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CONTENTS

The Sacrament of Politics

by the Revd Michael J. Cleaves, B.A., B.D.,
Minister, Leamington Road Baptist Church, Blackburn 3

Nuclear Issues — Where are we in the Baptist Denomination

by the Revd D.D. Black, M.A., B.D.,
Dept. of Mission, Baptist Union 15

Debating the Question of Nuclear Arms

by David Goodbourn,
Tutor, Northern Baptist College 19

Upgrading the Union's Pension Scheme

by Philip Cooke, F.C.A.,
Chairman, B.U. Superannuation Funds Committee 26

A Multi-lingual Baptist Church in Antwerp, Belgium

by the Revd Christiaan J.G. Vonck, Pastor 33

Annual Accounts 37

Of Interest to You 38

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The Sacrament of Politics — Christians and the Nuclear Dilemma

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him." (Deuteronomy 30: 19,20 R.S.V.)

A recent edition of the *Baptist Times* contained a 4-page pull-out called "The Peace Pages" (B.T. 16./2/84), which was an attempt to draw together for the benefit of its readers and the denomination the wide diversity of opinions which are held, even among Christians, on the question of peace and nuclear arms. The following extracts serve to illustrate the real dilemma which anyone struggling to make sense of the debate has to contend with.

"We must aim unashamedly to influence public opinion away from the idea that the only way to get peace is to prepare for war." — Donald Black.

"If the evils of Hitler's National Socialist ideology called for resistance (by an admittedly imperfect West) how much more is resistance needed today? Evil in the community of nations has ultimately to be contained by force." — Ronald Macaulay.

"There are dilemmas relating not only to doing and proposing but also to doing and failing to do We have to ask ourselves, as children of a creative God, whether the arms race is destructive not only potentially but presently, and how we are implicated in that destruction." — Gwenda Bond.

"The idea that a balance of nuclear weapons held by the super-powers reduces the risk of their use is proving illusory Scientists have warned that even a 'modest' nuclear war would disturb the balance of nature destroy all vegetation and produce a 'nuclear winter' of extreme, permanent cold. The choice is stark: either we *freeze* together; or we FREEZE TOGETHER." — Michael Cleaves.

It can be seen from the above that a number of dilemmas face the world hinging on the possession or not of nuclear weapons; continued development or a 'freeze' on production; the financial, social and spiritual costs of possessing nuclear weapons; the awesome consideration of whether a nuclear war can be won or that all will be losers; and so on.

But the important task which we have is to attempt to arrive at a distinctively Christian (and hopefully Baptist) conviction of what is the will of God for men in the matter of their living together in creation which he has made. It is as global and as theological as that, because few considerations of international affairs these days can ignore the effects which regional conflicts have in world terms, e.g. Central America, the Lebanon, the Iran-Iraq war, the death of Andropov, the U.S. Presidential election, or the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Economic Community. The theological dimension is raised especially by those nations who are on the sidelines, though no less involved, of the posturing and agonising of the nuclear powers. Those nations will rightly remind us that while we in the West and East argue the fine points of START, STOP, SALT II, Stockholm, FREEZE, MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) and all the other

acrimonious acronyms of nuclear jargon, the peoples living and barely living in the South of the great divide are increasingly faced with the Hobson's choice of the nuclear dilemma: death, not life, stares them in the face and stares at us in their faces. Whatever then, may be our particular standpoint in the nuclear spectrum: whether we are multilateral or unilateral disarmers; advocates of a nuclear 'freeze' or support the continued build up of nuclear arsenals by the West because of a perceived threat from the East; or whether we take a pietist view which believes that we as Christians have no call to be involved in such 'political' issues; I believe that we have nonetheless to recognise that the words of Deuteronomy quoted at the beginning and the dominical words of John 10:10 — "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" — give us a common denominator from which to begin. It is God's will that in loving obedience to him and in recognising Christ as the giver of abundant life, WE ARE CALLED TO CHOOSE LIFE, and to contend against all things which tend to the destruction of life and the reduction of its quality. Two things flow from this: (1) I believe that no thinking Christian can actively encourage the further build-up of nuclear arsenals; (2) such a basis demands that the Christian voice, and hopefully the non-conformist conscience, is expressed and heard within the vital debate. On the second point, I have realised recently that it seems a peculiarly British Baptist idea that we should not consider ourselves concerned with such matters. When I recently represented the Baptist Union at the European Baptist Federation Peace Forum in Sweden, it was an *a priori* assumption of those attending from both East and West that Christians have a God-given duty to be involved in the political arena. It has been disturbing to hear in local church circles the activities of the women at the Peace Camp at Greenham Common air base being roundly condemned as interfering and mischief-making and of little or no use to anyone. The greatest critics have been, it would seem, women church members. The question to be tackled at Greenham Common is surely this; who are nearer to doing the will of God, those inside the perimeter fence or those on the outside? In contrast, it was encouraging at the end of the last year that the Church of Czechoslovakia refused to welcome officially the arrival of Soviet SS'20 missiles in their country at the same time as the U.S.A. Cruise missiles were flown into Greenham. Satellite by any other name?

Having looked at some of the contemporary arguments, dilemmas and events, I will go on in the rest of the article to consider

- the concept of war as the sacrament of politics
- the problem of cliché in the nuclear debate
- arms and alms
- should Britain take the initiative?
- recent Baptist statements on nuclear issues.

The Sacrament of Politics

In 1982, Peter Hinchliff, chaplain and fellow of Balliol College, Oxford published *Holiness and Politics*, which he wrote as a major contribution to what has become known in recent years as "the politics of forgiveness". In it, he faces the current dilemma of Christian involvement in politics and

argues that a right understanding of sanctification brings politics and Christian morality together only when forgiveness is operative at least on the part of the believer. It is when the vital element of forgiveness is missing in the affairs of men that war becomes a reality. In developing his thesis, Hinchliff defines war as the 'sacrament of time'. That is, in death time takes an obvious visible form. Usually, we take little notice of time, but death reminds us of its concreteness and inescapability. So it is with war. Albeit as an observer of many foreign wars in the past 2 decades without any direct experience, it seems to me that what we normally close our eyes to in the political word becomes outward and visible in war. By that I mean that what is wrong with human society in its organisation, political expediency, opposed interests, justification of immoral actions for political ends, cruelty and injustice, explode in war and destruction. However, we understand the meaning of Mark 13:7,8 concerning the reality of wars and rumours of wars, it is clear that war appears as one of the penultimate horrors of human history. Together with famine and natural disaster, war forms an unholy trinity of death, not life, whose evils are inescapable.

It would seem right to assume, therefore, that the unquestionable evil of war is directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity and the life of our Lord himself. The question is not so straightforward, however, and has for many not been a matter of whether war is evil or not but whether war is acceptable or not. Theory on war in the writings of the Church has usually classified war as justifiable only as a desperate last resort, and the early practice of the Church was, in a sense contrary to much of Paul's writing, to refuse military service even on penalty of death. From one point of view, the 'political' baptism of Constantine could be regarded as a disaster for the 'holiness' of the Church, as it constituted the Church in a position of power with its political and military consequences. Thus the theory and concept of the 'just war' evolved to meet the demands of political power and provide casuistical justification for the taking up of arms which appeared contrary to the spirit of Christ. 'Holy' war, Crusades and the endorsement of secular war by preachers and church leaders have clouded even the moral arguments for 'just' war theory and have been used to justify many forms of aggression.

Just war theory therefore demands a logic and consistency to be brought to its arguments. Few people would say that under no circumstances are violence or force unjustified; our particular prejudices are shown when we make choices which condemn or support specific instances of violence. The constitutional mess in what was Rhodesia gave rise to many questions of who was the 'rightful authority' and who the 'rebel'. The critics of Trade Union activism in Britain will nevertheless encourage law-breaking unionism in Poland or South Africa. A prejudiced view is very difficult to avoid, but what we must try to do is establish a universal principle and moral activity, which if brought down to a personal level, says that if someone else is not justified in stealing from/attacking/waging war etc. on me then I am similarly not justified in doing the same.

It is important to couple war and personal violence because consistency must mean that what is immoral in individuals can not be moral when

approved by lawful authority. This is brought home to us in Britain by the fact that the two wars in which Britain is currently engaged throw up all manner of problems of legality and ethical consideration. The first is the *de facto* civil war in Northern Ireland, where British citizens should ask themselves the question which they want the Soviet government to address in relation to its dissidents — are the I.R.A. political activists or terrorists, political prisoners or criminals? The second war is the Falklands conflict where we have the fact of an undeclared war and an unnegotiated peace, an exclusion zone which did not preclude the sinking of the *Belgrano*, and the current sale of British military hardware to the new government of Argentina.

A whole new dimension opens up, however, when an attempt is made to apply "just war" theory to the nuclear debate. Aside from the fact that the bluff and counter-bluff of international diplomacy makes it highly unlikely that nuclear war would be actually declared by one side or another, such war is of a wholly different nature to any war in history. This fact alone ought to convince Christians that they must be involved in political thinking and the morality of actions taken in their name. For Britain in particular to possess nuclear weapons is, like all such possessors, to have to be honest and accept that they may be used — which demands consideration of the moral implications of nuclear weaponry.

The long-standing convention that British defence and foreign policy is a non-partisan issue was finally broken by the unilateral stance of the Labour Party at the General Election in June 1983 and its subsequent policy. The present government believes it holds a mandate for the retention of an independent nuclear deterrent and the accommodation of U.S. missiles in Britain. It is very difficult on moral grounds, however, for Britain and other nuclear powers to claim a right to self defence by nuclear weapons while denying that same 'moral' right to other nations. If non-proliferation treaties have been a good means of limiting possession, it is at the cost of creating an exclusive club of moralising powers who believe only they are able to be trusted. In the meantime, they have gone ahead and developed tactical, battlefield nuclear weapons which have produced the frightening thought of a limited, 'winable' nuclear war. I believe 'just war' theory breaks down with the existence and possible use of nuclear weapons. The question, "What is the moral difference between a bow and arrow and a nuclear missile?" is relevant when it shows that both are means of destruction; it is not relevant when it seeks to justify the latter on the grounds that it is just a matter of scale.

The new situation created by the development of tactical nuclear weapons also impinges on what Britain has claimed as a right to the retention of independent possession of weapons. With a non-independent U.S. —based foreign policy the use of such weapons independently would seem, at best, inadvisable. If she then denies such rights of self-determination to herself, how can Britain morally justify denying self-determination to other, non-aligned independent countries? It sounds too much like the politics of existing power, rather than any moral principle

being involved. Furthermore, such double-think ignores a further breakdown in 'just war' theory relating to nuclear war. I would contend that any nation which attacked or retaliated against another with equally destructive power, would be engaging in revenge, anticipated or real. Such action is indefensible in terms of a system of morality, but is the very basis of the policy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) on which so-called peace through deterrence has rested for the last twenty years. An extended quotation from Peter Hinchliff underlines and develops this paradox: "Mutually assured destruction, itself an immoral concept by any standards, is therefore one of the implications of accepting the idea that deterrence is the only way in which peace can be preserved. It may be, of course, that no government would actually be so immoral as to put it into practice. But the only alternative to doing so is to persuade not only one's enemies but one's own people that one would. The only way to avoid having to indulge in a grossly immoral act is to lie convincingly about one's willingness to do so. That is, in itself, immoral. One will need to back it up with other acts of ruthlessness and belligerence if one is to be convincing, and those acts may be immoral. One will also inevitably raise doubts in the minds of one's own people and one's allies that, if one is prepared to lie in the matter, one may already be lying to them in a whole range of others — for their own good, of course. This seems clearly the end of the road along which power politics without morality has been travelling. Either one has to accept that an appallingly immoral action must be performed or to accept, as the only alternative, a world of dishonesty where even one's friends are not to be trusted. On such a choice between two evils the future peace of the world depends." (*Holiness and Politics* p.176).

Cliché in the nuclear debate

In one of his numerous confrontations with the Jewish establishment Jesus said, not to those who did not believe him but to those who did, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31,32).

One of the problems of the nuclear dilemma is that we are seemingly not in the business of truth, but the business of propaganda. As Christians, we put at risk our inability to speak coherently to the world on vital questions if we are content to espouse the propaganda of opposing sides. The words of Hiram Johnson to the U.S. Senate in 1917 as the Americans belatedly entered the Great War, "The first casualty when war comes is truth," apply equally well to cold war diplomacy. In order to maintain the political control they enjoy, politicians on all sides are content to foster the half-truths of expediency, or lies, which have beset a clear understanding of nuclear issues in recent years. I will be kind and call them clichés, recognising the fact that a universalism of approach is not possible and that, however fair I try to be, I am still a western, liberal Christian addressing himself to an enormously complex issue. There are at least five major clichés which are common currency today; a) "The nuclear bomb has maintained peace in Europe for the past 39 years." I recognise that cliché must be defined as in part truth, and from a parochial European point of view the statement above has some credence. Yes, we have enjoyed in Europe peace, prosperity,

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indeed unprecedented affluence since 1945. Yes, it seems that similar dire threats from East and West have concentrated the mind wonderfully. But we must beware of what has happened during those years which has caused possibly irreparable damage. Back in 1945, the Soviet Union did not possess nuclear weapons. In order to compete with a power which was potentially overwhelmingly superior and at an enormous economic and social cost, she armed to the point of arguable equality. The legacy of this is that two great powers seem irreconcilably opposed in military and ideological terms and live in fear and hostility against each other. It has also meant that inevitably in European 'real-politik' the actions of the U.S.S.R. in repressing the Hungary Revolt in 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968 and Polish 'Solidarity' has had to be connived at by the U.S.A. for the very fear that escalation could lead to worse. Indeed, the possession of nuclear weapons not only make so-called 'conventional' war more likely, which in turn may lead to nuclear engagement, but has meant that in those post-1945 years over 100 non-European wars have occurred, many of which have been 'proxy' wars of the superpowers. We may be content to rest comfortable in the safety of Europe, but at what price in the lives of others and to any moral understanding we may claim to have?

b) "It is essential to negotiate from strength". The often — misquoted words of Aneurin Bevan "Do not send me naked into the conference chamber" were echoed by President Reagan in a speech in the Autumn of 1982 when he said "Our security is in our strength." This cliché falls into the trap of seeing everything in simple black and white terms of the evil enemy over whom we must have superior strength to dictate our terms. It precludes the possibility of negotiating from positions of more or less equality and reduces negotiation to the bullying rhetoric of the school play-ground. The weaker enemy becomes bitter and resentful and determines to increase his own defences. Thus both impasse and escalation are achieved as the superpowers reach the chilling position of being able to destroy each other, and everyone else, 10 to 20 times over. It is an obvious but a necessary question to ask whether overkill capacity of 2 or 3 may not be, literally, more than enough? Even more than this, Christians must reflect on the fact that strength in its brute, physical sense is not the example set by our Lord. The moral power of Christ which ultimately destroys death and brings life is seen in the physical weakness, degradation and humiliation of his suffering. It is hard to say this in the realm of international politics, but if it cannot be said there, where question of human life and death are in play, where can it be said? Furthermore, there is strength and strength; Britain's possession of its own nuclear force has not meant that she is represented in the current discussions between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. on the reduction of European — based missiles.

c) "The peace groups are cranks and communists." Any movement for change as radical and far-reaching as those which call for nuclear disarmament will be known, largely through the eyes of the media which report it and create its image. No doubt CND and its like have their fair share of odd-balls and fellow travellers, but what of it? No doubt the 70 followers of Christ appeared strange, especially through the medium of mis-

representing Pharisees! This often — used and dismissive criticism is a dangerous cliché, a fallacy which does no justice to the many men and women of conscience and achievement who have realised the danger of present international instability; as well as the increasingly aware citizens of many countries who feel that what Governments have achieved in the past 30 years, and especially the last 10, is just not good enough and threatens mankind's survival.

One of the first documents to land on my desk in the current nuclear debate was the text of the Strasbourg speech of Lord Louis Mountbatten in 1979. Neither a crank nor a communist, he said the following;

“As a military man who has given half a century of active service I say in all sincerity that the nuclear arms race has no military purpose. Wars cannot be fought with nuclear weapons. Their existence only adds to our perils because of the illusions which they have generated.

There are powerful voices around the world who still give credence to the old Roman precept — if you desire peace, prepare for war. This is absolute nuclear nonsense, it is a disastrous misconception to believe that by increasing the total uncertainty one increases one's own certainty.”

d) “The bomb is a deterrent.” This cliché has the ring of truth about it, but its ring is hollow when the concept of deterrent is examined.

Time magazine got it exactly wrong (January 31, 1983) when it said: “Like all nuclear missiles, their (Pershing II and Cruise) purpose is paradoxical; they exist not to be employed but to be deployed, as instruments of deterrence.” What is a deterrent? It is a threat or means of punishment which seeks to deter deviant behaviour and loses its credibility if it is not carried out. The constant, reassuring use of the word deterrent deflects people from thinking whether they are prepared to allow their governments to use bombs which would kill millions of people. The authors of *The Church and the Bomb* have posed the moral issue clearly. The paradox involved “may be distilled into one fundamental form, round which the whole debate ultimately revolves. If the deterrent is to work, you have to convince an enemy that you are willing to use it, but if you have to use it, it has failed.” (p.153).

e) “You cannot appease the Russians.” Once again, we have a word which because we beg its definition creates all kinds of image problems. The Russian “bear” is seen as having no redeeming features and being dangerous with it — “the aggressive impulses of an evil empire” to quote President Reagan's deathless phrase. But the words “to appease” means to pacify, to soothe, to try to be at peace with. What is at question is the nature of the action taken — is it wise or unwise, right or wrong?

The spectre of Munich 1938 haunts much of the appeasement argument in the nuclear dilemma today, but it is based on dangerous fallacies.

The first is that Soviet Communism today can be seen as analogous to Nazi Fascism in the thirties, but there is no clear evidence that the Soviet Union wants to conquer Western Europe or embark on general military conquest. They are paranoid about national security boundaries but that is born of experience of fear of foreign invasion. It is also well to remember that the Soviet people were victims of Nazi aggression and their sacrifice on the Eastern front of 20 million dead saved Britain from invasion. Undoubtedly,



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Dear Fellow Ministers

In the January issue of the Fraternal, I concentrated on the Family Ministry which Ron Messenger is developing at Bodey House. In this issue I want to highlight the emerging ministry of the Stanley Turl Wing here at York House.

If you have taken an interest in our work over recent years, you will know that we have been seeking to develop a ministry among the terminally ill. A concept which was very dear to the heart of Stanley Turl. For a variety of reasons, it has not been possible to establish a "hospice" in the normally understood sense of that word. This in no way diminishes our commitment to those who, at the present state of medical knowledge, are unlikely to recover. This "terminal" phase can extend over months and even years when the patient is cared for at home, sometimes at tremendous cost to his or her loved ones.

In co-operation with our Local Authority, we plan to open in the Spring in this year a four-bedded Respite Ward where such folk will come for a period of two weeks at a time and will receive skilled and loving nursing care. This will enable their caring relatives to enjoy a much needed break so that they might be the better able to resume the care of their loved ones. There is a great need for this kind of provision. Indeed, we have a waiting list of nearly 50 patients even before the unit is open.

Will you please pray for the Nurse in charge, and those who work with her, that the atmosphere and the care received in the Stanley Turl Wing may clearly speak of the loving compassion of our Lord. Pray also that we shall be given discernment so that we might seize every opportunity to bear witness to our faith.

May the Lord richly bless you in your Manse and in your ministry.

Yours in His service,

Trevor W. Davis, M.A.
Superintendent Minister

the Soviet Union would like communist ideology to be accepted throughout the world; but is this desire any different in its moral and social implications from the American desire that free enterprise, private profit capitalism should similarly reign supreme?

These clichés have a powerful hold over the minds of many. In wrestling with the dilemma one has to run the risk of false accusations.

Alms or arms?

In the midst of all the current debate, one voice will have to be increasingly heard — that of the nations of the South, or the third world. They view the nuclear question as very much an argument between rich nations, who have the luxury of such debate while two-thirds of the world does not have enough to eat. Their cry is for justice, not just for peace, and is one we would be wise to heed. What, then is the cost to the rest of the world of 'our' expensive dilemma? There is no easy equation of expenditure on nuclear armaments and the poverty of the third world, as we can be sure that even if *all* nuclear weapons were scrapped tomorrow, similar amounts would be spent on conventional arms. Any lobby for transferring wealth to the poor therefore has to work for reductions in conventional as well as nuclear weaponry — which seems a well-nigh impossible task. Couple that with the truly vast trade in armaments around the world and the estimated 40% of the world's scientific research now being devoted to military purposes, and it appears that the whole edifice of world economics is based on inflationary non-productive, non-returning expenditure. The 1982 estimated world expenditure on defence was a staggering \$650,000,000,000 and rising. What are the equivalent costs of third world possible projects?

- to prevent and cure unnecessary blindness = A few hours' expenditure
- to eradicate malaria = 8 hours
- to finance all the U.N.'s activities = 2 days
- current level of aid = 12 days
- to provide fresh water and sanitation = 7 months.

Although an over-simplification, the words of President Eisenhower in 1953 stand the test of time: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies a theft from those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is spending the sweat of its labourers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children This is not a way of life at all."

Should Britain take the initiative?

The Life and Peace Christian World Conference met in Uppsala, Sweden in April 1983. In its unanimously adopted 'Message', the following breath taking resolution was made: "We must press for controlled and verifiable measures of multilateral disarmament leading to the TOTAL ELIMINATION of all nuclear weapons WITHIN FIVE YEARS". (My capitals) I still regard this as hopelessly unrealistic but as Olle Dahlen, Swedish Ambassador to the U.N. said when we discussed it "would the powers have taken us more seriously if we had said ten years?"

Whether we know it or not, British Baptists are indirectly committed to the quoted course of action through our membership of the European Baptist

Federation. What we have in the present disarmament discussions, however, holds little hope with only 4 years to go!

What initiatives could or should be taken? All the concerned powers seem to be saying to each other "You move first," and no-one is prepared to move unilaterally. I would dare to hope that if such a move was made on the part of the British government we would have little to lose and much to gain. All my life I have heard that Britain has lost an empire and failed to find a role in the world. Some see membership of the E.E.C. as loss of identity, and being locked into U.S. defence policy as loss of integrity, but Britain's role is not to be found in isolationist independency or retention of nuclear independence. It just might be found in the risky business of renouncing both, ironically from a position of relative strength, to show that we are serious in the business of disarmament. If we believe we showed the world how to do things during the days of empire, could we not dare to show by example again?

No matter what are all the counter-arguments, we face the dilemma that we are as Christians bound up in an unacceptable evil. We have to decide whether we want to live uneasily with it, or work to remove it. As I write, the recent visits of Mrs Thatcher to the U.S.S.R. and Hungary and changes of leadership in the Kremlin are slight but scant hope of future progress. The concept of moral leadership is fraught with dangers and open to dismissive abuse; the idea of a unique British role in world affairs may appear presumptuous indeed, and unilateralism a dangerous idealism, but it may be that the world no longer has the time for the multilateral option.

Recent Baptist statements on nuclear issues

It is almost impossible in such an article as this to hope to be fully up-to-date with developments in the complex issues of the nuclear debate, so I will be content to record a recent Baptist World Alliance resolution, part of the message of the E.B.F. Peace Forum 1983, and to anticipate what may have been said by the B.U. Assembly this year.

At Nairobi in July 1982 the B.W.A. council stated:

"We reiterate the conviction, expressed by every Baptist World Congress from 1970 to the present, that the levels of fighting forces and armaments of the nations must be reduced. The arms race between the super-powers and the increased military readiness of all nations constitute a danger to peace and are an economic and social waste. They are inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The very willingness of powers possessing such weapons to use them, is an affront to our Christian beliefs."

The E.B.F. Peace Forum 1983 urged their fellow Baptist Christians

- i) to work and pray for peace which is more than the absence of war, and is the establishing of a three-fold shalom (peace) which takes seriously the reconciliation of humankind to the creator, to other people and to the created world;
- ii) to regard the existence of nuclear weapons as contradictory to the will of God;
- iii) to recognise the danger of apathy in churches and society at large

iv) to promote international religions and cultural exchange and friendship to break down barriers of mutual fear and mistrust, etc.

N.B. nowhere else has so clear and unequivocal a statement as ii) above been made officially to my knowledge. This bold declaration needs to be fully worked out in the context of the question "How can we/do we know what is the will of God?" I believe the answer lies somewhere in the theology of Deuteronomy's "choose life" command.)

Finally, the Baptist Union Assembly 1984 has on its agenda the issue of Peace and Disarmament. Although at the time of writing the resolution for debate is not published, its draft included the following points which are particular to Britain's role on the nuclear dilemma:

— We believe that for as long as the United Kingdom retains nuclear weapons it should forswear their first use ...

— We support the proposal that there should be an immediate nuclear freeze by the major powers ...

— We hold that the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom is unhelpful to the cause of world peace, and that they should be withdrawn.

— We consider that the United Kingdom, while remaining within NATO should progressively phase out British nuclear weapons, and in particular should not replace Polaris with Trident missiles.

Conclusion

I suppose that my conclusion is that there is no conclusion to the nuclear dilemma until we are able to remove the threat of the manifestation of the sacrament of modern politics, total war. It is impossible to be balanced, difficult to be rational and unreasonable to be emotionally detached from the potential cataclysm of nuclear conflict. It is often possible to be lulled into the false sense of security expressed by one fellow Christian, "I am quite happy as long as they (U.S. and U.S.S.R.) both have the bomb — I feel quite safe." Everything discussed above does, I believe, show us that there is a better way, which is in accord with the Gospel, and for which conscientious Christians must strive. At the same time as we express the hope that our own children will be able to live in a world that is safe and unblighted by nuclear threat, the urgency of the situation is underlined by realising that man is still and now faced with the ultimate choice — life or death. Into this crucial juncture in human affairs we are called to proclaim the gospel which is a message of life and peace, of hope and love, but also of judgement.

Michael J. Cleaves

(Michael Cleaves is the minister of Leamington Road Baptist Church, Blackburn and a member of the Baptist Union Overseas Relations Committee. He is also the B.U. representative on the British Council of Churches' newly formed Peace Forum).

FOR FURTHER READING:

1. **Holiness and Politics** — Peter Hinchliff; Darton, Longman and Todd 1982
2. **The Challenge of Peace** — National Conference of Catholic Bishops; USCC Washington 1983
3. **The Messenger** — Life and Peace Christian World Conference; Uppsala 1983
4. **The Wargames that Superpowers play** — D.M.A. Leggett and C.M. Waterlow; Centre for International Peacebuilding, London 1983
5. **Peace Pack** — Baptist Renewal Group and Baptist Peace Fellowship, 1983
6. **Christian Perspective on Nuclear Weapons** — Sydney D. Bailey; B.C.C. 1981
7. **Patriotism and Peace** — Oxford Diocesan Council for Education, 1983

Nuclear Issues — Where are we in the Baptist Denomination

It is a fact that Baptists like many others in contemporary society are beginning to challenge certain statements that have held the floor in the debate of nuclear issues for a long time.

The first, "If we are going to get rid of nuclear weapons, the only way to do so is to have more of them". There are about 50,000 warheads in the world now and if things go on as they are at present, there will be half as many again by the end of the decade. Some Baptists are saying, "NO. This is not the only way to disarmament".

The second, "Because we have treaties we are going to get rid of nuclear weapons". We have been made to realize that the treaties are not to stop these things, they are to ensure their continuance. There is even evidence that the treaties are working in exactly the opposite direction. Some silly arithmetic is applied, for example. The statesmen say, "If you have five separate warheads and their delivery mechanisms, that counts as five, but if you have one missile, carrying three or five or fourteen warheads, that counts as one." The "One" being more deadly than the many. Under that sort of argument any nation can bunch their warheads into one missile carrier and then have the gall to go to the conference table and say "We have decreased our number according to treaty".

The third statement, "People are powerless in this matter". This is a direct challenge to the messages which come from politicians and military experts. They want to tell us there is nothing we can do. They want to tell us that the issues have become so complicated that they cannot be worked out by any one human mind. So what they want us to accept is that "Murphy's Law" does not apply to them. Murphy's law says "if something can go wrong, it will". We know that some computer giving wrong advice to the button pusher can plunge us into a world devastation that even in our

wildest imaginings we cannot get anywhere near. Sixty-five per cent of the people in Britain are convinced that nuclear missiles will fall on this country within their lifetime. Most of these people think there is nothing to be done. Many Baptists are saying that they are wrong. They are saying, with others, that we can do something about it to get rid of these things.

But the problem goes even deeper for Baptists. I imagine that every Christian would agree that "war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and the example of our Lord Jesus Christ". This means that there are some human activities which cannot be discussed in Christian terms. There is no Christian way of waging war. The theory of a "just war" is not in origin, nor in itself a Christian tradition. It is something that Christian thinkers took over from pagan Greece and Rome. They developed it. They gave it a veneer of Christian language, but it remains for ever what it is. It is essentially a secular way of arguing. Take, for example, the principle of "proportionality". I take that to mean that you can kill as many people and the same sort of people on your enemy's side as he kills on yours. Now I cannot find anything Christian in that. In a nuclear war, proportionality just breaks down completely. It is impossible to draw a line between combatants and non-combatants and say these are due for killing and others are not.

Many Baptists are beginning to realise that there is no "Christian" way of prosecuting an inherently un-Christian pursuit. That does not mean to say that Christians are left with their hands hanging down and their knees feeble. We do have a specific Christian language and Christian tradition when it comes to peace making. The language comes cascading towards us from tradition and scripture. We do have some insights into forgiveness, into reconciliation, into a new life through sacrifice, into rebirth, into community.

Even that does not solve the problem, but rather it redefines it. We believe that the Kingdom of God has been brought in in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Church is called to be an instrument of the Kingdom — an expression of it. But the Kingdom is not fully come. That is only in the future. So the Kingdom is in evidence within the Church, but the Church is not the Kingdom. The Church, like any other organisation, is weakened by its own rebellion. So the Church is betwixt and between. It does not belong to the world in that it acknowledges the King. It does not belong to the Kingdom because sin is in its midst. We have no ground therefore for making blueprints for peace and demanding that others shall follow them.

Yet in spite of all this Baptists have a responsibility to witness to what they believe to be right, or rather, to Him whom they believe to be Lord. In a world where so many people are voiceless on these matters — some because that is the nature of their Government, some because their all consuming effort is to stay alive — where so many remain voiceless, Baptists must learn to speak.

That is where we are now. That is the attempted answer to the question, "Where are we in the Baptist Denomination now?" The answer — we are learning to speak. That is not just to speak in Church circles, that may be a

prerequisite, but we are learning to speak in those places where vital decisions about life and death are made.

There is an ugly word going round. It is the word "contextualisation". It is going around, because ugly though it is, that is exactly what is happening. People are learning the proclamation of the Gospel "in context". For the sake of this article it means the context of the nuclear debate.

Contextualisation has nothing to do with watering down the Gospel. What it has to do with, is learning to express the Gospel of reconciliation in the language and thought forms of the discussion. It is always refreshing to hear the actual Christian language being used, especially when it is accompanied by a real understanding of the meaning of the words. But we do not dismiss people as "not being Christian enough" when they are seeking to translate Christian ideas and Christian concepts into the vocabulary of the debate.

There are a number of Baptists who are concerned to bring the nuclear debate into Parliament. They are not, of course, asking that national security should be put at risk by making known "top secrets". But some are disturbed at the number of decisions which concern the future of us all, and also the future perhaps of millions more, which are taken outside Parliament. Recently, for example, Sir Geoffrey Howe, the British Foreign Secretary, explained that not all decisions are taken even at Cabinet level. It is reported that the decision to replace the Polaris submarine system with the Trident system was taken outside even of the Cabinet. We claim to be a democracy, but we are fast moving towards a Presidential style of Government. That is the area in which some are working on the nuclear debate. They wish to bring the debate as fully as is commensurate with national security onto the floor of the House of Commons.

Again, there is an attempt by Baptists to listen to and to share with members of Parliament. A number of Churches at the time of the General Election invited prospective candidates to share in discussions on their premises. In many places one of the questions that was put to the (usually three) candidates was their attitude to peace making and nuclear disarmament. Frequently the answers developed, as you would expect, into party political slanging matches. But in other places candidates and the one who was elected from them were hearing an argument based on the principles of forgiveness and reconciliation. I should be very surprised if anyone changed his mind because of the discussion, or if they did it would have been a miracle in that context to admit it. But some members of Parliament heard and some took note.

Other Churches and other Baptists do not consider that they are at that stage yet and what they have sought to do is to set up discussion within their own fellowship. It was to encourage this sort of discussion that the decision was taken by the Council in 1983 *not* to present a resolution to the Assembly. Though the Council is perfectly capable of defending itself, may I, who am not a member, though I attend, outline its thinking.

It is important to remember the very nature of the Union. It is a Union. We are not a Church. We are a voluntary Union of local Churches. If you get the right telephone numbers it is possible within a very short time to discover

what the Methodist Church through its Conference, or the United Reformed Church, through its Annual Assembly, or the Church of England Synod, or the Roman Catholic Church, says about these matters. But in answers to letters and phone calls that come to me asking "What do the Baptists believe about this", I have to reply "There are probably 2,400 answers". I go on to say that the nearest thing we can get to that, is what the BU Assembly has said (I think it is a great weakness that the Baptist Union Council has not gone on record on some of these public issues).

What does a resolution through the Assembly mean? People asking questions about Baptist attitudes, especially if they are in public life, know very well how Assembly resolutions are passed. Sometimes with only a minority understanding the implications of the resolution. In actual fact, the resolutions at Assembly have to be so general in terms that though they gain a majority assent, probably they say only what a very small minority want to say. Some want to go much further, some want to say much less, and some nothing at all.

At the Assembly in '83, the Council proposed that there should be an introduction by the Bishop of Salisbury, Dr John Baker, who was the Chairman of the Working Group which produced the Report "The Church and the Bomb". Many spoke appreciatively of the address he gave. The introduction was then followed by contributions from members of the Assembly. Instead of discussing the text of a resolution, we were able to occupy the time (I think well) in discussing the issues of nuclear debate. The hope was that Assembly members would take the issues back to their local churches and then fashion their own statements or resolutions on the basis of the discussion taking place there. To some extent this has happened. Far more churches have taken up this subject in the last year, though not all have resulted in resolutions being forwarded to HMG.

At its meeting in October 1983, the Mission Department began making plans for Baptists and the nuclear debate in 1984. These plans have yet to receive the approval of the BU Council so what is reported here is the proposal coming from Mission Main Committee.

In the third week of February there appeared in the Baptist Times, through the courtesy of the Editor, a four-page "pull-out". This had been specially requested by the Mission Department. Contributors had been invited to write on a number of issues related to the nuclear disarmament debate. The hope is that not only will subscribers read the articles, but will take them, with consent, to their discussion meeting, it may be Church Meeting, or mid-week meeting. From the very demands of the subject it is hoped that Churches will take action, so that the discussion in the local Church does not just disappear into the air like smoke.

A resolution will be put in front of the Baptist Union Council in March which will have two major parts. The first part will contain statements about theological and moral background, and will call on HMG to be involved wherever possible in negotiations for disarmament. (As I write, this seems to be a greater possibility than a month ago. President Regan and Mrs Thatcher have certainly changed their language and what will be the approach of the new President of the Soviet Union no one knows to date). But in the name of reconciliation, we are pinning our resolution to "jaw jaw and not war war".

It is hoped that the second part will enable the Assembly to express its opinion without having interminable debates about the text of a resolution. We shall ask Assembly members to vote in one of three ways. "For", "against" the proposal, or "abstaining". This is fully recognising that we are not all of one mind on any of these issues. We shall not have to spend time discussing the text or amendments on it, but will have full opportunity to express our mind on the issues raised.

I have to say again, all this is subject to Council's approval.

If, however, Council approves this procedure, after the Assembly if someone rings up from, say, a national Newspaper and wants to know what it is that the Baptists think about, shall we say, "The Freeze", I shall be able to say, "In the Assembly of 1984, there were (x) for it, (y) against it, and (z) abstaining for various reasons".

It is not intended that this will be the end of the matter as far as discussions amongst Baptists are concerned. Churches may not have the opportunity in their programmes between the publishing of the articles in the Baptist Times and the Assembly of discussions. But the issue will be with us for some years to come. Our hope is that all churches within this twelve month will have sought to grapple amongst themselves with the issues of life and death of the world.

Finally, if any resolutions are agreed or statements or reports made (in Church magazines) I should be very glad to receive a copy. Though I cannot say that I will agree with every one, I can assure you that I will read them very carefully.

Donald D. Black

Debating the Question of Nuclear Arms

There are those who will greet the news that the Baptist churches are being asked to debate the nuclear question with tremendous enthusiasm. They can't wait to get their teeth into the opposition and demonstrate their familiarity with the language of MIRVS, SALT and START.

I suspect, however, that they are the minority. For many the prospect will summon up images of ill-informed discussions in ill-attended meetings, and their hearts will sink. It is not that they don't accept the importance of the issue or the need for a Christian response. It is simply that they fear a sterile discussion between rival prejudices which will leave most people cold.

Their fears are at least in part borne out by the experience of the United Reformed Church, which has been busy debating the question up and down the land over the last twelve months. In too many cases the result has been unconstructively divisive, and has contributed little to the formation of considered Christian comment. We have the chance to learn from their experience; I want to suggest one or two ways in which that might be done.

One lesson we might learn is the need to get at the questions behind the question. We will make little progress on the immediate questions about

nuclear arms, unless we can look at some of the assumptions people are working on, and move beyond the simple gut reactions usually aroused by the unilateralist-multilateralist debate. For me there are at least five areas which need some exploration before we begin to debate the details of nuclear strategy — areas within which there are Christian resources on which we might draw.

1. **Our goal.** All participants in the debate will talk about peace, and will accept that as a common goal. But peace can become a word of such imprecision that it actually obscured the discussion. We must ask, then, the question of what we mean by 'peace'. Much contemporary discussion assumes peace merely to be the absence of war, but is that good enough? When we use the word 'peace', especially as Christians, we usually have more in mind. Perhaps we draw on the Old Testament tradition of 'shalom', with its hints of a society based on righteousness, trust and relationship. Perhaps we draw on other Christian traditions, which might emphasise absence from fear, or being at one with oneself, with others and with God. Certainly we might have to question whether we have peace now, and therefore whether making peace rather than preserving peace might not be our task. If we are to be peace makers, perhaps there are things we might do at the local level — by building relationships with another Christian church within the Soviet bloc, for example.

2. **Our perspective.** Christians are going to approach these issues with a perspective which affirms the value of creation, and especially of human beings, and which sees us as having a responsibility to God for our stewardship of God's world and its people. That perspective presents us with a number of questions of great importance to the nuclear debate, including:

Can we endorse any policy which would look like being prepared to sacrifice the lives of people in other nations in order to preserve those of our own? This is important in the nuclear debate for two reasons: the first because the strategy of deterrence is based on the assumption that after our own nation had been destroyed (and there was therefore nothing left to defend) we would then destroy the attacking nation, even though at that stage that could in no way advance the preservation of life within our own; the second because it is recognised that military spending uses resources which might otherwise help alleviate the suffering of the world's poor (though nuclear defence is cheaper than conventional weapons, so in fact consumes fewer resources)

Could we ever justify the destruction of nearly all created life which would follow in the 'nuclear winter' after a full-scale nuclear exchange?

3 **Christian realism.** The Christian tradition has a healthy recognition of human sinfulness, and no room at all for the easy optimism which characterizes some disarmers. We speak of the world as fallen, and recognize that all our motives are mixed and humankind cannot be trusted to act for the good, nor within its fallen structures is it capable consistently of so doing. We have to ask how this affects our responses to the nuclear question, so that all our positions will have to be tested against the criteria of realism: do they allow for self-interest, for constraint on the international wrongdoer, for the vanities of power?

**THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
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To the Readers of the Fraternal.

Dear Friends,

Reinstatement — “New for Old”

The letter “R” gives me an opportunity to write a few words on a subject which is frequently mentioned by churches.

Our policies covering Church and Private House building and contents are policies of indemnity. This is the traditional basis of insurance which provides for an allowance to be made both in sums insured and claims settlements for depreciation and wear and tear. The object is that, as nearly as possible, the Insured should neither lose nor benefit from a claim. In the case of buildings, if these have been well maintained, the element of wear and tear should not be of great significance.

However, we will provide for Church insurances on a “reinstatement as new” basis if requested. It is essential if this basis is chosen for the sums insured to represent the cost of reinstating the property *as new* bearing in mind such extra costs as professional fees and site clearance. This is because “average” is incorporated into reinstatement conditions. Average means that in the event of under-insurance claims are scaled down proportionately. Unlike most insurers, unless there is severe under-insurance we do not apply average conditions to our standard indemnity policies for Churches.

Traditional indemnity policies without the constraint of average meet the needs of most of our Churches, but we are happy to provide “reinstatement as new” when asked.

Yours sincerely,

M.E. PURVER
General Manager

4 **The Way of Jesus.** Most of us will want to affirm that the way of good news for the world is the way of Jesus: that he is a paradigm of what it means to live in hope, even in the face of destruction. The question for Christians is what it means to keep faith with the way of Jesus in the nuclear age. For instance:

- It might mean making the dramatic gesture of sacrifice and making oneself powerless, even if such appears not to be rational in terms of human wisdom.
- It might mean taking the path of risk, risking present security for greater opportunity.
- It might mean facing up to almost inevitable destruction without fear, and in the knowledge that even death is not the worst that can happen for it has been conquered.

Each of us may give different answers, but it is important to give *an* answer. And if we can determine what it could mean for us, we have also to decide how far what seems good to us as within the way of Jesus can be applied also to the deeds of nations, or on behalf of those who do not see its logic.

5 **Just war and just deterrence.** What would justify war? For pacifists the answer is easy: nothing would. For others, it is very difficult. Traditionally it has been worked out in terms of the theory of the just war, with its list of criteria. Of these, one is perhaps the most important in the case of nuclear war, and that is the question of proportionality: could there ever be any evil great enough to justify the destruction of most of the world in overcoming it? The answer to that question tells us whether we would ever be justified in *using* nuclear weapons. It does not tell us whether we are justified in *possessing* them. For that we have to ask a supplementary question: could we ever be justified in threatening to do what we would not be justified in doing? The question is a difficult one, because in nuclear terms it is difficult to separate threat from intention. If you wish to convince an enemy that the threat is real, and that if they send their missiles against you, you will respond, then you have to create an almost automatic response. For instance, in case all the communication centres are knocked out in an enemy first strike, you have to give instructions to submarine commanders allowing them to fire their missiles independently after an enemy strikes. To threaten convincingly thus puts you in a position where you would have to respond, whether you wanted to or not.

The most important thing about these five areas of discussion is that they do not divide people up solely in predictable ways. People might find themselves agreeing with someone on one with whom they have disagreed on another — hence the possibility of exists of real encounter, learning and opinion forming. Furthermore, they make people explore the reasoning behind what might otherwise be purely emotional commitments. It was the failure to do this kind of groundwork which led some URC churches into sterile debate.

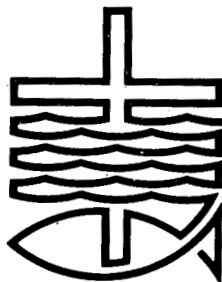
Another lesson we might learn from the URC experience is to avoid operating too readily on the parliamentary model. Some churches have divided people neatly into two parties, the Unilateralists and the Multilateralists,

set up spokesmen for each side, and sit back to watch the sparks fly. The trouble is that the divisions are nothing like so neat; nor are we faced with a single issue but with several, and it is quite possible for people to line up differently on each. The resolution to the Baptist Assembly notes five policy issues, and if a church is to make a response to the questions of nuclear weapons, it makes sense to look at all five. My first point covers two of the Union's issues in one paragraph.

- 1 **First use.** The question of whether the Alliance of which we are part should ever use nuclear weapons before they have been used by an opponent is one on which there has been most Christian agreement. The Anglicans, for instance, have adopted a 'no first use' stance. It does, however, cut right across past and present Government policy. The western allies have been the only people ever to make 'first use' of atomic weapons — in the attacks on Japan in August 1945 — and current policy in Europe, where NATO would almost certainly lose a conventional war, still assumes that we would be the first to use 'tactical' nuclear weapons. Our reliance on nuclear weapons is based at least in part on the fact that they are cheaper than conventional forces of equivalent strength — they provide 'more bangs for the buck' as Eisenhower once put it. Those who oppose first use thus have to say with what they would replace the existing policy. Would they be prepared to see, say, the re-introduction of conscription, or a major increase in military spending? If not, what is the alternative? It becomes very difficult on this issue to isolate the nuclear question from defence questions in general.
- 2 **Nuclear freeze.** This idea has been growing in popularity as the attempts to produce a negotiated reduction in arms have bogged down. Those negotiations have run into trouble particularly on the question of which missiles are to be counted: only those already deployed, or those under production as well; only those deployed by the two superpowers, or also those deployed by Britain and France; only those the two blocs have pointing at each other, or also those they have pointing at third parties such as China. The 'freeze' idea seeks to break through this debate by imposing a freeze on all deployment, research and production of nuclear weapons, so we all stay exactly where we are now. It rules out the attempt to 'negotiate from strength' by engaging in an arms race.
- 3 **Deployment of cruise and pershing.** The argument of those who resist the deployment of these two American weapons is that, as weapons designed for a 'theatre' war — a war confined to Europe — they represent a move closer towards a third world war by proxy, fought out by the USA and the USSR in the territory of the states of eastern and western Europe — they make Britain less safe, by making it necessarily a party to a Russian-American conflict, whether or not it approves of that conflict. The counter argument is that the missiles make Britain more safe, by contributing to the ability of the west to retaliate at all levels of war, including an attack confined to the European theatre. The arguments on this question tend perhaps more than the others to centre on the self-interest of west European nations.

The Baptist Union

OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND



DEPARTMENT OF MISSION
4 Southampton Row,
London WC18 4AB

Dear Colleagues,

Re — Christian Education

Members of my committee have asked me to bring the following matters to your attention.

EQUIPPED TO TEACH — the appointing of a national network of tutors means that we are now able to enrol students who wish to train for work among children of the church. I shall be happy to send further details to any Minister who wishes to encourage staff to benefit from this course.

TRAINING SESSIONS for those involved in Christian Education can be arranged for any church interested. If such sessions can be organized on a district or association level so much the better. Skilled people are available to assist you.

May I remind you about **SWAPIT** — a quarterly publication for all involved in Christian Education. It is an exchange of ideas, written for those who preach and teach! Why file away that good talk or theme? — others may be able to use it.

A number of people are very concerned about the mentally handicapped person and the church. It is likely that during the next decade many people at present in hospital will be released into the community. A London based committee has been formed, and the members are seeking ways to help local churches. One suggestion is that local fraternals invite a speaker to address them. Will you consider this in the near future? If you need assistance in finding someone let me know.

Every good wish in your work,

Bryan George
(Education Adviser)

4 **Getting rid of the British nuclear deterrent.** Britain has at present five submarines armed with Polaris missiles (each, under the 'Chevaline programme' being equipped with several warheads), a strike aircraft (the Tornado) capable of delivering nuclear bombs, and a number of frontline 'tactical' nuclear weapons, such as the Lance missile and nuclear shells. Three kinds of argument are marshalled to support our having them:

- they represent a significant contribution to the combined forces of NATO
- they represent a British deterrent to protect Britain, necessary since the idea that America would risk self destruction on our behalf is irrational
- they make a medium-sized nation into a significant world presence, guaranteeing, for instance, our place on the United Nations Security Council.

Against these arguments are:

- the possibility of a small power like Britain making the first arms reduction in a way which does not threaten the nuclear 'balance' but could lead others into stage by stage disarmament
- The weapons are in any case unworkable without American satellite assistance (for communication with submarines), so they are not independent
- they are too expensive
- no one has any reason to attack Britain on its own, so an independent deterrent is unnecessary.

It is here that Christians who want to pursue the notion of taking risks with existing security in order to create greater long term collective security see their greatest opportunity.

I have only outlined very briefly the issues raised by these four questions of policy — enough, perhaps, to show that the arguments work differently in each, and that they cannot be taken as a job lot. It highlights the need for a church to discuss carefully, and also to do its research thoroughly. No one will listen to a church which appears unaware of the issues, or which seems to have approached them in a slapdash way.

Those doing the research to help their church be well-informed might find particularly helpful, in addition to the Anglican report *The Church and the Bomb*, the following books:

British Nuclear Weapons: For and Against Jeff McMahan Junction Books
1981

War Facts Now Christy Campbell Fontana 1982

One or two comments about such research. Try to use data which are undisputed — the Defence Ministry's own accounts of what a nuclear war is like are quite horrific enough, so use theirs, rather than get your discussion bogged down in questions of whether the facts are right. Similarly, try to avoid using books written with a solely polemical purpose as your main source. You might also find it useful not to use the church enthusiasts, one

way or another, to introduce your debate, but to ask other people to research for and present the options. Let the enthusiasts come in later on, but try to avoid them dominating too soon, or they will hinder people from listening clearly to the arguments.

I will no doubt have come across as a person too detached, unable to make up my mind, and will have annoyed everybody. In fact, I am one of the enthusiasts — I would cast my vote for no first use, for a nuclear freeze, against deploying cruise and pershing and in favour of ditching British nuclear weapons. But I can see very well indeed the other side of the argument, and I certainly do not regard those who disagree with me as fools, knaves or unchristian. The debate between people on the issues of nuclear arms needs itself to be an exercise in peace making.

David Goodbourn

Upgrading the Union's Pension Scheme

This article will, I understand, appear in the *Fraternal* at or about the time when, hopefully, the Baptist Union Assembly will be giving its blessing to some far-reaching proposals to improve the Union's superannuation arrangements for its ministers. Since its inception in 1927, the main fund of the scheme has been operated on the 'fellowship' principle. At the outset the scheme was open to all ministers regardless of age, length of service or stipend, and a single level of benefit applied to them all. Some modifications have been made to the scheme over the years by, for example, providing for some abatement of benefits or the payment of an entrance fee if a minister joined the scheme after the age of 30, but essentially the main scheme has continued as a 'fellowship' scheme throughout the years and a single level of benefit is still paid.

I can understand how important and necessary this 'fellowship' principle was in the early years of the scheme. It seemed eminently sensible and praiseworthy that pensions should be provided for ministers who were shortly to retire regardless of the amount which they had personally contributed to the Fund. I am given to understand that this sense of 'fellowship' was freely and gladly assented to by the ministers of that day and there is much to be said for the attitude which was thus displayed. However, with the benefit of hindsight one can see that some fundamental changes ought to have been made to the scheme at some time in the past. I can only judge that the time never seemed to be propitious. Certainly the 1930s and then the war and post-war years were not conducive to making such changes. The size of the fund, the low level of contributions and the investment policy which was pursued at that time conspired to make it pretty nigh impossible to engage in any fundamental restructuring of the fund. And so the level of benefits remained pitifully low and it seemed that there was little or nothing that could be done to improve the situation.

However, in 1964 the church contribution was doubled from 2½% to 5% pa and in 1972 a capital appeal to the churches resulted in £350,000 being added to the fund. Furthermore, in 1969, the supplementary scheme was

introduced enabling a minister, with an equal 2½% contribution from his church, to make provision for additional benefits which accrued to him personally (ie the 'fellowship' principle did not apply in this case). The investment policy also underwent a thorough overhaul and largely due to the efforts of Charles Knight, my predecessor as chairman of the Superannuation Funds Committee, it can now be said that the investments are in very good shape.

But despite all of these important and very useful developments, the fundamental problem surrounding the main scheme has remained and, in fact, has intensified. As stipend levels have risen to more realistic levels so, too, have the contributions payable to both ministers and the churches and a significant part of these contributions is being used to fund the pensions that are being paid to presently retired ministers and their widows. We are, of course, delighted that the recent actuarial valuation of the main fund has enabled us to increase the standard annuity from £720 pa to £960 pa as from 1 January 1984 and I feel sure that none of our serving ministers begrudge their retired brethren this increase which, despite its size, still leaves the pension pitifully low. Nonetheless, the fact remains that as the scheme is presently structured some part of the contributions which are being paid by currently serving ministers does not earn them any pension benefit and this has increasingly given rise to the comment that they are not receiving 'value for money' in respect of their contributions. I feel sure that these comments are not prompted by any feeling of selfishness but rather from a very understandable concern for the well-being of their dependents.

It is against this background, therefore, that the Superannuation Funds Committee have been considering the future of the Union's superannuation arrangements. However, lest it be thought that what we are now about to do is completely to overturn the 'fellowship' principle, let me say at once that this is neither possible nor desirable. What the committee have concluded is that there are unacceptable defects in the present arrangements and it is proposed to start to put them right in relation to service and contributions from 1 January 1985. At the same time it is intended to improve still further the level of pension for those who have already retired and for those who will retire before the benefit of the new arrangements is fully reflected in their pension entitlement. Let me first of all describe the proposals in relation to future service.

After consultation with the actuaries we concluded that we should try to link future pension benefits more closely to length of service and to stipend levels at the time of retirement. A basis which is commonly adopted by pension schemes which are 'contracted-in' to the State earnings-related scheme is to provide for a pension of 1% of final pensionable income for each year of service and after careful consideration we decided that this would be an appropriate basis for our scheme. A minister aged 30 joining our scheme after 31 December 1984 and serving for 35 years would, on this basis, earn a pension of not less than 35% of his final minimum pensionable income. Final minimum pensionable income is defined for this purpose as the HMF minimum stipend plus the manse allowance for the twelve months ending at the end of the quarter immediately preceding retirement. This will be the minimum amount of

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With small family homes and Family
Day Care Centres**

Children coming into care these days no longer need to live "away from it all" in large institutional type homes. Many of them are the victims of broken marriages and they need to stay close to places and schools they know. Spurgeon's have now established a network of small family units in Bedford, Wolverhampton and Luton, each run by houseparents. The children often need us for only a few months and being close to home can see their families and friends. We have also opened Family Day Care Centres at Coventry and Wolverhampton to meet a desperate need for pre-school age children. A 'Preventive Care' unit has been opened at Bedford.

All this work is a step in a wider sphere of service to show practical everyday Christianity to children in need. We hope that you will share in this growing outreach by encouraging your Church to remember our work in their prayers and send a gift of money.

Please send your enquiries and gifts to:-

The Secretary, Peter Johnson,
Spurgeon's Homes, 14, Haddon House,
Station Road, Birchington, Kent, CT7 9DH.
Telephone: Thanet (0843) 41381.

Reg. Charity No. 307560

pension which would be earned. Contributions will be payable by both the minister and his church on the total of his pensionable income up to a stipulated maximum of one and one-half times the HMF minimum stipend plus the manse allowance. However, the contributions payable by the minister (but not the church) on that part of his pensionable income between the minimum and maximum figure will give rise to supplementary pension benefits which will accrue to him personally. Bonuses will also be added to these pension benefits so that they will not remain static. It will also be possible for ministers to make additional voluntary contributions to the scheme (subject to Inland Revenue limits) and these contributions will also earn supplementary benefits.

In the case of ministers who are members of the scheme at 31 December 1984 their pension entitlement will, in most cases, be made up of three elements, namely:

- (a) A proportion of the standard annuity which has accrued under the existing main scheme in respect of service up to 31 December 1984. This proportion will be expressed as $x/35$ ths where x equals the number of years service to 31 December 1984 (subject to a maximum of 35/35ths) where x equals the number of years service to 31 December 1984 (subject to a maximum of 35/35ths) and annual increases will be made hopefully at a rate of not less than 5% pa.
- (b) The benefit earned by reason of membership of the supplementary scheme in respect of service up to 31 December 1984 plus bonuses earned before and after that date.
- (c) Pension at the rate of 1% of final minimum pensionable income for each year of service from 1 January 1985 onwards as described earlier.

The following table sets forth a comparison of present and proposed benefits in 1985 terms for male ministers of varying ages receiving in 1985 the HMF minimum stipend of £6,250 pa and it will be seen that in every case the minister will be significantly better off under the proposed arrangements compared with the present arrangements.

Comparison of Present and Proposed Benefits in 1985 Terms for Male Ministers Receiving the HMF Minimum Stipend of £6,250.

| Year of retire-ment | Age in 1985 | Present Pension | | | | % min stipend | Proposed Pension | | | | % min stipend |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|----|---------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------|---------------|
| | | Main scheme £ | Suppl. scheme £ | Total £ | % | | Main scheme £ | Suppl. scheme £ | Post 1984 service £ | Total £ | |
| (A) Joining scheme at age 30 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1985 | 65 | 1,000* | 287 | 1,287 | 21 | 1,250 | 287 | - | 1,537 | 25 | |
| 1990 | 60 | 1,000 | 440 | 1,440 | 23 | 1,071 | 279 | 363 | 1,713 | 27 | |
| 2000 | 50 | 1,000 | 748 | 1,748 | 28 | 714 | 282 | 1,087 | 2,083 | 33 | |
| 2010 | 40 | 1,000 | 999 | 1,999 | 32 | 357 | 225 | 1,813 | 2,395 | 38 | |
| 2020 | 30 | 1,000 | 1,089 | 2,089 | 33 | - | - | 2,537 | 2,537 | 41 | |
| (B) Joining scheme at age 40 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1985 | 65 | 714* | 287 | 1,001 | 16 | 893 | 287 | - | 1,180 | 19 | |
| 1990 | 60 | 714 | 440 | 1,154 | 18 | 714 | 279 | 363 | 1,356 | 22 | |
| 2000 | 50 | 714 | 685 | 1,399 | 22 | 357 | 219 | 1,087 | 1,663 | 27 | |
| 2010 | 40 | 714 | 774 | 1,488 | 24 | - | - | 1,813 | 1,813 | 29 | |

(* The figure of £1,000 (and the corresponding figure of £714 for a late entrant) represents the amount of main scheme pension which would have applied in 1985 under the existing arrangements.)

I must emphasise that all the figures in the above table are expressed in 1985 terms. The benefits which will actually be received on retirement will, of course, reflect the higher income figures which will actually obtain during the years up to retirement. From time to time I receive from ministers copies of quotations which they have obtained from life offices which purport to show that substantially better terms could be obtained from an outside scheme compared with the benefits now being paid from our scheme. Such comparisons are seldom made on a 'like with like' basis but if they were it would be seen quite clearly that our scheme, particularly in its revised form, compares very favourably indeed with most commercial schemes.

A widow is presently entitled to one-half of a minister's main scheme pension and there is no widow's pension attaching to the supplementary scheme. In future, the widow's pension will be one-half of the main scheme pension element for service up to 31 December 1984 plus one-half of the pension element for services from 1 January 1985. It will also be possible for a minister to elect that part of any supplementary benefits earned by him on contributions on the excess of income over minimum pensionable income shall be converted into a widow's pension.

Under the existing arrangements it is not possible to commute part of the pension payable from the main scheme for a tax-free lump sum though commutation is possible in the case of the supplementary scheme. Under the revised arrangements it will be possible to commute part of the total pension benefits up to the maximum permitted by the Inland Revenue. At the present time the maximum lump-sum which can be taken is equal to one and one-half times final pensionable income after 20 or more years' service.

The death in service benefits which are presently in force will continue and the widow of a minister who dies in service will receive a lump sum equal to two, three or four times minimum pensionable income, depending upon whether there are no dependent children, one or more than one such children, but subject to the same deductions which already apply.

It is also proposed to increase still further the level of pension to those ministers who have already retired as well as their widows. As from 1 January 1985 the standard rate of annuity for a retired male minister will be increased from the £960 which it is at the moment and the £1,000 which it would have been on that date if these improvements had not been made, to £1,250 pa. The pension for a female retired minister will become £1,125 whilst the widow's annuity will be increased from £480 to £625. The standard annuity of £1,250 will in fact represent 20% of the proposed HMF minimum stipend for 1985 of £6,250. It was a central part of the Committee's thinking that the standard annuity should be substantially boosted and it is hoped that future increases will be at a rate of not less than 5% pa. The Committee is also hopeful, though no commitment can be given in this respect, that a retired minister's total Union pension benefits will not be less than 20% of the HMF minimum stipend from time to time (10% in the case of a widow), but subject to abatement if full



Baptist Housing Association LTD

1984 has begun with major changes within the structure of the Association.

The first being the change of name to "BAPTIST HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED" as shown above. This change of name was considered by the Management Committee after it had been found that the name caused misconceptions regarding those for whom the accommodation was provided. Discussions were held with the principal denominational bodies, Baptist Union, Baptist Missionary Society and Baptist Men's Movement. A Resolution was passed to change the name at a Special General Meeting held on the 14th December, 1983. The approval of the Registrar of Friendly Societies has now been received.

On the 12th January, 1984, the former General Secretary Mr Charles E. Webb-Sear, officially retired. At the time Mr Peter J. Lee, formerly Finance Officer with the Association, became General Secretary. Mr Bertie Bulmer Brown, formerly Property Manger, became General Manager.

The 1983 Annual Report will explain these and other changes in fuller detail and will be available from the beginning of April from this office.

The General Secretary
Baptist Housing Association Limited
Baptist Church House
4 Southampton Row
London
WC1B 4AB

benefits have not been earned. (For this purpose it will be assumed that a minister has been a member of the supplementary scheme from the earliest date upon which he could have joined.) Entitlements under the old main and supplementary schemes as well as under the new arrangements will ensure that presently serving ministers will retire on pensions which will generally be substantially in excess of 20% of the HMF minimum stipend (see table above), but we shall strive to maintain this minimum level of pension as far as existing pensioners are concerned.

As you would expect, these improved benefits can only be financed by way of increased contributions. We gave careful consideration to the question of whether ministers should pay a higher rate of contribution but concluded that 5% was the appropriate rate. At present ministers pay 2½% of their pensionable income (stipend, manse allowance and any other assessable emoluments) to the main scheme and 2½% of the HMF minimum stipend figure to the supplementary scheme. In future ministers will pay a composite contribution of 5% of their total pensionable income and this will, of course, mean some increase in contributions since, as stated above, contributions to the supplementary scheme are presently based only on the HMF minimum stipend figure. Then there will be some ministers who are not members of the supplementary scheme who, hitherto, have paid contributions only at the rate of 2½% to the main scheme. However, as stated earlier, a minister's contributions on income in excess of the minimum pensionable income (ie HMF minimum stipend plus manse allowance) will accrue for his personal benefits. I would also emphasise that the whole of a minister's contributions will go towards the funding of future service benefits and no part of his contributions will be used to fund pensions for past service, either in respect of himself or his retired brethren.

Churches presently pay contributions at a total rate of 7½% (ie 5% of pensionable income to the main fund and 2½% of the HMF minimum stipend to the supplementary scheme). As from 1 January 1985 the churches will pay a composite contribution at the rate of 10% pa of the minister's pensionable income. Of this 10%, 5% is required to pay for benefits in respect of past service, viz for increases after 1984 of benefits already accrued under the old main scheme and for the special increase in the standard rate of annuity from 1 January 1985. The other 5% will, like the ministers' 5% contribution, be used wholly to pay for future service benefits. The following table shows the contributions payable in 1985 by both church and minister compared with those payable in 1984 (a) in respect of a minister in receipt of the HMF minimum stipend and (b) in respect of a minister receiving £1,000 pa more than the minimum.

During a pastoral vacancy a church would be expected to maintain contributions to the scheme at a reduced rate of 5% pa of the minimum pensionable income. At the moment churches are expected to contribute to the main scheme during a vacancy at the rate of 5% pa of the previous minister's pensionable income and whilst many churches have complied with this request some have felt unable to do so. If we are to keep faith with our aim to maintain a minimum level of pension it is absolutely essential that all

churches accept this responsibility to pay contributions at the reduced level during a vacancy.

It is recognised that the increase in the church contributions is quite a large one and that it comes at a time when increased demands are being made on the churches in terms of higher stipends and increased giving to the HMF and BMS, not to mention other expenses and outgoings. However, we are convinced that now is the time to put our superannuation arrangements on to a better footing and we feel sure that the churches will gladly and willingly respond to this call.

Philip Cooke

COMPARISONS OF CONTRIBUTIONS PAYABLE BY CHURCH AND MINISTER IN 1984 AND 1985

| | Minister A | | | | Minister B | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----|-------|-----|-------------------|-----|-------|-----|--|
| | 1984 | | 1985 | | 1984 | | 1985 | | |
| | £ | | £ | | £ | | £ | | |
| Stipend | 5,500 | | 6,250 | | 6,500 | | 7,250 | | |
| Manse allowance | 1,000 | | 1,000 | | 1,000 | | 1,000 | | |
| | 6,500 | | 7,250 | | 7,500 | | 8,250 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Contributions | Chch | Min | Chch | Min | Chch | Min | Chch | Min | |
| | £ | | £ | | £ | | £ | | |
| Main scheme | 325 | 163 | | | 375 | 188 | | | |
| Supplementary | 138 | 137 | | | 138 | 137 | | | |
| New scheme | | | 725 | 362 | | | 825 | 412 | |
| Increase due to: | | | | | | | | | |
| 1985 stipend increase | | | 56 | 37 | | | 56 | 37 | |
| Improvements in scheme | | | 206 | 25 | | | 256 | 50 | |
| Total increase | | | 262 | 62 | | | 312 | 87 | |

A Multi-Lingual Baptist Church in Antwerp, Belgium Flanders field

Twice the British came to liberate Antwerp. Most of the Belgians remember that very well and they pass it on to the new generations. That's important. It's good to know that in times of "occupation" friends come to liberate.

Young men, soldiers, have died. Not hundreds but thousands. Why did they die? Because of the war. That's the fight for freedom, liberty. What are we doing today? Are we "liberating" people who are still occupied by materialisms or whatever it may be?

We live today. And I believe we live even “the day after ...” because of Him: Kurios Christos!

God Himself who is the King of Peace. He holds the whole wide world. And He keeps His promises. Do we tell that great message to others? People may say that the military can destroy 1/4 of the world population these days. I believe we must agree. But is that something “new”? Solomon says “there is nothing new under the sun” and when reading the first book of the bible we actually see that once upon a time indeed 1/4 of the total population was destroyed (Genesis 4:8).

This story may be strange, but many youngsters — especially christian young people — are optimistic and believe indeed that God — not men — keeps His creation.

In Belgium we see since the start of the “Multi-lingual Baptist Church” many more youngsters than persons over 30 year of age. That’s a very healthy sign. Why?

Belgium yesterday and today

Belgium, an important Roman Catholic country, has “visioned” in its history the beauty (freedom) of the Reformation. Some of the first European (and English!) Bibles were printed in down-town Antwerp. The German reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) had many colleagues in Antwerp who read and translated his scriptures which did lead to an “awakening” in these regions. But the counter-reformation was ‘well-done’ here. The so called intellectuals fled to the Netherlands and others such as printer and publisher Jacob van Liesfelt were beheaded. The first martyrs of the Reformation — H. Voes and J. van Esschen — were brought to Brussels in 1522 and burned alive in 1523.

Short was the period of liberty. Dark ages came again. Very little “humanism” was found in that sense as we witness it today in this country. In the early 50s of this century it was still forbidden to read the Bible. It was a book which belonged to the Roman Catholic clergy. Few permissions were granted to others. Belgians were good or less good devoted Roman Catholics.

I believe we can understand former Cardinal Seunens of Belgium now when he wrote “a certain Church is dying, a new Church is coming out”. This Cardinal, the Pope’s liaison to the international charismatic movement, experienced in his life-time both the “closed” and the “open” Bible. In which way it is only a “strategy” time will tell us. But we see right now that by giving people the possibility to read the Gospels is not enough. A more important step has to be done, to be announced.

I should write how my devoted parents became Protestant-Evangelical christians in the 1930s. Grandfather was given a New Testament in a street in Antwerp and advised his son — my father — to have a look in it. But as a devoted and sincere Roman Catholic believer my father asked permission from the clergy of his Church. The priest told him “You are an educated man and surely will understand what you will read. You have permission, but not so your wife ...” So my father read the Gospels every day aloud (the priest had probably not thought about that possibility?). When the 2nd World War was in the air my parents started to question. One of the friends of my father

was a Protestant and so it came to pass that after more than one year the family Vonck entered a Protestant-Evangelical (lead by a Baptist minister) church, accepted the living Christ and were baptized.

I believe suchlike situations are very rare now. But you never know. It was not theological items which "changed" their lives but purely ethical ones, pacifistic ones.

Nobody sees the trouble I see, but Jesus ...

Nobody sees the beauty I see, but Jesus ...

This latter saying is mine. Maybe subjective thinking. But it was and it is still a part of me. I pray it will remain with me all the days of my life. It was given to me at the age of twelve. Please, do not tell me you do not believe in "child evangelism"! It was as real to me as this very moment. But more had to come. Greater things.

I take the Bible text seriously which was given to me when I was baptized at the age of 15: "Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favour and good good repute in the sight of God and man."

Belgium counts about 10 million inhabitants. The Belgian Government does not recognize churches, only religions. Which ones are recognized?: the Roman Catholic one, the Anglican one, the Protestant one, the Jewish religion, and since 1974 the Islam.

The recognized religions do receive for their clergy a State salary. Most of the protestants (that is less than 1% of the population) are against Government recognition. That makes it very difficult to tell how many protestants and/or evangelicals live here. Actually we have more Jehovah Witnesses than Protestants and Evangelicals together. This was — in my opinion — very clear when Dr Billy Graham stated after Eurofest in Brussels in 1975 "I never before spoke in such a huge stadium to such a small crowd". Why was the group so small? Why so few?!

God, why so few?!

It's a fact that politics and secularism has brought damage to churches. Not politics and secularism as such, but the fact that we as clergy have often used it within the church. Maybe we thought the church would remain (our) church (*Ecclesiam habemus!*).

Instead of leaving politics — and many other items — to those who specialize in it. So many churches, also here in Belgium, are empty today. You see that even when clergy receive a State salary there is uncertainty about today and tomorrow. The spiritual level has gone ... while many (oh, many indeed) are looking for the "living water", for "Das Heilige" ...

Again I must be personal ..

When asking my parents to go to Seminary abroad their (objective realistic) answer was: "Son, we are Belgians! What would you do with a certificate of a Protestant minister in this country? Look around. Open your eyes, and judge for yourself. Are not all (!) protestant/evangelical pastors foreigners? Who would support you? Do we have a "home church"? Boy, the place we go to on Sunday is a "mission-post". And if you go please take another nationality because Flemish pastors do not exist. And even if there would be some, so what?"

But I went. God is leading. We prayed, and we asked for advice. Indeed, not easy. First some youth work, later Chaplain in the State prison system. And last year: a new open door!

A Multi-Lingual Baptist Church

Antwerp keeps about 700,000 inhabitants. It has a large diamond centre and a big harbour. It's a metropolitan city. People speak many languages. You meet youngsters and older people from about any place in the world. There are Mosques, Synagogues, Temples and Churches. Are there Flemish churches? Very, very few.

When reading "French & Belgian Protestantism" by L.S. Houghton, published in 1919 I must tell myself that not much has changed since that date. Surely, in big towns Roman Catholics have by now spoken or heard about a Protestant. Maybe even seen a church building. In the week of unity — and thanks to that week! — we have seen some actions. Small, but they did happen. They still do happen, I wish we saw more. Ecumenism looks sometimes to be "history". But we should look to the future. Ahead ... and try at least to be "Christ-minded".

After much prayer and advice in and outside the country a first meeting of a "churchboard to be" was organized in July 1983. Later that month we as Antwerp baptist christians voted to go ahead with services beginning in October in the Antwerp "Congress Hotel". Though the managers donated us free space and much more ... we still felt as Søren A. Kierkegaard when he wrote "Fear and Trembling". I believe it was in the 50s and 60s easier to start a worship service than today!

The service would be multi-lingual. We — Antwerp christians — were and are used to converse almost daily in two or more languages. Many of the local people would be foreign. The multi-lingual songbooks of Eurofest '75 would be used. On that first Sunday in October we only expected family members. But who came? ... students from Switzerland, France, Canada, and the USA, young people from Ghana, Nigeria and Bangladesh. Businessmen from Scotland and Ireland. People from England touring in Flemish-Belgium. Young ladies, working au-pair in Belgian families, but coming from Scotland. And ... Belgians. Many have in the meantime found shelter at the M.B.C.A.

And besides, Belgian media published this news, both the Socialistic magazines (labour party) and the Roman Catholic ones. It was on radio. The Town of Antwerp made it officially known in four languages. Ashamed we were waiting so many months.

What you may do ...

- **Pray**
- **Publish** this "new" ministry in your local church-bulletin.
- **Remember** problems (with music, etc.), possible funds.

Well, share the vision. Act through the Fellowship ... so we may know in