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

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The Fraternal

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CONTENTS

A Word from the New Chairman	3
Rev. J.J. Brown, B.D., Minister, Herne Bay.	
The Church - an Open-ended Community	6
Rev. B.J. Monk, B.A., B.D., Minister, West Worthing.	
The Open University and the Minister	11
Rev. B. Treharne B.A., Minister, Christ Church, Bristol.	
Missionaries go home!	16
Rev. C. Karunaratna B.D., M.Th, Ph.D., Minister, Hainault.	
Book Reviews	19
Of Interest to you	21

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A Word From The New Chairman.



You have saddled me with responsibility. At the same time you have trusted me with your confidence. I will do my utmost to serve the Fellowship which has encouraged me in the ministry during the past 37 years. Your prayers will help me.

My predecessor in office, Dick Rowsell, has put us all in his debt. As long ago as 1951 he was appointed Summer School Secretary. He then became Minute Secretary until 1975 when we welcomed him as Chairman. So for 27 years he has served us with faithfulness, efficiency and modesty. We assure him of our warm appreciation.

The Editor has asked me to write about the Ministry, and I am mindful of two words used by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians chapter four verse one. There he refers to "This Ministry". Despite his troubles with the Corinthian church I imagine that he wrote those words with a sense of privilege and joy.

He says two things about the *nature* of "This Ministry". First that it is a *gift*.

Secondly, that it is a *life*.

1. It is a gift. We have it "by mercy of God"¹. It is He who called us into it. It is He who endowed us with any talents we possess. It is He who empowers us for service. The recollection that we owe everything to Him will save us from losing heart, as the apostle says, and we will be less likely to assume a false superiority.

2. It is a life. "We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning . . ."². "This Ministry" cannot be divorced from "this man" who exercise it. We communicate by what we are as well as by what we say. What we are will show what we believe, and our hearers will judge whether we believe what we preach³. Helmut Thielicke of Hamburg says that anybody who wants to know whether a particular soft drink is really as good as the advertising man on the T.V. screen says it is, must find out whether the man actually drinks this beverage at home when he is not in public. Thielicke then asks: "Does the preacher himself drink what he hands out in the pulpit?"⁴. Ministry is to be characterised by integrity. "We put no obstacle in anyone's ways so that no fault may be found with our ministry"⁵. Authenticity is a powerful communicator. a point made by Daniel Day Williams is worth pondering: 'vocation is more than a role; it is a life dedicated and a responsibility assumed. No one should be playing a role at the point where ultimate things are at stake'⁶.

Paul says two things about the *practice* of "This Ministry". First that it is a *word*. Secondly, that it is a *deed*.

1. It is a word. "We preach" he declares.⁷ When all the dialogues, the happenings, the dramatisations and the cosy chats have done their best there is still room for the announcement of good news which saves the sinner and sustains the saint. We can be encouraged by the greatness of our theme: "For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus our Lord". George Target reminds us that for the first time since Pentecost we have the opportunity to preach Christ to a generation without preconceptions about Him.⁸ We have a message which is distinctive and relevant in our divided world - the message of reconciliation. We are called to speak a word which offers the Gospel and edifies the people of God.

2. It is a deed. Paul's word translated "ministry" is the word for household chores. He tells the Corinthians "we are your slaves for Jesus' sake"⁹. In the name of Him who girded Himself with a towel and stooped to wash the dusty, sweaty feet of His disciples, we engage in the menial tasks and involve ourselves in the practical help which people often require. Even in our Welfare State there is a distinctive pastoral function which falls to the hands of those who are in "This Ministry". And we will encourage our churches to be serving communities in which people care for one another and minister to the needs of the neighbourhood. After all, we are followers of Him who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

Paul also says two things about the *environment* in which "This Ministry" is exercised. First that it is *difficult*. Secondly, that it is *transient*.

1. It is difficult. The apostle lists the pressures¹⁰. There are afflictions. We minister to people afflicted by suffering and sorrow, we absorb some of their pain, and we pass through afflictions of this kind ourselves. But we need not be crushed. There are perplexities. We minister to people who ask unanswerable questions, and we have such questions ourselves if the truth be told. There are dilemmas in church life which are not easily resolved. There are people who disappoint us by their failure, and we wonder why. But we need not be driven to despair. There is persecution. We minister to victims of paranoia, we feel deeply for persecuted Christians. We ourselves may suffer in mind and spirit as the result of the words and attitudes of harshly cynical and the destructively critical people. But we are not forsaken. There are "muggings" - if you will forgive this ugly word for an ugly feature of modern life as a translation of Paul's *kataballomenoi*. We minister to those who have been struck down and robbed both physically and spiritually. At times we may feel that we ourselves have been assaulted by unkind judgments or thoughtless comments at ill-chosen moments. These are like body blows. But we need not be destroyed. At such times we need to "keep our eyes fixed on Jesus . . . think of what he went through . . . So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up"¹¹. The fact that twice over in 2 Corinthians 4 the apostle says "We do not lose heart" suggests that he might have been tempted to do so. But the light shone in his heart "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ"¹².

2. It is *transient*. "For the things that are seen are transient" writes the apostle.¹³ Alvin Toffler, an American sociologist, draws attention to the fact that we are living through a time of the most rapid change that human society has ever known. He warns that the change is so fast that people who are unprepared for it will catch a disease called "Future Shock" (which is the title of his book)¹⁴. He devotes a hundred pages to the subject of transience. It is symbolised in our "paper society" in which, apparently, there is a roaring trade in paper clothes. Many articles have built-in obsolescence. There is a vast movement of population. An American lady had moved home so often that she

refused to re-decorate the rooms of any house and vowed to re-decorate the car instead! There is an impermanence in society determined by "the things that are seen". Change may be resisted as a threat. It may also be welcomed as an opportunity. Methods and structures of ministry are changing. The grouping of churches, the teaming of ministers, specialised ministries, Supplementary Ministry, ecumenical experiments are all with us. Institutional churches, like all institutions, are slow to change. Therefore we have a proliferation of various groups which look for freedom of movement and expression, and which prefer not to be hampered by what their members would regard as historical accidents, man-made traditions and denominational divisions. There is no doubt that the Spirit of God is prompting new developments in worship and fellowship. We must learn to "take hold of change" that it may be the servant of the churches and not their master. Paul sets "This Ministry" in the context of eternity. He knows that people in such a transient society need the stability of character and purpose which comes from relationship with the Christ who is "the same yesterday, and today and for ever". In the midst of transience we bear witness to the one, eternal God.

It is our task to equip the saints for the work of ministry. We all have a gift to use and a life to live, a word to speak and an opportunity to care, difficulties to encounter and changes to accept. Those who are in "This Ministry" as enablers have a great privilege and a weighty responsibility as they guide God's people in worship, train them in Christian witness and encourage them in service. It is something to be talked about with gratitude and humility and with a sense of amazement, in the spirit of a minister who said to his son in the faith: "I am deeply grateful to Jesus Christ, to whom I owe all that I have accomplished, for trusting me enough to appoint me his minister"¹⁵. Horatius Bonar caught this spirit in the words:

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

"Having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart".

J.J. Brown.

1. 2 Corinthians 4:1
2. 2 Corinthians 4:2
3. 2 Corinthians 4:13
4. "The Trouble with the Church" Hodder & Stoughton 1966
5. 2 Corinthians 6:3
6. Quoted by Professor John Maquarrie in an article on "Ministerial Character" in The Expository Times Volume 87 No. 5 (February 1976)
7. 2 Corinthians 4:5
8. "Tell it the way it is" Lutterworth Press 1970
9. 2 Corinthians 4:5
10. 2 Corinthians 4:8,9
11. Hebrews 12:2-3 (Good News Bible)
12. 2 Corinthians 4:6
13. 2 Corinthians 4:18
14. "Future Shock". Pan Books 1970
15. 1 Timothy 1:12 (J.B. Phillips)

THE CHURCH - AN OPEN-ENDED COMMUNITY

I believe in the Church! Let me begin by laying my cards on the table. I cannot be a Christian in isolation. I am a Christian because of the Church and, for me, the future of Christianity is tied very closely to the future of the Church. It has long since seemed to me that Paul van Buren put his finger on an important truth when he reminded us that we are able to hold our perspective as Christians only because others have held it before us. It could, of course, be that I have a vested interest in the future of the Church. But then again, it could be that I have chosen to invest my future here because of the convictions I have about the Church.

I begin from this positive point of view to go on and ask questions about the nature of the Church community. Granted that the Church is a community characterised by faith in God and that its presence as part of the purpose of God is to preserve and pass on the story of Jesus and to represent the world before God . . . what shape does that community exhibit?

Is it just for those who believe certain things and express their convictions according to certain stereotyped formulas? Is it just for those who live in a certain way and who have often managed to extract most of the bubbles from the champagne to leave it dull and flat? Is it, as someone has asked, for people brought up in nice homes and sent to nice schools and for whom heaven is a kind of perpetual tea-party with thin cucumber sandwiches and smoky-tasting tea served in bone china cups? Now accepting the obvious caricature, we often manage to convey the impression that the church is only for the 'right kind' of people.

So let me remind you of a picture.

PICTURE

It is familiar because it comes out of Ernest Gordon's book *Miracle on the River Kwai* and his description of the Church in that Japanese P.O.W. camp at Chungghai.

There it stood; it was not built because it was really just a clearing in the jungle. The sky was its roof; the forests of bamboo were its walls. There were no doors and you could enter at any point. Indeed it was all door. In fact it was hard to know when you were in the Church and when you were not. Sometimes POW's used to walk across the clearing and then suddenly take off their hats as they remembered that this was their Church. The confession of Jesus Christ as Lord was the one requirement for membership. And it was all characterised by a rough simplicity as they made do with what they had.

And here was the Church - not hidden away in some remote corner - but in the middle of the camp, giving life and creating community. And that chapter is entitled, "Church Without Walls".

I think we need to look long and hard at that picture of an open Church with a sky for its roof and a forest for its walls, where you can come in at any point because it is all door. And I am referring, of course, to a community that is flexible, vulnerable and open-ended and which could take its inspiration from this picture. A Church . . . without walls.

For some time I have tried to find an image that would conveniently express what has come to be my understanding of the Church community - but without conspicuous success! I can only suggest one that is not wholly satisfactory and must not be pushed too far. But perhaps it is good enough to enable you to catch a glimpse of the picture I am trying to paint.

IMAGE

I would like you to imagine a stone being dropped into a huge pond. And, assuming that you are placed in some convenient spot above the centre of that pond, you will notice two things:

i) you can mark the place where the splash occurred and the stone hit the water; you can see the ripples that are set up:

ii) you can never be sure just how far out these ripples will travel; assuming that you have a large expanse of water, the ripples will get smaller and smaller as they move further from the splash until they are indistinguishable from the surface of the pond.

What is clear in the middle is hard to distinguish at the edges.

Now this gets close to what I mean about the Church as an open-ended community. It is more clearly defined at the middle than it is around the edges. And if you can't see where the ripples stop, that does not matter.

When we lived in the Midlands, we used to take most of our visitors to see Coventry Cathedral which brings both of these ideas together. Here is a magnificent sanctuary which inspires worship and reverence with its wealth of colour and beauty; and the people who built it must have had convictions about the supreme importance of the community gathered for worship and making confession of their faith. But closely associated with it are its chapels of unity and industry, the cross of nails with its emphasis on peace and reconciliation, its drama, vigils and conferences . . . all reaching out into society, like the ripples on a pond, further than the eye can see. You never know quite how far it spreads.

Another image I suppose would be that of the radio signal: the nearer you are to the transmitting station, the stronger the signal you receive. But you are never quite sure just how far away that signal can be picked up - sometimes unexpectedly because of certain conditions.

I use these images to suggest a picture of the Church which I find increasingly meaningful.

BASIS

Now some people will be concerned to discover what kind of basis the New Testament provides for this point of view. And the answer - as always, of course - will depend upon interpretation. Questions about church order and practice are difficult. The Principal of the London Bible College in a recent book *Too Hot to Handle* argues in this context that there are no precise rules:

"The New Testament evidence is insufficient for us to know precisely what the exact position was in the early Church".¹

And later on, in another context (about 'sanctification') he comments:

"Most of us tend to argue from our own experience and proceed to interpret Scripture in the light of it".²

And, in a similar way, I find New Testament words and stories that lend support for this approach. Though I am fully aware that others will read them in a different way. Let me mention four - almost at random:-

a) There is that incident that Mark relates early on in his Gospel about the 'hole in the roof'. Four men bring their paralysed friend, but cannot get near to Jesus because of the crowds. And so they begin pulling the roof to pieces.

Is it too fanciful to see here the beginning of the process?

People trying to get to Jesus because they believe he has what they need and structures getting in their way. What they require is not a horde of people around Jesus crowding them out; but a community open enough to receive them as they are.

b) In Luke's Gospel I think of his chapter about the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son. He sets the scene at the beginning and there is Jesus getting a bad press for mixing with the wrong kind of people, doing the kind of things that so many people thought he ought not to do.

And the story goes on to tell of the shepherd, the woman, and the father looking and searching until they find. And that little word "until" spells out the same kind of message. The boundaries and the limits are breaking down. Sometimes our structures and our approaches draw lines that I think Jesus did not draw.

Just before I typed out this manuscript, I bought a copy of Jurgen Moltmann's book *The Open Church* and unfortunately I have not had time to read it all. But he has a section on 'Open Friendship' and he says of Jesus:

"... his incarnation and his friendship with sinners and tax collectors breaks through the exclusive circles. For this reason Christian friendship cannot be lived within a closed circle of the faithful and pious..."³

- c) I look at the New Testament and I see the disciples as a band of men who followed and were committed to Jesus. They were invited to go; and those who responded were accepted. Need we ask any more than that? Hans Kung describes the Church in his mammoth book *On Being a Christian* as "the community of those who have become involved in the cause of Jesus Christ...". Do we not therefore welcome those who want to be in?
- d) But in the last analysis I look at the Christian community in this open-ended way because of the Cross. Such a simple and yet immense symbol. It reaches up to God and it reaches out to include the whole world. To stand beneath that Cross is to be involved with every man in the whole world. Here I see most clearly that I am my brother's keeper.

"What would it be like", asks Moltmann, "if Christian congregations and communities were no longer to regard themselves only as 'the community of saints', or as 'the congregation of the faithful', but as a 'community of friends'?"

Open friendship transfigures an otherwise often unpleasant world".⁴

This is how I read the story of Jesus. And on that basis I am arguing for this open-ended community.

OPEN-ENDED CHURCH

The picture of the Church I am trying to paint using this analogy of the stone dropped in the pond is of a community clearly defined in the middle but whose edges are blurred and indistinct. At the centre there is something which is clearly seen, but which also moves out until it seems lost in the wider world.

- a) At the centre the community has clear definition. There is worship, there is faith, there is obedience and an expression of our commitment and there is service to the wider community. Things are clearly held and believed. There will be a message or story, a conviction, a style of life that we shall want to communicate. This is the "splash".

All of this will take shape and be defined. Sometimes it will set us apart from the general run of the society in which we are living. It will demand of us a different life style because our convictions will cut across some of the assumptions that many other people in the community accept.

However it works itself out in different situations, it will have a clear and definite form. The centre has shape.

- b) But the edges of this community are blurred and ragged and open. It will run out into society and no-one will ever be quite sure just how far it goes or where it all stops.

It will be open for a number of reasons, but perhaps one of them has to do with finding a place for a number of people who are growing towards faith.

At the centre, the Christian Church is characterised by certain convictions and the line between faith and unbelief is more clearly seen, perhaps. But what about the people on the edge of the pond who are growing towards those convictions? They want to belong - but are not as convinced as some at the centre. There are people around whose tongue - bewilderment makes them hesitant about some of the things we take for granted - and yet they are on a pilgrimage, growing towards faith. The movement may not be so violent at this point, but the ripples are there. Here the imagery breaks down because the ripples move back towards the centre! The creeds are not the religious 11+ entrance exam by which selection takes place; they are rather the end of the pilgrimage to which we all travel.

I see the centre firm for the Church, with the edges open. Part of our task is to stand at the centre, committed to the faith, because it is only when the centre is firm that the boundaries can be opened up. It will require a measure of faith and courage and conviction, and is certainly not an easy option.

To change the metaphor, sometimes when I think about Christian experience and the Christian community, I think of a strait-jacket or a kind of religious corset that holds everything tightly in place. And so what I am saying is that we should be more concerned with unpicking the seams than tying up the loose ends, that sometimes appear to be our obsession. If the Church is the meeting place between the contemporary world and the Gospel of the New Testament, then we should welcome the frayed edges of its community life and not bother ourselves about sewing it all up into neat hems!

Outside our Church in Worthing there is a notice to be found on many such notice boards. It says: 'Everybody is Welcome'. We should be very embarrassed if the community around took it literally! But the picture I have tried to paint in this article is a way of understanding how that invitation ought to be worked out. The analogy I have used cannot be pushed too far, but it does suggest an approach which seems to me to be important.

Other people will see it in different ways, but I see this as a way of preserving the life-style of the Christian community as in-but-not-of the world, committed yet open, clearly to be seen yet blurred at the edges.

Listen finally to Jurgen Moltmann:

"We are no longer individualists but a congregation in which the one accepts the other in the way that one has already been accepted by Christ. The old and very bleak principle, "Birds of a feather flock together" is then no longer valid.

Instead, people who are radically different take pleasure in and accept each other. Christian (this means liberating) community, then, no longer means only to sit next to those with whom I agree, but also to sit next to those with whom I do not agree. Functioning with this meaning of community, we would no longer come together in order to confirm for each other the eternally same stories, jokes and opinions, but would rather create an open and hospitable community which would bring friendliness into the unfriendly corners of this society".⁵

It is all very untidy - and difficult for those who like to tie up the loose ends. But the exciting thing about it is that, although we can see where the splash takes place . . . we never know how far the ripples reach!

NOTES

Bernard J. Monk

1. *"Too Hot To Handle"* by G.W. Kirby (Lakeland) p.23
2. *Ibid* p.70
3. *"The Open Church"* by Jurgen Moltmann (SCM) p.61
4. *Ibid* p.62
5. *Ibid* pp. 32/3

WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION
409 Barking Road, Plaistow, London, E13 8AL

My dear Brother Minister,

I moved at the end of last year to a bungalow in Capel St. Mary in Suffolk and I found at the time of the move just how much one accumulates over the years. I am finding much the same thing now that I prepare to hand over to Trevor Davis in the autumn. It is difficult to decide what to keep and what to put in the wastepaper basket but we are generally winning the day.

We have decided to have "Hail and Farewell" meetings from 3 p.m. onwards on Saturday October 28th. There will be a Thanksgiving Service in the afternoon when the basis of Thanksgiving will probably vary but in any event I shall be "Farewelled" then we shall have tea in various places and tea speeches (holy necessity) to follow in the Church then at 6.30 we shall have the Induction Service for Trevor Davis and this will be a historic occasion. Some of you who read these notes may be able to come and join us on this day and you would be very welcome. Most of our friends will not be able to come but we do invite you as a leader in your Church to ask for the prayers of your people that God's blessing may be on the new Superintendent and his family as they take up the work in the autumn.

The building of our new flats at Barking Road is going on well and already we are very much impressed by the quality of the work being done. We hope to have our first residents in by the spring of 1979 and I am personally quite sure that this is a most important development in the work of the Mission.

There is no space to give details of the various other pieces of work we are continuing to do as a Mission except that I must mention that we are faced with some searching questions regarding the future of the work at Orchard House.

Owing to a national change of policy regarding the placement of youngsters in trouble we are finding it exceedingly difficult to maintain our numbers and it is quite apparent that during this year we shall have to make some far reaching decisions concerning the future of Orchard House and again we would ask for your prayers.

Let me remind you again that we have a very good film strip which has commended itself very powerfully to a large number of organisations and Churches and if you would like to book a copy please write to Miss Margaret Gray, Office Manager, West Ham Central Mission, 409 Barking Road, Plaistow, E13 8AL and if possible give alternative dates.

May God's blessing be on all your own fine work,

Yours very sincerely,

STANLEY TURL

Superintendent of the Mission

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY AND THE MINISTER

The Open University is probably the most important and innovative educational development of the past decade and from its inception and granting of a Royal Charter as a degree-conferring institution in 1969 there have been a number of Baptist ministers who have studied and graduated by this means. Their reasons for embarking on such a course within the demands of the ministry are probably as varied as the men themselves but I suspect that for most the gaining of a degree is the completion of 'unfinished business' in that they have spent four years at a theological college and either failed at the last hurdle of the examination or, more likely, were denied the opportunity to take the degree because their previous education and career did not give them the prerequisite requirements for University Entrance. It was extremely frustrating to be taking a degree-orientated course with no possibility of gaining a degree.

A further strong factor in the decision to undertake the degree course is an awareness that one's motivation for study is greater in later years and this is allied with the hope, sometimes forlorn, that a measure of wisdom has been accrued along the way! Link this with the desire for academic stimulus and challenge and the OU facility becomes most appealing. My aim in this article, then, is to acquaint ministers with the ethos and practice of the Open University and commend it as particularly appropriate to their own circumstances and development.

Something should be said about the University's conception and establishment in the teeth of hostile opposition from political and traditional educational groups. I suppose anything linked with Sir Harold Wilson will seem contentious for some but he must be given credit for the initial idea of a University of the Air in which broadcasting would play a major role. The idea came to him on Easter Sunday morning in 1963 and was 'written out by hand in less than an hour after Church'. We are left to wonder whether it was the stimulus of the day and its worship or the opportunity for a wandering mind which brought the idea to birth! The hostility of the Conservative Party to the proposals when they later appeared in a White Paper in greater detail was intense and makes strange reading now. Iain Macleod called the concept a 'blithering nonsense' and Margaret Thatcher made her attitude clear in a furious exchange of views at a meeting with the Officers of the Open University in 1970. Any potential applicant for an academic post who contacted Party Headquarters for advice was advised not to apply as the future of the institution was in doubt.

I will leave you to draw your own conclusions as to the reasoning and philosophy behind this hostility.

Having accepted that the original idea was Harold Wilson's it must be affirmed that the main architects of the new academic institution were Jennie Lee and Lord Goodman. What a formidable duo they were as they tackled the problems inherent in such a scheme with enthusiasm and skill.

Jennie Lee was determined on two main guiding principles. One, that the academic standards required were to be of the highest and comparable, if not superior, to the established Universities. In carrying out this objective the choice of Sir Walter Perry to be the first Vice-Chancellor was crucial and inspired. He was at that time Professor of Pharmacology and Vice-Principal of Edinburgh University and he writes, 'I had long been concerned at the pitifully inadequate standard of most of the teaching that went on in the established universities . . . (and had) . . . tried tentative experiments in designing courses by teamwork, both within my own department and, jointly between the departments of Pathology, Bacteriology and Pharmacology'. (The Open University, by Walter Perry p.xiv) Here was a man with the vision, motivation, ability and drive to make such a radically new concept in University education succeed and maintain the very highest of standards.

The other main principle was the egalitarian one that it would be genuinely 'Open' in its admissions to courses. The Robbins Committee in the early Sixties went deeply into the mounting evidence that elitism in education seriously placed at a disadvantage those people who came from lower socio-economic groups regardless of their intelligence. The Open University would go some way to redressing the imbalance by giving a later opportunity to those denied University education in their teens.

The fortuitous election of Labour governments in the Sixties and the determination of Jennie Lee and Lord Goodman overcame the political hostility but there was still ranged against it the combined opposition of the educational establishment and the Department of Education and Science. Those who find this kind of in-fighting fascinating are referred to the book by Walter Perry already mentioned. Sufficient to say that the academic opposition has been overcome by the public availability of course materials and external moderation and assessment of examination scripts which ensure comparability with standards prevailing in other universities. A measure of the academic status is the recognition of the degree by other Universities and no University Library in the country can now be found lacking a substantial proportion of publications by the Open University. It has broken new ground socially and academically and its reputation as an educational trail-blazer is second to none.

One of the heartening results of its 'Open' nature and philosophy is the special provision made for handicapped and blind students to attain a degree and the success and attendance of these students at graduation ceremonies every year is most moving.

The structure of the degree is made up by courses of full or half-credit and six credits qualify a student for the ordinary degree while eight credits are necessary for the honours degree. Assessment is continuous through written assignments and each course culminates in a three-hour examination. The student must obtain pass grades in both elements of assessment to be awarded a credit. Studies begin with a compulsory foundation course from a choice of five and this will include a week's attendance at University Summer School. The foundation courses are in Arts, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Science and Technology and the degree can be made up of elements from any of these disciplines so a student in fact designs his own degree structure.

An important factor for the Baptist Minister is that his previous training is taken into account and he may be awarded up to three credit exemptions on the basis of years spent at theological college and the qualifications obtained. Each credit course requires thirty-two weekly units of work demanding approximately ten to fourteen hours of study and experience would suggest that one credit a year is about the right pace for a working minister. Study need not be continuous and credits gained are not forfeited in the event of either a period without study or failure in any one subject. You effectively set your own pace.

The teaching and learning method is based upon correspondence course units and related reading from set books which you must obtain. The television and radio components of the work are but a small fraction of the learning process and are generally not essential, though helpful. For each course the student has a tutor and counsellor and there will usually be a centre where the student can engage in tutorials. The tutor marks and grades the assignments and gives a full and detailed criticism of work submitted. He/she is readily available by telephone for advice and assistance and students often form groups for discussion and support. This is encouraged as a means of education and the competitive element between students is seen for the immature approach that it is!

Some courses, particularly in Science, involve the use of Home Experiment Kits. This is one of the great success stories of the University both in the brilliance of design involved and the commercial response which has been such that a special marketing division has had to be set up for the outside sale of many of these items and course

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To the Readers of the "Fraternal"

Dear Friends,

"The first thing that caught her eye was the date (of the letter) two days earlier than she received it . . . the letter had been entrusted to some careless waiter who had forgotten to post it".

North and South - Elizabeth Gaskell

I have just finished reading Mrs. Gaskell's North and South - a most interesting cameo of social levels of the mid-nineteenth century.

My interest in Mrs. Gaskell was reawakened last summer by a visit to the National Portrait Gallery in London to see the Branwell Brontë painting of the Brontë sisters (you will recall it as the picture in which he had painted out his own portrait from the group - a curious foreshadowing of his unhappy death).

In the Gallery room the Brontë group was on the right flanking wall - a picture of interest rather than of merit. However on turning on my heel to leave the room I saw just by the door two crayon drawings of arresting skill in delineation and subtle colouring; the portraits by George Richmond of Mrs. Gaskell and of Charlotte Brontë.

It would be a worthwhile visit to the Gallery for these portraits alone.

However, I digress, for what I really wanted to remark was that over a century ago surprise could be expressed at the late receipt of a letter dated two days earlier! Would that our post was reliable even to two days!

The decision of diaconates reached often late in an evening may be delayed to us by the sheer effort of getting down to a letter and then further delayed in the post. A correspondent in The Times suggested that delays could be lessened by reverting to horse-drawn mail coaches!

Insurance decisions are important decisions often involving in these inflationary days substantial increases in sums insured. We can only deal with such increases as from the date we receive them and it is often best to by-pass the post by telephoning instructions to us - a leisurely letter of confirmation could follow.

Shakespeare was so right when he said "In delay there lies no plenty".

Yours sincerely,
C.J.L. COLVIN
General Manager

correspondence units in a number of languages. You will probably have heard of the McArthur microscope which was specially designed for the University and is part of the 272 pieces of equipment sent to the student for the Science Foundation Course! There is also the Opus miniature computer which plugs into household mains and gives students experience with a real computer. Add to these specially designed electronic timers, sound level indicators, galvanic skin response meters and binary calculators and you have some idea of the range and complexity of the operations.

There is then a wide range of courses to choose from and some ministers deliberately choose courses which have no direct bearing on their ministerial roles, but for those who would only feel justified or confident in spending time on studies which are clearly related to their task or understanding of the faith may I suggest the following structure and choice of subjects to make up the degree? We will assume that the applicant will receive two exemptions.

A101 Foundation Course in Humanities 1 Credit

A course on the nature of man studied through History, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Art and Religion culminating in an interdisciplinary study of man in an age of Industrialisation.

A201 Renaissance and Reformation 1 Credit

This course sees the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in the context of Renaissance Europe, rather than the blinkered view generally adopted in an exclusively religious approach which tends to isolate and cocoon this great historical upheaval.

AD208 Man's Religious Quest 1 Credit

This is a new course in which the theme is explored through a study of the main religions of the World. Of intrinsic interest to the Christian minister and of particular value in our multi-cultural and multi-faith society.

A291 The Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity 1/2 Credit

This course is widely praised by those who have taken it. The major religious development of the period - the rise of Christianity - is seen against the background of the arts and social life of the time and includes studies in the literature and philosophies which were current then. The final block looks at the life and teaching of Jesus and Paul and the Pauline Churches.

AMST283 Science and Belief: From Copernicus to Darwin 1/2 Credit

The 'conflict' between science and belief is here examined and the great crises in human thought associated with these great names and their theories are explored. The final block studies the scientific progress and religious dissent of the seventeenth century.

This is but one of many permutations and you alone can judge the ideal combination of courses to meet your own needs. Cost should not deter you as the University generously subsidises those on low incomes with tuition fees and the free loan of text books. Your local authority will pay for Summer School in most cases. You will benefit from the stimulus and demands of the course you engage in and your people will share in the development and extension of your outlook. That you will have to make some personal and family sacrifices over time cannot be denied but Alexander Whyte's dictum is apposite in this regard. 'It is not time we want. We have plenty of time. It is want of intention. It is want of heart'.

For further information you should contact the University at Walton Hall, Milton Keynes and those ministers who have already graduated through the University will be happy to give advice from their own experience. I am convinced that the structure and methods of the University are particularly suited to the ministerial situation. The presentation of arguments and evidence in the form of essays should present no difficulty following the years in theological college and the ministry. The one essential and necessary ingredient which you alone can supply is determination.

Brian Treharne

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“MISSIONARIES GO HOME!”

In *Matthew 28: 19-20* we have the Royal Command from the Risen Lord. It is recorded in a threefold order:-

- (a) “make disciples of all the nations”
- (b) “baptizing them”
- (c) “teaching them”

Mark 16: 15 re-echoes a similar commission as far as the universal mission of the Christian Church is concerned. Preaching the gospel is aimed at the whole creation, and for this reason preachers have been sent into all the world. *Luke 24: 47-48* provides us with the furthest and nearest areas of gospel-activity, namely, ‘unto all the nations’ and ‘beginning from Jerusalem’. As the early Church went into action we see in *Acts 1: 8* the orderly pattern of the spread of the Christian gospel, the pioneer thrust of our first missionaries. They began by being witnesses a) “in Jerusalem, b) in all Judaea and Samaria, and c) to the uttermost part of the earth”.

Looking back on missionary history from our vantage-points in 1978, can we truly say that the obedience of the Church to the Royal Command deserves the title - A Royal Command Performance? Let a modern Chinese author, Han Suyin, give us an adequate though not comprehensive summary of missionary endeavours. What is true of China is also true generally of the entire mission-field of the world. We are, of course, dealing very much with Western-led missions to Africa, the East and the Far East. It is only in recent times that the Younger Churches have begun to become native-led and native-inspired in pastoral and evangelistic work. Now, for Han Suyin’s comments as she watched the expulsion of missionaries from Communist China.

“In this room were the remains of a hundred years of missionary work in China. A hundred years of devotion, sacrifice, and good works. For the glory of their God, in unselfish zeal; men and women had gone to baptize the heathen, teach their variety of the only Truth, heal the sick, feed the hungry, fulfil themselves and the will of their God. In this room were the people who had worn down our traditions, broken our selfishness, awakened our social-conscience, armed us with ideals, dragged our scholars from their poetic torpor and our peasants’ superfluous babies from the cesspits, built our universities, our hospitals and our puritanism. They also had made New China”.

A Many Splendoured Thing,
by Han Suyin, London, 1959, page 306.

Young missionaries, training to serve overseas, are now asking the question - “How long will we be needed in other countries?” Christians in Britain together with their fellows in the western world are asking another question - “When will the younger churches of the overseas mission-fields stand on their own feet?”. Consider for a moment or two some other relevant and contemporary questions. “Why should we send our missionaries to other countries when so many of our people do not pretend to be Christians?”. In other words, like charity, even evangelistic work begins at home, i.e. in Jerusalem, Judaea and Samaria. When the BMS held its General Committee in July 1969 at Oxford it was returning to one of its former mission-fields. “It was in 1796 that the society made a grant of six guineas to the Revd James Hinton, then minister of the New Road Church, Oxford, to help him in his work of ‘evangelising the heathen villages of Oxfordshire’. Later, Mr. Hinton became secretary of the society on the death of its first secretary, Andrew Fuller”. (*The Baptist Times*, 9.11.67). One more challenging question remains to be asked. More and more British churches have felt the impact of post-war immigration. “Why should we send missionaries to India when there are Hindus and Sikhs in our cities? - to Pakistan and Bangladesh when there are Moslems and their Mosques here on our doorstep? - to the West Indies when so many West Indians have settled down in Britain?”.

The title of this essay is taken without apology from the well-known book by Dr. James A. Scherer, formerly Dean of the School of Missions of the Chicago Lutheran Seminary: (*Missionary, Go Home*, by James A. Scherer, 1964). We ought to see for ourselves the truth behind the words 'Missionary, Go Home!' Let me see how many reasons I am able to produce in support of this sentiment.

1. Missionaries did a good work as pioneers in education, medical and social-services.
2. Latterly, they opened-up technical, industrial and agricultural programmes in order to serve developing nations.
3. They first brought the good news of Jesus Christ to people who had hitherto not heard of the Saviour.
4. But, now we have native Christians in positions of responsibility. "In Papua-New Guinea the head of the Lutheran Church is already a born Papuan, and both the Roman Catholic and the Anglican fellowships have Papuan bishops". (*Salvation Tomorrow*, p.47 . . . Bishop S. Neill.)
5. This calls for a radical re-allocation of western missionary resources.
6. Where special needs have to be met in the Third World, the request no doubt, will come from that quarter for help on a long-term or short-term basis.
7. With foreign missionaries safely back in their own lands will all ecumenical contact and fellowship in the universal church be extinguished? The answer can be a firm 'No'.

Theological colleges can have staff and scholars from various parts of the world. Research students can still make their journeys to and fro and so share their knowledge and experience and fellowship with churches in other lands. In times of emergency and natural disasters, the world-church can come to the aid of fellow Christians across all sorts of boundaries. So, the mere culminating of missionary work as we now know it will not mean the end of the world as far as missions are concerned.

Gone are the days when missionary work was defined as carrying the Christian gospel to non-Christians overseas. Stephen Neill has expressed this brilliantly with enough and more sarcasm. "Mission used to be an affair of far horizons. The missionary was the man who disappeared into distant and unknown lands, to return after some years to hypnotize western congregations with tales of adventure amidst uncouth and possibly dangerous aborigines". (*Salvation Tomorrow*, by Stephen Neill, London, 1976, pages 22 and 34. See also *Recall to Religion*, London, 1937, which is an adequate summary of the situation 40 years ago). Commenting on the multi-religious composition of British society today Stephen Neill made this further remark:- "Now we are all so mixed-up together that the situation is entirely different from what it was a century ago. Mission has been washed up on our shores, and we have been washed up on the shore of mission". At my own church at Hainault we have since 1977 adopted the following missionary policy which we believe is loyal to the New Testament pattern.

- 1) Local evangelism and campaigns aimed at the non-Christians.
- 2) Support of national evangelistic ventures.
- 3) Support of overseas missionary projects.

These three aspects of mission are co-ordinated by a single Missionary Committee, whilst the pastoral work of the church is carried out by Ministers, Deacons and Layhelpers. Therefore, the sharing of the gospel begins at Hainault and spreads outwards from us to embrace the whole world. We agree with John Wesley and believe that at the last analysis "the world is our parish". With such theologically correct attitudes it will be easier for us to accept help and leadership from the world-church. We are, therefore, Christians and missionaries at the same time. Thomas Barnardo heard Hudson Taylor talk about Christian missionary work in China, and before long, was offering himself for overseas service as a doctor. But, having found his God-given sphere of service in East London, Barnardo was reminded by Lord Shaftesbury that it

was a permanent assignment - "I think you have found your China. You can be a missionary in London. God bless you in your work". (*Workers for God*, by Norman J. Bull, MA., London, 1960, pages 66 & 69). Could Barnardo's experience be the one that all our historic churches and their missionary societies are called upon to share during these closing decades of the 20th century?

Should we not use the word 'witness' in 1978 in preference to 'mission'? Stephen Neill says that it is "the comprehensive term to include every form of Christian activity, since every activity is directed to bearing witness to Christ as Lord". (*Stephen Neill*, page 57). The word can be used in proclaiming the gospel to the pre-Christian, Christian and post-Christian societies of our time. Pastoral concern (in biblical parlance - "for the Jews") and evangelistic activity (in biblical usage "to the Gentiles") are two sides of the witness coin. That God keeps this balance is evident in scripture where Jews and Gentiles finally have the gospel-privileges thrown open to them freely. (Gal. 2 : 8-10). See also *Gen. 9 : 8-17*. If gospel-proclamation in 1978 can be seen in such light we shall cease to think in terms of the West sending missionaries to the East or vice versa. It will be at all times a two-way traffic of support and sympathy in Christ. Our task will end only with the second Advent : the church (the Shepherd-Community) goes in search until the lost sheep is found. (*Luke 15 : 4*).

The church in one part of the world must always be ready, willing and able to help churches in another part to become strong and deep-rooted according to cultural and social patterns that are acceptable to the genius of Christianity. So we shall rejoice in the progress made by indigenous churches following their indigenous Christianity. D.T. Niles once wrote that "the gospel is the seed which one plants in the different soils of different peoples, and the plant that grows-up is Christianity : it bears marks both of the soil and of the seed". (*Eternal Life : Now*, by D.T. Niles, Colombo, 1946, page 57). Then, referring to the Church in Ceylon, he said - "Ceylon must grow her own plant. The days when missionaries brought pot-plants to us are over".

F.F. Bruce mentions how in 1958 he was struck by the following news item. "A native evangelist on the Danish mission-field in the Sudan has been fined and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for having offended the Muslims by delivering a sermon on the words of Jesus: 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me'. The evangelist has maintained that he said nothing hostile to the Muslim faith, and has lodged an appeal". That Sudanese evangelist knew how costly missionary work can be at times. But, the Sudanese must one day hear and see the Christian Gospel in action and immediately be able to see a genuine Sudanese Christ. (*First-Century Faith*, by F.F. Bruce, London, 1977, pages 89-90). In this essay I am only trying to express some of my missionary thinking. Like other Christians I am sorting my way out of traditional missionary programmes. But, what of the future? Will the overseas-fields be closed to foreign missionaries soon? I venture to suggest that within the next 5-7 years such will be the position. Our present young missionaries may be the last in a long-line of noble, self-sacrificial Christians who went forth for Christ and the Gospel's sake.

But, gospel witness to neighbourhood, nation and the nations will be on-going fact. This will involve us all in missionary responsibilities and obligations now as in the days to come. The main problem, as I see it, is short sightedness, myopia in our churches. We need to wear missionary glasses in order to be long-sighted! The fields are white already for harvest. Let me draw my thoughts to a close by mentioning that in the Selly Oak Group of Colleges missions involve a self-giving on the part of Christ's Universal Church. Missions send Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to and from all parts of the globe. It's a two-way traffic. Leslie Lyall in *A World to Win* said this and here I end.

"What God requires of His whole church now, as of the early Christians, is total obedience to His command to evangelize the world and at any cost. We have no options. This has always been, and remains the *raison d'etre* of the Church".

Here we stand in 1978. Lord, we can do no other.

Charles W. Karunaratna.

New Testament Interpretation. Essays in Principles and Methods

edited by I.H. Marshall. Paternoster Press. 406pp. £6

To judge from the popular religious press "hermeneutics" was one of the watchwords of NEAC 77. If so, it was only because Evangelicals had done their homework, as this volume testifies. For these seventeen essays are basically concerned with the problem of hermeneutics and are revisions of papers presented in July 73 to the New Testament Study Group of the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research.

The theme introduced by Howard Marshall, who in a very helpful essay sets out the problem in relation to John 4.1-45. The work then falls into four sections:

Part I deals with the 'Background to Interpretation'. Here F.F. Bruce gives a concise history of NT study, while Graham Stanton seeks to answer the question 'why do the conclusions of NT scholars differ so widely?' under the heading 'Presuppositions in NT Criticism'.

Part II, 'The Use of Critical Methods in Interpretation', covers Semantics (Anthony Thistleton), Questions of Introduction (Donald Guthrie), Religious Background (John Drane), Historical Criticism (Howard Marshall), Source Criticism (David Wenham), Form Criticism (Stephen Travis), Tradition History (David Catchpole) and Redaction Criticism (Stephen Smalley). I cannot pretend to have been set on fire by any of these essays. However, they form a very useful introduction to the subject, and will no doubt be of interest to the theological students or to the minister out of touch with recent trends in NT study.

Part III is concerned with 'The Task of Exegesis'. Here Earle Ellis takes up his familiar theme of 'The use of the OT in the New', while Ralph Martin in his 'Approaches to NT exegesis' shows his usual interest in the NT hymns. However, it is the third essay by Dick France which many will find especially interesting. For here we are given two examples of exegesis: Mathew 8.5-13 is chosen because of redaction critical considerations, while 1 Peter 3.8-20 is chosen because of its notorious obscurity (the latter France rightly argues does not deal with a Descent to Hades).

Part IV, 'The NT and the Modern Reader', contains essays on Demythologizing (James Dunn), the New Hermeneutic (Anthony Thistleton), The Authority of the NT (Robin Nixon) and Expounding the NT (John Goldingay). The last named essay picks up the two passages exegeted by Dick France and helpfully expounds them for today.

This is a book that lives up to its cover blurb: "Comprehensive and practical, but never superficial, this unique survey with its constructive approach will be especially welcome by all who fear that critical study undermines faith". Paternoster are to be congratulated in bringing out this book which shows evangelical scholarship at its best. It a book to be read by preachers. For where this kind of scholarship is combined with evangelical zeal, there is power in the pulpit.

Let me whet your appetite by concluding with some sentences from Robin Nixon's essay: "It is very rarely the scholar sitting isolated in his study who discovers anything really fresh in the message of the Scriptures. The task of understanding and application needs interplay between evangelist, pastor and layman in the world on the one hand and the theologian on the other. The individual Christian should be able to go to the New Testament and find 'a command, a promise or a warning, an example to follow or an error to avoid'. But he will do this, not by reading the Bible in isolation so that he fails

to contextualise what he has read, but by engaging in study of the text and discussion of its meaning with other Christians also. The authority of the New Testament, rightly understood, will never be fully experienced in this life. But if Christians approach it desiring to hear the voice of God speaking to them they will find that the Spirit takes the word in the church and makes it for them something living and active. Only by those with such an attitude can a true authority be found".

Paul Beasley-Murray

"YOUTH, BRAINWASHING, AND THE EXTREMIST CULTS"

by Ronald Enroth

The Paternoster Press Ltd.

£2.40

Ronald Enroth is an American sociologist who also describes himself as an evangelical Christian. Since 1971 he has been a student of current religious movements, and this book is the result of his particular study of youth, brainwashing, and extremist cults.

The first part of the book is given over to case histories from the cults of the Hare Krishna Movement, the Children of God, the Alamo Christian Foundation, the Love Family, the Unification Church, the Way and the Divine Light Mission. The second part of the book is a commentary on the cults, and the author attempts to analyse and interpret the case histories.

The case histories provide interesting information about the cults as they exist in the United States. Although some of these cults have found their way across the Atlantic, their work in Britain has not reached the same proportions — at least not yet. Nevertheless, those who recognise the potential danger of these cults, and at the same time are aware that spiritually seeking young people can very easily be trapped by them, will find this book informative and thought-provoking.

John Brandham

ASIANS IN BRITAIN

A Christian Understanding

Patrick Sookhdeo.

Paternoster Press Ltd. 80p.

This book is essentially the same as that published by Falcon Press in 1972, except that the Resources information has been updated. With its concise, knowledgeable, wise and practical approach, it is unique in its field today, and must be essential reading for all ministers and church members who face the problems and opportunities which arise in areas where Asians come to live. Patrick Sookhdeo writes out of a Hindu/Moslem family background together with an evangelical fervour. The chapter on Points for Consideration at Church Level is invaluable for its perceptive counsel and constructive suggestions.

63 pages may not seem much for 80p. but it is strongly and attractively bound and presented.

Donald Cranefield

PAUL: APOSTLE OF THE FREE SPIRIT

by F.F. Bruce

The Paternoster Press Ltd.

490 pp. £9.60

In his introduction Professor Bruce says that he has written this book *amore Pauli* - for the love of Paul. That love illuminates every page of this book.

Drawing on autobiographical references in the epistles, the Lucan account of Paul's career in Acts, and the setting and contents of the epistles themselves, the author has ingeniously traced the development of Paul's life and theology. The simple style conceals a wealth of scholarship that is evidenced in the footnotes: The unfolding of the story makes fascinating reading, whilst the references *en route* to the contemporary situation within which Paul lived and worked add greatly to our understanding of him.

There are excellent chapters on the comparison of Paul as 'man of action' and 'mystic', the Gentile problem and Paul's teaching on the life to come. The first is not only an excellent guide to Paul's experience and understanding of the 'mystical', but points the way to an evangelical mysticism greatly needed in our own time. His sensitive handling of the Gentile problem reveals an empathy with the Jewish Christian community not always shared by other Christian exegetes. He traces the cultural gulf that had to be crossed and one is left surprised not that some never made it but that any of them did. His exposition of Paul's developing doctrine of life after death provides a mass of material both for sermons on this theme and meeting the questions of those who face death or bereavement. He takes us to Second Corinthians to answer some of the questions inevitably raised by the Thessalonian correspondence.

This work of love has given us new insights into the apostle of the Gentiles and the measure of his influence on succeeding generations. The attractiveness of the prose is matched by the book's print and presentation. A book to read and a book to keep for reference.

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