

# The Fraternal

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# The Concept of Heaven in the Writings of C.S. Lewis

## Introduction

The following is an extract from a much longer essay in which some of the themes and ideas of C.S. Lewis were set against the background of recent writing on the subject of eschatology. This article concentrates on Lewis's understanding of the biblical symbolism and his characteristic emphasis on "Joy" and "reality" as the most helpful concepts for enabling the ordinary "man in the pew" to understand the nature of the Christian hope. No apology is made for the fact that it reads rather like an anthology, as Lewis is his own best interpreter.

D.L. Edwards remarks in the Preface to his book **Last Things Now**, 'It is a fair question to address to any Christian teacher, what a modern man may rightly be expected to believe about his destiny'. The continuing popularity of Lewis nearly twenty years after his death shows that his writings still meet a need in this area since the majority of recent work on eschatology has been of a rather technical and academic nature which makes it unavailable to most Christians. Throughout his apologetic works Lewis insists that it is when eschatology is neglected that Christians are robbed, not only of their hope for the future, but of the whole meaning of their present experience.

"If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most about the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth "thrown in"; aim at Earth and you will get neither."<sup>1</sup>

However, Lewis is not concerned with mere survival (i.e. of the soul after death), which, even if it could be proved, is not what the Christian means by heaven. For heaven has to do with Joy and with God. If the idea of immortality does not centre on the "Beatific vision of God", then belief in an afterlife need be no more religious than belief that there is life on the planet Mars.<sup>2</sup>

## Heaven as "Reality"

For many people the idea of "spiritual" reality suggests something insubstantial, ethereal and dreamlike; something far less "real" than "physical" reality. Consequently, the average Christian's understanding of the heavenly life is more akin to the Old Testament concept of 'Sheol'<sup>3</sup> with its 'shades' than the concept used by Paul, for example, of the resurrection body. Lewis is concerned to reverse this way of thinking:-

"Think of yourself as a seed patiently waiting in the earth; waiting to come up a flower in the Gardener's good time, up into the real world, the real

awakening. I suppose that our whole present life, looked back on from there, will seem only a drowsy half-waking. We are here in the land of dreams. But cock-crow is coming. It is nearer now than when I began this letter.”<sup>4</sup>

This passage could almost be taken as a text for his book **The Great Divorce**, in which Lewis attempts to paint an imaginary landscape in which everything is more “really real” than anything in our present experience. Here we are shown, as visitors, round a world which corresponds to Plato’s ‘world of reality’ (in comparison with which the present world is merely a shadow) and which strikes our senses with an overwhelming and unbearable power. Fallen leaves weigh more than sacks of coal; blades of grass cut like knives into the feet; daisies are impossible to pick because of their diamond hard quality; streams can be walked upon; raindrops pierce like bullets, and the noise of a waterfall is like “the revelry of a whole college of giants laughing, dancing, singing, roaring at their high works”.<sup>5</sup> In this world visitors from earth were

“. . . transparent - fully transparent in the light, smudgy and imperfectly opaque when they stood in the shadow of some tree. They were in fact ghosts; man-shaped stains on the brightness of the air . . . . Then I saw the whole phenomenon the other way round. The men were as they had always been; as all the men I had known had been perhaps. It was the light, the grass, the trees that were different, made of some different substance, so much solidier than things in our country that men were ghosts by comparison.”<sup>6</sup>

This description of Lewis’ imaginary world leads up to a discussion between a visitor and his ‘guide’ which reveals clearly the basic message he is trying to get across. The visitor suggest that perhaps those who have understood heaven and hell as ‘states of mind’ are essentially right. The guide (George Macdonald, the Victorian novelist and poet) replies:

“Hell is a state of mind - ye never said a truer word. And every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeons of its own mind - is, in the end, Hell. But Heaven is not a state of mind. Heaven is reality itself. All that is fully real is heavenly”<sup>7</sup>.

This emphasis on the reality of the heavenly realm reminds us of the philosophic dualism of Plato who taught that the world which we see with our eyes and touch with our bodies was only a world of shadows. It was a copy of the eternal world of spiritual Forms to which the pure soul could attain by philosophic speculation<sup>8</sup>. Philo (c. 20BC - 50AD) the Jewish thinker of Alexandria, adapted Plato’s thought to Judaism, and, some would argue, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews adapted Philo’s thought to Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

But however close the similarity may be between Plato’s world of Spiritual Forms and Lewis’s emphasis on heaven as fully real, it is interesting to note that far from seeing immortality in Platonic terms, (i.e. as the escape of the soul from the prison-house of the body)<sup>10</sup>, Lewis is keen to press the concept of the resurrection body:

“Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body - which believes that matter is good, that

God Himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given us in heaven, and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty and our energy.”<sup>11</sup>

“(We need to take seriously).. the resurrection of the body: a doctrine which nowadays is soft-pedalled by nearly all the faithful - to our great impoverishment.”<sup>12</sup>

“We must both, I’m afraid, recognise that as we grow older we become like old cars - more and more repairs and replacements are necessary. We must just look forward to the fine new machines (latest resurrection model) which are waiting for us, we hope, in the Divine garage!”<sup>13</sup>

## Heaven as Joy

**Surprised by Joy** is more than the title of a book. For Lewis it was the description of an experience; an experience he had found in Christ. Throughout his writings we find the contention that anyone who has really learned to look into his own heart finds that he wants, and wants acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. Many things in this world offer this elusive ‘something’, but they never quite keep their promise.

“The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning can really satisfy. I am not now speaking of what would be ordinarily called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or learned careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones. There was something we grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality. I think everyone knows what I mean. The wife may be a good wife, and the hotels and scenery may have been excellent, and the chemistry may be a very interesting job; but something has evaded us.”<sup>14</sup>

The conclusion that Lewis draws from this is that there is within us a deep longing for Heaven, but that this longing usually goes unrecognised. The vague feeling of dissatisfaction leads some to pursue more and more varied experiences in the hope that one day they will find what so far they have only glimpsed in the distance. Others react by falling into a cheerful (or otherwise) cynicism which represses the desire to cry for the moon and adopts the motto, “Blessed is he that expecteth nothing; for he shall not be disappointed”! The correct reaction to these experiences, however, suggests Lewis, is to recognise that

“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in the world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of the earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.”<sup>15</sup>

And the real thing is Joy. “It will be joy going to the mountains,” says one of the guides in **The Great Divorce**.<sup>16</sup> “Here is all joy”<sup>17</sup>. “Here is joy that cannot be shaken”<sup>18</sup>. Another guide explains that one visitor missed his opportunity because

“... if he would only have admitted his mistakes and had a good laugh at himself he could have begun all over again like a little child and entered into

joy. But he would not do that. He cared nothing about joy. In the end he went away.”<sup>19</sup>

Those that do go away do so because there is always something they prefer to Joy; always something they insist on keeping even at the price of misery. Like Milton’s Satan, they believe that it is “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.”

Joy, then, is the final experience offered by Heaven. The deepest and most loving experiences of this world point towards it and in some measure dimly reflect it. But it can never be had now. It is part of the Christian’s hope:

“The faint, far-off results of those energies which God’s creative rapture implanted in matter when He made the worlds are what we now call physical pleasures; and even thus filtered, they are too much for our present management. What would it be to taste at the fountain-head that stream of which even these lower reaches prove so intoxicating? Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of Joy.”<sup>20</sup>

It is clear that Lewis uses the word Joy in a rather different sense from that of the biblical writers. For them it is a present possession, for him it is an unsatisfied desire

“... It is never a possession, always a desire for something longer ago, or further away, or still “about to be”.<sup>21</sup>”

For Lewis, therefore, Joy is the want rather than the satisfaction. The desire is itself desirable. But it can never be found by looking for it. It comes unawares, through a book, through a climb on a windy mountain ridge, through a conversation with a friend. But it is none of these things, and a repetition of the same events which produced it in the first place invariably fails to recapture it. When ‘to get it again’ becomes our constant endeavour it eludes us totally. And this, of course, is because Joy is a by-product. Its very existence presupposes that you desire not it, but something other and beyond. It is this line of thought that led Lewis in the end to a (very reluctant) belief in God.<sup>22</sup>

For he discovered, first, that the very nature of Joy (as he experienced and defined it) made nonsense of the common distinction between having and wanting.

“There, to have is to want and to want is to have. Thus the very moment when I so longed to be stabbed again was itself again such a stabbing.”<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, he discovered that although Joy was ‘Desire’, it was a desire that is turned, not to itself, but to its object.

“I had been wrong in supposing that I desired Joy itself. Joy itself, considered simply as an event in my own mind, turned out to be of no value at all. All the value lay in that of which Joy was the desiring.”<sup>24</sup>

It was when he saw this, that he realised that Joy, pointing to something else beyond itself, was leading him to faith.

The difference then, between Joy in the biblical writers and Joy in Lewis, is not as great as at first it seems. For in the New Testament it is seen as a ‘foretaste’ of what is yet to be. But even the foretaste - the desire - is present here and now. It fulfils the function of a signpost, an ‘earnest’, an ‘arrabon’ of what is still to come. Perhaps the two view-points meet most clearly in

Adelaide Proctor's fine hymn:

I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast made  
Joy to abound;  
So many gentle thoughts and deeds  
Circling us round,  
That in the darkest spot of earth  
Some love is found.

I thank Thee too that all our joy  
Is touched with pain;  
That shadows fall on brightest hours,  
That thorns remain;  
So that earth's bliss may be our guide,  
And not our chain.

### **The Relationship between heaven, earth and hell**

If it is true to say that Lewis took the reality of Heaven far more seriously than most of his Christian contemporaries it is equally true to say that he was swimming almost alone against the theological stream by his insistence also on the traditional, orthodox concept of Hell. He argues that to believe in the one involves the necessity of taking seriously the other. In one place he even goes as far as to say,

"I have met no people who fully disbelieved in Hell and also had a living and life-giving belief in Heaven."<sup>25</sup>

Be that as it may, what is relevant here, however, is not his doctrine of Hell (which would be a subject of study in itself), but the way in which he sees both Heaven and Hell as related to this present world of space and time. Earth is the place where eternal choices are made and eternal destinies decided. In that sense, there is something of Hell and something of Heaven in earth itself, but which we experience depends on which road we are travelling. But this can only be seen in retrospect. In order to gain Heaven we must be prepared to lose our grasp on Earth - and yet on attaining Heaven we shall find that Earth itself was heavenly. Conversely, if we retain our grasp on Earth we shall discover in the end that what we held already had the character of Hell about it. This is really the underlying subject of the whole fantasy contained within **The Great Divorce**. Lewis sets it out for us in his preface:

"Earth, I think, will not be found by anyone to be in the end a very distinct place. I think Earth, if chosen instead of Heaven, will turn out to have been all along, only a region in Hell; and Earth, if put second to Heaven, to have been from the beginning a part of Heaven itself."<sup>26</sup>

He develops the same thought at some length in a dialogue between the narrator of the story and George McDonald, his appointed guide:

"... if ye say that both good and evil, when they are full grown, become retrospective. Not only this valley, but all their earthly past will have been Heaven to those who are saved. Not only the twilight in that town, but all

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their life on earth too, will then be seen by the damned to have been Hell. That is what mortals misunderstand. They say of some temporal suffering, 'No future bliss can make up for it', not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into glory. And of some sinful pleasures they say, 'Let me but have this, and I'll take the consequences,' little dreaming how damnation will spread back into their past and contaminate the pleasure of the sin. Both processes begin even before death. The good man's past begins to change so that his forgiven sins and remembered sorrows take on the quality of Heaven; the bad man's past already conforms to his badness and is filled only with dreariness. And that is why, at the end of all things, when the sun rises here and the twilight turns to blackness down there, the Blessed will say, 'We have never lived anywhere except in Heaven', and the Lost, 'We were always in Hell.' And both will speak truly."<sup>27</sup>

But all this, Lewis argues, will only be seen to be true in retrospect. Only for those who have completed the journey will it be true to say that good is everything and Heaven everywhere. We must not try to anticipate that vision, because if we do, we are likely to embrace the false and disastrous converse and fancy that everything is good and everywhere is Heaven.

In the New Testament writings in general, and in the Gospel of John in particular, we find the puzzling and much discussed "Now and not yet" motif with respect to the Kingdom, around which so much controversy has raged.

It is this tension between time and eternity that Lewis tries to express in his conception of Heaven and Hell as retrospective, working their way back from the future into the present and infecting for good or ill our present experience. While we are here on earth, however, all we can hope to catch are fleeting glimpses of 'Joy', which, while real, are always transitory and can never be recaptured. "Our Father refreshes us on our journey in some very pleasant inns, but he never allows us to mistake them for home". So this present world of Nature speaks to us of the heavenly world, but must never be mistaken for it. Nature is an image, a symbol, which scripture invites us to use in understanding what lies beyond. But we are summoned to pass through Nature, beyond her, into that splendour that she fitfully reflects. It is because Heaven and Earth are related in this way that "When we see the face of God we shall know that we have always known it"<sup>28</sup> - recognising the Original from the portraits we have already dimly perceived.

### **Farther up and farther in**

In 1946 Lewis had explored his theme of space and solidity as images from Heaven in **The Great Divorce**, and ten years later the same models were developed even further in the last of the series of Narnia adventures, **The Last Battle**.

In **The Great Divorce** the traveller's first impression of the world he has just entered is one of overwhelming spaciousness which gives him a combined sense of freedom and exposure to danger:

"I had the sense of being in a larger space, perhaps even a larger sort of



space, than I had ever known before: as if the sky were further off and the extent of the green plain wider than they could be on this little ball of earth. I had got 'out' in some sense which made the Solar System itself seem an indoor affair."<sup>29</sup>

But he soon discovers that he is still only on the edge, as it were, of this new world, still only in the 'Valley of the Shadow of Life'. As his guide tells him, "Everyone of us lives only to journey further and further into the mountains"<sup>30</sup>. And when later on the traveller asks to be shown the immense towering cliffs over which the bus in which he had travelled had flown on its journey into the land, his guide points out a tiny crack in the soil -

"I cannot be certain", he said, "that this **is** the crack ye came up through. But through a crack no bigger than that ye certainly came"<sup>31</sup>.

In fact, the guide goes on, if one of Heaven's butterflies were to swallow all Hell it would not even notice the taste or get indigestion!

In the final chapters of the 'Last Battle' this model is developed and worked out in detail. Narnia, the imaginary world of beasts and fauns etc. is seen for the last time by the children as a final catastrophe brings it to an end. But as soon as they pass out of Narnia they find themselves in an even more splendid world which turns out to be a literally 'glorified' Narnia. Passing 'further and further in' to this land they then enter through the golden gates of a walled city where the first thing they notice is that the inside is larger than the outside. And once again, the mountains and valleys, hills and woods they see remind them of Narnia - only this time more real and solid than ever before, so that the old Narnia is seen as only a faint portrait of what they now realise is the original. One of the children remarks, "Yes, in our world too, a Stable once held something inside it that was bigger than our whole world"<sup>32</sup>.

"I see", she said at last, thoughtfully. "I see it now. This garden is like the Stable. It is far bigger inside than it was outside."

"Of course, Daughter of Eve", said the faun, "The farther up and farther in you go, the bigger everything gets. The inside is larger than the outside."

Lucy looked hard at the garden and saw that it was not really a garden at all, but a whole world, with its own rivers and woods and seas and mountains. But they were not strange. She knew them all.

"I see", she said. "This is still Narnia, and more real more beautiful than the Narnia down below, just as it was more real and more beautiful than the Narnia outside the Stable door! I see ... world within world, Narnia within Narnia..."

"Yes", said Mr Tumnus, "Like an onion; except that as you go in and in, each circle is larger than the last."<sup>33</sup> When some of the children express surprise at the idea, the old professor, who has turned up throughout their adventures, exclaims, "Its all in Plato, all in Plato; bless me, what do they teach them in these schools nowadays?"<sup>34</sup>

The book ends with the children terrified at the prospect of having to leave Narnia for the last time and return to their own world. The Lion reassures them,

"No fear of that", said Aslan. "Have you not guessed?" Their hearts leaped and a wild hope rose within them. "There was a real railway accident", said

Aslan softly. "Your Father and Mother and all of you are - as you used to call it in the Shadowlands - dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is over. This is the morning."

And as he spoke he no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and so beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all stories, and we can most truly say that they all live happily after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has ever read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before"<sup>35</sup>

It is perhaps here, in this conception of Heaven as somehow contained within this world, and yet expanding inwards so that the inside is larger than the outside, that Lewis gives us his most original thought. It is, of course, a symbolic model for something inexpressible in language. It is, furthermore, a model which is not one that is found in scripture. The question then becomes, it seems to me, not 'Is it true?', but 'Is it helpful?'; does it give us an insight into what truth **may** be like? Most of those writers who have toyed with the idea of a fourth dimension have placed it 'outside' whereas Lewis places it 'inside'! Does it matter, if in the end we gain from it glimpses of exciting possibilities of which before we had no idea? Lewis himself clearly believed that we are the kind of creatures who grasp things best when they are embodied or pictured, and if the analogies he uses awaken our imaginations and enable us to see just a little more clearly the future God has planned for his people, then he would be well satisfied. Those of us for whom the 'dreams' are unhelpful or even incomprehensible, he would consider quite at liberty to discard them altogether. But he would, I am sure, expect us to develop in our imaginations ideas and concepts of our own to put in their place.

"Guesses, of course, only guesses. If they are not true, something better will be. For "We know that we shall be made like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"."<sup>36</sup>

**David M. Richardson**

## **Notes and References**

1. 'Mere Christianity' ch.10
2. H.D. McDonald 'The Idea of Immortality' in Vox Evangelica Vol. VII
3. 'Religious Ideas of the Old Testament' H.W. Robinson ch.36
4. 'Letters to an American Lady' p.116
5. 'Great Divorce' p.65
6. Ibid. p.27
7. Ibid. p.63
8. The Republic VI and VII
9. cf. G.E. Ladd 'A Theology of the New Testament' p.572
10. The slogan of the Neo-Platonists was that the body (soma) was a tomb (sema)
11. 'Mere Christianity' p.88

12. 'Letters fo an American Lady' 26th Nov. 1962
13. Ibid. p.75
14. 'Mere Christianity' p.117
15. Ibid. p.118
16. 'Great Divorce' p.34
17. Ibid. p.106. 18. Ibid. p.108 19. Ibid. p.65
20. 'Weight of Glory' a sermon, reprinted in 'Screwtape Proposes a Toast' p.108
21. 'Surprised by Joy' p.66 22. Ibid. ch.11 & 14. 23. Ibid. p.135
24. Ibid. p.176
25. 'Letters to Malcolm' ch.14
26. 'Great Divorce' Preface p.8 27. Ibid. p.62
28. 'The Four Loves' p.127
29. 'Great Divorce' p.26 30. Ibid. p.66 31. Ibid. p.112
32. 'The Last Battle' p.128 33. Ibid. p.162-163. 34. Ibid. p.154
35. Ibid. p.165
36. 'Letters to Malcolm' ch.22

## The Pastor and Psychiatric Care

Three years ago I left the pastorate of a Baptist Church to become the full-time Chaplain of fairly large Mental Hospital which also had within its area of responsibility several Units for the residential care of the Mentally Handicapped. Since then my Ministry has extended to the new general hospital which recently opened in Sheffield. The Hallamshire Hospital is now one of the show pieces in Europe caring for about 700 patients in need of surgical and medical care.

My interest in mental illness and disturbed patterns of behaviour began years ago, when as a result of the German occupation of the Channel Isles, our family was split up for five years, at a crucial time in the development of the two children who were evacuated to the mainland. When the family was reunited there were inevitable problems in the relationship between members who had become strangers to one another. One became a casualty and became emotionally disturbed to the point of developing a severe psychotic illness. The effect on all the family was one of great pain, confusion, with a feeling of helplessness. Fortunately, by the Grace of God the sick member made a total recovery - one of those cases when breakdown turns out to be a breakthrough. We witnessed what seemed to be a miracle, for the new personality that gradually emerged from the trauma was stronger, more confident, and more positive than the one which had broken down. That experience I now realise was to influence my personal life in ways that have become apparent only in more recent years. The point is that one actually saw healing of a person who had been in the grip of a severe emotional illness. This inspires hope in coping with such problems in the Pastoral Ministry.

In the early years of my ministry, I was invited to a part-time chaplaincy to

a mental hospital, where I learned a great deal from patients, staff and relatives. From the Clinical Theology Association and the work of Dr. Frank Lake, I have been privileged to learn something of the skills that can be learned in pastoral counselling both in individual and group work.

I write a little of this background because I believe that there is an important role for the Pastor in the care of the emotionally disturbed. There are also insights from various schools of therapy that can be an aid to the Minister in his pastoral care of those who become victims of stress.

The causes of mental illness are numerous and there is still a great deal of mystery about the working of the mind and the relation between mind and body. But one thing is clear, that the experiences and training of the early years of childhood affect the developing personality. They lay the foundations for the building which needs to stand the pressures of life in a competitive and fragmented society. Those who belong to the Christian Faith have the privilege of belonging to the family of Christ. They have the opportunity of extending their relationships, of discovering themselves in relation to others. They can profit from group support, group learning, and corporate prayer. These are resources for personal growth which can compensate for the deprivations of childhood. To be born again partly means to be born into the Christian family as well as being given a new start in the power of the Spirit.

The Pastor through his personal relationships with the individual members is in a position to be of influence in the lives of his people. He is involved in all their times of personal crisis. In times of loss or bereavement, whether it be the loss of a loved one, the loss of a limb, or his job, there is a threat to personal identity. The Pastor often hears the troubles of those with broken relationships, those exposed to new responsibilities and, of course, the crisis of physical or mental disease. In times of crisis, the counsellor is often confronted by the present causes of stress but also the painful experiences of the past that reverberate deep within the person. If he knows his people, the Pastor will understand at the deeper level and respond appropriately. Whilst we must never play at being amateur psychiatrists - a charge which is often levelled at those who seek to take advantage of training in Pastoral Counselling, we can learn to listen with greater understanding; to respond with empathy, and to facilitate the owning of feelings which, having been buried, may do great harm deep within the person. Also, a deepening awareness is a prerequisite for attempts at ministering through the Means of Grace such as the Laying on of Hands and prayer for healing. Of course, God's power is not limited by our lack of insight or proper diagnosis. The Means are God's gift and it is His power that is communicated through them. What I am saying is that through careful, prayerful listening one may get in touch with problems underneath the presenting problem such as unresolved guilt, fear, anger, resentment. To deal with the surface problem may bring superficial relief - a deeper work of healing may be necessary and can be facilitated by careful counselling.

It may be helpful to consider some of the different types of mental and emotional problems that confront us as we listen to those who seek our help, or those who may be referred to us by doctor or family.

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## The deeply disturbed.

From time to time in the pastoral ministry we find ourselves ministering to the severely disorientated person. Often they are referred to the Psychiatric Hospital for treatment and the Pastor visits them on the ward. Nowadays more and more are discharged back into the community after treatment; if the illness is of a recurring kind there will be frequent admissions and between times at home there will be good and bad days.

A severely disorientated patient may present with all kinds of irrational statements and patterns of behaviour. The emotional swings may vary from high elation to the deepest depression. Delusions may distort and produce frightening misconstructions of reality. Internal voices may torment the patient. Frequently those who are threatened by strongly disowned feelings may seek deliverance by dramatic means. I believe caution must be exercised at this point as there is a danger that we may actually reinforce an attempt to disclaim responsibility of personal feelings that need to be worked through by careful counselling. This is not to say that prayer and Laying on of Hands is inappropriate - only that by careful listening to the whole person can we begin to identify the problem, and help deal with the conflicting emotions.

Confronted by irrational and often bizarre responses what sort of a pastoral relationship can we offer to the disturbed person?

Firstly, we can accept people just as they are - symptoms and all. This is a primary factor in the pastoral relationship. However disorientated the person is, the fact that someone accepts them will be meaningful to that person. John Taylor in his book **The Go-between God** says, "In these days more and more people are sick and lost because they do not know with any certainty who they are and what they are. They can find their identity and role only when someone else sees them with love .... No-one can change or give himself until he has a self to give."

The Minister of the Gospel is seen as the representative of God. If the sick person senses he is accepted by the one who ministers, it will be a practical expression of the God who cares. This means giving oneself in a relationship that has risks and is demanding.

One cannot overemphasize the importance of listening in this relationship.

Usually, with the distressed person there is a need to be heard and understood. Not only does this reduce the feeling of isolation which accompanies emotional hurt, but listening offers the opportunity for the sufferer to give expression to feelings that may be an internal jumble of pain and confusion.

As the person speaks aloud of the feelings that trouble him, he may see more clearly the issues that create the conflict within.

Even when a person is troubled by irrational thoughts and gives expression to paranoid feelings divorced from reality, it is still possible - indeed, I believe helpful, to listen with respect to the confused messages we hear. One can respond empathetically on a feeling level to what may be expressed in bizarre speech and retain contact with some part of the

personality. At such times rational persuasion or reassurance will not avail much. It is particularly important to respond appropriately when there are extreme mood swings. For example, a very depressed man asks to see the Chaplain. He is burdened by guilt and unworthiness. He pours out these feelings but cannot at the time rationalise the message of Grace, forgiveness, and the love of God. The guilt is morbid not based on reality. Some time later he presents a totally different mood. The depression has lifted and he is able to relate to the previous meeting. He thanks the Chaplain for listening with patience to his irrational feelings - counselling can then take place, and the relationship develops from there. It is in the times of relative stability that one can build on the pastoral relationship.

With the Christian patient it may be necessary to help alleviate feelings of guilt and anxiety with regard to medication. Many people feel they ought to be able to manage without such help. There may indeed be many people with problems of relationships, conflicting loyalties etc., who may be prevented from working these through by senses dulled by unnecessary medication, but there are many who need the kind of help that medicine can give. These are the persons that we can help to accept assistance without feeling guilty.

## **Nervous Disorders**

I hesitate to use the label neurotic because for some reason people who have difficulties within that definition object to the word. In pastoral work we fight shy of using labels for fear of being technical or of putting people in little boxes.

However, there are many 'nervous problems' which although not so emotionally crippling as the more serious psychotic illnesses do prevent people from enjoying work, making good relationships and affect the quality of life generally. Unlike the more deeply disturbed person, people who are so troubled remain generally in touch with reality. The Minister as well as the Chaplain meets with all kinds of irrational fears, reactive depression, psychosomatic illness and anxiety, transformed into physical symptoms, obsessive states and various other forms of anxiety which interfere with home and work relationships. We also have to minister to people who for one reason or another have failed to mature as persons and so prevent them from being fulfilled.

The over anxious person who has found the degree of anxiety such that it has interfered with his life sufficiently as to be a burden, may already have sought the help of physicians and may already be receiving some kind of therapy to help overcome the problem. The pastor's task may be simply to give support, rally prayer and generally be an empathetic listener. A good deal of support can be given to those who seek sincerely to overcome the problem, to find deliverance or to confront whatever or whoever may be preventing them from being free to be themselves. Through supportive counselling, anxious people may be given confidence to be positive in decision making, and to tackle the problems that are sometimes shelved, only to produce more anxiety and guilt through procrastination.

With reactive forms of depression, when the immobility is caused through external problems which appear insurmountable, the root of the depression may surface in pastoral counselling and the Pastor can encourage the depressed person to confront the problem and may be able to help in a practical way or advise where such help may be found.

The Pastor and his people may help tremendously in cases of irrational fears. For instance through support given to those who find it difficult or even impossible to venture outside for even necessary errands. Of course he will have to be sensitive with others who need to withdraw from other human company, otherwise he may make the situation worse by trying to manipulate a solution too urgently.

Pastoral counselling is not exclusively the work of the Minister. There may be those in the Church Fellowship who can be encouraged to develop the gift through training and to exercise this ministry within the Church and to those who seek help from outside the membership. Indeed the Pastor himself may not feel that he is particularly gifted in dealing with deeper emotional problems and may feel that others in the membership have a particular ministry in this respect. Such individuals should be given every encouragement to develop the gift.

There is a tremendous scope for group work within the fellowship. Indeed I personally believe that this is often more appropriate than one to one counselling. It does not encourage such a degree of dependency upon an individual person. The resources of a group may reflect more clearly for the sincere seeker for truth the kind of response that will help to develop insight. The collective response of a group may be more comprehensive than that of one individual, however gifted in discernment. The support that can be given by the group in dealing positively with personality changes can be more powerful than that of one counsellor. It is helpful of course for an experienced leader or facilitator to be in the group to help the healing potential develop. I have learned through Community Therapy in the hospital setting what potential there is through group interaction for changing sick patterns of living, and forming better relationships. If it works in a secular setting, how much more potentially powerful it should be in the community of the Holy Spirit where the love of God inspires and motivates the group.

Having said that I believe it is still important for the caring Pastor to accept what help he can to develop his ability to hear, understand and to respond to the person suffering from nervous or personality disorders. Even in some forms of physical ailments we can sometimes detect underlying conflicts. The loss of voice may be a way of telling us that the person is in conflict with an important near relative and be unable to express his feelings. I have known such times when the physical condition has been relieved through the underlying conflict coming to the surface. It goes without saying that such symptoms need to be examined by the Doctor and physical causes treated where appropriate, but occasionally for those with ears to hear, a deeper emotional problem may come to light.

This is in no way meant to devalue the priorities of our Ministry which are preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. I believe that these



are means by which God heals and changes lives. In my hospital work I have seen even more clearly the link between the Pulpit and the Pastoral Ministry. The Lord's Supper has become even more powerful, a true means of Grace.

The call for repentance, the reassurance of forgiveness, the encouragement of the Scriptures - these are God's means of bringing people into a healthy relationship with Himself and with other people. The inner peace which is in effect the peace which Christ Himself promised to faithful believers, is the most powerful antidote to stress. This peace guards the hearts and minds of men - the seat of their emotions and thought patterns against external and internal threats to personal well being.

Sometimes, however, the realities of our Faith need to be earthed at an emotional rather than an intellectual level. The skills of pastoral and group counselling may help unlock many an imprisoned emotion, neither good nor bad, negative or positive, paving the way for that peace.

### **The Elderly Disturbed**

I should say a word about the older people within our Ministry who are losing or have lost some of their grip on reality. Part of my ministry at Middlewood is with the Psychogeriatric wards. Many old and senile patients are forgotten in their twilight state. Because of the difficulty in communicating and relating to these older people who may have been stable, intelligent and useful in their more productive years, they are forgotten or left to be cared for by professional carers. Those who stay to be cared for by their relatives can place enormous burdens upon them - often it is left to a particular son or daughter, themselves in the middle years when there are other demanding responsibilities. The Church can help to give support to those who are faced with such a demanding task. Sometimes a well-meaning person may need to be gently encouraged to share the burden with others without feeling guilty.

With regard to the elderly confused themselves, there is still a pastoral work to be done. The memories of early years are often intact and I have been surprised at the degree of participation in Ward services. The familiar hymns bring back memories, familiar prayers and passages of Scriptures are recalled and are meaningful. On a personal level one learns to communicate by means other than words if necessary. We can communicate through touch, eye contact - again this is on an emotional feeling level rather than an intellectual one. We should never feel that because of the difficulties involved in relating to the elderly confused that they may be left in order to follow more obviously rewarding areas of our Ministry. Often of course with diminishing control mentally, they can be expressively hurtful to those devoted to their care. Sometimes we hear quite shocking words from people who once were most pious and carefully controlled. The Pastor himself needs to be able to cope with this change and reassure those of the relatives who are distressed by what they hear.

### **The Mentally Handicapped**

We should not forget the people in our churches or those who are cared

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## To the Readers of the Fraternal

Dear Friends,

I hope, new as I am to these pages, I may address you thus.

*"Did he not magnify the mind, show clear just what it all meant?"*

*Robert Browning*

I have taken this quotation shamefully out of context, because it seemed to me, reading through Mr. Colvin's advertising letters, that it described the way in which he drew from his wide study of literature, and then applied a quotation to make a point. It is out of context because the Grammarian Browning described was at the end of a very narrow life, whereas Mr. Colvin is entering on what we all hope will be a long and happy retirement on the foundation of wide interests and, quoting what Dr. Ernest Payne said of him, "a well stored mind". Although I share his love of literature, I cannot hope to emulate him with an appropriate quotation for every letter. I propose to base a series of letters on the alphabet—next time "A". I could be in trouble with "Z" but "something may turn up".

Since taking this appointment one of the questions that has been asked me, is how should deacons establish priorities in selecting insurances? It must be recognised that desirable as it may be to effect all the covers we can provide, the budget may necessitate taking one's own risk for certain eventualities. I have no hesitation in saying that the standard Fire policy (which includes lightning and explosion cover) and Liability insurance must be the priorities. These two represent the principle insurable calamities which can befall the Cause in a locality. Without fire insurance for an adequate sum insured, the complete or substantial destruction of the Church buildings will at best severely hamper and dislocate worship and work. At worst it will cause their cessation. A heavy claim for damages because someone is injured through, for example, a defect in the premises for which the deacons are held legally liable in negligence, could impose an impossible financial burden with equally serious results.

The need for insurance does not end here, but other covers must be selected and arranged with regard to the particular needs and circumstances of the individual Church.

Yours sincerely,

**M.E. Purver**  
General Manager

for in institutions who suffer from mental handicap. To refer to them as sufferers of course is not strictly correct. Often they are happy people who are quite content with their own lives. It is we who project into them our own expectations and understandings of life around us. We may feel distressed at what seems to be lacking in their lives which we possess in ours.

Our main responsibility is to enable them to fulfil their personal potential. Mental handicap is different from mental illness in that the handicapped person is not sick. He may be limited in his conceptual powers and even in his physical co-ordination, but he is still a person with feelings and an ability to relate - except of course for the most severely handicapped where the difficulties are most serious. I have learned a great deal from my handicapped friends about spontaneity, honesty, trust and friendliness.

Those who live in the community at home with their family can be encouraged to participate in the life of the Church. Usually such people love music, movement and even drama. They love to give and receive expressions of love and caring. The undemonstrative person may be almost overwhelmed when on the receiving end of such demonstrations of affection.

In learning situations one needs to be aware of the limitation to understand concepts and ideas. The best means of learning is through visual and dramatic means. They love pictures and sculpture and other visual representations.

Our churches can also be involved where there are places for residential care of the mentally handicapped in their area. In conjunction with the Chaplain they can participate in acts of worship. There are often opportunities for social contact and the offering of friendship.

In our churches we will be particularly aware of parents who have physically or mentally handicapped children. When the realisation first comes to the parents of the young baby that there will be problems, they will need a great deal of pastoral support. The reactions can themselves cause feelings of guilt and self condemnation. These need to be worked through - as indeed with relatives of the mentally ill. Later such families still need a great deal of practical help and spiritual support as the handicapped person will require more attention than other members of the family.

## **Training**

There are courses which can help the Minister to develop his Pastoral gifts and to gain insight into the various categories of mental and emotional disorders. I personally have been helped by them over the years. However, the most important area of preparation for work of this kind is in the preparation of oneself. It is helpful to be in touch - indeed it is necessary - with what is happening to the counsellor in the counselling relationship. One needs to be aware of being manipulated by those who may unconsciously need to control their helpers, and not respond in a way which only leads to collusion and loss of control over time and attention given. We may ourselves be in need of being needed - this may stand eventually in the way of progress towards maturity in the other. One needs

to learn about the occasions when the counselling situation arouses one's own anxieties. There may be conflicts and repressed feelings in ourselves that need to be dealt with in order to be effective in pastoral work of an intensive kind. This is the most practical of training.

The rewards are deeply satisfying. To have a share in the healing of persons, to help another human being to be free to be himself, to observe in others the development of new courage to face the future, to stand alongside a lonely frightened confused soul - this is surely a rich reward. Besides, as Dr. Paul Tournier has said - we discover something new about God's world in every person we meet for each is individual and unique. It is therefore a most interesting and stimulating task. May we seek to be as well equipped as we can for the work.

Lloyd E. Ozanne

## **Reflections on Ministry in a Secular Institution.**

I am Free Church chaplain at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham and work happily in an Ecumenical team comprised of two Anglican, one Roman Catholic, and myself, Free Church chaplain. My stipend is split equally between the Home Mission Fund and its Methodist and URC equivalents. I am also associate minister of St. Andrew's with Castle Gate URC which is situated right next to the Polytechnic.

Trent is the second largest Polytechnic in the country with an FTE., of 7,200. This makes it larger than Nottingham University, down the road. Like other Polytechnics it has a diversity of courses many of which include a length of time on 'industrial placement': the so-called sandwich courses. It is also true to say that, to a limited extent, it caters for some people who failed to get good enough 'A' levels to go to the University of their choice. To generalise even more, whereas in most campus universities about 80% of the students are from 'middle-class' backgrounds, the percentage is the other way round in most Polytechnics. In reality this means that most students coming to a polytechnic have little or no church background or affiliation. This together with the fact that there is no extensive residential campus means that there are not large groups of Christian students meeting regularly. I'm sure there are many other factors influencing this state of affairs, but this does not alter the situation as it actually is. There are no denominational societies at Trent, only a Christian Union. So, if you have any students going to a Polytechnic, they may well discover that there is no denominational society for them to join, and a very limited choice in the kind of student Christian gathering available to them. From a chaplain's point of view this brings its headaches, but more importantly it means that there is no chaplaincy group large enough to create its own full-time job. A chaplain is faced with exploring what it means to minister to or in a secular institution. It is this aspect of my work that I want to look at in more detail.

In a secular institution like Trent Polytechnic, no one is going to draw-up job specification for you, nor are they going to push you into the centre of things. Therefore you have to make your own way and create a job and a role. On the one hand this gives you a tremendous freedom to explore what you think is feasible and promising. On the other hand it takes a certain kind of self-discipline not to get lost in the vastness of it all, or to spend all your time playing snooker or drinking coffee! While no one is going to plan a time-table for you, many will have an idea of what they expect you to be and do. There are a whole host of expectations and understandings conjured-up by the word 'chaplain' that have a negative or misleading connotation. I will indicate a few.

(1). I am not sure how many people really do believe the common T.V. image of clergymen as 'wet'; certainly you may be regarded for your curiosity value and hardly be taken seriously at all. (2). Others will put you in a box marked 'for the religious and religious people.' (3). Many people think of you as someone who has little or no understanding of subjects other than theology, by which they mean something like a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible and Services. (4). If you begin to make an impact some will reflect and feel that you are trying to interfere in matters that do not concern you; eg., if you venture an opinion on the devising of a new curriculum. (5). There are others who consider you to be a useful bolt-hole if they are confronted by any of the thorny 'religious' questions. (6). More damaging still is the view that chaplains are really only second-rate counsellors. In this connection it is interesting to note that the report of the last Polytechnic Quinquennial review of Student Services, treated the chaplaincy as a one line adjunct to the Counselling Service. (7). Finally, there is the widespread understanding that together with other student services, you are irrelevant to the 'healthy' student. You are for people with problems.

Amongst the complexity of reasons why people think like this about chaplains is the fact that sometimes it is true. Any chaplains who are happy to be seen in any of these ways have to face up to the fact that the effect of such views is to alienate them from the 'real life' of the institution by labelling them as marginal figures. There is some overlap with these understandings and expectations when one considers the general opinion about Christians and Christian groups in the Polytechnic. Further, there is the idea that any religious group is going to spend its time pressurizing the rest of the community into listening to what they say, to such an extent that it constitutes anti-social behaviour. Such a view, of course, has been known to have been backed by hard facts in a number of cases. We know that there are some internal Christian conflicts, and there are times when other Christian groups put up posters or hold meetings with which you would not wish to be identified. Unfortunately for us, most of the other members of the Polytechnic do not have our worries over these matters, and any religious poster or activity is immediately identified with the chaplaincy, even some non-Christian groups!

Such a context for chaplaincy in a secular institution of higher education has its implications for the working 'style' adopted by chaplains. The following are some:-

(1). In a large institution there is the constant need to re-inforce your presence. We all know how quickly we forget events and faces, when new situations come our way. People need to be reminded that you are part of the scenery. Being around in popular places may not appear to be achieving much, but without it, you would be forgotten.

(2). In order to become known in an institutional context, and thereby be enabled to present a 'view', it is important to take up particular concerns and offer support, advice, criticisms and, not least, your own learning needs, which have an important message to offer in themselves in a society dominated by experts. One such situation was the need for the provision of a half-term play-group for the children of mature students, so that the students could pursue their own studies over the half-term period, there being no mid-term break in the Polytechnic.

(3). Most of us have guilt feelings about having time on our hands. How important it is amongst very busy people, for them to know that you are likely to be able to give them some time. Of course there is the danger of going to the other extreme, then people will believe that you have nothing worth saying, otherwise someone else would be listening!

(4). People only go where they need to go. Many in the Polytechnic have never entered some of the other buildings. Chaplains are constantly moving about and thereby create the opportunity to relate apparently disparate events and ideas, across the institution. One of the more recent examples of this has been the various feelings expressed by the 'dreaded' silicon chip technology. People in different contexts are asking 'What will be its effects?' The chaplains have, amongst others, offered people the opportunity to share their thinking on this subject.

(5). In order to become involved in how a department operates one needs to gain an understanding of how courses run, and some of the concerns of staff in terms of curricula, new courses, administration, location/travelling, (most Polytechnics are multi-site and require a certain amount of commuting between classes), available equipment, and methods of assessment.

(6). Behind all the decision making, there are the written or unwritten goals people have for themselves, for their departments and for the institution. What are these goals? Who defines them? How widely are they accepted? It is helpful to know to what ends people are working, and to have some vision of what the institution may be yourself.

(7). If we are talking about decisions: who makes them? How can you get anything done? We want more space, but how do we go about getting any? We have had to learn the procedures and etiquette in order to be able to get things done for us. Many people wish to initiate change but they give-up saying, "But how can we do anything?" Well there are ways!

(8). One basic fact that needs to be recognised as far as Trent Polytechnic is concerned, is that we are there 'by grace and favour'. We are not paid by the institution but they welcome us in and provide certain facilities. In

consequence, we can only operate with the willingness of others; we have no place 'of right' within the various discussions in the institution. We are there because the churches have asked ... so too, presumably, could any other religious or political group provided that the polytechnic didn't regard them as subversive.

(9). In a busy institution working within a specified budget different criteria are going to operate with regard to the availability of resources from what is often the case in churches. For example, in the Polytechnic space is in demand, and there are few people who would not be able to use more room if it were offered. If you request more space, a basic question asked is: 'For how long in each day will it be occupied?' In the churches we have escaped the need for this kind of justification of the use of our space until recently. The vast majority of church buildings include a 'sanctuary' that is in use for a very small amount of time in any week. We know why this is, but you try justifying this use of space to an administrator who has many demands on the available rooms.

What emerges from all these aspects of ministry within a secular institution like Trent Polytechnic is the apparent 'weakness' in role and status. Perhaps one can identify this under three headings: (1). **Weakness of recognition:** A chaplain is not seen as essential to the life of the institution: at Trent you are welcomed but not paid for! There are exceptions to this like Sheffield Polytechnic, but in the main one's importance is to be judged by the fact of how much you cost. (2). **Weakness of operation:** As I have indicated earlier, we rely very heavily upon the good-will of others: our right to be there, particularly within the academic departments, is not widely accepted. The story is not all gloom, however, there are people who are happy to welcome us, and our contribution has, on a number of occasions, won over others who did not see our relevance initially. (3). **Weakness of support:** I am conscious of the contrast with ministry in a local church, when one reflects upon the kind of support one receives from moment to moment in the day. As a minister of a local church I was spending much of my time with people who cared about me, and what I was doing. They shared my basic understanding of my work. This is not true in a secular institution. Yes, I am conscious of individuals who support me within and without the Polytechnic, but this does not have a means of visible expression with any degree of reality, as it does when one is with people who support what is being done. Allied to this is the whole area of what it means to give visible expression to Christian faith in the place where you work. Ministers often talk of enabling people to relate their faith to their work. How important this is for those who work in an institution of higher education. But how realistic are these demands? We talk of membership of a local church as though it were a self-contained entity, yet, we are really members of several potential 'local churches'. There is the local church where we worship, there may be the local church where we live. There is the local church at school, and at work, and in any helping agency. No one can give his or her energies to all these local churches, in fact they will concentrate on one or maybe two. When you make demands of your members, remember that this means they are less likely to give the time and energy to working out their Christian faith

at work. From the chaplain's end, response to exercises to help people relate their faith to their jobs, is very poor. So many members of staff and students appear to isolate the one from the other. Perhaps this is not the kind of deliberate isolationism we tend to think it is, but rather an indication that people have no spare energy left to tackle these demanding questions. Here again chaplains may not have the visible support of people coming to meetings that they have set-up. From the student point of view, one has to face the fact, that you are not someone's minister. That minister is always back home, or somewhere else in Nottingham. You are a kind of stop-gap, or interim helper. For me, trying to cope with this 'weakness of support', I have found working within an ecumenical team and being associated with a local church, invaluable. This is not the moment to elaborate on these two vital aspects of my appointment. Now this weakness need not be a bad thing. It is different. Perhaps it is the weakness that contrasts with a 'this worldly' strength: a foolishness that confounds human wisdom.

The conclusion I come to is that ministry in or to a secular institution is very different from that in a local church, and has to be understood, supported and assessed in a different way. What I would also want to say is that it is an essential ministry if the Gospel is to be proclaimed and lived-out in our day, amongst our peers, in our society.

Adrian Thomas

## Book Reviews

**Ministers' Money Matters** 40 pages, loosebound: 60p plus 15p postage  
from Roger Nunn, Manvers Street Baptist Church, Bath.

This is a duplicated booklet privately produced by a group of Ministers from the Western Association. The need was seen for a publication which "gathered together in a clear and concise way" the information already largely available on the different aspects of the financial affairs of ministers. The Group apparently felt it "unlikely that any official body would be able to produce what is needed." Although such an assumption is open to question, nevertheless this booklet does to a large extent achieve the aim of its authors and is commended to members.

The various subjects dealt with are:-

1. *Settlement*: The most valuable part of this section is undoubtedly the publication in full as an appendix of the recently agreed: "Recommended Terms of Settlement" produced by the Superintendents' Board.
2. *Housing*: dealt with in three sections: a) Owning your own house is very much a summary of the recent B.M.F. report. b) Living in a Manse examines the more usual position. c) Retirement describes the work of the RBMHS and the BMMHA.
3. *Cars*. It is a pity that in (2) a specific figure for a mileage allowance of 10p a mile has been included without qualification. This is far below

*continued on page 36 ...*



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## **"Can British Churches Grow?"**

A Workbook compiled by Robin Thomson

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However we understand Church Growth, one fact is unassailable: the churches belonging to the major demoninations are not growing in the Inner City. The membership of black churches increases and house churches multiply. It seems to the reviewer that an equally obvious fact is that the non-growing churches maintain a culture and an expression of life that is alien to the area in which the churches are set. Therefore the question: "Can British Churches grow?" is of supreme relevance to those who are perennially engaged in "holding the fort".

Over 25 years ago the late Rev. Douglas Stewart, among others, was warning our denomination of the ghetto mentality. To face the question asked by this Workbook is to begin to divest oneself of the crippling paralysis caused by this state of mind.

These were the considerations that prompted me to invite fellow church members interested in this question to constitute a study group using the workbook as our main tool of enquiry.

The workbook is imposing, in the style of an official government document. It is the sort of format beloved by civil servants and local government officials. Loose leaf, diagrammatic, graphic, and very clearly set out. I feel that the front cover is puzzling: it appears that to the question "Can British Churches Grow?" the artist has given the thumbs down sign! The interior, however, is much more positive while at the same time being thoroughly realistic in its use of facts and their interpretation.

The scheme is to encourage the members of the group to read each unit (there are nine in all) before the group meeting. At the meeting the open questions contained in that unit are discussed and the practical assignments essayed. One moves from studying the meaning of the question itself to the answering of the question and the implementation of that answer in practical planning.

After reading the workbook and then experiencing the first three units, my overall impression is that this could prove immensely valuable to those who are seeking to clarify the church's strengths and weaknesses, priorities and objectives, and are willing to make the necessary changes. It says, in effect, "All right - if you want to be inward looking, really look!" Painful questions which undercut the artificial defences (such as the confusion of witness with churchgoing, and evangelism with Sunday School teaching), are put in as constructive and as loving a way as is consonant with reality. Vague and imprecise statements which are in everyday currency in our churches such as "Our church is flourishing", "We spent last Saturday in evangelism", "Evangelism is taking place the whole time in all our church activities" are examined, (and why should not the benefits of linguistic analysis be placed at our disposal?). A church that has the impression of

wellbeing and flourishing growth because of the large numbers transferred to its membership from other churches would likewise benefit from the searching questions presented.

The congregational survey in the programme is a contemporary commentary on the promise of Christ that the truth will make us free. The freedom to grow which has been the experience of a number of strategic thinkers and activists in the church of Christ is described from three different points of view. This is an important feature of the scheme; a useful distillation of the thinking of people as diverse but as relevant as McGravan, David Watson, David Sheppard, David Pawson, Lewis Misselbrook and Peter Wagner. These men seem to have grappled successfully with the problem of identifying the false antitheses which prevent so much of our work from getting off the ground: for instance, the operation of planning is not in itself inimical to the free expression and activity of the Holy Spirit, neither is missionary zeal alien from an informed social conscience.

So I am enthusiastic but by no means uncritical. A number of our group feel that the material "talks down" to them and much of the analysis both theological and social is inevitably shallow at times. For a fuller critique from this viewpoint see Leslie Newbiggin's excellent "The Open Secret" published by S.P.C.K. price £3.95.

Keith Sobey

**Meditation. The Key to Expanded Consciousness. by Eric W. Hayden. New Horizon £2.50 80pp**

1. It is good to be near someone at silent prayer in Church and to sense the strain leave them, to see the shoulders relax, to hear the exhalation as if weight and worry were being expelled, and new life taken with the new breath. Good too when it is yourself. We sense it in each other when we are together. Is it so in private too?
2. The thoughts in this book are grounded in a personal experience of suffering and healing, and a long acquaintance with Yoga. (There are many references to the author's previous book 'Everyday Yoga for Christians'.). Simply and clearly it deals with some of the basic practical requirements for meditation:- Finding a place, a posture, a time which is right. I sat up straight as I read it, and became aware of my breathing.
3. It is good too to share the discipline of a Christian Community, or to see a Priest saying his Office quietly in the corner of the train. In non-christian traditions the regular call to prayer is kept. As the author recognises, discussions on this can cause guilt feelings over the reader's own haphazard ways. We need, and seek a self discipline. Perhaps there is more we can do to help each other achieve it. How many of us join with others in regular prayer and devotion, or keep our own daily Office?
4. The book's title suggests a progression, borne out by the text. Meditation is a first step, using objects, stories, themes, to stir thoughts and root them. Thence to Contemplation, reaching beyond the objects and meditative aids to the deeper wonder of God. The Everest peak, - an expanded consciousness. It is this last which gives pause. Perhaps in some ways it can

be worked at by the means suggested of techniques and discipline, yet there still seems a missing link, or perhaps a chasm. Emily Bronte wrote: 'Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals;

My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels:  
Its wings are almost free - its home, its harbour found,  
Measuring the gulf, it stoops - and dares the final bound.'

Do I cross the gulf by bounding? Perhaps in faith I need to dare. Or is it more that in being still the gulf is crossed from the other side, and I am embraced? Emily again:

'What I love shall come like visitants of air,  
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare.

.....  
He for whom I wait thus ever comes to me;  
Strange powers! I trust thy might; trust thou my constancy!'.  
Certainly the ecstasy is not divorced from the agony, and the vision that caught St. Francis, marked his flesh with the wounds of the Cross. The eternal Mystery is a gift, not a reward for effort, - or who would sense it? Mr. Hayden is a good guide to the way, to the place of being. He provides meditations for several stages. Let the poet speak again in Emily: 'O! dreadful is the check - intense the agony -  
When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;  
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again;  
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.'

### **Praying for Revival. by Eric W. Hayden. Revival Publishing Co. £1.50 158pp**

I must confess to impatience. 'Revival' like 'Outreach' is not a word I find myself using very much. Both seem cover-up words for deeper truths, words which have come to a verdict without due regard for the evidence. Or, even further into Alice - 'sentence first, verdict afterwards'. This judging metaphor is relevant. I feel condemned. Perhaps I should. Think of it. Revival - as if we were dead already. So many prayers for revival have been made, so many revivals come and gone, that I am left wondering what it is really about. The grave (!) danger seems to be of missing what is, in the pursuit of something that should be or might be. Not only missing it, but dismissing it. Not seeing the Resurrection now. Thus vision becomes a myopic view of people, of the Church, of Prayer, of God and of the Gospel.

This is the great lack. This book is based almost entirely on passages from the Old Testament. The Book of Acts squeezes in at the end, but the Gospels not at all. At a recent Ministers' Retreat we spent two days together in sessions and devotions. At no time did anyone read from the Gospels to us. If you have kept a record, as I have some years, you will have found much the same imbalance at the Annual Assembly. I am not suggesting that the Gospel is only in the Gospels, but the story of Jesus must be central, otherwise we are heartless.

If I had not been so depressed by the total tone of the book, I should undoubtedly have found some helpful thought and study in it, especially the treasures of the Psalms. You may well see from the tenor of these comments

that it is in fact just the book for you, - just as you assess the likes and dislikes of the film critic of your Daily, and can make your decisions from his favourable or unfavourable comments. I emerged battered. I have always resisted being 'Challenged'. A little book which needs reviving with a draught of Living Water, - or I do.

Ronald Ayres

### **Communicating the Good News in a Television Age by Tom Houston**

Published by the British & Foreign Bible Society.

Last year's Diamond Jubilee Lecture to the London Baptist Preachers' Association was delivered by Tom Houston and is now available in booklet form. True to its subject matter of communication it was delivered with the aid of 37 overhead projector slides all of which are reproduced in the text. Little is said of the content of the Good News itself. Its basic theme is that if we were to rediscover the varied means by which God has communicated, rather than resting content with the one form of monologue preaching, we would be better able to communicate to our own age. It is an age symbolised by the advent and domination of the TV and the implications of being a television society are spelled out. Nothing can be done without the Holy Spirit. But in the past God chose to communicate in various ways to a community who then passed the message on to others. This community dimension is sadly lacking today. The one curious omission in this otherwise challenging lecture is the idea of God's communication through the Incarnation. But every pastor will find much to provoke and stimulate here.

Derek J. Tidball.

### **Preaching: A Syllabus and Lectionary**

Those interested in using the Joint Liturgical Group's Lectionary - see my article in the January FRATERNAL - may like to know of a two-volume publication by John Gunstone, **Commentary on the New Lectionary**, published by SPCK at £3.50 per volume.

For every reading in the two-year cycle he provides a short, information-packed commentary designed to spark off ideas. He indicates the main thrust of the passage and relates it to the biblical witness as a whole. The use of the lectionary, says the publisher's blurb, "encourages, indeed calls for systematic biblical preaching". These two volumes, together with the lectionary, will indeed encourage the systematic biblical preaching that is the very life-blood of the Church.

Roy Turvey

# WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

409, Barking Road, Plaistow, London E13 8AL

My dear Fellow Minister,

There are three matters which I would bring to your attention and concerning which I would ask for your prayers and possibly your help.

First is the work at Orchard House. In the last month or so, the Mission has come to a very important and far reaching decision concerning our approach to this work. You will realise that current thinking in Social Work and particularly in Child Care lays very great emphasis upon reaching and dealing with the individual in his or her need, rather than neatly pigeon-holing men, women and young people into convenient categories. Add to this the fact that for a number of reasons the boys who come and will come to us at Orchard House are more deeply disturbed than their predecessors of 20 or 30 years ago, and you will realise how vital is the need for clear thinking concerning our "philosophy of care". Translated into practical terms, this means that we have committed ourselves to increase the number and the professional expertise of the care staff at Orchard House. This has considerable financial implications. Even more challenging, however, is the task of seeking and finding men or women of the right calibre in terms of professional ability and spiritual commitment to do the work. Please pray for us as we seek personnel for Orchard House. If by any chance you have in your church someone of the right background and personality for this kind of work, then perhaps you might want to challenge them to consider the possibility of working for the West Ham Central Mission.

The second matter is concerning the possibility of our opening a "Family Centre" at Stock in Essex. We feel that there is a very great need for a programme of research, education, training and counselling in this vital area of marriage breakdown. Sad to say, the incidence of breakdown in Christian marriages is on the increase. There may be many ways of interpreting this phenomenon, but we cannot get away from the facts, nor from our responsibility to try to do something to help. May I ask you to remember us in your prayers as we explore this whole potential field of service, as we look at the financial aspects in undertaking this work, and as above all we seek the clear guidance of God as to what we should do.

Finally brethren, the perennial "communications problem". As a reader of The Fraternal, you will be aware of what the Mission stands for and what it is trying to do in the name of Christ and the Church. I wonder how many members of our church are as well informed. I am sure that the vast majority of our Baptist men, women and young people, if only they knew the sort of work that we undertake, would be stimulated to interest and prayer and giving. May I ask you to do all that you can to commend the work of the Mission to the members of your church. If you have not recently seen our filmstrip, or invited a speaker from the Mission, then perhaps you would try to arrange one or the other as soon as possible. I still have a number of vacant dates in 1980 if you would like to invite me to your church. I should be delighted to come. We've a story to tell to the churches, and we would like you to give us the opportunity to tell it.

May the Lord readily use you and your church for His glory.

Yours sincerely  
Trevor W. Davis  
SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER