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The Fraternal

April 1982

No. 199

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Membership is open to Baptist Ministers, Missionaries
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Subscription: £4.00 per annum (or equivalent)
Due January.

Eye Witnesses to Glory

One of the nicest things about small children is the sense of wonder which they show so openly when they encounter things for the first time in life. It might be their first ride on a train, or their first visit to the zoo, or their discovery of the presents left by Santa Claus on Christmas Eve, but whatever the event the open and unashamed response is one of sheer wonder. As adults we learn to restrain our sense of wonder and give it very little open expression, and in one sense there is, of course, something very healthy about this, in that there would surely be something wrong if, as adults, we went to bed on Christmas Eve in breathless anticipation of a visit from Santa Claus down the chimney in the night, or if we jumped up and down in sheer delight as the 8.15 commuter train pulled into the local railway station!! On the other hand what a pity it is that when things happen to us in life which move us very deeply, we convey to other people only the faintest glimpse of the deep sense of wonder that we may feel inside.

Now what has this got to do with the Editor's suggested topic for this article, namely a reflective article on the cross and resurrection? Quite a lot, I would suggest, since the dimension that can easily be missing from our reading and study of the familiar gospel story is precisely the sense of wonder at the gradual unfolding of these great salvation events of which the first disciples were privileged to be eye witnesses. If we today want to read a murder novel, a sure way in which we can deprive ourselves of an important dimension of the enjoyment from so doing is to read the last couple of pages of the novel first, to see who is the murderer. In exactly the same way, when we today read the gospel story knowing exactly what the next step in that story is to be, and knowing especially what the outcome is to be, this may be a considerable advantage in respect of our understanding of these great events, but do we miss on this other dimension, namely the trauma of living through these events with our emotions oscillating from despair to ecstasy, and the depth of the sheer wonder and spontaneous worship that would naturally come at the climax of the story? Certainly the first disciples were not able to read as it were the last two pages of the story first; they had to start at page one, not knowing what the outcome would be, and neither did they have the brilliant and inspired theological mind of the apostle Paul, as we do, to guide them into an understanding of the events that were taking place before their very eyes.

How then did the first disciples arrive at their understanding of the meaning of the cross and resurrection? Obviously it was through the dynamic ministry of the Holy Spirit, lighting up their minds with God's truth, and, after the resurrection, bringing back to them specific things that Jesus had said. I would suggest, however, that the most important way in which the first disciples came to understand what they were experiencing, was not so much in what Jesus said as in the things he did, as they reflected on these, and two things in particular.

1. The Upper Room Drama

Nowhere is the political theme of the gospel story more clearly seen than in

the dramatic events of Holy Week. Palm Sunday was the occasion which brought to a head the growing political crisis in Jerusalem in the form of a head on clash between two political parties. One political party had been founded only three years previously, and it still had only one reliable and fully committed member, Jesus himself, and the manifesto of this party was the Kingdom of God. The other political party consisted of those who were seeking to destroy Jesus and, though they didn't realise it, their manifesto was the kingdom of darkness. And in this deeply political clash is seen the true meaning, and horror, of Holy Week.

The incredible thing about this opposition to Jesus is that it came, not from the world but from the church, from the religious leaders of that day. As they saw it Jesus was not the Messiah but an imposter who openly questioned the Pharisees' interpretation of the law, who included those contemptuous people the Gentiles in his message of salvation, and who must, therefore, be destroyed. Jesus was well aware of this opposition, of course, but had always avoided proclaiming himself openly as the Messiah because he knew that no-one understood what kind of Messiah he was. Because Messiahship for Jesus involved not the expected military revolution and overthrow of the Roman government, but rather the unheard of, the undreamed of, act of suffering alone on a blood-stained cross for the sin of the world.

On Palm Sunday, however, Jesus dramatically changed his strategy. He rides openly into Jerusalem, declaring himself to be God's Messiah, willing to meet the opposition head on, in its own capital, knowing full well that he was limiting the possibilities to only one — the Roman cross of execution — for Jesus also knows that man's salvation can be achieved in no other way. So Palm Sunday is the day when Jesus effectively signed his own death warrant. In this acted parable of riding in on an ass Jesus says, in a way far plainer than words, "Behold, your king", and in so doing Jesus issues a defiant challenge to the Jerusalem authorities which he knew they would find intolerable. Now there could be only one possible outcome : the cross.

The disciples would not have understood the political significance of these actions, but they must have reflected much on the dramatic change of strategy on the part of Jesus, and it was in this atmosphere of ominous foreboding that they met together on the Thursday evening of Holy Week in the guest room of John Mark's house in Jerusalem. The meal which Jesus eats with his disciples on this occasion is undoubtedly a passover meal of some kind; and I believe that it was what Jesus did on this occasion, more than anything he said, which would have brought home to these disciples the meaning of the cross and resurrection, not so much at the last supper itself, but later, after the resurrection, as they thought it through.

We must remember that the disciples of Jesus were faithful sons of ancient Israel, and as they sat down with Jesus to eat this annual passover meal they would have had two primary desires in their hearts: one was the desire to remember and thank God for the deliverance from bondage which *their* nation had experienced on the very first passover, and the other desire was for a realisation of the hope which burned in the soul of every true son of Israel that on a future paschal night God would send his long awaited Messiah and the day of final salvation would have arrived — and in token of

this hope Jews then, as they still do today, set a vacant place at the passover table for Elijah who, it was believed, would come on passover night as the Messiah's herald. And what these disciples then saw Jesus do, by way of interpreting the passover, made this particular passover celebration both for them and for us a never-to-be-forgotten occasion. For as the passover meal proceeded in accordance with the usual established Jewish procedure, Jesus said and did three totally new and, for the disciples, utterly amazing things by way of departure from the normal procedure.

Firstly, as he took the bread, Jesus said: "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me". In a normal passover meal the disciples would have expected Jesus to say: "This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate when they came out of Egypt", but instead of saying this and thereby recalling the past redemption of the exodus, Jesus says that the bread in *his* hands stands for his body, shortly to be yielded up for an act of present redemption which would include not just the descendants of ancient Israel but the whole world. And suddenly Jesus has invested the passover meal with a brand new significance — a parabolic significance — as he speaks of a new exodus which he is about to effect for his people, and reading between the lines one can almost hear the unrecorded gasps from the disciples in this dramatic moment.

Secondly, as Jesus takes the cup he says: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you". Now the idea of the covenant which God had made with his people Israel would, of course, have been no new thing for the Jewish disciples. But the historical problem was that the old covenant had broken down from Israel's side because of her rebellion and unfaithfulness to God, and it was this state of affairs which had led the prophet Jeremiah to speak of a new covenant which God would make with his people, only this time he would write it not on tablets of stone but on the hearts of his people so that all the emphasis would be not on external obedience but on the inwardness of faith, personal responsibility, and the pledge of a full forgiveness. So the staggering newness of what Jesus now says is that his death is actually going to inaugurate the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah, and the unmistakable overtone is that this new covenant could only be inaugurated as Jesus accepted from his Father's hand the cup of our sins and tasted the bitter experience of sin-bearing and separation from his Father on the cross. So the astonishing implication for these open-mouthed disciples is that, after the death of Jesus, they would no longer be dreaming about the coming kingdom age — they would be living in it!

Thirdly, Jesus bids his disciples observe the Lord's Supper not just once but again and again until he himself comes again: "Do this (literally "go on doing this") in remembrance of me". So as the Jewish passover was instituted as a lasting ordinance whereby the nation of Israel could be continually carried back to, and caught up in, God's redeeming action in the Exodus, so the Supper of the Lord is no simple exercise of mental reflection on the death of Jesus, but a reliving of his accomplished redemption, a being taken back again to the Jerusalem upper room and the hill called Calvary, and a sharing again in that saving work of the new exodus which we now

know as a present reality because its Author is the living One in the midst of his ransomed people.

So, for the eyes of faith, the upper room was full of clues which would lead to a profound understanding of the meaning and achievement of the cross. It was evident that the significance of what Jesus was saying and doing did not dawn immediately on the disciples, because the cross still came as a tremendous shock, the unexpected disaster which they never thought would happen. But later, after the resurrection, they remembered, and they understood, which brings us to the second major event which helped these disciples to their understanding of the meaning of the cross and resurrection.

2. The Empty Tomb

The end never is, you know,
he said.
And the words fell from his lips
like a voice
from the dead,
come back to remind me
of all I believed ... yes,

He loved too,
on His own,
the long day moving
into the night. And the dawn
saw Him dead.
But wait ... I smiled and remembered
the end never is ... He said.

Philip Ashley-Lahey.

Here, of course, is the very thing that makes Christianity so unique — quite simply a grave in the Middle East that is empty for ever. And the event of the empty tomb sends a tingle down our spines as we seek to relate to it over a time gap of 2000 years. However must those first disciples have felt when they discovered the news! No wonder, therefore, the early Christians made so much of the resurrection of Jesus, and no wonder that a note of triumph characterised their life and worship and evangelism. To them, living through the events, the resurrection opened up a whole new world of unexpected beauty and splendour. Someone has helpfully and graphically suggested that it was as if they were climbing a mountain through cloud and driving rain and all the way up they had no view — and then suddenly, at the summit, the cloud dispersed and there was unveiled before them a wide and glorious expanse of country which they had never seen before!

Scholars and historians are not slow to remind us that it is this vital living hope, based on the resurrection, which made these Christians so very different from those around them. The world of ancient Greek and Roman civilization was a world of beauty, courage, culture, superb intellect and

impressive poetry, but it was primarily a world without hope. There was a warmth in the enjoyment of the present, but the thought of the future struck chill. Old age was dreaded, and over the whole of life, like the sword of Damocles, hung the certainty of death, spoiling man's enjoyment of the present with the intruding thought of the future. It was a world without hope, until the resurrection of Jesus which dethroned even death, the king of terrors, and from now on Christians were men of hope, looking steadily into the future not with resignation and fear but with eager anticipation.

Perhaps the reality of the resurrection comes home to us even more if we do a direct comparison between our risen Saviour and all other would be saviours. For example, in Moscow's famous Red Square, before the frowning Kremlin walls, you can today, if you want to, join the queue of those waiting to file past the glass tomb of Nicolai Lenin who died in 1924 at the age of 54. His death was a shock to the Communist world but his body has been preserved in that glass tomb so that you can today look into the dead and silent face of Lenin. When he died the Grand Presidium of the Soviet Union gave this announcement to the world, and I quote it verbatim: "No man ever ruled as Lenin. He was the greatest teacher of all time. He was the greatest leader among men. He was the author of a new social order. He was the saviour of the world".

But he's dead! Still and silent in death. Unknown to the Grand Presidium that sits in the Kremlin they spelled their ultimate defeat in the very tense of the words they used. "He was the greatest teacher" — but he's dead. "He was the greatest leader" — but he's dead. "He was the author of a new social order" but he's dead. "He was the saviour of the world" — but he's dead. With what glory does the Christian stand in this dark world and raise his voice and lift his face toward heaven and say: "He's alive, He's alive, He is risen from the dead." There's no tomb that you can visit and say "There's our dead Christ". He's alive and he reigns in heaven as one day he will reign on earth. And the tense is present. He *is* the greatest teacher of all time. He *is* the greatest leader among men. He *is* the author of a new social order. He *is* the Saviour of the world.

It has been my main contention, therefore, that it was the dual events of the last supper and the empty tomb which, more than anything else, helped these early disciples to understand the meaning of the cross and resurrection as, after the resurrection, they looked back and reflected on all that happened. Once they had grasped it then they set about their task of communicating their message of a crucified and risen Saviour to a needy first century world in which they were a small handful of people in a mighty Roman Empire. Such is the power of the Holy Spirit to bring home to men's hearts the good news of Jesus, however, that today, as Lewis Misslebrook reminded us at the first Mainstream conference, the church of the living Christ is an international fellowship numbering millions while we are in the process of digging up pieces of that mighty Roman Empire and putting them in our museums.

Stone door ajar beckoning entrance and scrutiny,
Dawn's first glimmer on bare rock slab,

Linen shrouding void rather than still flesh,
Riven wax signalling death's unshackled bonds,
Angelic invitation "Come, see" — a corpseless tomb,
Hewn crypt radiating heaven's brilliance.
Grief's approaching plod turned to wonder's breathless haste,
Preserving spice discarded sweetening morning air.

Was emptiness ever so full of meaning
Or nothing so eloquent?

James Propst.

Hugh Bishop

"The Sorrow of the World"

It is a common experience that typewriters spell very badly. Just occasionally, very mischievously, they put in the wrong word. When I was first asked to write this article, I was asked to deal with the experience of *ennui* in our ministry. I should be the last person to write on such a subject for I can hardly ever remember an occasion when I was really bored. There is never enough time to do what I feel I ought. There is never sufficient time to do the things I want to do and to follow interests and hobbies. Moreover, I find the infinite variety in the tasks of the ministry and the fascinating diversity of the people I meet as a minister most interesting and rewarding.

The word the typewriter should have written was, of course, *accidie*. One can hardly blame it for refusing to print it for the Oxford Dictionary describes it as obsolete and few people recognise it. It is a word beloved by moral theologians. It has a long history and stands for a very serious spiritual condition. It certainly includes the idea of boredom but it includes so much more. Indeed, it is the word we should use for one of the seven deadly sins, the one usually called 'sloth'.

It comes from the Greek word *akedia*. The original meaning according to the Liddle and Scott Lexicon was "indifference or torpor arising from grief or exhaustion". This suggests that one of the marks of *acedia* was sadness; and *tristitia* is often used as a synonym for *accidie*, as for example by St Gregory the Great. *Akedia* is found in the Septuagint at Psalm 119, v.28: "My soul melts away for sorrow." And it is used again in Isaiah 61 v.3. There God gives "the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit". St Paul is describing *accidie* in 2 Corinthians 7, v.10 where he declares that "the sorrow (*lupē*) of the world produces death" whereas "godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret." In view of the use of the word in the Greek version of the Old Testament it is not surprising that "*acedia* became a favourite ecclesiastical word applied to the mental prostration of recluses induced by fasting and other physical causes." It was a spiritual malady to which monks were specially prone and they described it as the "mid-day demon" (*daemonio meridiano*) from the Vulgate translation of Psalm 91, v.6 "the destruction that wastes at noonday".

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

Dear fellow ministers, -

"Thank goodness it's nearly opening time!"

In order to save my friends even a moment's anxiety, may I hasten to assure them that I have not deviated from a life-long path of total abstinence, nor do I intend to do so. The "opening time" to which I am looking forward so eagerly is, of course, that of YORK HOUSE our new Headquarters, Old People's Home and unit for the care of the terminally ill.

For nearly two years we have watched the fascinating process of demolition, preparation and construction — and now, at long last, we are about to occupy our new building. We have reason to believe that it will be completed, furnished and in use by the first week in May.

I know that you will want to rejoice with us that not far short of a million pounds has been either given or promised.

I know that you will want to pray that our newly enlarged community of elderly folk will soon settle into their new home, and gel into a loving, supportive family.

I know you will want to share with us our concern that we might be guided as to the form of the ministry we shall offer to the terminally ill in what is to be called the Stanley Turl Wing.

With all this excitement here at West Ham, we must not forget the work that Ron Messenger, Russel Warden and the rest of the staff at Greenwoods and The Parsonage are doing. The team there are engaged in a careful and radical consideration not only of the ministry now being exercised, but also of the possible future patterns of our work. Please pray for them, that they may be clearly guided and greatly used by God.

May the Lord give you an Easter blessing.

Yours in Him,

Trevor W. Davis

Perhaps the best account of accidie in English is the Introductory Essay to "*The Spirit of Discipline*" by Francis Paget, a former Bishop of Oxford and Student of Christ Church (Seventh edition, 1906). There is a critical examination of accidie in the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas where it is spoken of as "spiritual apathy". But the fullest and most searching analysis of accidie in the ancient writers is to be found in Cassian (c.360 to 435 A.D.) who in his *Institutes of the Coenobia* devotes the twenty-five chapters of his Tenth Book to a description of it.

Cassian has an amusing and instructive picture of a monk suffering an attack of acedia. He cannot settle to prayer or to work. He is sad; although there is no reason to be sad. He is restless and he wishes that someone would come to visit him to relieve the monotony. He must not break his fast although he is very hungry and the sun seems to decline so slowly to the hour when he may take food. He decides that it would be a work of mercy to visit another monk or even a relation. He feels that the people in his own monastery are so unspiritual. He can think of other monasteries where he would be much happier and make much more progress in the spiritual life. He envies others their bigger opportunities. In the end he throws himself on his pallet and goes to sleep. His day is wasted and nothing is achieved.

From this vivid description one can see that accidie is a complex condition. The outstanding marks are sadness and sloth. But in the ancient writers it is recognised that it is parent to a very undesirable brood: idleness, drowsiness, anxiety of mind, sluggishness in obeying the commandments, straying of the mind towards illicit things, restlessness of body, instability, verbosity, idle curiosity. Aquinas says that it begins with bored indifference towards religious and spiritual matters, goes on to disgust with the spiritual, and if persisted in results in despair. Aquinas continues that, if acedia is allowed to take possession of the life, "one simply gives up the ultimate meaning of life to pursue a thousand trivia". There is distaste for study, distaste for prayer; all is a bore and in the end there is distaste for the things of God. Dante places those who succumb to the sin of acedia in the Fifth Circle of Hell (Inf. 7, 123). They can be heard moaning, submerged in a horrible lake, "we were sad and complaining in the bright sunlight and we continue to be sad here in this gloom."

Cassian's account of this spiritual malady springs out of his own experience. He tells us that one day he suffered an attack. He became (to use a splendid monastic word) a "gyrovague", a gad-about. He went visiting friends instead of getting on with his study and prayers. Sometime later he went to his spiritual adviser, the Abbot Moses, who said to him, "You have not freed yourself from it but rather have given yourself up to it as its slave and subject. For the enemy will henceforth attack you more strongly as a deserter and runaway ... On a second occasion make up your mind not to dispell its attacks by deserting your cell, or by the inactivity of sleep, but rather learn to triumph over it by endurance and conflict." Cassian concludes, "It is proved by experience that a fit of accidie should not be evaded by running away from it but overcome by resisting it". This was St Paul's cure for this condition. "Be not weary in well-doing" (Gal. 6, v.9) "Be ambitious to be quiet and to do your own job". This was the prescription that Wheeler Robinson gave to his men, "Consume your own smoke in a draught of hard work". He advised that when accidie attacked us we should take down our stiffest piece of theological work and grapple with it. It was characteristic of this

tremendous worker that he translated *solvitur ambulando* by "if you go on you come through"; although his variant was *solvitur patiendo*, the solution again and again involves suffering. There are some temptations that we must run away from: but there are others that we must stand and resist. The deadly sin of accidie must be met with the cardinal virtue fortitude.

Already we have passed beyond the historical survey and have begun to see the relevance of this discussion to our own vocational tasks and to our life of prayer. Human nature has not altered much since the 5th Century. The Baptist minister is not immune from the temptation to give in to accidie. We should be grateful that we have such an interesting calling. No dull repetitive tasks are ours. Usually we find pleasure in the study and reading which are essential to our work. Preaching is often a delight. In visiting the sick, the lonely and bereaved we can feel a genuine satisfaction. The fellowship with deacons can be a very rich thing; and discipleship classes a sheer joy. But let us face it that there are many chores which are not so exciting and rewarding. We do not always enjoy the multitude of small committees, the pettiness we too often find and the time spent pouring oil on troubled waters. When we have had a surfeit of such things, it is easy to feel in the words of an earlier Preacher that "all is vanity and a striving after the wind."; that all our endeavours are useless; that our days are a meaningless succession of one thing after another. It is then that the attack begins. We feel that our people are unspiritual; that we should be happier in another church or an administrative job. We become envious of the bigger opportunities granted to our College contemporaries. We become irritable with the family. We cannot settle to prayer or to work. We find all sorts of reasons to desert the study and to postpone doing the things that urgently need doing. At the end of the day we have little to show for the hours spent in gloom.

These, as we have seen, are some of the symptoms of accidie. Of course, we have to be on our guard: the cause *may* be physical. The symptoms are very like post-influenza depression! If we are sickening for something then a visit to the doctor is indicated. But it *may* be the result of exhaustion which we have brought on ourselves by failure to take a day off. If that is the case, drop everything and have a day in the country or at the seaside. Go to a concert and hear, if possible, Beethoven's Ninth with its setting of Schiller's "Ode to Joy" and you may come away convinced that joy is at the heart of the universe. Go to a play: not just a farce to make you laugh, but a great dramatic work which will stir your emotions and make you think; for, as the Greeks knew, there is catharsis in great drama and you will return refreshed.

But if it is a genuine attack of accidie (and those nearest and dearest to us are likely to be able to tell the difference) then there are many things that we can do. Bishop Paget, who calls accidie "most hateful and unmanly", suggests that we should think of the real ills of other people or meditate on the Passion of our Lord. But, as with the spiritual teachers we have already considered, he says that the real cure is to turn strenuously to work. He suggests that, if in such a mood we cannot do our best and creative work, there is always work that we can do, routine work like filing or writing business letters. At least in one respect we can emulate Dr Alexander Whyte of Free St George's Edinburgh. He once told a gathering of fellow ministers, "As a rule, and even when I was most tempted to procrastinate, as Dr Johnson taught me, I sat down doggedly to my desk. Ay, and that, sometimes, on the Sabbath night, and always on the Monday

morning." His famous assistant, Dr G.H. Morrison of Wellington, Glasgow, speaks of the tremendous strength of Dr Whyte's will. "It would seem", he said, "as if nothing — no mood, no listlessness, no lack of present inspiration — could keep him from his appointed task in its appointed hour, or prevent him from carrying it through no matter how heavily the chariot wheels might drive." Dr Morrison points out that this strength of will was "built up through a thousand minute victories."

But what are we to do when we feel a disinclination to pray, even a distaste for prayer? Let us be grateful for those times when we are drawn out in prayer and prayer seems delightful, when we are very conscious of God's presence and power. Few of us, however, escape periods of dryness in prayer. The greatest saints have experienced such periods. Indeed, some of the greatest have known not just dryness but the desolating experience that they have called "the dark night of the soul". When prayer seems to us unattractive, it is all too easy to say, "What is the good of praying when we do not feel like it?" That is the very moment when we must do battle with the demon accidie. When we feel most disinclined to pray that is probably the moment when we need prayer most. We should keep doggedly on. A great spiritual writer asserts, "In the journey of the soul, the traveller moves fastest at night". We should all have a prayerfully thought out "rule of life" and in that rule there must be ample provision for the life of prayer with regular times and regular places for prayer. No advance can be made in the art of prayer without discipline. An encouraging word for the life of prayer is this: Keep the rule and the rule will keep you. When you feel least like praying but keep doggedly on for the sake of the Church and the Kingdom and the Lord, perhaps then our prayers are of most worth to God just because they are marked with the cross. Too often our prayers are too cosy and comfortable. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears ... and he was heard for his godly fear". A study of the prayer-life of our Lord is a rebuke to the poverty and the pettiness of so much of our praying.

But having said this and it had to be said, there are practical steps that we can take to combat dryness. It may well be that we have carried on too long with one kind of prayer or one method of prayer. A change of method may be all that is needed. Perhaps we have concentrated too much on vocal prayer and we should discover the enrichment of disciplined meditation. And too few go on to discover the refreshment of the prayer of contemplation, just quietly resting in the presence of God and "enjoying God", as the Shorter Catechism puts it. Taking up a completely new devotional book or reading a great spiritual biography will usually dispel dryness; and even those who fight shy of books of prayers would find their life enriched by quiet meditation on such a book as *My God My Glory* by Eric Milner-White or the *Prayers of Life* of Michel Quoist.

What then is the real cure for the deadly sin of accidie? It is the very opposite of Christian joy. We need to rediscover that joy which Nehemiah found to be our strength. Such joy is one of the two parting gifts of Our Lord who said, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full". Nor should we forget that, if we put our lives under His control, "The fruit of the Spirit is joy".

Spurgeon's Homes

SPURGEON'S ARE SPREADING CARE THROUGHOUT BRITAIN.

Wherever you go in Britain there are children suffering through family problems. Sometimes it's divorce, sometimes parental illness, bereavement or imprisonment and so often this means the children cannot be cared for at home. Spurgeon's are providing family homes to care for such children. We have already established homes in Bromley, Bedford, Coventry and Luton, with a purpose built Day Care Centre at Coventry.

This service to the community is dependent upon the financial help we receive from churches and our many friends. We hope you and your church will help us meet the needs of these unfortunate people with your prayers and gifts of money.

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KENT CT7 9DH.

The Cessation of the BMF Library in the near future!

Sadly, I have to report that at the last committee meeting of the BMF in March I proposed as the Fraternal Library secretary that the library be closed and the books disposed of in the most suitable way. The committee accepted this resolution.

The reason for my bringing this proposal was that over the eight or so years that I have been secretary the use of the library by our Fraternal has grown less and less and it seemed to me that we have now come to the time when the expense required to run such a library was not warranted. Only seven ministers' Fraternal use the library with any regularity now and only a few individuals avail themselves of the facilities we offer. Despite this I have continued to buy new books and over the years since I took over from Walter Harris I have spent nearly £500 on books and postage etc.

Here I would like to record our appreciation to the Particular Baptist Fund for their generosity over the years in allowing us so much money to buy books and cover postage expenses.

Why the library has not been used latterly is hard to say. It could be that ministers are now paid better and so can purchase their own books; it is true too that more churches make book allowances to encourage their pastors to buy essential books; in some areas the public libraries have improved their theological sections and have been more willing to obtain modern theological works; the cost of postage may have inhibited some groups from asking for parcels; or it could be that some ministers are keeping up with their reading less than their predecessors.

ANYHOW THE LIBRARY will be closing so please WILL ALL THE FRATERNALS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BOOKS OUT ON LOAN FROM THE LIBRARY RETURN THEM TO ME AS SOON AS IT IS CONVENIENT SO THAT I MIGHT MAKE A FINAL TALLY OF THE BOOKS PREPARATORY TO DISPOSING OF THEM IN THE MOST SUITABLE MANNER.

Thank you.

Ministerial Training at South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff

As each new issue of the Fraternal rumbles by and as the story of ministerial training at this College and that relentlessly unfolds, the faithful reader surely has a lurking sense of *déjà vu*. Surely the mixture as before? The brand label changes. Does much else?

Perhaps the fairer slogan might be: Variations on a Theme. There are variations of pattern — sometimes of real significance. There are variations of method — difficult to grade on any objective basis. There are variations of emphasis — but how far are these more than marginal? So why spend time in tabling the ingredients of training at the South Wales Baptist College? Why not simply say “Snap”?

In the end, the heart of the problem lies in the fact that many of the essentials are almost incommunicable. How do you categorise attitudes, perspectives, expectations, so that he who runs may read? How do you translate into cold prose a subtle (and partly unplanned) balance and blend of ingredients that produce a total configuration of training importantly different from that which a different mix of precisely the same elements would create? Perhaps all that can usefully be attempted is to gesture in the direction of some controlling attitudes and expectations, to point to some crucial concerns and their concrete expression, and to indicate some of the “givens” which in this, as in every situation, mercifully limit any unbridled freedom of the “trainers” to do exactly what their limited wisdom might dictate.

Fixed Points

The obvious place to begin is with the recognition that College ministerial training is an episode in a long-running serial. It is bounded by a before and after to which it must carefully relate. The arriving student is not a blank page to be written on. He comes moulded by his christian origins, his past experiences, the churches he has known, and a motley host of other “contributors”. Decisive training has already taken place.

Equally significant is what comes after. Training continues in that succession of pastorates which constitute many a “ministry”. This is “on the job” training with a vengeance. It is heavily governed by the expectations of “ministry” which a church possesses and by the pressures in this direction or that it (often unconsciously) imposes. Churches compound ministerial flaws and weaknesses, elicit potential, shape operation. For good or for ill they prosecute ministerial training.

In between the Whence and the Whither stands that explicit training the College seeks to provide, as it strives to build upon (or undo) the past and prepare for the future. Often it cannot do many things it would deem important, because its ministerial candidates arrive in so many respects already shaped and there are no instant ink eradicators available. Equally, and in many respects properly, the College’s freedom to plot ideal goals is

circumscribed by consumer demand. The churches would claim to know what they want. Were they to be provided with something alarmingly different they could hardly be expected to respond with a "Well done, good and faithful servant".

What of the other "givens" within which the College at Cardiff operates? Perhaps the most significant is its relationship to the University of Wales, and, in particular, to the University College, Cardiff. The South Wales Baptist College, St Michael's (Church of Wales) College, and University College are equal partners constituting a School of Theology. Each partner provides its complement of teaching staff who together offer the courses leading to the University of Wales B.D. degree or Diploma in Theology. Both qualifications involve a three year period of study. The Diploma in Theology is recognised as equivalent in standard to two thirds of the degree. Every ministerial student is entered for one or other of these courses.

This is a "given" of the Cardiff situation. But it was at the beginning and it still remains a chosen given. It reflects the constantly reaffirmed judgment that, whatever may be the drawbacks (and such there are), a faith which is essentially missionary is in the end best served by setting up its stall at the heart of the secular academic marketplace where its claim to truth may be tested amid the full traffic of the world's life.

We may pause at this point to ask what is actually going on? Is the training and growth of tender plants really assisted by this thoroughgoing exposure to academic icy winds? Does effective preparation for Ministry really demand the pitchforking of young and not so young disciples into the confusion of academic theories and the destructive tentacles of academic scepticism? Is the whole enterprise not theoretical rather than practical, negative rather than upbuilding?

To this query there is, of course, a response which has had a certain popularity. It goes something like this. Faith which is worth the name is gained in constant dialogue with doubt. It is only when all the props have been knocked away that the real Gospel bedrock will be found. Light the academic critical fire and let everything that will burn be consumed. Throw the student head first into the ruthlessly questioning swimming pool. Only thus will he learn to swim and gain the further bank of a mature and realistic faith.

At Cardiff we have little sympathy for the extremer forms of this conviction. Pursued singlemindedly it would leave few survivors from the ordeal. As so often, pace and timing are everything. None of us can bear more than a certain measure of reality. We need our theological illusions; and woe betide the teacher who strips a student of them before the soul is ready for something truer. Swept and garnished rooms are a magnet for all kinds of unpleasant theological visitors; and too often the last state will be worse than the first.

Evidently some nifty pastoral footwork is called for. Nevertheless, the dangers are not in general found to arise from academic courses and insensitive teachers. More commonly, they stem from the moulding the student has undergone before he enters the College doors. Has there been a conspiracy of silence designed to shield all growing disciples from catching

even a rumour of the theological commonplaces of the last two centuries? Has there been a concerted effort to inculcate in them a suspicious abhorrence of ever changing one's mind about anything? Occasionally one wonders. And it is in such cases that contact with the real world, its knowledge and its opinions, tends to be felt as threatening and can sometimes prove disastrous.

Central Concerns

So, with more urgency and greater point, the question may be reiterated as to what is actually going on in the initial Cardiff three year course rooted in the University. The College would answer by pointing to three overriding concerns. The first is that the ministerial student shall learn how to listen so that he may the more really and truly hear what Scripture is saying. The knowledge he is offered, the tools made available to him, the opinions to which he is introduced, these are all set before him to the end that he may, if possible, become a faithful servant of the Word. He comes, as do we all in varied measure, having already decided at many points what Scripture does and must say. It is not the task of the theological college to replace one set of predetermined fixities by another but to seek to open eyes and unstop ears, so that the newness, strangeness and unexpectedness of Scripture may be known.

The second concern is that the ministerial student shall begin to gain the freedom of history. At this point too often he enters training as a prisoner. He has his stereotypes and illusions about the past, particularly the ecclesiastical past. He has to be encouraged to "read" the past in its *own* frame of reference and to learn how to weigh evidence and come to terms with hard facts he would rather not admit. More seriously still, he has to be led towards the realisation that the past is not dead but like a mighty river irrigates and often inundates the living present, and that our fantasies about it distort our christian attitudes in ways that almost pass belief.

The third concern is that the ministerial student shall lay or deepen the foundations of a mature christian faith which can operate in the real world. This process reaches its specific focus in the fourth year of training which is almost always required and which involves the Diploma in Pastoral studies course of University College, Cardiff. Here he will taste the disciplines of psychology, sociology, education, pastoral care. Here he will come to grips with the lineaments of the society in which he is called to minister. And here he encounters the specific encouragement to forge or refine a theology with which he can operate in the days of ministry that lie ahead.

Three dominating concerns — sometimes doubtless more obvious to the teacher than to the students. Inevitably, in all this, University courses (or any courses) remain to some extent blunt instruments, even though theological college staff have a substantial role in the teaching responsibility. So it is that a good deal of the strengthening cement is consciously provided through the familiar internal College sessions — sermon class, leadership of worship, pastoralia, Baptist history and principles. Designedly these all cohere and interlock to serve the same overriding purposes, whether it be the use of scripture, the gaining of a historical sense, or the forging of faith.

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Yours sincerely,

M.E. PURVER
General Manager

Knowing & Doing

Knowing is of course barren without doing. Once more the envisaged pattern is familiar. An initial attachment of at least a year to a local Baptist church and under the supervision of its minister, so that ministerial operation and functioning church life can be observed, participated in, and felt on the pulse. A summer vacation student pastorate, assessed by church and college alike. A heavy practical component in the Diploma in Pastoral Studies requirements, with pastoral placement throughout and experience in such situations as hospital, social services, industrial mission — not to mention work in some chosen area of special concern. And from first to last, the student being pastorally related to a theological college tutor with a beady eye but hopefully a perceptive mind and a compassionate heart.

We may well pause once more to ask whether the balance and inter-relationship between knowing and doing and between theory and practice is being properly maintained. It is not an easy question to answer; and those most confident of the solutions are those most to be suspected. In their best moments, churches are aware that they need something more than skilled technicians; and Cardiff is not in the business of trying to produce them. Equally, it would be a strange church that welcomed a minister totally unequipped to exercise the tools of his trade; and the practice of the essential elements of his craft is something that Cardiff is concerned to make possible at every step of the four year pilgrimage. So far, so clear.

Yet once we move from these obvious points a grey area begins to emerge. Knowledge means enablement, some enthusiasts may claim. It may. The trouble is that there is no automatic guarantee that it will. Learning comes by doing, other dogmatists declaim. It may. The trouble is that there is no automatic guarantee that it will. The hardest nut to crack is the problem of the establishment of a two-way road between knowing and doing along which traffic flows freely in both directions. The worst deceivers are those who claim that an effective journey can be made only by starting at one particular end.

Pragmatic to the last, Cardiff struggles to provide a mixture. For observation suggests that human beings stubbornly refuse to conform to theoretical moulds. Sermon class may centre on an examination of the sermon preached and seek from there to plot the errors made and chart the insights exemplified. Alternatively, it may centre on the text allotted, sketch the relevant and proper movement of biblical preaching, and largely leave the preacher to discern whether or not the outcome intersects his "offering" at a single material point. Pastoral sessions may centre on examination of case studies encapsulating the student's own pastoral operation and seek to unveil the adequacy or inadequacy of his actions and reactions. Alternatively, they may concentrate on illumining in the light of the Gospel the strange dynamics of human interplay, in the hope that the budding pastor will see his experimental practice confirmed or denied. There really is no telling what will work for whom. Believe not those who would tell you otherwise.

Christian Formation

It is time to attempt to draw the threads together. What has been spoken

of is a series of threefold cords. Ministerial training at Cardiff takes place in a partnership between theological college, University, and city churches. Its formal channels are the three year B.D. or Diploma Course, the one year Diploma in Pastoral Studies Course, and the accompanying internal college training provisions. The controlling concerns are the keener hearing of Scripture so that the Bible may be effectively deployed and fruitfully used, an entering into the freedom of history so that the past may be faced and assessed and the present liberated from inherited distortions, and the forging of a mature personal theology pastorally viable in today's world. The points of concentrated attention are knowing, doing — and being. It is to this last that in conclusion we must turn.

For however preoccupied a theological college may be with training in “knowing” and “doing”, its necessary and overarching commitment is to “being”. Its essential charter is the nurturing of men and women of God. If there is failure here, all else is of little final account. We may call it spirituality. We may call it christian formation. Whatever name it bears it relates to the maturity of the children of God.

Just here the stakes are highest and the demands on the College most daunting. Christian formation cannot be laid on. Wholeness, integration, depth, cannot be organised, packaged and distributed. Men of God embodying leadership in service cannot be run off a production line, however carefully planned. Yet the meeting of this central challenge cannot be left passively to chance — disguised by a nod in the direction of the Holy Spirit. What then is to be done?

Cardiff has no clearcut answers on offer. It looks however in three directions. There is the impact of theological training on the mind. We have already glimpsed the mingled promise and peril of the enterprise and need not retrack at any length. If christian maturity involves the integration of the whole man in captivity to Christ, then the deepening and discipline which exposure to truth may bring should begin to heal that rift, particularly between the mind and the emotions, which so often signals spiritual immaturity in the ministerial student. All that the theological college can do is to ensure that the opportunity is provided. It cannot guarantee that it will be fruitfully seized. Yet it prays and hopes. For the harmonious christian wearing of the seamless robe of mind, emotions and will is a signal mark of spiritual coming of age.

Secondly, there is the impact of christian community. Because of this, Cardiff reaffirms its basic commitment to the residential college and prizes its limited but significant family accommodation units. If christian maturity involves right relationships with others and with God, then the deepening and discipline which belonging to a community established round the symbols of the Faith offers *may* bring life. In this total enterprise, the measuring of gentle informal training afforded by the Wives' Group in its continuing life remains relevant. Again there are no guarantees; only the possibilities that exposure offers. But the travail of human relating under the shadow of the Cross is a significant indicator of growth towards the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Finally, there is the impact of personal lives. This constitutes the most awesome challenge of all. In the end, spirituality is caught rather than taught, glimpsed and embraced rather than prescribed and ingested. At this point everyone is on trial, but College tutors perhaps most of all. For just as the ultimate way to a great preaching is to sit at the feet of great preaching, so the highroad to a spirituality, to mature christian manhood and womanhood, is to catch as in a human mirror the reflection of Christ. We are not asked to be the embodiments of greatness. But we are saddled with responsibility for mirroring and reflecting. We are not the disbursers of spirituality. But we are the midwives who assist at strange places of new birth, faithfully or catastrophically.

So, at the end of a very long day, as we contemplate ministerial training at Cardiff, we have to weigh whether and to what extent "the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our students but in ourselves"; and the menacing text for the academic institution becomes "Physician, heal thyself".

Neville Clark

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A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF CHILDHOOD

It seems a lot of people have been talking about children lately. 1979 was the International Year of the Child. Government decisions and summit talks in many other countries, focused attention on such things as the exploitation of children. For others it was popularised in TV programmes like 'Blue Peter'. For yet others it was a good excuse to do some interesting things in the church, like fund raising, tea parties, family days, etc.

Another cause to talk about children has been the Bi-Centenary of Robert Raikes, reputed founder of the Sunday School Movement. (Perhaps 'populariser' would be a better word). For some a nostalgic backward look and a wish that the good old days of the Sunday school were back with us. For others an excuse to have a good anniversary occasion, and look at and listen to the children. For yet others an occasion to do something imaginative in the church and ask questions about children and education and needs. But one way or another a focus on children.

To add to the possible reasons for talking about children one could mention the publication in 1976 by the British Council of Churches of the report *The Child in the Church*, now a best seller and already in its eighth reprint. This document challenged the whole issue of children in the church with an examination of theology of childhood and theology of nurture. This is being followed up with a closer and more detailed examination of theology of 'critical openness' and the relationship between Christian nurture and upbringing and secular education in a pluralistic society. Can a Christian be an educated person if education is by definition critical, evaluative, open and committed to further enquiry and learning? Big issues! Children have always been a problem, even if previous centuries dealt with it by denying it or not facing it. Yet each major church denomination has a distinctive view of childhood, embodied in its practices and ceremonies. These emerged in the formative periods of our particular beginnings, and are consciously or unconsciously expressed in our churchmanship and way of life. There is a good case to resurrect these historic doctrines, and to examine them in the light of the theology of nurture in a changing world. 'What are we doing with and for children?' might be answered profitably by examining not only the theology of nurture but also our practices and allowing them to interact. Views follow certain lines:

Church Membership of Infants with the giving of communion to infants, baptismal regeneration, and infant salvation. This view amongst Romans and Orthodox is tied to a sacramental system, and a view of grace which operates through the church's system.

Child Conversion amongst Baptists and Methodists and other evangelical groups holds the child to be in preparation for the day when he will hear the Gospel for himself and respond in repentance and faith. For the Baptist this will be the moment of baptism, for others affirmation of faith. For both it will be the occasion of church membership. Baptism is desirable but not

essential. Some baptise infants, where the baptism is an anticipation and a hope as well as an expression of the faith of the people (parents) and a celebration of the grace and love of God. For Baptists, child dedication might well be all those things, yet baptism is for those who choose it for themselves as their personal identification with Christ, symbol of their willingness to follow him in the church.

The Child and his Parents is another line of approach. The child is bound with his parents, (if they are believers) in covenant relation to God and the Church. 'The promise is to you and your children ... to Abraham and his seed after him'. The child is baptised as a sign of the covenant and becomes a presumptive Christian, presumptively regenerate. He is to grow in the faith knowing himself as a Christian and no other, reaching maturity as he grows as a person. Conversions there may be, though these are not single moments when he comes into faith from no faith, rather moments of renewal of the latent faith in him by virtue of the sacramental nature of his birth in covenant relationship of which his baptism is the sign.

Childhood Innocence the view of Quakers, Unitarians and Congregationalists is shared also by some of the descendants of the continental Anabaptists. (The latter combine this view with conversion theology). Childhood is a state of innocence and ignorance, the questions of sin and faith and membership do not apply to children until they reach the age of understanding, passing from infancy through childhood to adulthood, and thus from their innocence and ignorance into understanding and maturity.

The interesting thing is how secular views correspond to some of these theologies. Equally interesting is how, despite a historic view of the child held by a particular denomination that view may be compromised in practice. For example, the notion of childhood innocence can be taken to extremes; with views of child idealisation the moment of birth being seen as the moment of purity. A contrast to the Roman view of original sin. Later in life, (with the stress on the sexual nature of man expressed so completely by Freud), the innocence is spoiled by the "sin". The whole business of development of childhood and the stages through which childhood passes are expressed by Piaget, Goldmann and Fowler in their stage psychology theories. The stress is on cognitive development, yet this does relate to emotional and physical development also. Other researches by E. Robinson and M. Paffard on the significance of childhood experiences of the numinous, the mystery, the totality and wholeness of life etc. also raise important questions about the status of childhood. Thus denomination views worked out on the grounds of doctrines of sin, and grace and salvation and the status of the child to God and the Church are confirmed, or alternatively, seriously changed by the views of childhood from secular, autonomous disciplines like psychology and education. Equally views of education and worship, expressed in various curricula and 'Family Church' practices, often compromise traditional denominational stances concerning the nature and status of childhood.

Let's look a bit closer:-

Certain theological principles must be borne in mind when one considers, for instance, the Roman Catholic view of childhood. First, the principle of **extra ecclesiam nula salus** implies the necessity of being brought into the Church if salvation is to be real. Since baptism is the gateway into the church and the means of regeneration and salvation, then the unbaptised are not saved. Regarding those who die in infancy without baptism, some doctrine of limbo emerged, added to which arose a doctrine of baptismal intention. Thus if the parents intended to have the child baptised, but the child died before this could take place, then at least they could be optimistic about his salvation. The Roman view is wedded to the sacramental view of the church: the baptism confers grace **ex opere operato**, and the means of regeneration and removal of original sin. Man is completely corrupt because of Adam's sin. He has no free will as a consequence, and is therefore completely dependent on the grace of God in Christ. Thus the child will be baptised into the church at birth, his sins will be forgiven in that the effects of Adam's sin and guilt are taken away by the grace operative through the sacrament. He then grows as a Christian, will be confirmed into the church at an early age and receive Communion usually at the beginning of the stage of reason. This is a sacramental view of childhood and salvation.

The Romans share much in common with the Orthodox Church. However, there is a point of real difference. In common with some Protestants, Romans recognise some stages of growth and development in the child for childhood is a series of stages of spiritual formation, hence the withholding of Communion until the age of 7 or so. The Orthodox recognises baptismal regeneration in the administration of baptism to the new born infant, in the principle of 'no salvation outside the church', and in the doctrine of the necessity of baptism. Yet the Orthodox also give communion to their infants, thus ruling out any view of development into stages at which certain sacraments operate. The process of child upbringing with the Orthodox is more a process of religious socialism.

An important concept in childhood theology is covenant. For Calvin it was crucial. In the **Presbyterian Doctrine of the Child in the Covenant**, it provided an important base for establishing the relation of children to the Church and the Gospel and the grounds for baptising infants, at least the infants of committed Church members. The principle seemed to be that the covenant established with Abraham was also with his descendants, they were beneficiaries of the covenant with him. Infants were to be circumcised as the confirmatory sign of that covenant. It was a covenant of grace whereby man shares the divine life by the gracious act of God. In this promise of grace in covenant is the promise of eternal life. 'He who is God of the living is God to Abraham and to the children of Abraham'. Calvin saw continuity in the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, and analogy between circumcision and baptism of infants. The only difference between the two was one of administration. Thus Calvin saw children of believers not as sinners, nor as being in some state of 'in between', rather heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. However there is no **ex opere operato** action here, no baptismal regeneration. Christ, the fulfilment of the Old Covenant, is to be trusted and the salvation of the infants is secured. Calvin also had a firm view

of the invisible church. Infants who die in infancy die in the grace of Christ, and their early death is a sign of their election. The knowledge of this church is with God alone. Children enter this church on the grounds of the covenant and are presumptively regenerate. Baptism is the ratification of the adoption or calling into eternal life by the covenant of grace. Thus the child is a presumptive Christian. This view of childhood is quite distinct from others. Each child has a unique personality and is complete at each stage of his life. The seeds of a doctrine of personhood are evident. Infants are renewed by the spirit of God according to their capacity until the power in them, latent at birth, grows by degrees and the presumptive repentance expressed in their baptism as infants, and the faith anticipated in baptism, are manifest. This contrasts sharply with conversion theology, where each person must wait until the age of understanding, hear the Word for himself and then respond. Covenanting with God then takes place at that point not earlier in infancy. The doctrine recognises the significance of birth into a Christian family. The family is a unit. The child is already in the realms of grace and in relationship with God and the Church. Lastly, the process of child upbringing that follows from such a theology is not one of preparation for conversion, nor socialisation, nor instruction through various stages, rather growth and nurture. The child grows up as a Christian and continues to grow as a Christian as the years progress. He is a member of the Church, though full participation is reserved until later. So the presumptive faith becomes more and more actual, and matures as the person matures. 'Rebirth' and conversion were not seen as essential to those born into the Faith by virtue of their natural birth. The seeds of a sacramental view of parenthood are inherent in this theology.

The Baptists

Historically the separation from the established church in the repudiation of infant baptism by the Baptists amounted also to a separation from the officially constituted life of the nation. It is doubtful now whether in the context of a pluralistic secular society this is relevant. There are three strands of Baptist witness since the 16th century — the continental Anabaptists, the English General Baptists and the English Particular Baptists. The General Baptists united with the Particulars in the 17th century. The General Baptists lost their extreme wing to the Unitarians, and the Particulars theirs to the Strict and Particular Baptists, who held a hyper-Calvinistic view of predestination. BUT all groups repudiated infant baptism. On the one hand they held certain things in common with other Separatists: church government, attitudes to ministry, priesthood of all believers, etc. yet parted company with them on theology of covenant. To the other Separatists the child was within covenant relationship with the Church by virtue of his birth into a family of believers. The New Covenant was continuous with the Old, infant baptism analogous to circumcision. The Baptists repudiated this. On baptism however, before the two English groups united, there was some divergence of view. The General Baptists under the influence of Arminian theology, held that the gospel is the free gift of God to all, sin is a personal responsibility atoned for by Christ, and appropriated by the believer in repentance and faith. Those who die in

infancy die in the salvation wrought by Christ for all, and because original sin is not the same as original guilt, and children do not share the latter, then they die in innocence. Baptism was a profession of faith but also an initiation into the church, itself a gathered fellowship of believers. The Particular Baptists differed from their General brethren not in the mode of administering baptism nor in repudiation of infant baptism, but in regard to its motif. Baptism for them was not so much an initiation into the church as the symbol of identification with Christ in his death and resurrection. Baptism was the symbol of new life. They held a view of Covenant in common with the Calvinistic Reformed brethren but contrasted the New with the Old and severed any continuity between them. In common with other Calvinists and in contradistinction to the continental Anabaptists, the Particular Baptists had a strong view of the invisible church, membership of which was by grace of election and known only to God. However membership of the **visible** church was by personal faith. The General Baptists did recognise some link with the church on the part of the children of believers, though it was not expressed very adequately.

After union the two views on baptism were brought together. Now Baptists recognise baptism as both a profession of faith and identification with Christ and also an initiation into the Church. Still infant baptism is repudiated for much the same reason as the formative period, though infant dedication is widely practised. Children are not ready for faith, do not understand, are in a state of preparation and therefore are neither members of the church, nor to be baptised, nor held responsible for sin. For Baptists there is no **ex opere operato** action in the baptism, it does not confer salvation, it is not an absolute requirement for salvation. Baptism is the symbol of new life, the outward sign of the inward change. It is to be sought personally and voluntarily. Being a Christian is a matter of discipleship by which believers commit themselves to the Lord and to one another to be the Church. Thus each local church is free under God to interpret the laws of God, the only authority in the church is the Spirit working through scripture amongst the believers.

Reformed Baptists also take seriously the doctrines of election and covenant. However, these break completely with the view that the Old Covenant is continuous with the New Covenant. The Reformed Baptists' view sees only discontinuity between old and new. Reformed Baptists regard children as non Christian until they are converted. Instruction is necessary so that they do not grow up with a false sense of security and hypocrisy counting themselves as something they are not. To count children as regenerate, as church members, would encourage in them false hope. The challenge to children is not 'Be Good Christians' rather 'Repent and believe the Gospel'. Reformed Baptists believe that Calvinism is a "high" doctrine but does itself grave injustice at the point of childhood. The child is lost, alienated from God, and the only remedy to this lost state, is the Gospel of Salvation. 'Ye must be born again' is the key principle of attitudes to children. In common with other Baptists they repudiate infant baptism and see a great responsibility to parents and the church to instruct their children

in the faith and preach the gospel to them. The position is clearly stated in *Children of Abraham* by David Kingdon.

Continental Anabaptists took their separation from the State and State Church more seriously. They established schools and in the communalisation that took place amongst the Hutterites, Mennonites and Amish developed quite distinctive views of childhood. They repudiated infant baptism. They saw a sequence of events by which persons came to faith; preaching the Word, hearing, repentance, faith and baptism. Children were in a state of innocency until they moved from infancy into youth and could begin to show three important things: development of a good conscience with God, ability to distinguish between good and evil, and exhibit self will. Crucial to this process was understanding and obedience. Baptism and profession of mature faith was the climax of a self surrender and obedience to the will of God. Original sin was of no account in infants until manifest in actual sins. Infants dying in infancy died in the universal grace of God and their fate was with him — though about that Anabaptists would not pronounce but were optimistic. Children were to be disciplined through the exercise of obedience until that day when free voluntary surrender to God's will was symbolised in baptism, itself a rite of passage into adulthood. Hutterite, Mennonite and Amish children tend to be socialised through communalisation patterns in a way that English Baptists are not in these days. They have their own schools even today and have established their own goals for child rearing.

Talk about children is a challenge to look again at these traditionally held denominational theologies of childhood. Our attitudes and practices regarding Children and Worship, especially Communion — to Family Worship — to alternatives to Sunday School — to inter-generational learning — to family life and parenthood — to human development and the learning and growth process — to children in the community and the place of schools — to education and its essential features in a pluralistic society — often bear no relation to our denominational views. Our practices embodied in our rites and ceremonies are often saying different things to us and to our contemporaries.

It may be that the fact that children are the cause of talk in the church at the present is one way in which the Spirit is challenging us in the doing of our theology, and the ways in which we are facing up to the issues of a secular society. 'By their rites and ceremonies we shall know them'.

David F. Tennant

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- a) the number of properties by 16% to 43
- b) the number of flats by 30% to 759
- c) the number of tenants by 30% to 1252

To date this year four additional schemes

Arundal	— 28 flats
Bideford	— 22 flats
Leamington Spa	— 55 flats
Pontypridd	— 26 flats

have been completed.

Building is proceeding on thirteen new projects.

These are at Barnwell, Cambridge; Bedminster, Bristol; Townstal, Dartmouth; East Greenwich; West Gorton; Buckhurst Hill; Llanelli; Peckham; Penydarren, Merthyr Tydfil; Resolven; Kingsland, Southampton; Whitchurch, Hants; Wolvercote, Oxford.

Further information from:

Charles Webb-Sear
Baptist Church House
4 Southampton Row
London, WC1B 4AB.

B.M.F. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 1981

(with comparative figures for 1980)

GENERAL ACCOUNT:

Income:

Home subscriptions	2011.14	(1820.16)
Overseas "	292.32	(133.62)
B.M.S. "	10.00	(11.50)
Fraternal	917.73	(568.63)
Interest: 1212.34		
less. trans.		
to life A/Cs 3287.86	884.48	(624.99)
	4115.67	(3158.90)

Expenditure:

Committee fares/lunches	335.71	(331.39)
Fraternal, Printing	2099.08	(1937.20)
Postage	474.49	* (776.22) +
Article	-	(15.00)
Envelopes	-	(106.60)
Library	20.00	
Pastoral Session	54.50	
Whitley Lectures	5.00	(143.75)
Postage & sundry expenses of Officers/Secretaries	117.89	
	3106.67	(3310.16)

Balance on the year to transfer to General Reserve: £1009.00 (-£151.26)

Notes: * = 3 postings: += 5 postings.

GENERAL RESERVE

Balance @ 1.1.81	332.96
Surplus from 1980	749.69
Balance @ 31.12.81	1082.65

BENEVOLENT ACCOUNT:

Balance @ 1.1.81	133.36	Two payments:	30.00
Donation	5.00	Balance @ 31.12.81	108.36
	138.36		138.36

LIFE ACCOUNT No. 1. (entry closed at 31.12.1980)

Balance @ 1.1.81	5110.14
Donations:	17.00
Interest added to capital	277.86
Balance @ 31.12.81	5405.00

LIFE ACCOUNT No. 2. (commenced 1.1.1981)

Subscriptions of 25 new members	800.00
Interest added to capital	50.00
Balance @ 31.12.81	850.00

Note: Monies belonging to Life Accounts Nos. 1 & 2 @ 31.12.1981 are held in the following government stocks (Except for £55 held in the Bank awaiting investment).

£3,000 in £3018.02 nominal Treasury 1997 13¼% stock

£1,700 in £1768.14 nominal Treasury 1993 13¾% stock

£1,000 in £ 993.51 nominal Treasury 2003 13¾% stock

£ 500 in £ 597.54 nominal Treasury 1995 12% stock

£6,200 in £6377.21 total nominal stock

Total yield in 1982 on life account balances expected to be 14.9% approx.

Summary of balances @ 31.12.81

General	1009.00 (749.69)	Held in following accounts.	
Reserve	1082.65 (332.96)	Bank current	89.74
Benevolent	108.36 (133.36)	Bank Deposit	419.97
Life No. 1	5405.00 (5110.14)	POSB Investment	1645.53
Life No. 2	850.00 (—)	Government stock	6200.00
	8455.01 (6326.15)	Cash in hand	99.77
			8455.01

Audited and found correct. J. Gartside. 22.1.1982

Committee Notes 8th March 1982

There were sixteen members present. Note was taken of two resignations; A. Evans and G. Licence; and two new members ... D. Tickner and P. Dwyer.

Appointment of Secretary: W.H.Wragg reported that he had received only two suggestions from local fraternal. Nottingham nominated R. Burnish and Sevenoaks nominated Vic. Sumner. A ballot was held and V. Sumner elected. Appreciation and thanks were extended to R. Burnish for his willingness to stand.

Discussion took place regarding correspondence between B.M.F. and the chairman of the B.U. Superannuation Committee. It is now hoped that any member of B.M.F. committee elected to B.U. Council and serving on the superannuation committee may be able to represent our interests.

A small working group has been set up to look into issues involving ministerial settlement, especially where difficulties have been met through house ownership, spouse's employment or children's education. The secretary would be glad to receive, in confidence, any information from members who have met with problems in this matter.

Finance: The Treasurer presented statement of accounts for 1981 revealing a healthy state of affairs. A copy of the statement is included in this issue of The Fraternal.

It was agreed that an offering for the Benevolent Fund be taken at the Pastoral Session on April 28th.

Following a report by the librarian it was decided to end this service.

Interesting reports were received concerning Commonwealth, U.S.A., European and B.M.S. members.

Sincere thanks and appreciation for service rendered to the Fellowship were recorded as follows ... D. Rowsell, former minute secretary and Chairman. J.J. Brown, retiring chairman. W. Wragg, retiring Secretary.

Good wishes were expressed to W. Wragg as he assumes chairmanship and Vic. Sumner as he takes office as secretary.