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LIVING WITH STRESS

In recent years much attention has been paid to a definition of Health. It is patently obvious that the concept of health being merely the absence of disease is unsatisfactory; as evidenced by the full, satisfying and productive lives led by some of those suffering from considerable disabilities.

The World Health Organisation describes health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being rather than solely as an absence of disease." Even that is not entirely satisfactory and other definitions are (1) "A condition which maximises the individual's capacity to live happily and productively within the limits of pre-existing disease, disability or genetic endowment." (2) "Health is a purposeful, adaptive response physically, mentally and socially to internal and external stimuli in order to maintain stability and comfort." (3) "By Health I mean the power to live a full, adult, living breathing life in close contact with what I love — I want to be all that I am capable of becoming."

Thus in the concept of health there is a sense of achievement, of purpose, of adaptation and it follows that some degree of stress is inseparable from healthy living. Tension is an integral part of that nebulous, almost indefinable and constantly variable entity which we call Health. From these definitions can be sensed some of the disruptive stresses which detract from health; i.e. lack of stability, uncertainty, discomfort, failure of achievement and absence of purpose.

Stress can be viewed in the language of several disciplines. To the physicist and engineer stress is force per unit area. To the physician stress is that which arms the body, through the outpouring of adrenalin, to resist noxious or alarming external stimuli — the "Fight or Flight reaction". To the psychologist and psychiatrist stress can be any number of stimuli, varying widely from person to person, which result in a destruction of that harmony which we interpret as health in body, mind and spirit, i.e. the absence of well-being.

Stress is an essential part of normal human existence as it is within the whole animal kingdom. A stress-free life would prove intolerable. Mankind is intended to live in tension. This surely was in Augustine's mind when he said "Thou hast created us for thyself, and our heart cannot be quieted till it may find repose in Thee." Great achievements have normally come out of great struggle and much stress be they in the field of artistry, engineering or research.

Tennyson's "Lotus eaters" claimed "There is no joy but calm". The mariners under their spell, described as "Sweet music that softer falls than petals from blown roses on the grass", declaimed "Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things." But was there real joy in that land "Where all things always seemed the same."? Is not true content better reflected in those stirring words in Tennyson's "Ulysses":-

"That which we are, we are;

One equal temper of heroic hearts

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield."?

It is difficult to define any era as being especially stressful. Every generation tends to think that its own age is more stressful than any which has gone before. There may be an element of yearning for "The good old days" in all of us! Such an assumption must be challenged. Each generation seems to have ability to deal with its own problems. I am amazed at the way young people now face with equanimity problems which I find daunting and would, I think, have found daunting at their age. Perhaps my memory is defective or maybe this is just a sign of age!

There is however one sense in which the present time is excessively stressful and that is the speed with which changes are taking place. There is a limited quantity of change to which the human mind can adapt in unit time. Our powers of adaptability vary immensely and those of many are being overwhelmed by the pace of change. "Change and decay in all around I see", e.g. the postal service, the reorganised national health service, decimal currency; "Oh Thou, who changest not, abide with me."; this is surely a *crie-de-coeur* from the late twentieth century.

Stress is related to time in two senses. First, the amount of stress generated in any period of time is proportional to the quantity of change taking place in that period of time whether that change is pleasant or unpleasant. Change itself taxes every individual's ability to adapt and adaptability grows less with age. Secondly stress can be tolerated in many fields if it is limited in time and if there is an end in sight.

Pain is one of the greatest stresses we are called upon to bear. Acute shortlived pain of immense severity can be borne with fortitude whereas long-standing and apparently endless pain wears down the strongest personality. The anguish of this situation is one of the main factors which has given rise to the Hospice Movement and with it to one of the newest of medical specialities — Pain Control and Terminal Care.

Ministers are becoming increasingly involved with patients in this situation as more men and women are dying of cancer, the disease which is the major concern of workers within the hospice movement. Most advances over the centuries, in the care of the sick, the disabled and the dying have found Christian agencies in the forefront. As with the establishment of our great hospitals in mediaeval times, so, in the twentieth century, the establishment of most of the hospices for terminal care has stemmed from voluntary sources with Christian motivation towards compassion and concern.

Here is stress in its extremity with no relief and death as the only release. Yet it has been proved that hospices can be happy places. With proper pain control, and the removal of the fear of pain by keeping it suppressed by regular and adequate medication, cancer is not a bad way to go; there is time to say goodbye and there is not the lingering living death of many conditions of geriatric medicine, but it can only be so if the patient is surrounded by tender loving care.

I feel it rather presumptuous to express thoughts on the especial relationships of stress appertaining to ministers, but as I have been asked to write this for the Journal of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship such thoughts may not be considered out of place. I hope that they may not seem naive, will not be deemed inaccurate and may even be of some help.

From the very nature of their calling ministers are closely involved in the stressful events of other people's lives. They are acquainted with grief. Their flock are only too ready to bring their grief and anxiety to their minister and to lean on his shoulder however broad or narrow that may be. Their happiness and success is not always so readily shared and may at times be of such a nature as to bring grief to the heart of their spiritual advisor.

At a meeting of ministers those present were asked in what situation they found their training least helpful. The answer was — Redundancy. This must be at the heart of much stress today. The plight of the young unemployed is heart-rending. What has the minister to say in this situation? The awareness of being wanted is one of the most basic of human desires and without this life loses much of its meaning.

Here lies one of the subtle stresses of a period of affluence. Who can deny that, despite much that is said, the majority of those in the western world are living through such a period when comparison is made with the rest of the world today and with our

own country in other ages? Affluence inevitably breeds self-sufficiency and self-sufficiency is fine until things go wrong. It is then that one becomes aware of the absence of that gossamer fine thread of interdependence upon which truly joyous living depends. The shattering result of self-sufficiency in ruins is, I dare to suggest, one of the great fields in which the word of God has to be sown and where his harvest may be reaped, and what a strong field it is.

Uncertainty brings its own tension. Where the calm and established way ahead is suddenly seen to be stormy and obscure one's own inadequacy becomes a frightening reality.

Those words of Jesus to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, and my power is made perfect in weakness" is a fine theme in this age in which men and women need to be convinced of the inadequacy of their own strength to face "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

The ability to withstand and tolerate stress varies considerably from person to person. The discovery of the limit of toleration i.e. the degree of stress which can be contained with equanimity is usually a normal part of education for life. Some learn this lesson better than others. Those with wider limitations gravitate towards the more stressful occupations. Some are unhappy and resentful if not living under pressure with their mental and physical resources being constantly exercised. Doubt is now being cast upon the wisdom of detailed medical examination as a regular monitor of the health of executives and others in positions of responsibility. For the most part, the advice given, should any aberration from the established and somewhat arbitrary normal be discovered, is that life should be taken more easily, that one should "slow down". To what end is such advice given? That death may be postponed that life should be extended? These considerable gains are obtained only at considerable cost. There is the cost of unachieved ambition, of unreached goals, of the frustration of a life prolonged with a quality which is at best submaximal and at worst a continuing disaster.

I realise that this is an over simplification of a very personal and complex problem, but I feel that the medical profession, now endowed with great powers of prognostication and of influencing our lives, must adopt a very conscientious attitude towards the quality of the lives which it is able to prolong. There is a dangerous attitude developing amongst the general public that, because some form of therapy can be performed then it should be made available to all irrespective of the circumstances in each personal situation. I sense, on the other hand, a growing desire, especially among the elderly, to accept only symptomatic relief for many ailments which could, with more drastic therapy, be cured. This desire should be respected.

To return to stressful living — it may be more acceptable to allow some to continue under stress with the satisfaction of achievement rather than to frustrate them with restrictions. To allow them to burn out rather than to compel them to rust out. This whole problem needs to be considered in the light of the ever-increasing quantity of geriatric medicine and the falling birth-rate. There is a "calamity of so long life" as Shakespeare says. The poignant words of Laurence Binyon — "Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn" take on a different meaning in these latter years of the twentieth century.

If it is accepted that stress is inseparable from successful living; how is one to avoid becoming one of the casualties of the breakdown of this delicate relationship? A consideration of the engineer's concept of stress helps here. Stress is force per unit area, the larger the area the less the stress for any given force. In other words to spread the load reduces the stress. This may not be easy for a minister in his position of leadership within the local church. He experiences the loneliness of command. Constantly called upon to alleviate other people's stress there is little time left to seek

help for his own. Who could praise highly enough the work of our area superintendents in providing such help? However they are thin on the ground and cumbered about with many duties.

Frequently the minister's wife is the only one with whom he can share at the deepest level the day to day problems which the pastoral ministry presents. If she is "the minister's wife" wholly involved in the support of her husband and the work of the church, then she may not be able to spread the load very much. Problems are the same at home and at work. Work cannot be "left at the office." If the minister's wife works in a secular occupation then she may be the better able to assist her husband by bringing a fresh mind to bear upon the subjects he wishes to discuss. It would be impertinent of me to suggest which of these situations is the better ordered for Christ's glory and the sustaining of His Church.

Probably the greatest stress facing any christian is the necessity to equate the loving-kindness of God with the obscene and squalid realities occurring in this world of His. Every age has its own catalogue of terror and desecration but this surely reached a peak in the experience of chaplains in the First World War. The challenge there presented to their whole faith resulted in some failures but it was triumphantly met by others such as Geoffrey Studdart-Kennedy — "Woodbine Willie" — who, on returning with the Military Cross from the massacre of the Messines Ridge in 1917 could say:- "You know, this business has made me less cocksure of much of which I was cocksure before. On two points I am certain: Christ and His Sacrament. Apart from that I am not sure of anything." This agony also called from him those memorable words:

"Waste of Blood and waste of tears,
Waste of Youth's most precious years,
Waste of ways the Saints have trod,
Waste of Glory, Waste of God —
War!"

It is to be hoped devoutly that none shall be called upon ever again to face such a challenge to faith. On a smaller scale, Christians are having to face similar situations day by day of this perilous life. To christian ministers in Northern Ireland, to missionaries in Rhodesia, Burundi and Uganda the challenge is stark and direct even now. To most ministers there comes the challenge to faith of the parents mourning the death of a child killed in a needless accident or mourning a loved one lured to the living death of drug addiction or alcoholism.

To the Christian there is no promise of relief from pain or grief but faith in Jesus Christ generates the certainty and dependence which bring relief from uncertainty and self-sufficiency. In periods of breakdown of moral values and of all that civilised men and women hold dear the last and most important value to be retained at all cost is sincerity.

With a firm hold on sincerity and a firm faith in Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever. The Christian can take the whole armour of God and be able to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, can stand.

R.J. Charley

WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

409 Barking Road, Plaistow, London E13.

My dear Brother Minister,

This will be my last letter addressed to my brethren in the Ministry, prior to my retirement. Did I hear a sigh of relief? Bear with this once more!

Let me say a heartfelt word of thanks to all of you who have helped on the work of the Mission in so many different ways. Many of you have persuaded your fellowship to give generously to help sustain the various homes and activities. Some of you have recommended some of your young people to serve for a period in one or other of our Homes, and we have benefitted enormously from this influx of youth. Large numbers of you have urged your people to pray for the Mission, and who can tell how much we owe to the faithful prayers of our friends.

So I want to say "Thank you" to my brethren and through you to your people, for all the help you have given to us over these past twenty-five years. You have been instruments in the hand of God to bless us and we are all grateful.

I am delighted to be able to announce a wonderful breakthrough. For some years past I have been seeking a way to finance some very necessary rebuilding work on our Barking Road site. In the last months of my time here I have been told by a well established Charitable Trust that subject to planning permission and their own approval of the plans the Trust is prepared to finance the building of an enlarged Old People's Home to replace 'Rest-a-While', and are setting aside a very large sum of money to pay for it. I am hoping to get Church Meeting permission to go ahead, and you can imagine my sense of gratitude to God.

Trevor Davis takes over the Mission Superintendency at an exciting moment. He brings great gifts and I commend him with complete confidence. Please ask your people to go on praying for the Mission and all its fine staff, and to support us in practical ways.

May God bless your own ministry to the enrichment of Christ's people and to the conversion of men and women to our Lord.

Yours very gratefully,

Stanley Turl,

Superintendent of the Mission.

EXPERIMENTS IN VILLAGE CHURCH GROWTH

"I suppose it's the country and semi-retirement for you". There had to be some reason in the mind of my suburban neighbour for our move after twenty-two happy years in London. It wasn't the time to discuss the inner witness and outward confirmation of the Spirit, neither could he have appreciated the challenge of the new pastorate in a delightful rural setting, which had led to our uprooting from Stanmore.

1. IMAGES

Suburban man is the one with the hat and furled umbrella, the chap in the train with the concerned look and with sandwiches in his briefcase, the man in the statistics with 2.10 children, 1.30 cars, 1.76 washing machines. Rural man is the one with the cloth cap who often gets wet, the solitary chap on the tractor with the bronzed but often contented face, who knocks off for dinner, apart from harvest time! He's got a decent car if he is to survive in a day of severely depleted public services. He too has his refrigerator and deep freezer and his comfortable home. His knowledge of, and dexterity with complicated machinery, his many abilities in a day of mechanized techniques together with the widened horizons which T.V. has brought into the villages, makes rural man a different person from 50 years ago.

Generalisations are dangerous. No two villages are the same. In any consideration of the rural scene a distinction must be made between the accessible and inaccessible countryside. The first suffers from over exposure to Urban Culture, the latter from depopulation, contraction and drastic curtailment of facilities and services. 'Rural persons' is inaccurate as a description of people who live in our country areas today. Since 1951 over one million people have moved into rural districts. In 1800 four-fifths of England's population lived in villages, today four-fifths live in Urban areas. Stone cottages change hands at exorbitant prices, at least that's the view of the locals. The motivation for this invasion by suburban man, is anything from the need for quietness, 'the get away from it all' syndrome, or an inborn passion to get back to nature. Inevitably the influx has changed the character of the community. The continual inflow of young married commuters is reflected in the greater affluence and mobility of our society.

Few can share authentically the rhapsodies of the 17th Century Marvel, "What wondrous life is this I lead, ripe apples fall about my head". Fruit growing is big business with sophisticated machinery. Rural landscapes captured by Constable, or was it his son, are often shattered by the encroachment of the symbols of modern technology. Youth wears the same contemporary cultural symbols, their constant companion Radio 1, its language stamping its mark far more than rural dialect on their vocabulary.

2. CHANGE BRINGS CHALLENGE

Sociological changes bring their challenge. The community life centred on the village green, the local pub or the church has been disturbed. Youth complains of being bored and moans at the lack of facilities for leisure. Any community separation is generally between 'old' and 'new' rather than through class, job or profession. Absorption is often difficult as the 'old' want to dictate the terms. Family loyalties are strong and can be inhibiting. It could be argued that time honoured customs, formats and local opinions, can sometimes be stronger than rational deduction and urgently

needed modifications. But there are major positive qualities in the status quo of the 'old', a sense of security and well-being are among the most notable.

3. CHURCH GROWTH

After two years it would be presumptuous to suggest pointers to rural Church growth. We are learners, observing and assessing trends but we have made several discoveries.

Gorsley Baptist Church was established in 1831. Its premises are commodious, including a playing field and grave yard, the Chapel being a well appointed building seating 400 plus. Four small preaching Chapels were built over the years all within a radius of 4 miles from the 'mother' Church in which all membership is vested. Our assets include a strong family tradition, a healthy group of 'new' families and a long standing evangelical ministry.

The area is definitely accessible and has the contemporary overlapping and interpenetrating communities. Gorsley lacks a cohesive centre having neither a village green or main street. Houses are clustered in small groupings or isolated on the undulating hills.

4. STIMULATING MIXED CULTURE FELLOWSHIP

The accelerating pace of change has brought new blood into the congregation. Farmers share pews with business men, agriculturalists with accountants. The fusing of these cultures in the energy of the spirit is a major responsibility. 'New' folk want to get on with evangelism experiments while the 'old' are often content with the old wine skins. For any of these developments a strong united centre is imperative. Any growth programmes are in proportion to the unity, love and dynamic fellowship which exist within the membership. 'Koinonoi are persons who hold property in common, parties or shareholders in a common concern' (C.H. Dodd). The common blessings of Salvation are objectively the uniting factors in Scripture. The subjective experience of belonging, of sharing Koinonia is dependant on a willingness to know and share in the common things of life.

Experimenting with monthly Church family lunches, occasional social evenings, using festival times to relax together and to know each other as persons, is bringing new cohesion at the centre. The atrophy and disinterestedness which has spelt death to the village flower show, the football team and the disuse of the village hall, provides the village fellowship with a unique opportunity to demonstrate the social nature and true community needs of our humanity.

Loneliness is not confined to the cities. The traditional village supportive spirit has broken down in many families due to increased mobility. A few years ago almost everyone was related to one another. Interest in the family, for whatever motive was maintained but this is disintegrating. The young influenced by contemporary culture are isolated from their parents by thought forms, fashions and eroding promiscuous forces. The social coherence of the agrarian society of the 19th and 20th centuries is decreasing. The living fellowship therefore has much to offer as a way back to a caring, loving community. The second of our Lord's basic commandments to love our neighbours, may yet prove to be the road back to understanding obedience of the first.

5. HOME VENUES

My illustrious predecessor in the 19th century John Hall walked miles to farmsteads to gather groups for a meal, Bible reading and prayer. Contemporary experiments in house meetings are emerging as a pattern of outreach which may yet revive spiritual

interest in our villages. Our four Chapels are poorly attended for a traditional 6.30 p.m. Sunday Service. We can quadruple attendance if we have a house venue on a Sunday or week night evening. Inevitably the handful of the faithful are concerned about the disuse of the Chapels. These areas need tactful, sensitive handling by the Church leaders. Carefully selected material, informality in approach and carefully chosen venues, are a high priority in planning. The SEAN material for Bible Study promises to meet some of our need for the foreseeable future. Openness to one another is not easily encouraged in rural areas. Family loyalties, built in reserve, genuine humility, precedence of the old generation and fear of speaking out of turn, are natural barriers to flow in prayer and participation in Church discussions and devotions. Pastor and Elders must constantly encourage believers to 'walk-tall' in the power of the Spirit to realize their potential.

6. ALOOFNESS, REAL OR IMAGINARY

Thomas Hardy's delightful commentary on village life in the mid-nineteenth century still has a vestige of contemporary insight ... "the Chapel members be clever chaps enough in their way. They can lift up beautiful prayers out of their own hands" ... 'they can' said Monk Clark with corroborative feeling, 'but we Churchmen must have it all printed aforehand' ... 'Chapel folk be more hand in glove with them above than we' said Joseph thoughtfully.

In early visitation the concensus was that the Chapel people were exclusive, good people but living in a rarified atmosphere. Annual Community Sports days, involvement in community caring programmes, a splendid Art and Craft weekend have been effective in dispelling some of the imagined aloofness of Chapel folk. The observations were not groundless. There are gaps and misunderstandings in any community which need constant consideration and healing pastoral ministries. There is no sense in which we have achieved but being 'hand in glove' with our Lord has meant stretching out our other hand to man. Significantly, recent conversions have been among adults for whom Christ's Love has been the magnetic force. The tensions of involvement and separation in a rural setting are as numerous as they are difficult, but there can be no retreat if we are to be SALT in the community. Such involvement demands a close working relationship within the fellowship, a sensitivity to local opinion, and above all a commitment to the ethical demands of the gospel.

7. WORSHIP SERVICES

Rural worship in a non-conformist building is usually very traditional in character. The hymn sandwich is often uninspiring, predictable and dull. The skills and equipment negligible. The New Testament experience of meeting God in the company of fellow believers appears to be characterized by celebration, response to God's saving acts 1 Cor. 14:17, Eph. 5:19f, Phil. 4:6; awareness of the living presence of Jesus Christ, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2. It was intelligible 1 Cor. 14:25, orderly 1 Cor. 14:40, and related to life Rom. 12:1, 1 Peter 2:5.

We cannot offer to God that which costs us nothing especially in this important area of Spiritual worship.

8. WORDS

By careful introduction of the R.S.V. (Good News would have been too great a step) the reading of scripture has come alive. Our Bookstall secretary never had such a hey

day the Christmas following our arrival in the July. R.S.V. Bible were sold by the dozen! The Bible, one of the few books found and read in rural homes has lost its former status. Participation in smaller groups is providing an acceptable format for re-establishing a knowledge of God's word. Training group leaders to lead house meetings is encouraging the 'reserved' rural folk to take part. It is demanding but rewarding. We are beginning to see its potential in Church building.

9. MUSIC

Jewish temple worship was a colourful, enthusiastic exercise for the musicians. The list of instruments given in Psalm 150 suggests that every known means of making music was used for accompaniment of singing. The new wave of interest in making music in our country schools should be reflected, at least occasionally in our country Churches. The monthly family service is our proven launching pad for this introduction. Time spent carefully selecting and rehearsing is a sound investment. You can be sure of the parents' attendance when their offspring is fiddling in the front.

The advent of the O.H.P. has ensured greater flexibility in the choice of material. A short period of singing before the evening service is an opportunity to introduce new songs. In the informality of practice time one can also encourage people to move forward and occupy front seats! The introduction of modern tunes, with contemporary words has enhanced our rural worship. 'Selling' new tunes to a congregation whose span is limited to about one hundred 'golden oldies' needs sympathetic explanation and preparation. The best of Youth Praise and Psalm Praise together with new words to old English folk tunes, is proving acceptable.

10. PARTICIPATION

The richness of local dialect and brogue in praying or reading in worship services and fellowship gatherings, brings an authentic flavour to rural worship. One of the pastoral functions is to fulfil the role of an enabler. The 'rural born' have to be prised out of their shell of timidity and cultural shyness to use the variety of gifts for the fellowship. The supernaturalness of the Church lies in its capacity to constantly have its life replenished by the creative Spirit of God. As members of this dynamic body the ram-rod stiffness of yesterday is giving place to greater spontaneity as gifts are being recognised and used. The inherent danger, in a rural community steeped in traditional forms, is that greater articulation should appear contrived or superficial. Moments of acceptance of formerly unrecognised spiritual abilities, are liberating, releasing creative energy which in turn heightens the spirit of expectancy.

11. URBAN — RURAL STYLE EVANGELISM

The institutionalized, tailor-cut organisation and methods of urban Church Evangelism are not usually suited to the rural Church scene. 'Truly Rural' is a mythical concept. The renaissance in the appearance of many villages is due, not to the squire, but in part to the new urban residence. It is the mixed nature of the community that stretches the fellowship.

John Poulton has polarised Urban/Rural evangelism in terms of 'light' and 'salt'. He says 'A style of ministry that is basically light bearing is propositional, personal and persistent'. This is essentially designed for individuals whereas community has to do with individuals — in their natural groupings. Rural salt, or yeast evangelism, is much more dependent on involvement with village life, living the gospel precepts within the

village. Obviously these cannot be mutually exclusive to urban or rural situation but it is a helpful working distinction.

The basic friendliness and longstanding dependency relationships of the 'old' are assets in the task of infiltration. Village Evangelism is less direct, less individualistic in these circumstances but the interpretation of God's love and grace in community action may be just as effective in bringing seeking people into Kingdom commitment.

If in 'Shadows' by D.H. Lawrence we change the personal pronouns to collective nouns in terms of the Church, I think he expresses the traumas of many village fellowships which can lead eventually to a new day with renewed hope and life.

And if in the changing phases of man's life
I fall in sickness and in misery
My wrists seem broken and my heart seems dead
And strength is gone and my life
Is only the leavings of a life
And still among it all, snatches of lovely oblivion
Snatches of renewal
Odd wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new
strange flowers.
Such as my life has not brought forth before, new
blossoms of me
Then I must know that still
I am in the hands of the unknown God
He is breaking me down to his own oblivion
To send me forth on a new morning, a new man.

Thankfully we are in the hands of a revealed God whose character is partially seen in constant acts of newness.

Pat Goodland

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "these three remain: faith, hope, and love".¹ Christian love has always retained its central importance in the analysis of biblical truth. Christian faith, despite some 'doubtful' moments, has held pride of place, certainly since the Reformation. But Christian hope if it has remained at all has remained the neglected partner of the three. Even a glance at the concordance, under biblical words for hope and related concepts, reveals that this imbalance is unjustified. In fact, hope is a dominant theme in both Old and New Testaments.

It would be easy, after an examination of any area of Christian theology, to become over-aware of every allusion and nuance that relates to the chosen theme. However, there is increasing evidence of a revival both in the discussion and the application of the concept of Christian hope. Among Baptists, it was significant how widely the concept of hope featured in the 1978 sessions of the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union.² It formed the essential fabric of the President's address; it lent its name to an experiment in worship on the final evening; and, even more important, its related themes gave substance to many of the discussions and addresses that were given. This is no accident. It is one of the many responses to an extensive work of the Holy Spirit in re-

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creating both the concept and the reality of hope among Christian people. To examine the Christian concept of hope, especially in the light of recent work by those whose writings have been described as 'theology of hope', will result in new insights that will enrich the practical 'ministry of hope' to those who presently experience life as hopeless.

The concept of Hope

Hope is what relates the future to the present. The Oxford English Dictionary rightly separates the concept of hope from mere 'desire', which, though it too has aspirations to the future, lacks a foundation in reality. It is probable that the English form of this concept owes much to Judaeo-Christian influences: hope is rooted in the realism of what is possible. Plato also conceived of hope as rooted in what is really possible, but it is in the comparison of Greek and Hebrew concepts that a vitally important question emerges.³ What view of reality is it that determines the expectations of hope? Plato chose 'man' as the measure of hope. On that scheme, the content of hope is determined only by what man considers to be possible for him.

At this point, the biblical concept of hope stands out in strong contrast. The Old Testament consistently chooses God as the measure of hope. Therefore, the content of this hope is bounded only by the possibilities of God himself. The substance of this future possibility is established on the foundation of God's dealings with his people in the past, and this sustains the present experience of hope. Of special importance is the unification of past, present and future: the whole span of history is embraced in the exercise of hope. It was this rich Old Testament concept of hope that became the basis of a Christian understanding in the New Testament.

The apostle Peter summarised the New Testament approach in these words. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his mercy gave us new birth into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead".⁴ The foundation of Christian hope lies in the past, the historical raising of Jesus from the dead by his Father. In the present, the Christian enters by new birth into a living experience of hope. This secures his relationship to the future, guaranteed by all the 'open' possibilities of the God of the resurrection.

Resurrection and History

What happens to Christian hope, however, in a generation that has raised serious doubts about the historical nature of the resurrection of Jesus? It was necessary and inevitable that the biblical documents should be subject to a critical scrutiny comparable with that of other historical sources-inevitable if Christians were again to affirm a historical basis for their faith. But what confidence can be sustained in Christian hope, when, through the media, the Rev. Don Cupitt and his colleagues publicly deny, in the name of Christianity, any substantial faith in the resurrection of Jesus?⁵ The saddest thing is that Christendom is tempted to polarise into two camps: those who abandon the truly historical approach to Christianity and retire into a ghetto of unfounded assertion, and those who, feeling compelled to follow the times and often not fully grasping the central issues, become advocates of an insubstantial faith, devoid of power to evoke response.

John Henry Newman had a theory that has some relevance here.⁶ He reckoned that 'heretics' (a word used here with technical definition or specific application) were good for the church: good because they made people think. Often it is the heretic who does the original thinking, who paves the way to a new understanding. It is the responsibility of the church to think through the challenges that come to orthodox faith, discovering in the act of response new approaches and surer foundations. It would be a striking achievement if, as a result of critical historical study, it were possible to re-think the

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To the Readers of the 'Fraternal'

Dear Friends,

"Hic inceptit pestis"

How good is your Latin these days?

I am just in the middle of reading Schoenbaum's Compact Documentary Life of William Shakespeare and was somewhat startled by this Latin note which appeared in the burial register of the Stratford-on-Avon Church against the date of 11th July 1564 recording the death of "Oliver Gunne, an apprentice. Hic inceptit pestis".

The year 1564 was the year of Shakespeare's birth in April and the year in July at which the dreaded plague reached the small country town of Stratford from London.

The threat of pestilence was ever present in the sixteenth century and even towns like Stratford away from the narrow insalubrious streets of London could not escape.

In the period of over thirty years in which I have worked with Baptist Insurance I have witnessed the insidious spread of theft and of malicious damage from the inner downtown large city areas to churches in towns and villages where ministers, deacons and members have been horrified by the appearance of theft and malicious damage from which they thought they were immune.

I can imagine a minute in the Deacons Minute Book reading:-

"The treasurer reported that a theft had taken place the previous Monday and the amplifier had been stolen. The treasurer added that this was the first reported theft in the history of the church. Hic inceptit pestis".

Or the minute might have referred to malicious damage.

A break-in is not necessarily an attempt at theft for unhappily we know that a break-in may presage malicious damage alone.

To deal with these situations it is necessary to be insured (if the local situation will allow) by a theft policy and by malicious damage insurance.

I say "if the local situation will allow" because so much depends on the security precautions adopted by the deacons, or their positive attempts to combat these problems and of course on the incidence of such damage in the neighbourhood.

Some diaconates accept with resignation the inevitability of damage and make no attempt to resist. Some take very positive steps.

I hope your deacons take these matters very seriously and seek with energy and common sense (what a fighting combination) to deal with these pestes.

Yours sincerely
C.J.L. COLVIN
General Manager

very nature of the Christian approach to history itself, and discover for the present day a new and even firmer foundation for faith in the resurrection of Jesus. This would be the basis of a revived and effective Christian hope. The historical question of the resurrection is the first major question that must be considered in any review of the Christian concept of hope.

Hope for the Living

A prior question, equally significant for any understanding of the Christian concept of hope, is: what does faith in the resurrection of Jesus cause men to hope for? Certainly, Christian faith must be "hope for the dying": hope that they too will be raised, even as God raised Jesus from the dead. This is the supreme triumph of salvation, the victory over death itself. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "If for this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied".⁷ But Christian hope is also a 'living hope' and, as such, must be 'hope for the living' effective in the reality of human life. It must include hope for a 'quality of life' here on earth, especially for those who at present experience life as 'a living death'. This includes the millions, who through lack of food or shelter, medicine or education, are constrained to experience the world as hopeless. What is the content of Christian hope for them? Often, in pious zeal and the intensity of spiritual experience, the church has 'spiritualised' God's salvation to a point where it can only be hope for those who already experience a high material quality of life, those who are in a position to assess the failure of affluence to satisfy ultimate human needs. Many who sincerely believe that they are testing the reliability of God in the act of 'living by faith' are doing so only in the certainty of support from their dedicated and often affluent Christian brethren. But what does 'living by faith' mean to the man who has no human hope of food for himself or his family, but only the hope of death?

So many times Jesus ministered effectively to those who, by worldly standards, experienced life as hopeless. He came as the bearer of life for the dead, healing for the sick, good news for the poor. As before, there is a danger of polarisation; the isolation of practical or spiritual needs. It would be a tremendous achievement if, in the analysis of Christian Hope, it could be re-discovered that there really is 'hope for the whole man' in the Christian gospel, hope for his life in the world *and* hope for eternal life in the coming Kingdom of God.

The Marxist Hope

It is very significant that among the less privileged in many areas throughout the world, it is the Marxist philosophy that has captured the imagination of the common people. Where Christianity appears to fail, the promise of the 'socialist society' has created an intensity of hope, inspiring a revolutionary and martyr spirit. With its goal of the classless society, pure Marxism is committed to work for the removal of poverty, the elimination of racism and the improvement of the quality of life for all. This goal corresponds to the realistic needs of so many people throughout the world. The fact that a secular philosophy can evoke such hope must stand as an abiding challenge to Christianity. The eradication of poverty, the elimination of racism, the achievement of a fair and just society are such clearly Christian ideals, but often Christians have taken too little part in their promotion. It is commonly in the cities and at the centres of industry that Marxism has established its stronghold: the very place where Christianity is struggling to survive.

Underneath its varied and often corrupt manifestations, what is the essence of a Marxist philosophy? At root there is a view of history that has its origin in the ideas of the German philosopher Hegel. The history of the world is considered in its wholeness, in a process of progressive evolution. This world-view is often wrongly assumed to be deterministic in a rigorous mechanical sense, a view which could only lead to despair.

In fact, Marxist philosophy normally claims that the future has 'new' and genuineness 'open' possibilities, creating scope for a real concept of hope⁸, even if the measure of that hope is limited to the actions of men. The most important single consequence of this world-view is the way in which it provokes a profound sense of discontent with the *status quo* stimulating a continuous quest for change and improvement. This is the challenge to the Christian churches! At the 1978 Assembly of the Baptist Union, the Rev. Bernard Green spoke of the way "we dig ourselves in to defend dead tradition or a senile *status quo*". He continued "My plea is that we have a God with a sure future. We have a Christ who has power to bring that future into the present".⁹ His plea was for Christians to set themselves to the task of transforming the society in which they live - informed, equipped and committed Christians working out God's purposes in trade, unemployment, redundancy, management, trade unionism, race relations and so on. This is the perspective, necessarily integral to a full appreciation of the Christian gospel, that comes most clearly into focus with the challenge of Marxist ideals.

Theology of Liberation

Of course, if Christianity accepts this challenge, it cannot stand entirely aloof from the worlds of politics, economics and social planning; it demands full commitment to the improvement of the quality of life for all men and women throughout the world. This kind of thinking has already developed most obviously among Christians in South America, where a diversity of approaches and opinions have been grouped together under the blanket term 'theology of liberation'. Many of its advocates are Roman Catholics working at grass roots level in the midst of extreme poverty. They are working in countries where 'development' often means only a widening of the existing gulf between the rich and the poor, the socially privileged and the oppressed. They share a common disillusionment with many of the methods of traditional missionary activity. Both the influx of aid through charity organisations and the spiritual invasion of zealous missionary societies are suspected as examples of a 'paternalism' that fails to get to the heart of the long-term problem and sometimes even makes matters worse. They point to an over-emphasis on 'individualism' and insufficient emphasis on 'individuality', in which the goal is to create a genuine and lasting enrichment in the life of individuals and communities that can then sustain themselves in a condition of economic, social, political and spiritual liberation.

It is important to note that many who are committed to this trend in theology are at the same time convinced pacifists, unwilling to follow the tenets of revolutionary Marxism. By involvement in a variety of educative community programmes they seek to enable people living in hopeless conditions to discover and to realise the promises of hope in their present lives, believing this to be part of the full salvation that Christianity must bear. An introductory account of the work of many key figures in this movement (e.g. Rubem Alves in Brazil, Gustavo Gutierrez in Peru, José Bonino in Argentina and many others) is helpfully presented by Derek Winter, himself formerly with the Baptist Missionary Society, in his book *Hope in Captivity*.¹⁰ Whatever the final assessment of these men and their work, they are tackling questions that cannot be shelved indefinitely. Even if their solutions remain unacceptable, the challenge remains to find alternative answers to the very real questions they raise.

The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann

Whenever an area of Christian thought is under review, especially one so vital for the practical understanding of Christian life and mission, there must be a substantial theological inquiry at the deepest possible level to establish its legitimate foundations. Peter wrote, "Always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls you to

account for the hope that is in you".¹¹ A new trend in Christian theology will only stand the test of time if it can be shown to have a true place in the systematic analysis of biblical faith. The man who has provided much of the theological spadework behind the 'theology of hope' is Jürgen Moltmann, Professor of Systematics at the University of Tübingen. His penetrating analysis of the Christian faith is now extensively available in English, and has had its impact at many levels throughout the world. Many of his ideas have been developed by advocates of the 'theology of liberation' in Latin America, but his insights offer significant challenges in a wide range of theological issues. The remainder of this article seeks to expound his most important contributions. No attempt is made at a detailed criticism of his views, but an attempt is made to highlight those crucial points which must not go unheeded in any further discussions.

Moltmann is likely to have an appeal in a wide variety of Christian traditions, because, in the first place, his analysis of Christian faith is rigorously Christocentric. For Moltmann, Christianity is based on the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. Second, Moltmann is essentially a biblical theologian. Even if in the end it is not possible to agree with the balance of his exposition, the reader is forced to grapple with a serious attempt to understand the God of the Bible. On the Old Testament he draws on the kind of thinking found in the work of Gerhard von Rad¹². On the New Testament he is indebted to Ernst Käsemann and those who have undertaken the 'new quest' for the historical Jesus.¹³ Third, his theology is not 'ivory-tower academic'. It is worked out in the practice of his own preaching of the Christian gospel and his first hand knowledge of the mission of the church in many parts of the world. Unfortunately, many of his works are extremely difficult to read and understand (especially following translation from German into English). This means that there are inherent dangers in any attempt to interpret his writings into something as unambiguous as plain English. The only test of the interpretation that follows will be a thorough reading of his major works.

Moltmann on Hope

What has Moltmann to say that will establish new confidence in the historical resurrection of Jesus? The primary source for an answer to this question is his volume *Theology of Hope*¹⁴, but clarifications can be drawn from articles where Moltmann took the opportunity to respond to his critics.¹⁵ There can be no doubt about Moltmann's debt to his Marxist contemporary, the philosopher Ernst Bloch. Bloch wrote, "The messianic, utopian fire of Christianity has been extinguished ... the enthusiastic expectation of God's Kingdom has degenerated into a resigned dream world beyond the grave".¹⁶ Moltmann accepted the substance of this challenge, especially in view of Marxist success in evoking a quest for the new society, and he sought to learn from Bloch the reason for this dampening of the Christian fire. In so doing, Moltmann is neither advocating Marxism nor atheism, but he believes that Christians can learn even from those with such radically differing views. He sees himself engaged in a "dialogue with a humanism which is seeking a 'future without God' ", believing that here is a challenge to the many Christians who are seeking "God" without his future".¹⁷ Moltmann believes that Christians have lost a vital part of their understanding of God, the God who has 'future as his essential nature'. This is the God that Moltmann finds in the Old Testament, the God of 'promise'. This is the God of the exodus, who goes before his 'wayfaring' people. Moltmann discovers 'promise' and 'fulfilment' to be the essential framework within which God reveals himself to men. But Christians have failed to see that "the God who is recognised in his promises remains superior to any fulfilment that can be experienced".¹⁸ There is always an 'overspill', a 'not yet' of

fulfilment. There is a continual re-discovery of new fulfilments of ancient prophetic promises. This accounts for the present form of many of the biblical prophetic books, which include layers of tradition through which an original prophetic word repeatedly came to life in new applications to the circumstances of the day. So too, in the age of the church, Moltmann thinks there can be present fulfilments of the promise of the coming Kingdom of God through the struggle of Christians for a better world. He strongly upholds an ultimate fulfilment at the end of the age, but seeks to enlarge Christian expectations of the future. "Hope", says Moltmann, "is not just for the eternal future", but is "for the very future of the earth on which the cross stands".¹⁹ God's greatest promise, in the coming of Jesus Christ, far from lulling the believer into a state of contented rest, should fill him with impatience, discontent with the *status quo*: peace with God must mean conflict with the world.

An examination of the work of Ernst Bloch reveals that Moltmann is using Bloch's language to highlight fresh insights into the nature of the Christian God, particularly as he discovers God in the Old Testament. It is interesting to note parallels with the conclusions of Brevard Childs in his innovative commentary on the book of Exodus.²⁰ However, the question remains: why is it that Moltmann can find so many links between Marxism and Christianity, especially when viewed through the perspective of hope? The answer is a common understanding of the nature of history itself. They share a common debt to the tradition that produced Hegel; a tradition in which history is considered in its wholeness, in its essential unity. For example, this means that Moltmann can speak of the history of the world as history 'in God', our history as God's history. This is the key to Moltmann's confidence in the resurrection, and forms a basis for his view of the future. It means that the Christian who has come to recognise the ultimate promise of God in Jesus Christ is also to be committed to the task of active transformation of the present world. This ceaseless quest is rooted in what Moltmann calls, "the inexhaustibility of the God of promise, who never exhausts himself in any historic reality, but comes to 'rest' only in a reality that corresponds entirely to him".²¹

Moltmann on the Resurrection

The easiest way to clarify Moltmann's position is to make comparisons with other contemporary views of history and their corresponding interpretations of the Christian hope. Barth, Bultmann and Cullman serve to illustrate three alternative ways that modern theologians have sought to work within schemes that 'divide' rather than 'unify' the understanding of history. Each divides history into 'the history of ordinary events' and 'the history of special events' the latter being those where God is recognised as breaking into the world. There are two immediate consequences. First, these special events, most notably the resurrection, become inaccessible to the methods of the ordinary historian. In fact, Barth did not feel that there was any point in seeking to establish the facticity of the resurrection, for it was, in his terms, an event 'beyond history'. Second, it can easily mean that the future hope is also relegated to a point 'beyond history', consequently neglecting the reality of hope for the world. Bultmann enigmatically speaks of God's breaking into history as 'bare historicity', in events that are void of factual content. No wonder Christianity is reduced to an unfounded mythology based on an analysis of the human condition. But Moltmann is no more enamoured with the approach of Oscar Cullman, who has received much wider acclaim among Protestant evangelicals. Cullman has created what Moltmann calls the "special ghetto of salvation history".²² God's history and man's history remain poles apart, and the former remains inaccessible to human inquiry.

In contrast, Moltmann, Käsemann, Pannenberg and others have established the so-called 'new quest for the historical Jesus'. History is seen in its essential unity. Even God's saving acts are accessible within the borders of real history, a history shared in

common with the world. Surely it is inevitable that the gospel of the incarnation should be seen as God's action genuinely incarnated in the reality of history? It is vitally important to recognise how all these central themes of the Christian faith are dovetailed together in a systematic whole. All too often systematic thinking is shunned and an aspect of Christian thought is developed as if it could be totally isolated. A view of history, a method of exegesis, a belief in the historical resurrection, a belief in the incarnation, an attitude to the future hope and the practice of Christian mission are all tightly interwoven and interdependent. A decision about the nature of history itself has repercussions in every sphere of theology.

However, accepting the premise of the unity of history still leaves large questions unanswered, especially in the light of contemporary secular approaches to history. The present secular approach to historical inquiry can be described as founded on the principle of analogy. The probability of an event in the past is evaluated by comparison with an event in present experience. This method of doing history received its formal development mainly through the work of Ernst Troelsch. It has been widely adopted by Christian theologians, especially the existentialists. It follows inevitably that the saving acts of God must be expelled from the sphere of 'normal' history, for what possible analogy can be found to the resurrection of Jesus Christ? This is where the 'new questers' themselves diverge in the search for a principle by which to verify God's saving acts in history.

Moltmann finds the answer in what he calls the 'eschatological perspective'. It is possible, he argues, to find a day when there will be a contemporary analogy to the resurrection of Jesus. This is the Day of the Lord, when the dead will be raised according to the promise of God. Moltmann argues that, once history is seen in its wholeness, and once it has been appreciated in its structure of promise and fulfilment, it is legitimate to find here an analogical basis sufficient for the verification of faith. His own phrase is 'eschatological verification'. This, in fact, presents a challenge to the whole method of doing history. It is suggested that the method of doing history should be determined by a prior understanding of the relationship between God and the world. It is unlikely that many will find Moltmann's solution wholly satisfying, but the principle needs to be considered apart from his particular conclusion. It is of vital importance that Christians should not feel compelled to retreat in the face of a secular method of historiography, a method that is intrinsically incapable of dealing with the truly contingent event, even outside the realm of religion. Christians must be prepared to consider whether their distinctive world-view does not demand an alternative approach to history itself. Equally important is the observation that all those engaged in this new quest are offering to the church new confidence in the resurrection of Jesus. Implicit is a new confidence in the future and a greater reality of Christian hope in God.

Moltmann on the Crucifixion

Finally, it is necessary to examine how these assertions relate to Moltmann's claim that the Christian cannot simply rest in the hope of an eternal future, but must be engaged in the active realisation of that hope in the world through his life and service. Its theological basis is developed most fully in Moltmann's second major work *The Crucified God*.²³ In a practical application of his principle of the unity of history, Moltmann examines the death of Christ in the full context of his life and the actual process of his dying. Traditionally, the death of Christ has been interpreted mainly in the light of the resurrection, but this necessarily favours an interpretation loaded with futurist significance. In this way, Moltmann discovers new areas of significance in the death of Christ: social, political and religious significance, all closely inter-related.²⁴ Great importance is given to Jesus' cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast

thou forsaken me?"²⁵ which is seen as the clearest indicator of what God was doing in Christ. This is an event in the very heart of God himself, which can only be understood paradoxically in a formula such as: God against God, for us. For Moltmann, the Christian God is the one who bears suffering in himself for the sake of men. This, of course, raises enormous questions in the light of the classical doctrines of the immutability and impassibility of God. These cannot be discussed here. Sufficient to quote the summary formula, in which Moltmann seeks to express his analysis of the suffering that is borne in God. "The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son".²⁶ This makes fascinating reading and raises many important questions. It is relevant to note that many of these theological ideas grew out of Moltmann's practical experience of human suffering in the prison camps of Second World War Germany. He acknowledges a particular debt to Dostoevsky, whose novels he read for the first time during his own term of imprisonment.²⁶

What matters here is that this understanding of suffering, borne in the very heart of God himself, also determines the pattern for Christian living as 'taking up the cross', a responsibility worked out in commitment to the alleviation of suffering in this present world. The Christian, his understanding of God and his hope for the future fired by the death and resurrection of Christ, should find himself utterly committed to the liberation of his fellow-men from whatever physical or spiritual condition it is that binds them, inhibiting the realisation of the Christian hope.

In Conclusion

Here are the theological foundations of a way to understand the Christian faith that clearly has many repercussions in the practice of Christian life and mission. It is the theoretical foundation of a Christian concept of hope that can, in turn, form the basis of a practical 'ministry of hope', both to the living and to the dying. Two focal areas of Christian truth are under review. First, there are renewed foundations for confidence in the historical resurrection of Jesus. Second, there is a commission to work and bring about fulfilments of the promise of Christian hope in the liberation of men from their present sufferings. Response to the challenges posed here will mean a costly commitment by believers to engage in every facet of human life: this is the cost of realising the hope promised to the world in Jesus Christ.

Richard L. Kidd

FOOTNOTES

1. I Corinthians 13:13 (Good News Bible)
2. The Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, held in London, April 1978
3. For further background, see Kittell, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume II, p517ff.
4. I Peter 1:3 (This and all future references are from the Revised Standard Version)
5. Through the publication of *The Myth of God Incarnate*, SCM, 1977, and regular features on British television, these approaches to Christian faith have been given considerable exposure.
6. John Henry Newman, *The Development of Christian Doctrine*, Pelican Books, 1974.
7. I Corinthians 15:19
8. James Klugmann, 'The Marxist Hope' in *The Christian Hope*, SPCK, 1970, pp49-68.

9. Quotations from the *Baptist Times*, May 4th, 1978.
10. Derek Winter, *Hope in Captivity*, Epworth, 1977. Many of the comments in the preceding paragraph have their origins in this book.
11. I Peter 3:15.
12. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Oliver and Boyd, 1962.
13. Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, SCM, 1969.
14. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, SCM, 1967.
15. For example, *Hope and Planning*, SCM, 1971; and *The Experiment Hope*, Fortress Press, 1975.
16. Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, quoted from an article by G.G. O'Collins, 'The Principle and Theology of Hope', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 21, 1968, p129.
17. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope*, p32.
18. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p105.
19. *Ibid.*, p21.
20. Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus*, SCM, 1974.
21. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p106.
22. See A.D. Galloway, 'The New Hegelians', *Religious Studies*, Vol. 8, 1972, p367ff.
23. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, SCM, 1974.
24. *Ibid.*, Chapter 4.
25. *Ibid.*, p243.
26. Jürgen Moltmann, 'Dostoevsky and the Hope of Prisoners' in *The Experiment Hope*, p85f.

MISSIONARIES GO HOME! ... Conclusion

'The old picture of the missionary as one who sallies forth from a geographically defined Christendom into the outer world of barbarous superstition is no longer valid. Today the mission field is everywhere, and the home base is wherever the Church exists. Today the pagan world is no longer something away over the horizon; it is here in the midst of us. We live in a world in which the competing faiths, no longer separated and insulated by distance, jostle one another in every city and even in the minds of ordinary Christians'.

(Lesslie Newbigin)

Three talking-points emerge from my first article

1. **What do we mean by the word 'missionary'?** If the day of the missionary enterprise as we have known it is drawing to a close, it is only because a new chapter in mission has yet, under God, to begin. Do we think of the missionary in terms of a vacancy list? At our end, the sending; at the other end, the vacancy. We have talked about 'Churches in Partnership' for so long, but little has been acted upon. So anger is produced and talk of a moratorium. In some instances it may be right to break away

from the dependence of one group of Christians upon another group of Christians. It may be that when the Third World gets beyond its anger and Europe beyond its sense of guilt, the tension will become creative of new forms of giving and receiving in mutuality. All the great figures of the past have challenged what *is* — ecclesiastically, culturally and intellectually. Always the temptation is that the missionary is seen as a cog in the Church machine; if say a presbyter from the Church of South India came among us to minister and be a missionary, we run the risk of being challenged and of a rude awakening. Some aspects of the missionary task are to be found within the Church, but there are areas of mission *outside* which the institutional Church cannot reach. We need to be helped to see ourselves and our missionary situation as others see us. This is not a comfortable experience, and it is a most uncomfortable calling to be prophetic. Dare we encourage the prophetic voice 'over there' to come 'here', among us, to challenge our structures and to give us eyes to see beyond our institutional life?

2. What kind of a missionary organisation must evolve in a new day? I mean by this such an organisation which acknowledges that the balance of Church life in the world has changed so rapidly. Why should we decide and have all the machinery of decision making? In terms of money, the piper calls the tune, but in the Christian family, an ecumenical family, must we not create a new kind of organisation for giving and receiving in resources and personnel for a real partnership? There is need to break down the dichotomy between Mission at home and overseas. The West needs salvation too in our dehumanised, technological age. Mission is not something we pay someone to do for us somewhere else, and an organisation that is exclusively missionary in an overseas context must now inevitably be called into question. There is no integrity in pursuing mission in other parts of the world without pursuing it here at home.

3. There is need to think freshly about the purpose and aim of mission. As D.T. Niles once said: "Mission is not a population drive for heaven. The Gospel was proclaimed because those who had responded to it wanted to share with others the best they knew. If this is propoganda, so be it. Saving of one's soul and joining the Christian Church are not the object of evangelism or the esse of conversion; they are results. Neither of these things must be put at the centre." (Douglas Webster: 'Not Ashamed', page 89) The Overseas Churches bring something new; our stance tends to be upon conversions. Conversions happen still, need to happen, and thank God always will happen. But is this the centre? Or the new reality of a new heaven and a new earth? "Show us a *society* which is converted" is the demand from overseas, and it is a sad fact of history that some of the great ages of faith yield very little effort to change society. In South Africa today there are many Christians but ... have we anything to say upon the conversion of society, of power structures, as well as individuals? It is from our Christian style of life — "politei" — that politics derive. Or, are we going to deny a good slice of relevance and meaning to the proclamation of the King and His kingdom?

Three factors — if not more — will continue to govern our thinking of missions and missionaries.

- 1) The fact of political nationalism. Hindu India, Moslem Pakistan and Bangladesh and Buddhist Sri Lanka may shut the door to 'foreign' Christians who wish to come as missionaries.
- 2) The fact of large-scale immigration from eastern lands has brought many Hindus, Moslems & Buddhists to western countries. How are these newcomers to be evangelised?
- 3) The fact that the younger churches of the former mission fields are now on the way to self-determination and self-support. "Let us run our Churches with our own folk" they seem to be saying. They may not be altogether right, but we must listen.

Charles W. Karunaratna

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BOOK REVIEWS

Recent Christological studies have left many Christians disquieted by what they judge to be the agnostic temper of the modern mind. One virtue of these studies has been however, the attempt to see Jesus in the setting of his own culture and not through the coloured spectacles of our own. Paternoster Press have recently published two books that will help us all to come closer to Christ as he was known and experienced by his contemporaries.

John — Evangelist and Interpreter by S. Smalley (Paternoster £7.00, 285pp) is an excellent Introduction to the present state of Johannine studies. The revered tradition that set John over against the synoptics and viewed it more as a meditation than an account is now being called into question. Smalley believes that *John* is not a 'spiritual' continuation of the synoptic tradition but originates in a separate Palestinian tradition and was written without knowledge of the Synoptics. Further, the view that it was largely influenced by Hellenism is now abandoned in favour of Judaistic influence. Smalley has much helpful comment on the theological considerations that determined the structure of the gospel. Writing for Christians of Jewish origin who found the divinity of Jesus difficult to accept and Christians from a Hellenist background who were more prone to gnosticism and thus a denial of the Lord's real humanity *John* sets out to present Jesus as truly Son of God and Son of Man. Smalley argues for the historicity of the gospel's contents, supporting his claim with a critical examination of what must be the gospel's two most difficult narratives, the changing of water into wine at Cana and the raising of Lazarus: difficult, even if only for their omission from the synoptics.

From what is a fascinating and stimulating book on *John* to the first of a new series of commentaries on the Greek New Testament. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Paternoster, £13.00, 928pp) by Howard Marshall is value for money. After a forty page introduction (readers are referred to Howard Marshall's book *Luke: Historian and Theologian* for a deeper examination of the critical questions of authorship, sources, etc.), the entire book deals with the text of the gospel.

Preachers are sometimes frustrated by commentaries that fall into one of two categories. The first delves deeply into critical analysis but makes no attempt to deal with the theological questions raised by the passage being studied. The second provides expository material but at the cost of turning a blind eye to the critical problems. This commentary should satisfy the most fastidious in both groups. Marshall supplies us with a wealth of material, both critical and expository. If you are thinking of bringing the commentaries on your shelves up to date Paternoster's New International Greek Testament Commentary looks like being a splendid investment if this first volume is any indication of what is to come.

M.W.