London, yet the population dropped by only 190,000—310,000 had moved in. Our cities have become pools washed by migration waves—in and out, for ever on the move. There is always a moral debate in progress in city life. And the anonymity conferred upon the commuter from the concrete jungle of the city to “all the little boxes” of a dormitory suburb frees him to enjoy a life-long holiday from deep personal commitments on the one hand, and social responsibility on the other. City life breeds a holiday morality. You can do pretty well what you like—who’s to know? The “extended family” of relations and neighbours is no longer a factor of experience—there is no “pocket of society” to whom you feel responsible to give account.

Modern urban man is not a creative agent in the action of human life even in the dumb sense that a Korean peasant can feel himself to be part of the great cycle of nature.

All this, like hunger and illiteracy, is a world-wide feature of modern life. It is no longer peculiar to the industrialised West, for this urban increase runs parallel with and grows directly out of growth in industry. Nine out of ten people in modern England live now in its cities. But this pattern of living is growingly a feature of the world’s expanding population. In the ten years from 1950 to 1960, while the population of the world grew by half (49%), the CITY population of the world grew by 250%. This is not a drift to city living, it is a tidal wave on a world-wide scale, a tidal wave raised almost entirely by the detonating explosion of industry all round the world.

There is small wonder that Dr Williams went on to say—“I know of no challenge greater than that of the days in which we are living to rediscover man as a responsible, spiritual, moral being, and to re-define the purpose of God in giving him life.”

We will do well to set all that has been said in the broader context of humanity’s historical horizons, and in what follows, I am directly indebted to lectures I heard Dr Henton Davies give some years ago to a Ministers’ Retreat on the Isle of Wight.

In all the history of the world, there are two great turning points which have been responsible for massive and drastic change in man’s whole way of life and a shift of emphasis in his scale of values.

The first was the birth of agriculture.

The first men were wanderers, they wandered in tribes from water-hole to water-hole, and from hunting ground to hunting ground. They GATHERED food wherever they could find it; when the local supply was exhausted, they moved on. While men lived like this, they could not build permanent homes—they could not get further than open fires and tents and caves.

Humanity took a great leap forward when it learned to tame the soil, when it ceased to GATHER food and began to GROW it. It enabled man to settle; it enabled him to get wealth. Agriculture saw the dawn of civilisation and the birth of money. For thousands of years, agriculture has been the basis of human life; all the great civilisations of the world have in the past risen from the soil.

The second leap forward is the one which the world is taking now—the transition from agriculture to industry as the basis of human life. As soon as industry took over the tilling of the soil with its tractors and machinery, as soon as science developed new techniques of soil revitalisation and pest control, thousands at first, and now millions upon millions of human beings have been released from their age-long slavery to the soil to produce consumer goods and to pursue knowledge. We in the western world have almost turned this crucial corner. In the East, the change has been slower coming but the coloured peoples of the world are stirring from their long sleep and rousing themselves to turn this corner after us. After long centuries, mankind is wrestling in the throes of tremendous change. We are crossing the threshold into an unimaginable world of limitless power and possibilities. Released from the tyranny of the soil, men already are lifting their eyes literally to the stars.

So a great change brings problems no less great. Because we are so immersed in the throes of change, we do not see clearly yet where it will lead us, and the point therefore at which we feel the pressure of doubt most keenly is in the matter of our faith and vision. Inevitably, the tension centres in the realm of religion. Of what value to us in the new age is the faith of our fathers?

It is just here that the Old Testament has something of the very first importance to say to us. For it is the story of a nation—the people Israel—who in their own experience recapitulated the fundamental transition from a nomadic to an agricultural way of life.

Under the shadow of great events and the leadership of that very great man, Moses, they escaped from Egyptian slavery into the desert, where cut off for a while from the rest of mankind, they lived a nomadic life, wandering from water-hole to water-hole, and feeding ground to feeding ground. God gave them a vivid, unforgettable experience of His power, His character, and His purpose for them. It was He Who brought forth water for them out of the rock, HE who gave them quail from the west and manna from the skies. In this way of life they learned that He could be trusted—the desert was His province—He was GOD there, and they were His pledged people.

At last they came to the borders of their promised land—desert-born and desert-bred, every last man, woman and child of them. Then they crossed over into their new world . . . a world into which **GOD HAD LED THEM.**

But for the first time in their lives, and with a shock of dismay, they discovered civilisation—splendid cities, glittering wealth, enchanting comforts, rolling fields, and acres of vines. Nothing like it had entered their experience before. And they felt all at sea. If they were going to settle here—**LIVE** here—they themselves would have to *change*—drastically and fast. From being gypsies, they'd have to become farmers—at once. The vine (to take one example), of which they knew nothing, takes seven years of cultivation from first planting to the first yield of grapes. They knew nothing about all this. It was an untried world, demanding of them techniques that were strange.

The biggest challenge that “hit them for six” was the challenge that all this presented to their religious faith.

This God of theirs, this **YAHWEH**, He was a desert God. What use was He **HERE**? They'd felt safe enough with Him in the desert . . . He could get them out of Egypt, He could lead them from place to place, He could give them commandments and law, He could give them victory in battle, but . . . **COULD HE GROW CORN**? Was the God of their fathers adequate, or even (what was more to the point) **RELEVANT** to this strange and alarming new life?

The answer they gave was—**NO.**

Already, there were other gods in occupation—gods who reputedly “knew the ropes” here—the fertility gods Baal and Astarte. Flocks and herds and crops were their business. Yahweh, great as He was, didn't belong to the soil; He belonged in the sky. Of what use was a “God-up-there” in **THIS** situation (shades of John Robinson!)?

So they left Him behind where they thought He belonged—in the desert sky, and gave themselves to the worship of Baal and Astarte: not without some guilt and consequent compromise, for they had pledged themselves to a covenant in the desert. But it took them centuries to discover the appalling mistake they had made . . . centuries to learn that God of Sinai was God of the whole earth, of corn and oil and wine, as well as of waterholes and fiery mountains. This was the critical battle Elijah fought—Yahweh, not Baal, had control of the rains, and therefore of fertility. Naboth's vineyard was a test case—the very **SOIL** of it was Yahweh's. But three hundred, four hundred years later, the prophets were still telling them, as though it were **NEWS**—that it was Yahweh who gave them food and rain and agriculture know-how and the wealth which all this yielded, which they wasted on Baal. (Isaiah 28:23-29, Hosea 2 and 11 etc).

When, later, their fortunes changed again, and they found themselves an exile people, again in a strange land, the land of Babylon, they sat down by the banks of the Euphrates River and wailed that

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they'd lost God AGAIN—"How can we sing the song of Yahweh in a strange land?" They NEVER learned.

And because as a people, they never learned, as a people they perished. But they were warned . . . right at the beginning. They'd been warned. The crux of this whole question had been dealt with already in Deuteronomy chapter 8—a chapter which Henton Davies says "might have been written for our own condition." (*The Approach to the Old Testament*, p. 16.)

We today are facing the same sort of challenge they faced. Like them, we have crossed over into a new world. It is a simple matter to translate Deuteronomy 8 into terms of our contemporary situation.

I believe it to be of God's good will and purpose that mankind is entering a land flowing with science and technology and industry—at the most elementary level, there is no other conceivable means by which its multiplying millions can be fed. But at a higher level, it is a Biblical conviction that God has made the earth subject to man: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion . . ." (Gen. 1:28) This, in the will of God, is mankind's destiny. But it can be fulfilled only if man himself is subject to God.

I recall vividly that Dr Henton Davies summed all this up at the end of his lecture in the form of an equation:

From the desert, the Israelites came into Canaan,
From being nomads, they became agriculturalists,
From the worship of Yahweh they turned to Baal,
From the country, modern man has come to the laboratory and the factory,
From being agriculturalists, we have become industrialists.
From the worship of God, we have turned to the worship of . . . what?
We are too clever to worship idols.
And when man can no longer put an idol on God's Throne, He instals Himself there.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has been relegated to the past—the agricultural past. Science is the God who is already in occupation in this marvellous but frightening new world. Science—not God—knows the ropes. Already in Russia, cybernetics has developed in the political and industrial structure a system of control based solely on the scientifically observable facts of man's reaction to an existing environment. An article in *The Observer* of June 20th last year suggested quite seriously, that with the likely prospect that our biologists will soon be able to reconstruct the DNA molecule, (the "blue-print" inherent within every body-cell which programmes our genetic development), it will be possible to make human personalities to order (man's conquest of himself) . . . but to whose order?

More than at any other time in history, there is an urgent need for Christian men and women who will come together with an

intelligent grasp of the forces that are shaping our common life, and seek of God that wisdom by which alone the Church can speak that WORD OF GOD, prophetic in its faith and vision which can open the eyes of our world to the howling wilderness on whose boundaries she already stands, and towards which her face is already set.

God LOVES this world—this vast, sprawling, energetic, exciting, irrepressible, headstrong, ignorant world which we have tried to review in this article. He LOVES it—ALL of it. And the Son Whom He sent into it that ALL AUTHORITY in it might be given to HIM—over the secular bits of it as well as over the religious bits of it—has commissioned us to go into ALL the world and proclaim the Gospel. I greatly fear, lest by the ignorance and the unconcern of His Church over what is happening in it, Christ is being denied a voice in its affairs.

The Church, it seems to me, has become so wrapped up in its own affairs that it is blind to what is going on around it. Just as the Russian Orthodox Church, at the time of the revolution, was immersed in puerile disputation over fine points of liturgical order and dress, fiddling while Rome burned, so it seems to me that the energies of the Church today are being consumed in futile disputation about episcopacy and the validity of orders and the intercommunion, all in the undoubtedly laudable interests of greater unity, while the real battle for the soul of the world rages almost unheeded around it. I am not pouring scorn on the ecumenical movement—I endorse and support its spirit and its aim. But I am honestly afraid lest it appear to be the critical ground on which the Church of the twentieth century has to fight, so that its energies are syphoned off from the real battle-ground which lies elsewhere. Of the Church no less than the individual Christian it must be true that "he that seeketh to save his life, shall lose it; but he that loseth his life for My sake and the Gospel's shall surely find it." The Church must die to its lust for self-realisation if it is to rise to newness of life in the service of this potentially glorious, but also potentially demonic world for which Christ died.

Concerned as I sincerely am for liturgical reform, and evangelistic renewal, I believe that it is the prophetic voice which is crucial for our time.

PAUL T. HARRISON

ACCOMMODATION FOR RETIRED MINISTERS

I have been asked by the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship to set out clearly the accommodation for retired ministers which is owned by the Baptist Union and the procedure by which ministers about to retire are offered accommodation. At the present time the Union owns the following properties:

Billericay: 3 flats.

Saffron Walden: 3 bungalows, 1 house.

Herne Bay: 2 flats.

Stafford: 1 house.

Havant: 2 flats.

This is a total of 12 units of accommodation. In addition a house in the London area will, it is hoped, shortly be converted into two flats, and a number of houses and bungalows in various parts of the country are expected to come to the Union on the death of the donor or his widow. These are known to have been bequeathed to the Union for use as residences for retired ministers. The Union is also able to nominate a retired minister to each of two Baptist Homes for elderly persons, one in Sutton and one in Ealing. There are in addition ten places available in the Field Lane Homes in the South of England for Baptists, though they are not primarily for retired ministers.

The Baptist Union keeps a list of those ministers who have written to say that they are anticipating retirement and would like to be considered for accommodation. When a flat or house becomes vacant a small committee considers the names of those on the waiting list in order to offer accommodation to those whose need is most urgent and who would be suitable occupants. A uniform rent, at present 27s. 6d. or 30s. per week is charged. The Union pays the rates and bears the main responsibility for repairs and redecoration.

Ministers should be alert to the opportunity of drawing the attention of elderly people who have no dependents to the possibility of bequeathing their house or bungalow to the Union for this purpose. It is best if the property is left to the Union "without strings", the hope being expressed in the will that the property will be used as accommodation for retired Baptist ministers. This enables the Union to sell property which is unsuitable to this purpose and then to use the money for the purchase of more suitable accommodation.

A minister who is contemplating retirement should, at as early a date as possible, write to Dr. Payne at Baptist Church House and ask for his name to be put upon the list of those seeking accommodation.

R. W. THOMSON