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The Theology of Mission — a Survey 1952-77

THE intention of this article is to indicate some of the main developments in the theology of mission as it has been articulated in world missionary thought and especially in the International Missionary Council, subsequently the W.C.C.'s Department of World Mission and Evangelism.

The major conferences of the International Missionary Council, the World Council of Churches and other bodies provide convenient landmarks when making a survey such as this. They are focal points in the process of exploration and action. Various study projects and programmes of action are started at one conference and then reported at subsequent conferences. Thus the preparation for these conferences and their reports conveniently underline and make available a large amount of otherwise diffuse work. They are also occasions for "taking the temperature", when issues are discussed and points of view heard from a wide constituency. The following conferences are referred to in the text. The various reports and other documents are normally catalogued under these headings.

1910: Edinburgh: World missionary conference from which the modern world ecumenical movement is dated and the origin of the International Missionary Council.

1952: Willingen: World Missionary Conference of the I.M.C.

1961: New Delhi: Assembly of the W.C.C. when the W.C.C. and I.M.C. were joined and the Department of World Mission and Evangelism was formed.

1963: Mexico City: World Missionary Conference of the D.W.M.E.

1968: Uppsala: Assembly of the W.C.C.

1973: Bangkok: World missionary conference of the D.W.M.E.

1974: Lausanne: International Congress on World Evangelisation, sponsored by the more conservative evangelical organisations and churches.

1975: Nairobi: Assembly of the W.C.C.

This can only present the broad sweep of the changing emphases since the Second World War and must, perforce, omit some important facets. Nevertheless, it would seem valuable. We in this country are part of the world mission of the Church and what is happening globally or elsewhere in the world does in fact and ought consciously to affect us. This is as true theologically as practically. Theology, as reflections on what is happening in history within the understanding that Jesus Christ is Lord, provides the proper framework for Christian witness and service. So it is good that we should be more aware of the context in which we work, the British being a most insular people. It also provides a criterion of judgement by which we may assess our own attitudes and action both in what we do as part of the mission of the People of God, where we are set and how we relate to and support that wider mission for which we are all responsible.

1. First, there are two general points to be made as to what has happened to the Church in the twentieth century, for it is against the historical background that theology has to work.

The great era of Protestant expansion from the late eighteenth century was done on the basis of the expansion of Western civilisation. There is no intention to belittle this achievement, nor to doubt that it was right that the Gospel should have such a vehicle, but to accept the reality, warts and all. The result was that by and large Christianity was a white man's religion, dependent on and promoted by the support of economic and cultural superiority. The Gospel has always been related to and uses historical forms, the earthen vessels of mission. We should therefore remember the great Catholic missionary expansions of the sixteenth and seventeenth century at the height of Spanish and Portuguese power and that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were the period of the greatest expansion of the Orthodox churches as Russia spread eastwards over Asia.¹

Now, however, that has all changed as Christianity becomes detached from its cultural base and is seen to be truly universal. This is a triple phenomenon. First, William Temple's 'great new fact of our era', the world wide reality of the Church, means that it has burst the cocoon of western culture and has begun to find its way into the reality of other peoples and ways of life. Secondly, the receding of the tide of Western hegemony means that the Churches are more and more left behind, having to put down their roots afresh in the new situations that confront them. They must survive independently within the new nations or die. Thirdly, Western culture itself cannot now be regarded as essentially Christian. The elusive phenomenon of secularisation has meant that even the Churches of Europe and America cannot be assured of their cultural acceptance. We, too, live in missionary situations.

The other, complementary, aspect of this change is the growing recognition that 'Church is mission'. Far too long the two had been separated, mission frequently being an addendum for enthusiasts or what happens over there in some remote place, whether a village in the jungle or on the other side of the tracks. Now, to quote Emil Brunner: 'The Church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning'. That is what we have to recognise. The reason for the Church's existence is mission and that everything done has to serve that end. This is the primary reason for all the search for renewal and unity, the demand for experiment and change. None of that is merely fad or wanton prodigality but are genuine attempts to live in obedience to God's call. The shaking of the foundations comes because the Church has been drawn by the Spirit to look again at itself, to face the need to relate to a new world, to be open to Christ's grace and judgement in our time.

II. Against that background we begin at the central theological point that mission is the mission of God. The use of 'catch phrases' is both useful and dangerous. Their value is that they pin point a range of ideas in a useful and

often creative way. Their danger is that they can become rallying cries for an over simplified theology blocking further exploration and discussion. Nevertheless for us they can provide land marks on our journey.

Missio Dei became the focus of attention from the Willingen conference of the I.M.C. in 1952. God is the 'sending God' who is himself active in the work of creation and salvation. The Uppsala (1968) documents said:

'The God of the Bible is a sending God — he sends his prophets; he sends his Son; he sends his Spirit through the Son; he sends the apostles through the Son and by the Spirit. But the context of his sending is always history, since it is his concern to be present in the actual life situation of every man. Participation in God's mission is therefore entering into partnership with God in history, because our knowledge of God in Christ compels us to affirm that God is working out his purpose in the midst of the world and its historical processes.'²

This mission is bound up with the very life of God himself. It is not *ad extra*, external to God's own being and will, almost an afterthought, or something done by us for God! Nor is mission something done in preparation for God, making it possible for God to come. It is something done in God for God himself is mission. Mission is bound up in the Trinitarian life of God. The God of creation and salvation, who acts out of his own inner nature of love and personhood, is the God who is the author and centre of mission (cf. Romans 8 and the work of God in and through creation). Therefore mission is eschatological and all embracing. Mission cannot be reduced to winning converts, though it includes that, nor is it establishing Churches, though that too is involved. Mission is a total concept, pointing to the dynamic of creative and redeeming love. The purposes of God are to create a world and a people for himself.

'It is participation in the sending of the Son, *the missio Dei*, with the all embracing aim of establishing the lordship of Christ over the whole redeemed creation.'³

The horizons are universal. Nothing is excluded, especially the whole of human life. Yet it is not finished. All we are given is to be obedient in our place and in our way. This is only one aspect or factor in mission. Yet each is a real part in God's work as we live in service, creative action, witness, in work or home, family or community. Mission is partnership with God. He is the primary agent. He directs; he leads; he controls.

III. Such an understanding of *missio Dei* had to affect the way in which the Church's task was viewed. God is not to be understood as 'inside the Church', or to put it differently, the Church does not define the boundaries of salvation. If God is active in history the mission can be seen to be going on outside the bounds of the Church. Indeed world events can be part of

God's way of judging and leading his Church (cf. Isaiah 40-55). But this does ask us to redefine the significance of the Church in the mission, in salvation history.

Indeed there were, in the '60's, some very negative estimations of the Church and its task, partly due to disappointment with what was found in the Churches as well as reflecting an over exclusive emphasis on God's work in the world. But from the experience came a number of pointers which have become more or less normative.

The Church is *pars pro toto*. The fellowship of word and sacrament is a foretaste of the eschatological fulfilment. That which has been promised and is being worked out in the ambiguities of history is glimpsed as present possibility in the Church. Thus the People of God find themselves as a 'workshop' of the Spirit, offering themselves in fellowship and service to be proofs of the Gospel.

The Church is witness. We point away from ourselves to God in Christ. As Karl Barth says, John the Baptist is the figure of the Church. We point to Jesus as the key to all reality, not just of ourselves though as we have suggested, insofar as there is a work of grace in us or the Church, that too is 'not unto us'. But above that we 'name the name' that is above every name by which the whole creation is governed. We claim, in all humility 'to understand the world better than it does itself.' (Bonhoeffer)

The Church is service. It exists, as Temple put it 'for those who are not its members.' It is 'the Church for others' and thus part of the mission. In this sense it has to give itself, as did its master, for the life of the world whatever that may be. Its first aim is not to increase its size or influence, to make conversions, but to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed. Yet that, if done in real service and witness is, and contains, a proclamation of the call to repentance and faith.

Yet the Church is the world. We are part of the world which God has to save. There is no special privilege in sanctity. The Church, like the world, is under judgement and grace. It lives by the power of repentance. It is a home for sinners who need forgiveness. It would not be true to itself if the world were not reflected in its life — for God gives himself to such.

If God is at work in the world then how are we to work with him and to witness to him? Presumably Christians want to say that it is possible to discern the hand of God in the world, even though they would also want to suggest that even in the darkest place God is not absent or powerless. But we need to look for the places of hope, the opportunities for renewal, the crises of judgement. Thus the Church, or Christians in the world, has a prophetic role of pointing to the special places where the Spirit would have us work, think, witness.

'Salvation works in the struggle for economic justice against the exploitation of people by people.

Salvation works in the struggle for human dignity against political oppression by their fellow men.

Salvation works in the struggle of hope against despair in personal life.'⁴

It was this that impelled in the 1960's the emergence of political activity in the Churches across the world. It was an attempt to express in realistic terms what God would have us say with and for the oppressed. While it was not very prominent in our country we can recognise it in the U.S.A. and in Southern Africa. It was part of the emergence of the Third World which can be seen as a new era in the history of the world, a liberation of peoples to a new Exodus with all its opportunities and dangers. Is this not part of God's living hope?

This was the thinking behind another 'catch phrase' — 'The world sets the agenda' (Mexico City 1963). The task of the Church cannot be defined by its own inner satisfaction or needs. Nor does the Church set the assignments for God's mission. The Church is a body of disciples who respond to a call, who live by obedience to God's Spirit and find themselves serving where God has placed them. Of course the wisdom of God is hidden and we may find ourselves given strange tasks. But we exist for the world and it is the world that God serves and where he acts. So it is to the world's needs and aspirations, history and life that we turn when we ask what does God want us to do.

There has been a proper and healthy reaction to this way of thinking because it too frequently seemed to lead to inadequate Christian responses. It needs to be held very firmly in the wider Biblical perspective with its emphasis on the knowledge of the Lord and the eschatological understanding of the Kingdom. The hand of God can too easily be identified with the latest cause. Mission can become sucked into the latest crusades. But the God who is at work is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And all we are now given are signs of hope not the finished task. Everything has to be recognised as not fixed or final and however right it may be sin is always at the door waiting to spoil it.

Nevertheless it is essential to retain a grasp of the wholeness of mission and the concreteness of its application. It is about the fulfilment of human destiny in God's loving purposes. It is about the affirmation of the goodness of creation and the importance of human social existence. This is the thrust behind the interest since Uppsala on 'humanization', making it possible to become human. This has a proper concern for the political and economic structures of the world: (and in this whole section we are bordering on all the other socio-political concerns of the World Council of Churches, which are all part of 'mission'). Yet there is a further theological and intellectual task. There is a great need for a renewed Christian humanism that can enable us to focus on the reality of man as he is known in Christ and lives in the modern world.

IV. The secular concerns of the 60's produced reactions. There emerged a strong desire to rediscover and explore the spiritual which burst into a thousand blooms. Within the Christian tradition this finds itself expressed in different forms of charismatic and other spirituality. But more central to our purpose was a desire to reaffirm the distinctive Christian evangelism as central to mission. This was the burden of a forceful intervention by John Stott at Uppsala (1968) when the report on mission was revised and included these words:

'Our part in evangelism might be described as bringing about the occasions for men's response to Jesus Christ. Often the turning point does not appear as a religious choice at all. Yet it is a new birth ... For there is no turning to God which does not at the same time bring a man face to face with his fellow men in a new way.'⁵

At Nairobi (1975) we heard these words:

'Our obedience to God and our solidarity with the human family demand that we obey Christ's command to proclaim and demonstrate God's love to every person ...'⁶

Perhaps, however, the symbol of the reawakening of the evangelistic part in Christian witness was the Lausanne Conference of 1974.

The emphasis on evangelism is not unambiguous. It has obviously meant for some the narrowing down of mission to a pietistic proclamation of an individualistic soul saving. But at its best evangelicalism has never meant that. It is clear that much of the approach to mission described above has distressed and alienated some evangelicals. The main demand is for a firm commitment to evangelism as an essential part of mission. But evangelism is not mission. It is that part of the total Christian activity which proclaims the reality of God's saving action in Christ and calls people to faith, obedience and repentance, to receive the present power of Christ and to enter into the life of discipleship. 'The essence of evangelism lies in the faithful proclamation of the Gospel'.⁷

Among evangelicals and others there can be different emphases as to how mission and evangelism relate and as to their priority. It was a desire to escape from the narrow inadequacies of an earlier pietism and to be able more adequately to relate to a changing world that moved many to search for new forms of theology of mission. It is interesting to see how contemporary evangelicalism offers a far richer and open understanding than previously. It is obvious that evangelicals have responded to what has happened over the years. It is essential that what is being urged so strongly should be listened to and welcomed, enriching everyone in their search for obedience. So there is no simple contrast between the two. Central to all Christian faith is the Gospel of redeeming love, which is the basis of all true human existence before God and between people. And there is a unity of love of God and neighbour that cannot be rent assunder. 'Evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty'.⁸

V. Mission is participation in the mission of God. It is our task to point to where God is active in the world. What, then, are we to say about other religions? This has been a permanent question with Christianity ever since the beginning. It has been a burning issue in Western missions, especially since the rise of liberal theologies from the end of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century there has been tension between those, following the American liberal schools who would offer various kinds of syncretism, and those in the Neo-Orthodox tradition who would stress the distinctiveness of

Christianity, though not necessarily denying truth in other faiths. Since the Second World War the debate has been complicated by the 'secularisation debate. Those who have seen secularism as the enemy of religion have tended to stress the need for all faiths to stand together against the great apostasy. This can range from a simplistic syncretism to mutual respect. Over against this, however, has been the assertion that secularisation is a product of the Gospel and that therefore Christ and the secular are over against the sacralising religions. The mission of God is directly in line with the progress of modern technological society.

More recently the concept of 'dialogue' has been used in relation to this problem. Its emergence is linked with the fear of 'triumphalism', the assumption that Christians have got it right and have a right to proclaim but not listen. It is also linked with the disillusion of the West in the crises of power and pollution and population, the search for humility. Theologically, dialogue can be justified in terms of the *logos*, divine reason, that is in and behind everything, and therefore in the faiths of the world Christians can learn more of Christ. Once again we are in an ambiguous and complex area. It can mean sitting loose to one's own tradition and faith. It can also point to the fact that God moves in diverse ways and in any case never compels faith. Further it can indicate the need for others' existence and culture to be taken seriously for it is there, and not in our way that Christ will be formed in him. At its best then 'dialogue' is a profoundly Christian form of witness, bearing the marks of patience, love, commitment and the search for truth, believing that the Lord can lead us and each person into a greater understanding and a fuller reality.

'A Christian's dialogue with another implies neither a denial of the uniqueness of Christ, nor any loss of his own commitment to Christ, but rather that a genuinely Christian approach to others must be human, personal, relevant and humble ... Each meets and challenges the other, witnessing from the depths of his existence to the ultimate concerns that come to expression in word and action. As Christians we believe that Christ speaks in this dialogue, revealing himself to those who do not know him and correcting the limited and distorted knowledge of those who do'.⁹

'Dialogue' in fact is not so new or strange. It is a basic pastoral prerequisite—to listen and not to speak until the word is known and right. Nor are the barriers of religion (though these are now more and more real in our own land) unique. There are, e.g., the barriers of class or profession. 'Dialogue' is a natural and essential part of witness. 'Both "presence" and "dialogue" are indispensable to evangelism', writes John Stott, 'not as an alternative to proclamation but as providing the only context within which the proclamation may be made with Christian sensitivity'.¹⁰

VI. We began by pointing to the new historical context of mission in the twentieth century with the decline of the West and the emergence of global politics. In this last section we turn full circle with two further themes.

The first is the controversial concept of the 'moratorium' which suddenly came to the fore after Bangkok, 1973, though in the conference it had not figured very largely. It was further discussed at Lausanne in 1974. The idea is that, in order to make a clean break between the sponsoring bodies and the younger churches, to end once and for all the dependence of the one on the other and the control exercised over the new Churches, there should be a complete cessation of missionary funding or secondment of personnel. The younger church needs to discover independence and responsibility.¹¹

Such a suggestion appears as though mission is being denied. It has indeed been talked about in a mood of angry and bitter rejection. But that is not the intention. The suggestion comes from the younger churches. It can be costly, counting failure. But, at the right time and properly prepared for and agreed to, it is seen as necessary for true maturity and independence. It is argued that there cannot be true interdependence and mutual responsibility in mission if one partner has never been allowed actually or psychologically to be independent. In actual fact there have been examples of 'moratoria', some voluntary, on larger and smaller scales, and some enforced by a hostile regime or other circumstances. There is evidence to suggest that, despite a poor prognosis, the results show positive growth in maturity and power in such situations. Do we in fact all too easily acquiesce in situations of easy dependence?

'The whole debate on the 'moratorium' springs from our failure to relate to one another in a way that does not dehumanise. The 'moratorium' would enable the receiving Church to find its identity, set its own priorities and discover within its fellowship the resources to carry out its mission. It would also enable the sending Church to rediscover its identity in the context of the contemporary situation'.¹²

'That, however, is not the end of the story. The 'moratorium' is only a means to an end—the furtherance of mission. Out of it should come a new partnership which is stronger and richer and which can face the realities of the mission more adequately. For mission is a common responsibility and mutual enterprise. The whole People of God, living across the whole earth, are the living witness and gift of God. The whole life of the People of God, in daily necessity and quiet ordering in witness and service, in worship and proclamation, in key points of danger and world issues, in building community and fellowship; is the Mission of the People of God as they serve God and their generation. Within that there are the necessary planning and cooperation, providing the sinews of corporate witness and service. There is no base and no mission field, only the common obedience and mutual interdependence! The resources of the whole Church in terms of men, money and expertise are available for the use of the whole Church.'

Secondly, the theme of the Mexico conference in 1963 was 'mission in six continents. This sums up the new situation. God's people are now established in every continent. But the whole world still needs to see and hear the Gospel. Symbolically too, it was acknowledged when the I.M.C.,

originating at Edinburgh 1910, amalgamated with the W.C.C. at New Delhi, 1961. In our own country several denominations have also brought home and overseas spheres together. Now the Conference of British Missionary Societies is within the British Council of Churches. Church and mission are one. The challenge before the British Churches, when we are considering a "National Initiative in Evangelism" is to accept our part in the total mission of the whole Church. An important aspect of that is to be able to listen with humility to what our brethren elsewhere in the world have discovered and are saying. The world has changed. We must discover again what the reality of mission is for us today. God is not dead but leads us into new tasks and fresh ways. We must proclaim the Gospel and witness to what He is doing. We can never lose the vision of a world in which Christ is Lord and we are His servants, a world in which we must live by that faith and call others to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in Christ.

Paul H. Ballard

Notes:-

1. For the history of missions see: Stephen Neill: *The Pelican history of the Church 6 – Christian Missions*. (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964; Max Warren: *The Missionary Movement from Britain in Modern History* (S.C.M., London 1965); Gerald H. Anderson: *The Theology of Christian Mission* (S.C.M., London 1961) provides a good introduction to developments in the 20th century, up to the New Ihi Conference in 1961, as well as a full bibliography. For subsequent developments see review article — Johannes Aargaard: Trends in Missiological Thinking in the Sixties in *International Review of Mission* January 1973 (LXII -245).
2. Drafts for Sixties, Uppsala 1968, p33; *The Church for Others* (W.C.C., Geneva, 1967) pl3f.
3. Quoted in Aargaard, p12. cf J. Moltmann: *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (S.C.M, London,1977).
4. *Meeting in Bangkok: International Review of Mission* April 1973 (LXII-246) p200.
5. K. Slack: *Uppsala Report*. (S.C.M., London, 1968), p76.
6. *D.M. Paton: Breaking Barriers-Nairobi 1975* (S.P.C.K., London, 1976).
7. John Stott: *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Falcon, London, 1975) p40.
8. *Lausanne Covenant*: paragraph 5, in ed. J.D. Douglas: *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*: (World Wide Publications, Minneapolis, 1975).

9. Quoted in K. Slack, *op, cit.* p76.
10. John Stott: *International Review of Mission*: July 1975 (LXIV-255) p75. This issue is devoted to a discussion of dialogue.
11. *International Review of Mission*: April 1975 (LXIV-254) was devoted to a discussion of the moratorium idea.
12. *International Review of Mission*: April 1973 (LXII-246) p223.

General Committee Notes

THE General Committee met on November 13th 1978 when twenty two members were present.

The main item on the Agenda was the future structure of the committee. The secretary reported that he had received 20 replies from Fraternalists; the majority of which were against any change. The replies and comments were analysed and carefully considered and thereupon decided that the composition of the committee should remain as heretofore, viz, two representatives from each area, plus those who hold office in the fellowship, i.e. those whose names appear on page one of '*The Fraternal*'. Appreciation was expressed of those fraternalists which had responded to the secretary's letter and the committee wish to place on record their special thanks to them. The "Executive Officers" would constitute an 'ad hoc' committee to deal with any urgent matters which might arise and would only meet as and when required. There is now no Executive Committee. The term "executive officers" is understood to mean:- The Chairman; the Secretary; the Treasurer; the Minute Secretary; Membership Secretary; Editor; Ex-Chairman and when appointed the Vice Chairman.

Under the heading Reports, the following were noted:-

David Piggott stated that there was a slight increase in numbers of members. There was a need to make early contact with students in our colleges. Arthur Coffey reported on new correspondents in Australia. Ron Rivers gave an interesting breakdown of the totals of "Fraternalists" sent to various countries in Europe. George Neal asked that more use be made of the library. Ninety new books had been purchased since he took office as librarian.

Probationers Summer School 1979 — 11th to 14th June at St. Edwards, Great Malvern. Main theme will be "Church Growth".

Pastoral Sessions. 1979 — 25th April. Speaker Alan Webster, dean of St. Pauls, whose subject will be "The Gospel in the metropolis". **Note:** The meeting will commence at 2.45 p.m.

1980. Nottingham. It was agreed that this be a deliberative session and plans are being formulated forthwith.

Housing. The sub-committee presented a draft of their interim report and this is being submitted to accountants with specialised knowledge for comments.

Study notes. Committee would remind fraternalists that these are still available.

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Reflections on a Public Resolution

THE Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union meeting in London at the end of April 1978 overwhelmingly passed a resolution relating to the important moral and social issue of race relations. The resolution affirmed the Christian understanding of one humanity, rejoiced in that humanity's diversity and condemned any discrimination based on ethnic origins. It declared opposition to those groups, and some were named, that had discriminatory racialist emphases in their political programme yet it also confessed that within our own corporate life as Baptists we have failed to give "proper recognition to people of all races." The resolution went on to call Baptists to commit themselves to the nurturing of healthy race relations in their own localities, to educate themselves in order to be able to share the better in the current national debate on racism and encouraged them to promote racial understanding at international level.

The purpose of this brief essay is threefold. It is (1) to reflect on the form of this statement (2) to ask why such statements on moral and social issues are made by Christian bodies (3) to consider the status of such a statement in the denomination. My argument will be that the process of reflecting upon and speaking to the moral and social issues of the day is an important feature of Christian existence. I believe it should be more obviously part of our denominational life than it is.

(1) The Form of the statement.

The resolution put before the Assembly was brisk and direct. It takes but a matter of minutes to read. No attempt was made to argue a case or persuade others to a particular point of view. Two New Testament texts were quoted. A position with political consequences was taken and an attitude of mind encouraged. It was basically a word spoken to the churches. It did not call for any direct Government action. This curt form relates to the context in which the resolution was set and I shall come in a moment to consider that.

I am sure there is a place for such direct words spoken to a specific situation but there are advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are the directness, the plain speaking, the clear challenge on a specific matter. What is believed to be the Christian position is bluntly set forth. The disadvantages include the lack of any persuasive reasoning, the possible confusion of terms, the absence of evidence, the loss of any considered application of the principle stated etc. A longer statement would have been able to develop the argument. It would have set forth the reasons for the Christian view of all the peoples of the world as one family and would have clarified such phrases as "racial diversity", "ethnic origins" and "people of all races". A longer statement would have given evidence of the racist emphases of the National Front by quoting their publications; and reference would have been made to contemporary events showing how such racist emphases do lead to violence. Consideration could then have been given to

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the question of the freedom of political groups to hold marches in places where the risk of violence is high. A longer statement could have discussed what form healthy race relations take in a locality; what action churches might take to nurture these relations; what is involved in making a Christian judgment on the question of immigration control etc. The very complexity and range of these issues means that a short sharp statement is not always enough and there is the need for something much fuller by way of a Christian comment.

Some denominations and ecumenical bodies do, from time to time, request a group to produce a report which looks carefully at a contemporary matter of social and moral concern. I am thinking here of the very useful reports that the Church of England's Board of Social Responsibility have provided on Abortion, Euthanasia, Civil Strife etc. Another example would be the report of an ecumenical group serviced and initiated by the United Reformed Church on Non-Violent Action.

These reports look carefully at the teaching of Scripture and the tradition of the Church. They weigh such empirical evidence as is important. They consider other understandings of points at issue and formulate an argument that sometimes leads to special recommendations. The reports from the Church of England Board of Social Responsibility are often written with present or proposed government legislation in view. It is not unknown for such reports to be quoted verbatim in the House of Commons and their recommendations to become part of the law of the land.

I have drawn attention to two forms of statement by which Christian bodies may make comments on moral and social issues. There are other ways by which Christians speak to the concerns of the day. It is time to ask why they do so at all.

(2) Why do Christians make statements on moral and social issues?

The Assembly resolution arose in a particular context. At the time there was talk of a General Election in 1978, possibly in June, by October at the latest. The National Front had already held a number of marches and demonstrations which had led to violence. Other proposed marches were banned. The issue of race relations was 'hot'. It was time for Christians to take a stand and a number of denominations, Christian groups and leaders had already spoken in condemnation of racist attitudes. The British Council of Churches had encouraged a 'sign-in' and had made its position vis-a-vis the National Front quite clear. At the Assembly the Baptists added their voice to the growing Christian chorus. It was, in my judgement, the appropriate response at that time. It was made in the face of what was taken by Christians to be evil. As such the statement was a confession of faith and a witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and a call to the Churches to do battle with the enemy.

Behind the Assembly resolution lay the conviction that Christians have a duty to speak to the society in which they are set. They do so as members of that society and as a witness to the truth and will of God as they understand it. As such, the word spoken may be of condemnation, proclamation and exhortation. The BU resolution was primarily addressed to the Baptist

THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

4 Southampton Row, London, WC1B 4AB. Telephone: 01-405 4084

To the Readers of the 'Fraternal'

Dear Friends,

"... they compared notes, and discovered sundry circumstances that tallied with wonderful exactness - such as Barbara's father having been exactly four years and ten months older than Kit's father, and one of them having died on a Wednesday and the other on a Thursday... with other extraordinary coincidences."

The Old Curiosity Shop - Dickens.

The "they" you will remember were Barbara's mother and Kit's mother who over a comforting cup of tea were indulging in wishful thinking as to the future of the two young people. They were trying to twist odd reasons to support their intention to organise a wedding. There was a certain complacency allied to their wishful thinking from which emerged quite curious supporting conclusions.

You will be surprised, or on second thoughts perhaps you won't be surprised, to hear that quite curious conclusions are set out in some letters which reach my Office. Complacency in the sense of self-satisfaction must have played its part in the attitude of mind of the writers for there is inevitably in such letters a tone of confident certitude based on a lack of root understanding coupled with wishful thinking in the sense of "It won't happen to us." Mostly these letters concern an inability to face up to the harsh realities of inflation both past immediate and future. It is the current rate of inflation which has slowed down and not inflation itself cut back. There is no cut back.

Complacency and wishful thinking are the pillars of the gateway which leads to disaster. I cannot too emphatically repeat that policy sums insured revised last year are out of date - revisions two or three years old are seriously out and earlier revisions now really hopeless! So fast does inflation erode money values.

Complacency and wishful thinking have no place in realistic conclusions.

Yours sincerely
C.J.L. COLVIN
General Manager

Churches, and was a call to challenge evil and to seek the Kingdom.

In other forms of statement made by Churches e.g. the longer reports where the purpose may be to make a contribution to an ongoing debate or to make clear the churches teaching etc. the assumption is still the same, namely that Christians are called to bear responsibility for their own lives and for the sort of society in which they live.

The theological grounding of this responsibility is, I believe, in the Christian doctrine of God. This doctrine affirms that although there is discontinuity between God and creation there is also radical continuity in that, although he is not part of the world, the world owes its existence and continued being to him. God has irretrievably bound himself to the world of which our humanity is a part in the acts of creation and incarnation. He does not stand totally apart from the humanity he made and seeks to remake. The way of his remaking of men lies through 'taking flesh'. There is thus a 'worldliness' about God in Christian thinking for we dare to affirm that the world and all that is in it is his and in it he seeks to fulfil his purposes.

If impossibly the God of the Christians were a detached unconcerned inactive deity whose interests lay in some other sphere of existence then Christians would have reason for arguing that their concern with the things of God caused them to look away from the world. But, on the contrary, the God of Scripture calls for his will to be done on earth. The prophets call for justice in the name of God. The Saviour calls all to the Kingdom, one sign of which is the restoring and healing of broken relationships and the overcoming of prejudice. Sinners we may be who deform the creation of God but we are not abandoned nor forsaken. The prophets still come to call us back to the ways of God, to do the will of God on earth. And it is the will and ways of God thus revealed that determine the calling of the people of God. Simply, our concern is with human relationships and their fulfilment because that is God's concern too.

This point can be made in another rather different way, by noticing an interesting feature of the logic of theological utterances. This feature is all the more interesting because it does not seem to belong necessarily to other universes of discourse in quite the same way as it does to religious language. The point is that the meaning of a religious utterance, i.e. one in which the concept of God is foundational, is both in the word uttered and in the corresponding action inseparable from those words. It makes perfectly good sense to ask after all but the most metaphysical of religious statements, albeit inelegantly, "what are you going to do about it?" Any analysis of a religious utterance will in the end run out into activity. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein drew attention to this as he indicated the inseparable relationship between what he called a language game and a form of life. The point will be obvious to any who will go to a concordance and look up the references to knowing God, for they will find many that imply that knowing God is something you do. This is not to say that we do something in order to say that the knowing is doing, the believing is obeying, there is held together the way, the truth of life. And negatively, doesn't hypocrisy consist in the end in the divorce of language and life?

There is a great deal more that could and should be said to develop and defend the argument here so baldly presented. But space does not allow. So I simply reiterate my answer to the question 'why do Christians make statements on moral and social issues?' which is 'because it is a necessary feature of their life as the people of God'. The practice of moral theology ought to be more urgently practised amongst us, not out of any sense of moral superiority but as a necessary and difficult part of our calling. It would reflect our sense of responsibility for the world in which we live and be evidence of our theological existence. The BU Assembly resolution was in the last analysis not simply a political response but a theological statement made out of a theological commitment. Now I come to my third question.

(3) What is the status of the Assembly Resolution?

In some denominations with an authoritative hierarchical structure statements from 'above' have a status expecting respect and obedience. Those in authority can instruct others on what is the appropriate form of life. Among the Baptists we have no such structure. What is the 'status' then of the Assembly resolution?

It has been said that no one is in a position to speak for the Baptists in the sense that what he or she says commits Baptists to that particular statement. What is said may in fact reflect the view held by all Baptists but one man's saying it, however important or learned that man might be, does not make it so. For example, Baptists would take what the General Secretary of the Union says seriously and we hope others would do the same, but neither we nor he would want or require his words to commit us all. The same would apply to any statements of the BU Council. What then of the Assembly? Here is the nearest we come to the Baptists speaking together. I believe the recent BU Assembly resolution ought to be taken with great seriousness by Baptists and others because it represents what the vast majority of those present understood to be the mind of Christ. That the majority thought it so does not make it so, but it is surely significant. If any enquirers were to ask of Church House what the Baptist position is in regard to the activities and policies of the National Front then in all conscience I believe they could be given this resolution in the confidence that this is where the Baptists stand.

It does not follow that we now make assent to this resolution a test of membership. One could conceivably remain a Baptist and be a member of the National Front. This is the right to dissent and it must be safeguarded because although we claim to have an infallible Guide, none of us has an infallible apprehension of his guidance. However, the point to make here is that dissent only has credence when it is dissent with reason. We would have every right and responsibility to ask the Baptist National Front member to justify his apparently self-contradictory position just as he has every right and responsibility to ask us to explain and justify ours. Where the Assembly speaks on any sort of issue I believe every Baptist must take that statement with great seriousness and receive it in the light of the fact that others of serious Christian intent have made it as part of their quest for the mind of Christ.

This is, I believe, an important point because sometimes I sense that the freedom to dissent is used as an argument against our attempting to say anything on social or moral issues. It does not follow that because no one can speak for the Baptists the Baptists have nothing to say. I wonder why as a denomination we have had little or nothing to say for example on Abortion Law Reform when other Christian bodies have. The fact that these moral issues are demanding is no reason to avoid them and the fact that we may not reach full agreement on them is no reason not to consider what is involved. Indeed for a Christian community to show to the world that it is possible to have divided opinions without divided loyalties would be in itself no small matter.

I am not suggesting there will be or should be a distinctive Baptist view on these issues. Neither do I think there is a distinctive Baptist approach to making moral judgements. But while we remain a separate denominational group it does seem to me to be important that we give attention to the moral and social issues of the day. Not many of these can be dealt with in the brief form of resolution such as was submitted to the last Assembly. Mostly this will involve a group producing a report for discussion and possible acceptance by the denomination. This is the activity I wish to encourage.

It does not contradict what I have just said to go on and say that this work of Christian reflection on moral issues is best done now in an ecumenical context. There is to my mind no theological reason why this should not be so and as a denomination we ought therefore to give full support and encouragement to the British Council of Churches and any working parties they may call together to study a social or moral issue. Such ecumenical reports as are produced can then be studied by Council and commended to the Assembly or not.

We who are in pastoral charge find ourselves week by week confronted by difficult moral and social issues. I think we have every right to ask for help and guidance of one another and to this end I believe the study of moral and social issues in the denomination would help us all. We have reason to be grateful for the work of the old Citizenship Department now continued by the Department of Mission. Their service to ministers and churches enquiring on such matters is always helpful and constructive. The Baptist Times also gives space to these issues but there are obvious limitations. The issues are difficult and complex. What I am pleading for is a recognition of their importance, not least perhaps in the training given in our theological colleges.

We cannot wash our hands of the dilemmas our changing society brings to us. Thinking things through, engaging in the demanding task of moral theology, is a pastoral and may be prophetic feature of our ministry proclaiming the wholeness of the Gospel.

Brain Haymes

Preaching: A Syllabus and Lectionary

Preaching from a lectionary

I know I ought to have done this over the past twenty-six years, and I have made spasmodic attempts at it. If you use The Parson's Pocket Book as your diary you have the Revised Lectionary to hand, but I find this a bit cumbersome - the lectionary, not the diary - and cluttered up with too many odd saints' days - odd days, not odd saints, that is! Then there is the lectionary in the Payne/Winward *Order and Prayers for Church Worship*, but this is confined to two readings per service and I find three, Old Testament, Gospel and Epistle, helpful. It gives no hint of themes, a useful addition, but it does have the virtue of providing readings for morning and evening services. So, apart from the usual series one makes up, and a traditional Free Church outline observance of the Christian Year, though I did try to tackle things like Trinity Sunday, The Transfiguration and the Ascension, my preaching has perhaps not always had the overall plan I know it ought to have had. I must admit, too, that I was glad I was often on holiday in August when a note in the Parson's Pocket Book reminded me that during the week the Transfiguration had been remembered! The need for an overall preaching plan becomes increasingly apparent the longer one stays in a pastorate. I wonder if this has anything to do with what seems to be a trend towards shorter pastorates? Do men, left to their own devices, get 'preached out'? I did once take a series on John's Gospel on Sunday mornings, not a la Martyn Lloyd Jones, verse for verse, but following themes, incidents or chapters as seemed appropriate, and many years later at least one member of the congregation - a college governor no less - said he remembered them with profit. There is, obviously, merit in this kind of disciplined approach to preaching.

In the early years of my ministry two sermons a week took some finding but I found great help in such books as Andrew Blackwood's *Planning a Year's Pulpit Work*, it may be a bit old-fashioned and wordy but has good things in it. James Steward's great classic *Heralds of God*, read again and again to revive the fainting soul, was a real god-send. But nowhere did I come across any suggestion that there was a lectionary worked out to provide the struggling preacher with themes or guide lines. Perhaps I was told about it in college, but if I was it didn't sink in. I was interested to discover that I had to explain what a lectionary was to some of the students I spoke to when in one of our colleges for a Sabbatical term twelve months ago.

Now before someone writes to put me right, or writes me off, I ought to say I take it for granted that the Holy Spirit is in there somewhere. If I didn't believe that I couldn't have kept going for twenty-six weeks, let alone twenty-six years. All this at a time when the office of the preacher and the value of preaching are not held in the highest esteem to say the least, and indeed are often under attack even within the Church.

The Burning Call

No doubt we are all fed-up with continually being told that the day of preaching is over. But as Howard Williams reminded *Guardian* readers in his article *Face to Faith* on 7th October, 1978, most people are unaware that it had ever dawned. That article spoke, as Howard most persuasively can, of the supreme importance and high place of preaching. "It depends entirely upon the Word of God in Christ" he writes, "creative and open to the future, not held in thrall to the past and rooted in the place of our daily lives in the arena of the world which Christ came to redeem . . . let a man preach because he must and the status of the pulpit will look after itself. Preaching is a work to be avoided if at all possible. Constraint has been a mark of preaching since Moses became aware of his stammering tongue and Jeremiah felt the fire in his bones."

I take it that we preach because we are under that kind of constraint but we do it because we believe that even our stammering tongues can be used to speak the Word that brings life, proving once again that such power does not come from us but is God's alone, (2 Corinthians 4). We are aware that we should, in the words of 1 Peter 4, v 11, "Speak as if you uttered the oracles of God". Because of this overwhelming constraint and this need so to speak we need all the help, human and divine, we can find. This, I believe, is where a lectionary comes in.

A neighbouring minister who belongs to a denomination that ought to remain nameless, though I wonder sometimes how their new unity is working out and from some of the things I hear I wonder how reformed they really are, speaks of "liturgical preaching". By this he means simply preaching from a lectionary. But then he bows to the Elder who precedes him into church in the Processional Entry and makes the sign of the cross over the congregation when he pronounces the Benediction . . . but that is another story!

I don't like the phrase 'liturgical preaching' but then I expect I have, like most Baptists, a reflex rejection of words like liturgy, equating it with a rigid framework of worship and dry formalisms. I know it means 'service' in the widest sense - the work of the people of God - but I'm still not happy with the phrase. It speaks to me of a preaching that takes second place to the demands of liturgy, and while no doubt a good case could be made out for this by our liturgists, I take heart in the remark of Rex Mason in one of his *Baptist Times* articles that they are nearly always wrong!

A Syllabus for Teachers and Preachers

I was intrigued to see that while my dictionary gives the derivation of 'lectionary' as from the Latin word for 'to read', hence lectern for the desk from which to read and lectionary for a course of readings, it could also come from the Greek - we are usually more at home here - 'lectron' meaning couch! Now while there may be some preachers who are at ease in Zion, (Amos you remember), you can hardly lie down on the job.

In case someone says of this article what a prominent divine is reputed to have said of a sermon by one of his curates on Creation, "True to the words of Genesis, without form and void", let me get down to this question of preaching from a lectionary.

My interest in this has been revived by reading *The Story of the People of God*, subtitled "A Basis for Christian Education in the Church Community" (1). This is published by the British Lessons Council and edited by Rodney Matthews. *The Story of the People of God* is a syllabus based on the lectionary prepared some twelve years ago by the Joint Liturgical Group and is the syllabus on which *Partners in Learning* is based. From it, it would be possible to prepare your own material for all age groups as is done in *Partners in Learning*. Themes, their emphasis, starting questions for individuals, the main sources - Bible, tradition, present experience, together with imaginative flow-charts provide an abundance of material and ideas. To quote from the introduction, "The principle on which all this work (the syllabus) is based is the Bible as the basis, the Church as the setting, the Christian Year as the framework, and the developing experience as the centre of interest" (2). In the words of Ernest Payne in the forward, "The use of the material here presented should prove exciting to those who base their church programmes and worship upon it. It offers a thorough and effective introduction to the Bible and to the long story of the people of God. It should help all who participate to a closer relationship with the Ongoing Christian Community and its Lord" (title of one of the sectional themes) (3). The syllabus and the material in *Partners in Learning* will give the Christian educator, the leader of a group and the preacher more than enough from which to quarry programmes, group studies and sermons.

The Joint Liturgical Group Lectionary

It is to the JLG Lectionary itself, that which is behind all this, that I want to draw attention.

The Joint Liturgical Group was well served by the two Baptist representatives, Stephen Winward and Neville Clark. With twenty-five and seventeen years respectively in pastorates, they ought to know what is needed when it comes to the Church's regular diet of worship and preaching. The thinking behind the lectionary is set out in *The Calendar and Lectionary: A Reconsideration by the Joint Liturgical Group* published by the Oxford Press in 1967. This is now out of print but copies are around.

The lectionary is now readily available in *The Story of the People of God*. Three readings are given for each Sunday, one is defined as the controlling lection (4), first from the Old Testament, then the Gospels, and finally the Epistles. "If the heart of the Christian Year is Christmas to Pentecost, this period should be preceded by a preparation, strong in its own right and beginning at creation. Furthermore, it should be followed by an outworking, strong in its own right and concerned with the life and mission of the people of God who live between Pentecost and Parousia and are on pilgrimage to the ends of the earth and the end of time. To view this progression from the scriptural perspective is surely to reach clear lectionary conclusions. In the pre-Christmas period, the Old Testament should provide the controlling lessons. In the post-Pentecost period the Acts and the Epistles should provide the controlling lessons. From Christmas to Pentecost, the Gospels should control" (5).

The lectionary covers a two-year cycle during which the whole range of the Biblical story and Christian experience is covered. There is no necessity, of course, to use the three readings provided helpful to the preacher. If information about forthcoming services is given in church magazines, congregations can be encouraged to read the relevant passages beforehand. They could be split up or augmented to provide daily readings, perhaps with Psalms as these are not included in the lectionary.

Preaching from such a lectionary could well lift our preaching to new heights. Our congregations are much more likely to hear 'the whole counsel of God' instead of the minister's favourite passages again and again or his latest whims. Such preaching could well prove both easier and harder. It is easier because the preacher knows where he is going and that his preaching is less likely to be repetitive and circumscribed. He is also much less likely to be scratching around at the last minute for 'a word from the Lord'. It will be harder in that he will have to tackle themes, doctrines, areas of Christian concern, scripture passages, and questions he might otherwise be tempted to avoid. But then, was real preaching ever meant to be easy?

Let me give two examples from the lectionary, illustrating the use of Old Testament Gospel and Epistles which I, and I hope my people found helpful. "The Offering of Life" was the theme given to Ecclesiasticus (sic) 38, 24-34; Matthew 25, 14-29; and 1 Peter 4, 7-11 (6). "The Life of Faith", based on Daniel 6, 10-24; Luke 19, 1-10; and Romans 5, 1-11 (7) spoke to me of faith as trust in any circumstances, faith as active response and faith as latching on to the eternal - or availing yourself of God's grace if you want to be less colloquial.

Like any other aid to worship and preaching the lectionary is a wonderful tool to be used. It must not, obviously, become a master to follow slavishly. Twenty-six years ago I think I would have been horrified if anyone had suggested I follow a lectionary. Pious noises would have been made about freedom of worship and the guidance of the Spirit. I only hope my preaching was not as narrow and repetitive (in the wrong way) as I fear it might have been. I remember the reaction of some bretheren in the early 60's when David Russell, then at Rawdon, produced an outline preaching scheme on major doctrines for the Yorkshire Association. I used it with profit, as did many others. Is the Spirit any less likely to inspire and guide us if we discipline ourselves with material that has already been prayed over and which itself may well be the guidance of the Spirit?

While not specifically concerned with preaching *The Story of the People of God* has some perceptive things to say about it. "The proclamation of the Word in the public reading of scripture and in preaching first and foremost confronts people with the reality of the presence of God and the importance of the eternal in the contemporary scene . . . the people of God are declaring a faith in which, through successive generations, the Christian community has said, 'God is real for us: we must live accordingly'" (8).

The use of this lectionary in our preaching should help the people of God today so to be confronted, so to declare and so to live.

Roy Turvey

- (1) Can be obtained from NCEC, Robert Denholme House, Nutfield, Redhill, Surrey RH1 4HW. Price £1.20.
- (2) "The Story of the People of God" page 8.
- (3) "The Story of the People of God" page 5.
- (4) See Neville Clark's chapter "The Lectionary" in "The Calendar and Lectionary".
- (5) "The Calendar and Lectionary" page 17.
- (6) Pentecost 18, second year.
- (7) Pentecost 19, second year.
- (8) "The Story of the People of God" page 10.

BOOK REVIEWS

"LAW AND LIBERTY" by Alan Redpath, 128 pages,
published by Pickering & Inglis.

"CAPTIVITY TO CONQUEST" by Alan Redpath, 351 pages,
published by Pickering & Inglis. Price £1.60p.

IT IS ten years since the Evangelical Alliance published "*On the Other Side*". One of its lasting effects has been the keener ethical awareness of much evangelistic preaching. This is well illustrated in these two books by a popular Gospel preacher.

"*LAW AND LIBERTY*" is a "new look at the ten commandments in the light of contemporary society". The author is convinced that the Decalogue has a timeless relevance, and that although the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the law of sin it does not set us free from the law of God. Each commandment is treated in context and in the light of the teaching of Jesus. It is then applied in the author's forthright manner.

"*CAPTIVITY TO CONQUEST*" is based on chapters 40 to 66 of the Prophecy of Isaiah. There is no dilution of the Gospel message which exposes and deals with the depth of human need, but Mr. Redpath emphasises that it is useless holding to doctrine unless doctrine gets hold of us. This is a series of sermons on individual texts or paragraphs which are spiritualised and directed to present-day Christians and churches. They were in fact preached in preparation for a Billy Graham Crusade in Chicago. The hearers would certainly be called to confidence in the Gospel and to a life consistent with it. It is not the author's intention to grapple with the issues raised by Biblical scholarship. He quickly deals with theories of composite authorship, commenting that for those who accept the authority of scripture inspired by the Spirit there is no problem about the unity of the Prophecy. Interestingly enough this present volume of thirty-five chapters is a combination of three books previously published separately. Each section carries the unmistakable style of this incisive Gospel preacher — which is more than some scholars would claim for the Book of Isaiah!

WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

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

My dear Brother Minister,

In this, the first of what I hope will be many such letters, may I begin by expressing my gratitude to so many of you for your good wishes and the assurance of your prayers as I take up the work here at West Ham. I have always greatly valued the fellowship of the Ministry, and I shall take every opportunity to share in that fellowship in the future. I have no intention of becoming "desk-bound", even though there is a considerable amount of 'Admin' work to be done. My official title is Superintendent Minister of the West Ham Central Mission, and I intend to lay proper stress on both aspects.

In all this, I am following the excellent example of Stanley Turl, my friend and predecessor. Stanley has earned the love and respect not only of our denomination, but of a much wider circle, and he has earned my deep gratitude for the gracious way in which he has handed over to me the responsibility of leading the work of the Mission.

I hope that you will all have received the Mission Calendar for 1979. A careful perusal of the Report which it incorporates will put you in the picture as far as the progress of our work is concerned. Please pray for us as we draw up the preliminary plans for the new 'Rest-a-While', and especially for the 'Hospice' accommodation for the terminally ill. This is a new thing to us, and we want to do it well. Continue to remember Orchard House in your prayers. So many developments in 'Child Care' thinking have taken place in recent years, that it is not always easy to distinguish between sound principles and passing fashions. Yet we still have the responsibility for providing the best possible service to the boys who are in our care. Most important of all, we want to be sure that we never lose sight of the Christian motivation and intention of all that we do as a Mission. Whatever we may offer in terms of care for the young or the old, we want to offer them the healing love of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may be assured that, while I am here, we shall, by God's grace, never neglect or undervalue this, the most vital aspect of our work.

Please continue to remember us in your prayers and to commend our cause to your people. If you can arrange a showing of our NEW FILMSTRIP in your church, then please write to Miss Margaret Gray, Office Manager, West Ham Central Mission, 409 Barking Road, Plaistow, London, E13 8AL. If you can give us a choice of dates, it would be helpful.

May God richly bless you in your home and in your church in 1979.

Yours sincerely,
Trevor W. Davis,
Superintendent of the Mission.

**The New international Dictionary of New Testament
Theology, Vol. 3, Pri - Z.**

Editor - Colin Brown: Paternoster Press, pp 1481. £26.00
(£21.00 until 31st December 1978)

THOSE who already possess the first two volumes of this dictionary will need no further recommendation concerning volume 3, and will no doubt have been eagerly awaiting its appearance; but for those who have not yet invested in what is undoubtedly an expensive item for any library it needs only to be said that this volume brings to completion what is surely one of the most valuable aids to New Testament study to have appeared in English in recent years. Previous reviews in *'The Fraternal'* in 1976 and 1977 have made clear the format of the work and its value, and the details need not be repeated here. Suffice to say that in every way this volume is a worthy successor.

In addition to the articles on New Testament words — including this time full and helpful discussions of such key issues as sin, salvation, atonement, reconciliation, justification, redemption, resurrection, revelation, the Son of Man, the Son of God and the Holy Spirit — there are appended articles on such subjects as 'The Structure and Content of the Early Kerygma', 'The Resurrection in Contemporary Theology', 'Revelation in Contemporary Theology', the 'Virgin Birth', 'Jesus and Revolution' and, in an appendix, a study of the use of prepositions in the New Testament and their theological significance. As in the earlier volumes the articles provide a wealth of information and stimulation, and the splendid index, which covers all three volumes, is a valuable tool which enhances the value of the whole work.

Naturally the coverage of the subjects cannot be exhaustive and the Preface acknowledges that "The work has been planned as a dictionary and not an encyclopedia. Its aim is not to say the last word on every subject, but to provide an introduction and the tools to enable the reader to make his own way into the field of study." This purpose is admirably fulfilled and the extensive and up-to-date bibliographies provide more than ample further reading for those who wish to pursue a subject further.

It is intended to keep the dictionary abreast of contemporary scholarship by revising the material where necessary as the need for reprinting arises, and the supplementary material will be made available separately for those possessing the first edition. It is to be hoped that this will include a good number of 'Fraternal' readers, for this dictionary is a "must" for anyone seriously interested in the study and exposition of the New Testament.