

# The Fraternal

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# Editorial

The nation can only endure so much election fever which, at the time of writing, has all but paralysed business in the House of Commons. So if the pundits are right “she’ll go to the country in June”, and this Fraternal and the new government should arrive at about the same time.

In the election of 1983 your editor chaired a forum of prospective candidates for the benefit of the electorate in Croydon South. One of the candidates declined to attend, partly, it is understood, because of his aversion to mixing politics with religion (the event had been staged by the Council of Churches). One of the most significant changes in recent years has been the growing reluctance, across the theological spectrum, to drive this kind of wedge, effectively creating “no-go areas” in our national life which the gospel dare not address. Of course it speaks of an increasingly mature understanding of what Jesus meant by “the Kingdom”: that which encompasses private religious experience, but is not limited to it. The challenge is to translate gospel convictions into social and economic values and without that triumphalism which can’t admit we may not always be right! Burdened thus for the Kingdom, we cast our vote.

The riots in Brixton in 1981 and later ones elsewhere concentrated the national mind wonderfully on a terrible social sickness which had gone untreated for years. In that year of Scarman an article appeared in the Fraternal by the then pastor of Brixton Baptist Church. Now six years later, and against the odds, this church is experiencing significant growth and a renewal of its life. Richard Higbed tells the story in “Brixton and the Kingdom”.

Secondly, what place has an organisation, founded in 1917 for men only, in a Church which is increasingly “family” orientated? This was put to Ron Marr who responds trenchantly with “The Case for the BMM”.

The third article is a major one and the second in the series “Christianity and Culture”. It deals with the relationship between Christianity and Science, so often in the past at one another’s throats! Is there a basis for genuine dialogue and can truth-insights be shared to mutual advantage? Richard Kidd, who has lived in both worlds, is our guide.

Next, to help mark the Seventy Fifth Anniversary of Home Mission, David Waters tells of his church’s experience of “Task Force”. Last year 150 young people undertook voluntary work in 25 Home Mission churches and the benefits were two-way.

Our fifth contribution, by Tony Turner, describes a drastic case of culture shock through direct exposure to the Third World. In “Through Western Eyes — Bangladesh” he reflects on the life-changing character of his experience, and the new perspective on life it has given him.

Lastly, Sidney Hall, in searching through the archives of Bristol College, comes up with more evidence that there were giants in the land in the days of yore, if these “Ministerial Mileages” are anything to go by!

As regards book reviews, if any reader would like to undertake some review work from time to time, we would be glad to know.

# Brixton and the Kingdom

One has only to mention 'Brixton' and so much that is unpleasant comes to the fore — riots — muggings — murder — police raids and shootings — rapes, and then one dares head such an article as this 'Brixton and the Kingdom'. Is such a thing possible?

Maybe we can change the title slightly so that it reads 'Making the Kingdom known in Brixton', for that is what is taking place in Brixton Baptist Church (Kenyon). I am so often asked 'Just what is happening at Kenyon?', or 'What is the reason for such an amazing growth?', and frankly I find it very difficult to answer such questions.

KENYON was built in 1884 by the Higgs Family of the builders Higgs and Hill; it then seated just on one thousand people. The message proclaimed from the pulpit was the power of the Gospel. One of its early preachers was the Rev. J.R. Edwards who spent his entire ministry at Kenyon and proclaimed a dynamic Bible ministry, drawing great crowds each Sunday.

The spiritual life of a church is very much like the sea: at one time there is a full tide, whilst at other times the sea is far out. I came to Kenyon in 1983. I had been a Moderator here for a period of some nine months and was then asked to become the Pastor, and in this the Lord gave very clear leading.

Brixton had just experienced the first of its riots. There was much tension and suspicion in the area, and I found myself in a fellowship of some thirty eight members struggling to keep the church open; a very large building with declining funds, a roof in a very bad state of repair, an organ on its last legs and much else to be done. The congregation in the morning was about 40 and, in the evening, about 25 to 30. At times the Wednesday prayer meeting saw six or seven faithful prayer warriors.

That was the situation I discovered within the church in 1983, but believing that the Lord had sent me I knew my call, coming from the Lord, was for the Kingdom in Brixton.

## Living in Brixton

What is it like to live in Brixton — an area heavily populated — families — young people — children? Michael Armitage, in his book 'God loves Brixton too', has written a vivid description of living in Brixton. He wrote of living in an area of major deprivation and decay, and heavily vandalised during the 1981 riots ... living in Brixton means unemployment ... living in Brixton means being black for at least half the population ... it means finding that job vacancies are already filled ... living in Brixton means praying a lot in the knowledge that others are praying too. It also means enjoying rich and varied worship, and trying to work out what it means to be a Christian in a practical way.

Having been in the ministry for some thirty five years, I have watched many new 'thoughts' and 'revelations' sweep the church. I have heard many a lecture and sermon on Church Growth, and I am not too sure whether any has done me much good. I am not charismatic, but am an evangelical in ministry and outreach. I do not like House Groups for I believe that the

church should be our focal point. It is no argument that the unsaved do not come to church; they do — for we are proving it here in Brixton.

It has long been my belief that folk today are anxious to know what the Bible has to say, and how the Bible is relevant to the modern situation. They want to hear 'the old fashioned Gospel' that alone has the power to transform.

And this is what is proclaimed at Kenyon — God's Answer from God's Word. The result? — souls saved — the baptistry open again and again — church membership growing — new folk attending church each Sunday — larger congregations. People are talking about what they are hearing. The Church of Jesus Christ is on the move. The Kingdom is being extended in Brixton.

## **Tithing**

Relating to money matters, the church was experiencing difficulty, and the cost of a new roof seemed just impossible. At one deacons' meeting our Treasurer proposed that we should tithe all monies that came into the church; one tenth of our income. On the face of it it seemed very unwise as we needed every penny we could lay our hands upon. And now to suggest giving money away!! But we did. We took God at His word, and then we watched our income increase beyond all that we had ever thought, or dreamt. God was working. Folk began to give to the Lord and not to the church and He, in turn, blessed their giving and work. It was also a thrill to announce each Sunday the previous Sunday's giving and then to hear from all over the church: 'Praise the Lord' — 'Thank you Lord', and we continue to thank and praise Him.

At Deacons Court, each month, it is always a joy to consider to whom we shall send our tithe — missionary work — other churches — and the more we receive, the more we can give to His work in other places.

And so with the considerable increase in congregation and membership, resulting in positive giving, it was now possible to deal with the problem of the church roof. Discussions were held with a Christian Builder who advised us, and completely renewed our very large church roof.

A new organ was purchased to enhance the singing, and that particular year we commenced with a debt of £30,000. By the end of the same year every penny had been paid.

## **Outreach**

We then began to turn our attention to 'outreach'. A week's evangelistic Mission was held, led by a team from the London City Mission. Every house, flat, tower block in the vicinity was visited, and the Good News made known.

The Boys' Brigade Company was revived, so that now there is a thriving work in all sections, and very soon we hope to be able to send a Band out on the streets of Brixton. Each section is active and growing — the Anchor Boys, Junior Section and Company Section. A Girls' Brigade Company has been formed. This continues to grow in all its various sections, so that now on Church Parade both BB and GB take up a considerable amount of seatage. The youth of Brixton are being reached, and there is an exciting

advancement of Christ's Kingdom among these young people.

And so the church, which is right in the centre of Brixton, surrounded by hundreds of houses, has grown and still continues to grow — without any gimmicks — just a plain presentation of the Word of God, using simple terms that people can understand, and the proclamation of an evangelistic message that Christ can meet the needs of modern-day living.

With this article in mind, I asked one of my members just what 'coming to Kenyon' really meant to her. A few days after, she handed me the following which I believe sums up the sentiments of most of the folk who attend this church. She writes:

'There is always a welcome at Kenyon Baptist Church to every one who enters the church: by the Minister and his wife or the church secretary.

To me the church (the body of believers), is a friendly, caring, loving church, and having come the once, I wanted to attend again and again, because of the rich blessings I have and do receive through the preaching of the Word of God.

The leadership of Kenyon Baptist Church can be described as "a beautiful blend of Black and White members". No member has left for the lack of care, or dissatisfaction. Here is a multi-racial church which is part of the inner city (Brixton), with a working class environment demonstrating their unity in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The majority of the congregation is West Indian, many of whom settled in England since the 50's, and can be described as real mothers in the church.

I feel the power of God through power and fellowship each time we meet, and there is a real desire to make the Gospel of Christ known to the community, and spread the good news of salvation all over the world through the support of "Home Mission" and Evangelism.

Kenyon means much to me in my daily Christian life; I can tell the whole world that whether you are young or old, a babe in Christ or spiritually mature, there is still the need for fellowship and you can find such true fellowship in Kenyon Baptist Church. I am happy to have joined the membership of the church, and I am enjoying the ministry of the preaching of the Word of God by our Minister, through and by the power of God's Holy Spirit.'

### **Brixton and the Kingdom**

In the few years I have been at this Church we have witnessed an amazing movement from God, as He has seen fit to extend His Kingdom within this area, and for this we give Him all the Praise and glory. We have seen Him save souls and challenge folk to follow Him through the Waters of Baptism. We have watched the congregations grow each Sunday and Brigades have been formed drawing new young people into the church.

Of course there have been problems; Satan will never allow the Kingdom to grow without a fight. But the love-fellowship within the church has, in

some way, enabled us to overcome many of the problems.

Maybe the question is being asked, 'Why are such things taking place in Brixton, but not in my church?! I don't know. But I do know that my Lord is very faithful to His many promises, of which one is: 'Those that honour Me — I will honour'. He must be first. His message must be made known. The Church today must be outward-looking, for who is going to tell those who are without Christ of His love and mercy if the Church remains silent, or is so introspective that it fails to see the lost sinner?

A statement was published by the Brixton Deanery Clergy following the riots and one paragraph reads ... 'We affirm our hope for the Church in the Inner City. We believe that because our people are facing daily many of the most urgent problems of this Society — so their insights, their lessons, their testimony, have a profound importance for the wider Church ... and beyond.'

If we have learned anything at Kenyon, then we want to share it with as many as possible. We want to encourage others that our God is still able. He is still moving and working in the lives and hearts of His own, but we must be willing to let Him. We have to stop telling God how to run His own Church. We have to take the brake off our own lives. We have to LET GO AND LET GOD. Certainly, it is not what we have done here in Brixton — not the minister, deacons or membership — it is what God has done to extend His own Kingdom here in Brixton. And for this we give Him all glory.

**Richard J. Higbed**

## *A personal invitation . . . . .*

to join a dynamic organisation of men seeking to apply and extend Christian principles in many spheres of service.

- The Baptist Men's Movement has since 1917 been leading men to faith in Jesus Christ.
- Men are encouraged to take an active part in all aspects of the work of the Church.
- Fellowship and understanding are cultivated among all Christian men.

**ASK FOR A COPY OF THE BMM HANDBOOK**  
The Secretary, The Baptist Men's Movement,  
93 Gloucester Place, London, W1H 4AA.  
Tel: 01-935 1482



# The Case for the BMM

At a church conference not long ago a young man said, with some conviction, 'The day of sectional meetings is over'. Many in the group agreed, but a few of us suggested that was not the whole picture.

Naturally, local church programmes must cater for the whole church family, but this cannot mean every organisation, event or activity involving everybody. We all know that's impossible.

In the past the weekly church calendar seemed to be designed to produce the maximum number of meetings competing for the support of every member of the family on different days and at different times. None of us needs persuading now that this was wrong — husband and wife, parents and children passing each other on the front doorstep in a frantic effort to gulp down enough food to provide the energy to take part in the ceaseless round! And when they were participating in these organisations or meetings they became so wrapped up in them they thought theirs was the only group that mattered. Loyalty to the group mattered more than anything else, including Sunday worship, sometimes.

Far better, many believed, to structure the activities so that the church "family" as a whole could be on church premises, or wherever, at the same time and share in the same occasions. This led to a streamlining of church programmes, but has it always meant greater fellowship and more rewarding outreach?. It has always been easier to hide in a crowd!

I am not contending for the return of the old pattern, necessarily. Rather, I want to suggest there is room for sectional meetings along with the "family" activities. In fact, it is possible to include the former within the latter. Almost 20 years ago I worked out a weekly programme with leaders of several organisations which resulted in women, men, young people and young marrieds meeting in their groups but coming together for fellowship and prayer (and refreshments!) in the course of the same evening.

However, let me now declare an interest. I am a personal member of the Baptist Men's Movement and, therefore, I am convinced of the value of a group which brings men together regularly as part of the life and witness of the local church.

A men's group has so much to offer. It is a focus for men already active in the church, and it is a point of contact for these men to introduce others to the church and all it stands for.

Although no longer in pastoral charge I am well aware that committed menfolk are in great demand whatever the size of church — deacons, Junior Church leaders, BB officers, choir members, maintenance men. And yes, I know, some men already seem to spend a lot of time (too much?) "down at the church".

But is there not a case for some of these men easing their schedules so that once a fortnight, say, they could meet for fellowship with other men? They should be helped to see the opportunities for outreach in such a move. The husbands of women church members, the fathers of children and young people connected with the church, workmates, colleagues and

neighbours — they are all potential members of a men's group. A recent poll of over 5,000 men across the country showed that most of them had nothing against Christianity, they just thought it irrelevant to their day-to-day situations.

A men's group programme can be designed to interest men from all walks of life. Once there, these men will quickly respond to a friendly welcome and the all-important step of introducing them to Christian men will have been taken. Of course, it may take many more steps before they become part of the church family, but nobody is suggesting that a men's group is an instant answer to the imbalance of numbers in almost all our churches.

And it is not just talking, or listening to talks. Men's groups are places of action. The story of the Baptist Men's Movement's 70 years is one of practical Christianity stretching right round the world.

The Missionaries' Literature Association became part of BMM over 60 years ago and is the movement's oldest auxiliary. Today, about 8,000 journals and magazines are sent annually to missionaries serving on BMS fields. This reading material, chosen by the recipients, keeps them in touch with what is happening at home — life in general, life in the denomination, as well as professional publications.

Better known to Baptists, and not just the men, is Operation Agri, accepted by BMM as their special responsibility in 1961. It began with just £200 in response to the need for resources by BMS agricultural missionaries. More than 25 years later OA now spends well over £100,000 on purchases and personnel. Resources are now guaranteed, helping these specialists to increase crops, improve strains of livestock and teach nationals how to get the most from their land.

And it is not just a case of Baptists raising money to make all this possible. The OA Committee with the BMS Agricultural Advisory Committee have access to a pool of technical information to advise missionaries. As Brazil missionary Frank Gouthwaite put it, "I have valued so much the sense of personal support. Operation Agri is there, interested and committed. It's not only money".

Alongside Operation Agri goes BMM's latest auxiliary. "Tools With A Mission" takes craftsmen's and handymen's tools no longer used by their owners and refurbishes them. Then the good-as-new tools are shipped to missionaries to be put to good use by them and their colleagues.

Not all the movement's activities are beamed towards overseas needs. A housing association was launched in 1966, benefiting initially retired ministers and missionaries. The Baptist Housing Association has come a long way since then. Nearly 2,500 tenants are housed in upwards of 100 properties throughout the country. Local management is provided through local church groups. The latest development in an association dedicated to meeting people's needs is to be the provision of nursing care and meals for the frail elderly in some of the new BHA schemes.

These are all aspects of Christian service that every minister would surely be happy for the men of his or her congregation to be involved in, enlarging their vision of the church at home and overseas, feeling a part of such

worthwhile endeavour, enlisting the help of others in the church and community, participating in wider gatherings with those of like mind and enterprise.

Even so, some of you are perhaps saying 'that doesn't mean we have to have a separate group within the church'. It is true, alas, there are many men who have to support the work of BMM auxiliaries on a personal basis because there is no men's group in their church.

If yours is one of these churches — and they are by far in the majority these days, is it not time you considered getting a group together? Active encouragement from the minister may be all that is needed to gather a few men together in the first instance. That in no way suggests the minister should be burdened with another organisation to run, or be expected to attend on a regular basis.

But it is that initial encouragement that could make all the difference. This is not a plea just to increase the number of local groups and so boost the image of BMM. The officers of the movement are concerned for the work of the Kingdom and are convinced many of our churches are missing out in a vital area of witness and outreach. They see BMM as the servant of the local church, not in any way competing for men's time or finance.

So, what is there to lose? Would the formation of a men's group in your church really alter the declared pattern of the church's life so much? It might just cause a minor revolution — for the better! Contact BMM Secretary Tom Markie at Mission House in London for introductory material and further information.

Ron Marr

## **Religion and Science: One World or Two?**

For good or ill, science is among the most potent cultural forces shaping our lives in the twentieth century. It has, to put it bluntly, 'produced the goods' while others have been too much engaged in empty talk. The correlation between scientific theory and scientific practice is remarkable. While theorists marvel at the strangeness of the quantum, industry has manufactured several generations of silicon technology; while cosmologists speculate about the complexity of space-time, engineers have landed men on the moon and, what is more, brought them home too! Worlds of possibility and of terror spring from one and the same source; machinery for data processing is capable of answering previously unaskable questions; an arsenal of nuclear devices is capable of ending the need to ask any questions at all.

What, then, is this force which has taken western culture so mightily by storm and, if it is as significant as first appears, why does Christianity give it such a wide berth, and why so often have Christians preferred conflict to dialogue and grateful co-operation?

### **Personal Tensions**

Let me declare a personal interest, for my own story has frequently been shaped by the conflict. Strange as it may seem to some, much of my early



# **Baptist Housing Association LTD**

1986 was an excellent year for the Baptist Housing Association. During the year ten new schemes were completed, and a property was acquired from a small Baptist Housing Association which was taken over. By the end of the year, the Association had 90 properties. Since then, six more properties have been opened, and the Association can now house some 2,820 people. In June 1987 we expect to complete our hundredth property.

Completed properties are only part of the picture. The Association is currently building on 13 other sites, and there are more in the pipeline. We're also now looking very closely at the possibility of extending north into the Tyne-Tees area. We are also now diversifying into frail elderly schemes, and managing leasehold properties for sale to the elderly.

As many of you will know, we are always on the lookout for parcels of land on which we can build further properties. We believe, as those who went before us always believed, that God's purpose for us is to provide homes with a Christian caring input in the local church community. If you have surplus land, and your church has a real mission to support a scheme, please write to the headquarters of the Baptist Housing Association whose address is shown below:

**The Director  
Baptist Housing Association Limited  
Baptist Church House  
4 Southampton Row  
London WC1B 4AB**

'mountain-top' experience arose in the context of scientific discovery; not, I hasten to add, that I ever discovered anything for myself, but I have often delighted to retrace the steps of other and greater minds along their paths of discovery. I recall following the trail pioneered simultaneously more than a century before by the mathematicians Newton and Leibniz, and I remember being caught up in wonder at the simple beauty of the mathematics we now call 'the calculus'; or again I recall when, in the steps of the physical Einstein, I first became able to sample the physics of relativity. Each encounter opened up new worlds of meaning, and these insights into the intricate patterning of reality led to an experience of liberation which today it would be churlish for me not to compare with the later discoveries of faith.

From the start, however, there was conflict with religion. At school I readily concurred with the tacit assumption that the sciences had somehow laid to rest every figment of the religious imagination; in fact it was much more than concurrence, there was a positive delight in exercising scientific muscle to demolish the frail and unreasoned fantasies of the faithful, who seemed ill-prepared for the solid realities of the scientific world. At home it was all too easy to knock the flimsy framework of belief among those who patiently girded my life with security and loving care. In the heady atmosphere of the sixties, even a child could wield the reductionist argument: the scientists have shown us that life is nothing but ...

A matter of days into university — to read for a degree in the natural sciences, of course — a new kind of 'mountain-top' erupted into focus. The scientists term it a 'paradigm shift', but the Christians call it a 'conversion', and their term rightly testifies to the profoundly personal nature of the discovery which utterly re-shaped the potential for my life ever since. I had always said that religion would need to prove itself; I never anticipated the enormity of the evidence I would be given.

There I was, however, thrust into conflict again. The early days of my Christian pilgrimage were often spent in the company of Christians who were, to say the least, defensive, if not outrightly hostile to the ideals of open intellectual inquiry. They were — I hope they still are — delightful Christians, however, and they provided the cradle in which my new-found faith was to grow. Who was I to challenge the wisdom of those whose genuine zeal for the gospel was all the while enabling sceptics like myself to break from the darkness and to catch a glimpse of a glorious light? But at times the conflict was enormous. To remain religiously respectable, 'sound' they called it, I was expected to trade in hard won — I had sincerely thought thrilling — insights into the scientifically tested picture of the universe, in return for apparently conflicting pictures seemingly plain for all to see in the opening pages of the Bible. I found myself in conflict, both with the scientists and their 'nothing but ...', and with the very Christians who were so dedicated to the nurture of my faith. Something somewhere had gone dreadfully wrong!

### **A History of Conflict**

The tension I experienced was, of course, nothing new. It reflects the shape of many a personal story, and a larger history of conflict too. One writer, arguing that Christianity thrives in the presence of an enemy, suggests that

the sciences have provided a necessary and convenient focus for attack. Certainly the evidence indicates something of the kind. No matter how strongly it is argued that Christianity has provided an impetus for the dynamic development of the sciences in the western world, the over-riding impression is of a faith fearfully fighting for its life at every new turn. Whether it was Copernicus and the shape of the cosmos, Darwin and the origin of the species, or Einstein and the relativity of the observer, it would be a bold interpreter who suggests that Christianity has taken delight in the search for truth, the scientific way — and be not deluded, there is plenty to come, as yet unknown!

Saddest of all, there are always those who cannot leave past follies quietly to stand as monuments to an earlier age. Copernicus long dead, 'flat earth' was still a name to be heard; Darwin, his argument with the church exhausted a century ago, still claims space on the printed page. If only the implications of relativity and the quantum physics were more easily grasped, there would be more of a fight in progress today. Every generation has its 'creationists' — or some equivalent — young earth, special creation, first man Adam ... and more besides. Whatever is happening to the commitment to truth?

### **A Breakdown in Communication**

Some talk disparagingly about the integrity of scientists. Surely that cannot be right? If the checks and balances and the public scrutiny of the scientific community were transferred to the community of faith, far less mumbo-jumbo would ever go to press — and, after all, 'they have produced the goods'. People all too easily forget that the evolutionary biology which they lightly dismiss also supports much of the medical research on which their own well-being so often depends. They forget that the maps which the theoretical physicists provide are checked out each time we are called for an X-ray, and every time a laser is focused on an uninvited growth.

Others, of course, talk equally disparagingly about the integrity of those who confess a religious commitment. Surely that cannot be right either? Yes, there are endless examples of the religiously deceived, but that does not begin to account for the impact of genuine spirituality on the life of the world. If God is a projection, I am greatly impressed by the quality of the screen — for we are talking about an image with enormous influence on a countless number of lives.

If, however, I am unable to decry the integrity of either community, scientific or religious, and still they remain in continuing conflict, it might suggest that each is failing to understand what the other is saying — that there is a serious breakdown in communication. It is my contention that most of what normally goes under the heading of conflict between science and religion can be traced back to a fundamental misunderstanding of this kind.

In the business of critical inquiry, it is useful to remember that answers are significantly shaped by the questions we ask. To ask a question in a particular way is, in measure at least, to limit the answers which might be received. Scientific questions elicit largely scientific answers; theological questions, answers of a different kind. The sciences use language in a

distinctive way. It is not just a matter of a special vocabulary, there is a special method of reasoning too. The sciences have put the highest premium on logical rigour and, until very recently indeed, have shown little interest at all in the imaginative use of language which holds sway in the fields of literature and poetry. The result, sometimes called 'technical reason', has proved its unquestionable power for analysing and manipulating an encounter with the material world, but it would be hasty to assume that this exhausts every possibility for the human perception of truth.

All too often the problem with being trained as a scientist — or, for that matter, simply with living in a 'scientific' age — is that technical reason is expected to handle every aspect of possible knowing. This is fine when dealing with objects, when questions rarely push beyond the need for a Yes or a No. But technical reason is rapidly exposed in its weakness when dealing with persons who, scientists or not, invariably prickle if treated as objects. It is exposed as utterly impotent when dealing with God, who resists treatment as an object in any way whatsoever. Most of the worth-while God-questions cannot be resolved with a Yes or a No, but demand a Yes and a No together — something which technical reason declares as absurd. But technical reason is only a tip on the 'reasoning' iceberg and, very often, it is only as language and its concepts are racked beyond breaking, that the reality of God is released to the surface.

This, of course, is no surprise to those in the Christian tradition. Certainly, from Aquinas onwards, it has been clearly recognised that religious language functions in a peculiar way. It functions analogically, qualifying its pronouncements with the balance of Yes and of No. At every twist in an argument, God is like ... but not like ... knowable and unknowable. To expose God to the spotlight of technical reason reveals nothing but the gaps in our knowing — and locating God there makes fools of ourselves and the One whom we claim as the goal of our search.

This is not to say that God-talk is unconcerned about logic and rigour. Good theology demands logical consistency and rigorous coherence, but it does not pretend that these determine the limits of its task. Theology delights in metaphor, in parable and in story. A parable in the hands of technical reason can crumble and vanish to dust; neither is it to say, however, that science must be limited to its own kind of literalism. Increasingly, physics acknowledges the language of model and of paradigm, and the world of the sub-atomic particle has revealed a poetry all of its own. The crucial issue for language is the way in which vocabulary and reasoning are used; the unforgivable sin is to push for a meaning beyond the scope of the medium.

As we focus more closely on the disciplines of science and faith, it is possible to refine progressively sharper definitions of the possibilities and limitations in each domain. A first rule of thumb, suggests that science is equipped only to ask questions about mechanism, the 'how', theology equipped to ask questions about meaning, the 'why'. It is true, for example, that when the scientist talks about creation the reference is to 'how' the universe came to be as it is; an answer to the scientific question of creation might deal with an original bang, an evolutionary process and the like. When the theologian refers to creation, however, the reference is to 'why' the

universe is the way that it is; and answer to the religious question of creation deals with why there is anything at all, or why there is not nothing. A scientific inquiry into the celebration of the eucharist could get little beyond a chemical analysis of the elements and an objective description of the ritual behaviour; a theological inquiry can engage its analogical imagination to feel for the presence of Christ and the power of Spirit in the renewal of lives. The breakdown of communication around the Lord's table is a story in itself!

### **A Web of Interaction**

To leave science and faith separated by the gulf between a 'how' and a 'why', however, does not, under closer scrutiny, do justice to either; nor does it do justice to the unity of truth about the world with which both are so deeply concerned. There is, in fact, a web of interaction spun between the two, and without such interaction both are immeasurably the poorer.

The sciences have frequently served the faith well. Through the crises of belief, the sciences have forced Christian teaching to renounce only that ground on which it never was authorised to stand. Christianity still does not seem to have learnt that it can say nothing about the physics or biology of creation. Cosmology is the business of the physicist, evolution the business of the biologist; the theologian must be content with the 'doctrine of creation', which is neither about physics or biology, but the relationship between God and the world. Only after continual retreats into gaps has pressure from the sciences forced us to recognise that God does not belong in a gap at all; God is either ground and meaning of *all* being, or God can have little claim to significance in our world.

The sciences have forced us to maintain an appropriate rigour in the logic of theological debate. The danger is that, when technical reason is transcended, woolly and undisciplined thinking creeps into its place. Theology proceeds at its peril if it does not listen carefully to the challenge of linguistic philosophy which, earlier this century, rode on a wave of scientific achievement.

The sciences do, from time to time, force us to reconsider some of the assumptions which shape our genuinely theological answers. Copernicus demanded new thinking about what it means for humanity to be at the centre of creation. No longer can this be read-off from the geometry of the universe. If humanity is important to God, it must be for reasons other than geographical location, reasons which might have been obscured if the earth had not been dislodged from an apparent centre-stage. Anthropocentricity has taken another body-blow with the relativity of Einstein; trust in God's personal concern for his people can rest only on our calling in Jesus Christ and that alone, for there is nothing at all to favour our spot in the universe — neither in space, nor in time.

Something similar has happened with the theology of providence. Once it was possible to argue as if the only choice is between providence and chance — the old Yes and No of technical reason. The quantum physics posits chance as a building block in the ordering of reality. Theology must return to its roots, and think through the issues again.

The sciences have re-raised issues which became lost from the theological agenda. As ecology maps more clearly the inter-connectedness

of physical systems, humanity is reminded about the connections between its own destiny and that of the surrounding environment in ways unheard since the world of the Hebrews was invaded by ideas from Greece. It is all there, however, in the moulding of a man from the dust of the earth, in the resurrection of the body, and the hope of renewal in a new heaven and a new earth.

Lastly, and this must rate as of first importance, the sciences have offered a new storehouse of resources for worship. "When I consider the work of thy hands ...", says the psalmist. Whether it is a view into the outer reaches of the universe, to such a remote distance that the information reaching our telescopes must have left for its destination at the dawn of time, or whether it is a view into the inside world uncovered by the electron microscope, to see is surely to wonder, and to wonder is a hair's breadth from worship. "Truth in its beauty ...", says the hymn-writer, and there is no distinction between truths, scientific or religious.

What, however, about the service which theology can offer to the sciences? Science is desperate for methods of making moral decisions which can match the scope of its unparalleled advance. It is here above all that Christianity has a long tradition and a developed expertise, but it will never be given a worthy hearing while it is styled as the enemy. The decision to withdraw from a line of experiment on the basis of moral responsibility is not easily reached. Theology has a language to handle the issues; pray God that Christians will demonstrate a credibility, enough to allow their insights to be counted in the debate.

### **Personal Resolutions**

Today I am pleased to tell of a resolution in the personal tension I experienced between science and faith, a joyful resolution in 'one world', undivided in a search for the truth. Let the cosmologist do the cosmology; let the biologist do the biology; I, as a Christian, will listen-in as able, and enjoy at a distance what I judge to be a genuine reflection of the joy, first God's, in the venture of creation.

There is, however, another kind of resolution which has become important for me too. I am resolved that today there is an urgent prophetic task laid upon us to undermine the walls which hold the worlds of science and religion apart: to disown, in the name of Christ, the popular antagonism which continues to do inestimable damage to the credibility of faith in a modern world. In its place we must build the vision of 'one world', which alone can secure a future for scientists and believers alike.

### **Some Suggestions for Further Reading**

Ian Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion*, SCM, 1966.

Don Cuppitt, *The Worlds of Science and Religion*, Sheldon Press, 1976.

Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics*, Dent & Sons, 1983.

Adam Ford, *Universe: God, Man and Science*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1986.

George Hendry, *Theology of Nature*, Westminster Press, 1980.

Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, SCM, 1985.

Christian Montenat *et al*, *How to Read the World: Creation in Evolution*, SCM, 1985.

**THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY P.L.C.**  
**4 SOUTHAMPTON ROW,**  
**LONDON, WC1B 4AB**  
**Telephone No: 01-405 4084.**

**To the Readers of the Fraternal.**

Dear Friends,

It was pleasant to have an opportunity to meet a number of our clients at Bradford in April. Although when we "exhibit" on these occasions we are not averse to selling insurance, our main intention is to keep the name of our Company before the denomination and to have an opportunity of meeting customers personally.

We are conscious that ours is not a "captive market" and we appreciate the support of the Churches and members. In return we endeavour to give a personal and speedy service. The severe weather of January and the high winds of March have produced a spate of claims which has tested our staff resources to the full. However, it is good to know from many of our claimants' letters that the speed of response has been appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

**M.E. PURVER**  
**General Manager**

Arthur Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science*, Oxford, 1979.  
John Polkinhorne, *One World: the Interaction of Science and Theology*, SPCK, 1986.  
Colin Russell, *Cross-currents: Interactions Between Science and Faith*, IVP, 1985.

Richard L. Kidd

## Home Mission Task Force: The Inside Story

My introduction to Task Force was through a letter from Baptist Church House. At first I thought it was a Baptist Terrorist organisation set up by some left wing members of the clergy who would be ready at a moment's notice to swing into action and bring to justice churches and deacons who were not 'playing ball' with their ministers. This excited me, my pen twitched, eagerly searching for the signature space. Not only did I need them; I wanted to enlist. Is this what they call "liberation theology"?

It took me a few moments to realise that Task Force was something other than the Baptists' version of the 'A' Team. It looked interesting, but was of no use to my pastorate.

My 'patch' is on the west coast of Wales in the old county of Pembrokeshire. I am pastor of three churches; the main church situated in the holiday village of Broad Haven with the other two churches inland rural parishes. It was not the sort of pastorate that would warrant a Task Force youth team; my churches were doing quite well, we boasted a youth Task Force of our own who were more than able to conduct services and work with young people, we also had gifted teachers and leaders of children's groups who were able to arrange holiday bible clubs. We didn't need the Home Mission Task Force.

The question of Home Mission has been well voiced in this group of churches and we are well aware of the great debt that is owed to the H.M.F. for without it there would be no ministry in this corner of Wales. This fact was uppermost in my mind when I realised that we didn't need the Task Force, but they needed us. In some small way our group of churches could make a contribution to the H.M.F. by training and offering experience to a team of young people from different churches in the country, and helping them become leaders in their own areas.

The form was sent off and the list of names returned. This is where the story really begins. The first person to arrive was a young lady from Canada who had been spending some time in Ireland. She was expected to arrive at Fishguard at 12.45 a.m. The boat arrived at 3.30 a.m. Not a good start. Three other young ladies arrived at various times during the Saturday, and were soon settled in. They took but a short time to become good friends, and all took part in the four services the following day.

But the question was, what do you do with four eager young people? We could have put them to work at one of the pet projects of minister, or members, but that would hve been nothing more than a cosmetic exercise — good, exciting — but would have no lasting effect. The same things would

be done, but by different people. We allowed them to take time off, look at every aspect of church life, report their findings, and offer possible solutions to areas that were weak. This involved the arranging of a questionnaire that would be taken to every house in the village with the intention of finding out the views of the people regarding the need for the church in the community. The findings were hard hitting, but of great value.

Their research concluded, they were able to outline areas that had been untouched and needed attention as possible areas of growth. This was with the upper age group of young people, and the young marrieds. The church was able to keep them to the age of sixteen, but after that they would wash their hands of the things of the church.

The Task Force wanted to know what the church wanted of them. They were given the opportunity to try their own ideas to solve the problem. By enlisting the help of the young people in the church they shared ideas and attempted new things. They failed at some, but were successful at others.

From this four week relationship with the Home Mission Task Force the Church in this corner of West Wales has risen from its slumber, and has become aware of its new role. We have realised that there are areas where the ministry of the church has not yet been felt. It has taken a group of young people from other areas to come in and look, and reveal those areas of inactivity and seek to put them right.

But the most important contribution our church has made is to realise that there are young people in churches throughout our land who have talents and enthusiasm to spread the gospel, but have no area of service. We enjoy having them to worship, doing what we want them to do. We seek to press and squeeze them into our mould of belief and service, and so stifle the God-given gifts that are in them.

We might think that we have no need for the Home Mission Task Force in our churches and we may be right. We may have the very best of workers in our churches and believe that all areas of mission are covered, and that may be so, but the church has another role that, as yet, has not been fulfilled. We have failed to train people to lead.

The young men and women who offered themselves for service with Task Force also offered themselves for training. They each have ideas of their own, are deeply committed to their Lord, and seek to be used as His instruments. They also have a better grasp of the problems related to certain age groups and know how to overcome many of those problems, but if these young people are not allowed to breathe then we, ministers and church members, will have smothered the would-be church leaders of tomorrow. Home Mission Task Force exists not for the Baptist Union, and not for the big churches of the land that are well equipped for mission. It exists for the training of people for mission. It may well involve hard work on the part of the church, but is of great value for the future.

It would be interesting to discover the church backgrounds of these young people, the size of the church and the areas from which they come. The few I have come to know seem to come from churches where there is an absence of young people and from areas where the mission of the church is under review. The young ladies of Task Force Broad Haven saw problems in their own churches, and were eager to do something to rectify the situation.

It seems evident that we are dealing with young people of vision. They need us and the church needs them. They ask that we invite them, trust them, encourage them and guide them.

What, if anything, did Marie, Sue, Lesley and Val gain from Broad Haven Baptist Church? They learned openness with each other as they spoke of doubts and fears, hopes and joys. They learned the need to plan. No minister plans to fail, but so often we fail to plan. They learned the need to commit everything to God in prayer, another important lesson. They were able to be bold when speaking to other young people about their faith, and experienced the joy of leading someone to Christ.

What, if anything, did Broad Haven Baptist Church gain from Task Force? We learned the need to let go of the reins for a while. We didn't like doing that for one moment, but we are glad we did. It brought a freshness to the worship and revealed areas of deficiency in the pastorate which we have tried, or are trying, to put right. We have also learned new methods of approach when ministering to children and young people. I hope it has made the members of the church more aware of the debt that is owed to the Home Mission Fund, and to the churches around the country who make their contributions so that a group of churches in Pembrokeshire can have ministry

When the Task Force team arrived I thought it was to be an opportunity for the team to experiment with mission, and that the church would give rather than receive, but the team departed and made their way back to their churches having left us with memories of a very happy summer spent with four charming and lively young ladies. But they left us with more than just memories. The young people in the church have been fired with a new enthusiasm, and they too have caught the vision of a greater church in which they have an important contribution to make. But they know that the opportunity will not be given to them to experiment in mission in their own village, nor will they be able to have the same openness of speech or ideas as that enjoyed by the Task Force. But the seed has been sown and some of the young people want to know about Task Force so that they, too, might go away to a church, not only to learn, but also to give. What will happen when they return to their home church? Both minister and people will see that they have grown up, and have something to give back to the church here at Broad Haven.

What would have happened if they had not come to Broad Haven? Easter Sunday saw the baptism of a young lady who had been led to a point in her life where she saw a need for Christ in her life. At the end of May another young person is to be baptised. Both had been won for Christ by the prayers and the tears of members of the Task Force.

Was it all worth it? We can say without doubt, yes it was. We are looking forward to the next team and to a very happy and productive summer. But this year we shall know that we have a mission to them, and they have a mission to us.

If you have everything, ask some young people to come and learn from you, but don't keep it all to yourself. If you have an ailing church invite the Task Force to come and do something for you.

The young people of our churches have gifts that are not being used, and they are longing to do a job of work for the Lord, but the opportunity is never given and so they become frustrated and then become disillusioned, and finally leave the church. Task Force helps stop the flow and provides a training in practical Christianity.

**David Waters**

## **Through Western Eyes — Bangladesh**

In February 1986 my wife and I had the excitement and privilege of visiting Missionary work in Bangladesh. This came about because the people of Horfield desired that I should pay a pastoral visit to Sue Headlam, who is one of our members, and who is working with the under-fives at Chandraghona. What follows can only be described as 'first impressions'. It is so easy for somebody to pay a flying visit and then return home posing as an expert. On the other hand, first impressions are worth recording. They do not see into the depths, but they maybe see things with a certain freshness.

First of all I would like to say what a tremendous benefit we ourselves derived from the visit. Truly, I shall never be the same again. It was well worth-while. Before I went I had qualms of conscience about the amount of money being spent on my visit to enable me to go. I am now convinced that the whole enterprise was well worth-while. If, in any way, a minister is able to visit any of the Third-World countries it will bring an inestimable enrichment to their ministry. To experience the Third World brought to me an enlargement of my understanding and vision. No matter how much we may read about it, hear the accounts of others, and see photographs and films, we cannot understand it in the same way as being able to go and to live among the people.

One important aspect of my visit was the experience of Islam and Hinduism at first hand. Having read thoughtfully about them, and having been concerned about inter-faith dialogue, it was important for me to see what it was really like in the lives of ordinary people, and to see at first hand the effect on a community of a totally different set of fundamental beliefs. It enabled me to see the Christian faith in a world setting. One of my lasting memories was sitting drinking tea in a very English fashion with an elderly Father at the Oxford Mission of Barisal. He had spent forty years in Barisal and could look at the West from an Eastern Perspective. The picture of the Christian West that comes across to Eastern eyes is of a society disintegrating. Family life, standards of sexual morality, are perceived by them to be in decline. Western affluence and Western materialism do not impress Eastern eyes.

I experienced poverty such as I had never believed possible. As we drove in the country districts we saw bamboo huts isolated from all communication, with no fresh water, no sanitation, no pathways; the most primitive living imaginable. I had believed that only a few people in the world lived in places like this. But this was everywhere! Children walked about naked because they had no clothes. They had about them a listlessness; the weariness of the undernourished child — lacking the zest and sparkle which is normally associated with childhood. The most vivid memory of all is of a baby in the



# WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

York House 409 Barking Road,  
Plaistow. E13 8AL

Patron: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

Dear Fellow Ministers

Even as I write this letter, Britain is going to the Polls. The more discerning among you will already have realised that I am, yet again, late with my copy!

Over the last three seemingly endless weeks, we have been reminded that life is basically about choices. Every day, we make hundreds of individual choices, many of them unconscious. We choose our priorities, our attitudes, our reactions to people and situations, and most important of all, we choose whether or not in all these things we "seek first the Kingdom of God".

As you can imagine, the Mission becomes involved in many of the choices that folk have to make, and in the results of unwise choices. Much of our work in Greenwoods and the Family Ministry would fall into this category. We also share in the sometimes agonising decision as to whether the time has come for an elderly relative to receive full-time residential care.

Of course, you as a Minister have choices to make. One of them, and an important one as far as we are concerned, is the choice as to which of many worthy causes you commend to your people for prayer and support. We have been tremendously heartened by the response of both individuals and churches to our Special Appeal last Christmas. This, together with what appears to be something of a "break through" in our dealings with the D.H.S.S., has made a significant difference to our financial position. This does not mean, however, that we are no longer in need of the loving support of our fellow Christians. When you and those with whom you work have to decide which causes to support, I very much hope that your choice will fall on us.

May I offer you my personal congratulations/condolences (delete where not applicable) on the result of the General Election!

Yours in His service,

**Trevor W. Davis**  
Superintendent Minister

very centre of Calcutta. Three families had built themselves shacks of cardboard and plastic on a traffic island in the city centre. A mother had laid out her baby in the sun. The near-naked baby laid on a single piece of cloth. Cars and buses spewed out their fumes, dogs walked by, the child lay there.

My second impression was of the actual life that a missionary leads. I realised how little we at home understand them. When they come to our churches on deputation we expect much of them, but do not realise where they come from, how they live, and the many things that they would never dream of telling us. Life in Bangladesh is, to put it bluntly, rigorous. The conditions are by our standards, primitive. When I returned home and cleaned my teeth using tap-water I said that I shall always thank God for clean, pure water. We take it for granted. They never can. We took with us a few Mars Bars. To us, a simple everyday thing. You can hardly imagine the joy with which they were welcomed. Simple things which we have, which they are denied: sanitation, showers, quality of food, entertainment on tap, books, newspapers, magazines readily available, and above all Christian fellowship on a wide scale. We realised what a rigorous business travel turned out to be. No journey is ever simple, however short. Riding in a rickshaw is a novel, but very bumpy experience. Driving in the main street of Dacca is exciting, but very hazardous. Because the roads are bad and the conditions primitive, journeys which to us are simple, for the missionary can be long and very tiring. Perhaps in this connection my strongest impression is the spiritual isolation of the average missionary. Without doubt the fellowship that they have with other missionaries, where it can be obtained, is for them a rich blessing. We shared in a number of missionary prayer meetings, and sensed the reality of each occasion. But they do not have the resources of a local fellowship, Bible studies, a lot of broadcast religious comment, worship, teaching etc. that we do. For most of the time they are givers, and seldom the receivers. I came to realise how important letters from home are to them.

I often feel that when missionaries come back home they are expected to be spiritual 'superstars'. From meeting them at first hand in the work I realise that they are, but they are human too, and they need our prayers and our backing and our understanding. Whilst in Calcutta we came across a Canadian Mennonite who, in his open way, asked who we were and what we were doing. We explained that Horfield had sent us out on a pastoral visit, his immediate reaction was "What a good idea. If only more churches would do that; how important it is to missionaries."

My third impression was the effectiveness of the work of the B.M.S. Our visit was particularly to the Hospital at Chandraghona. There we saw the work of the general hospital, of Bob Hart the surgeon there, and the leprosy hospital; we were also specially concerned about the work of Sue Headlam with the under-fives. We visited a number of Clinics in country villages. Here we saw community care in action. Mothers with young babies came in an endless stream from very early in the morning. On one day about 180 cases passed through. T.B. Injections were given, Vitamin 'A' because Vitamin 'A' deficiency is a wide-spread cause of blindness; de-worming medicine, and special feeding diets, high protein food etc., and a lot of simple medical care. Beyond this mothers were taught simple hygiene and the importance of a

balanced diet. So much of this is preventative medicine, and we saw how important it is. At the same time the hospital has a literacy class where mothers come to learn to read and write. Then there is a developing scheme to provide proper sanitation in the villages around the hospital. All of it is of tremendous value. Since returning we have sometimes been asked "What is the use when there are so many, many millions starving and dying in the world?", and my answer has usually been that every single effort is important. Because we cannot cure the whole problem we must not stop doing the things which we can do. And for those on the receiving end of our particular bit, it is a matter of life and death. It is life for them — and that is important enough.

But all this must be set within the whole context of the effectiveness of aid to the Third World. Sometimes questions are asked about whether aid should be given, and whether or not aid gets through to the poorest. Our visit raised doubts about this very subject. The particular social and religious structure of the country to which it goes has an important bearing on how the money is used, and we found ourselves concluding that when giving aid it is most important to give to those agencies where you know it will get through to the poorest people and will be used. Which brings me back to my commitment to the work of the B.M.S. in places like Chandraghona. Here I saw money being well used. In future my commitment to the poor of the Third World must strongly relate to those agencies that I know are doing a good job, and chief of these must be the B.M.S.

My final conclusion on returning from Bangladesh is about the need of the Gospel in a world setting. Living for three weeks in a Muslim and Hindu culture, I came to understand it a little more. I learned to appreciate the positive qualities that these religions bring into people's lives. But I also realised just how deeply a religion shapes the whole culture. For instance, the role of women in Islam. It is a male dominated culture. Girls and women are definitely second-class. They have very few privileges, and are very restricted. This I felt very hard to cope with.

I also became aware of a resurgence of confidence especially among the Moslems. There is no doubt that many of them see themselves as a world faith. I saw once a television broadcast in English which talked about a conference that has been held concerning Islamic ideals. One of the speakers said there was only one faith that was capable of solving the problems of the world today and bringing peace — and that was Islam! For a minister who has been educated, and has worked in a Western society where the main threats to the Christian faith are seen to be secularism and materialism, this was a rude awakening. For clearly on a world scene the Christian faith is facing strong opposition. This is not a time for marking time, or cutting back in the work of Christian mission. Furthermore, we who minister in the U.K. setting have a duty to do everything we can not only to strengthen, but to enlarge the work of the Kingdom in our situation.

My visit, therefore, sent me back to my home church with a deeper commitment to evangelism in the broadest sense. I see the importance of doing everything I can in my situation to work steadily, thoughtfully, and I hope with some originality, to find ways and means, not simply of holding our ground, but of increasing our strength and spreading the gospel. The

stimulus that this has brought to me is now benign to affect the church. For me, therefore, this has been significant and extremely worth-while.

**Tony Turner**

## **Ministerial Mileages!**

Nowadays there is usually, in the contract of service agreed between a church and a minister, a clause covering the cost of travel incurred in the course of duty. What the church pays is related to the number of miles he travels.

I have no idea whether churches defrayed the minister's expenses in pre-car, pre-train times. But I find some mileages surprising. In the papers of Dr J. Ryland there is an account of journeys he made from 1792 to the end of 1824, which covers the period when he combined the Pastorate of Broadmead, the Principalship of Bristol College and a very active interest in the B.M.S.. It adds up to 36,706 miles, taken one supposes mainly by stage coach, but probably for short trips on horseback. He lists 286 churches in which he preached, and he gives dates and distances of travel. In June and July 1810 he went as far north as Aberdeen, travelling up by Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford, Newcastle and Edinburgh, and returned through Perth, Glasgow, Carlisle, Manchester and Birmingham, a total of 1,088 miles. In June 1816 he reached Glasgow via Dumfries and Kilmarnock, and returned from Edinburgh by the route he had used to get there in 1810. This was 891 miles. London and back to Bristol clocked 240 miles. Haverfordwest made 296 miles. He was frequently in the East Midlands and he has three pages in which he lists no fewer than seventeen possible routes to Northampton from Bristol.

William Steadman became the first Principal of Horton College, Bradford. In the memoir published by his son it is stated that when the Steadman family moved from Plymouth to Bradford it travelled by chaise, staying at Wellington, Salisbury, Broughton, Devizes, Nailsworth, Worcester, Birmingham, Coventry, Newcastle and Rochdale, but father rode his horse. It was a journey of 400 miles without a single accident! Steadman had earlier been a great walker, because he had no money to pay fares. In 1788 he walked from his home at Eardisland, near Leominster to Thornbury, via Rosa, in two days. This was 68 miles. He stayed the weekend and preached, and then completed his journey to Bristol College.

A more famous journey was made by John Sutcliffe, who in midwinter weather in January 1772 walked from his home at Hebden Bridge about 200 miles to become a student at Bristol College. It took less than seven days. His expenses were less than one pound. He saved money to buy books.

When Robert Redding settled in the Chacewater-Falmouth churches in 1780 his College anticipated the Home Mission Fund by giving him three guineas to spend on keeping a horse for a year. This was increased to four guineas in 1782.

The Church Book of Netherton, Dudley, shows that at the end of the 17th century a visiting preacher received up to five shillings, plus anything between fourpence and eightpence for his "horsemeat".

Would we agree that these were tough men or should we say that we are all people of the age and culture in which we live?

C. Sidney Hall

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Dynamics in Pastoring**

*by Jacob Firet (Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1986, 338 pp, £22.60)*

The plethora of books on aspects of Pastoral Care is greatly enriched by the occasional publication of one based on a thorough Pastoral theology. In a pragmatic age, first and basic principles can too easily be forgotten, ignored, or overlooked in an attempt to be 'relevant'.

Christian faith is a 'revealed' religion, so the nature of that revelation, and how it comes about, must be carefully and penetratingly examined before its principles are brought to bear on the demanding issues of the day. Our knowledge of God is the subject of review, re-appraisal, re-affirmation, renewal and development. It is, therefore, most helpful to find a theological thinker bringing his grasp of truth to bear on the work and role of the Pastor in the late twentieth century.

Strongly influenced by Barth in his understanding of the Word of God, Firet adopts a clear position from which to work. He argues closely, and with the acumen of the middle European, the nature of the Pastor's role, and his relationship with the Word of God among the People of God. His understanding of the nature of the Pastor's 'teaching' and its methods are based firmly on the nature of the Word. Whilst not explicitly dismissive of contemporary educational psychology, there is nothing in the work to suggest he gives much countenance to it for the Christian Pastor. The approach to communication depends, he argues, on a basic understanding of the Word. Let it be understood that Firet is not a 'preaching only' advocate, but he is committed to the centrality of proclamation within the ambit of pastoral activity.

This book is not for the timid, nor the superficial, nor the dabbler looking for techniques. Its theology and its argument, together with its overall comprehensiveness make it a book for the theological pastor who is willing to grapple with the implications of his understanding of the Word. At £22.00 it may not find its way onto the shelves of many working Pastors. Many prefer distilled wisdom, practically orientated. However, its absence will leave the Pastor the poorer. Perhaps the theological Faculties and Colleges, training people for pastoral ministry, would do well to make this a set text for their pastoral studies courses. It is more significant, though less readable, than Thurneyson.

For instance: '... God comes to a person in his word. He does not manipulate human beings as objects: he addresses them. Thus human listening is integral to the process. That process of being addressed and listening — viewed from a certain perspective — is conversion. Conversion, in one dimension, is a change in one's spiritual-mental functioning. When God comes to a person in his word and the person listens, she becomes a

new person and her life becomes Kingdom life' (p.231) There are large sections of the book in translation which are parenthesised — making the gist of the argument easier to follow.

The reader concerned about the integrity of his message and methods will be thoroughly rewarded for his painstaking reading. He will find the book a source of remarkable strength to his ministry.

**Peter Manson**

## **The Challenge of Christian Healing**

*by Stephen Parsons (SPCK, 1986, 176 pp £4.95)*

Most of the book is a report and comment on interviews with those practising a healing ministry, and a description of Stephen Parsons' joint ministry with his wife. I always advise against anecdotal books on healing since they tend to turn individual cases into universal laws, and lack the honesty to face failures. The purpose of this book is to show the variety of ministry and give some analytical explanations of it. Most of those interviewed work outside the traditional life of the church. Those working within it find the pattern of church worship mitigates against it because a healing ministry must always be spontaneous, unpredictable, and with painful demands and disappointments. This part of the book has helpful insights taken from individual, group and parish ministries.

The real meat of the book is in the final forty-eight pages: three chapters on "Spirituality of healing", "Context of healing" and "Towards a holistic theology of healing". The contents are better than the titles, but their very brevity would make one hope that further writing would duly appear. We are left to work out the deeper implications of the healing methods described, and the uniqueness of Christ and the width and power of the Kingdom of God. The spirituality of such a ministry is explained as personal humility, the discipline of prayer, and the willingness to be near and open to people and the Holy Spirit. The traditional church is rightly criticized for its remoteness. I share the writer's regret that no theological college seems to have Christian Healing on its curriculum. The case for holistic medicine in the light of the complex nature of man and relationships is well put without losing the distinctive work of God in His kingdom. It has a balanced view of the charismatic movement and biblical fundamentalism in their attitude to healing, and deals briefly with the weaknesses of both.

One takes seriously and regretfully the point that individuals, and even some doctors, turn to the National Association of Spiritual Healers rather than to the ordained priesthood. This fact adds importance to the book. It is not a study in depth, but the writer hopes "in a small way to be used to open the eyes of my readers" to what is happening and can happen.

I have a feeling that Mr Parsons is somewhat kinder, humbler and more gracious than myself, and might suffer from an uncritical attitude in his approach. There are dangers behind what can innocently be called paranormal, clairvoyant and transpsychic reality which the book does not explore. The call for a holistic theology I find difficult, since it could lead to

“accommodationism” — a kind of inclusive faith leading to the acceptance of any ‘healer’, however dubious his sources or philosophy.

Mr Parsons’ personal position is clear, and one warms to his definition of the Kingdom of God: “The encounter with God through the Risen Christ in His healing, forgiving and loving movement towards humankind”. An easily readable, well produced “eye opener” to what is happening in and around the church today and how some people explain it. It is also a challenge to explore more deeply the theology of the church and the kingdom, the nature of man, and the healing work of the Spirit by further study and, more important, the willingness to face the risk of experimenting with God’s power and grace.

Leonard C. Wilson

## **Agenda for Biblical People**

*by Jim Wallis (Triangle/SPCK, 1986, 128 pp, £1.95)*

Jim Wallis deserves a hearing from British Baptists. Though his ‘Agenda’ was drawn up eleven years ago in the USA, and only published in Britain last year, the theme has a contemporary challenge for readers on this side of the ‘pond’ also. But a word of caution; don’t read this book if you wish to remain in a comfortable rut! Indeed the application of its teaching could mean ending up in a prison cell!!

In the author’s introduction (or should it be ‘minutes of the last meeting’?) we are given a topical example of a vital area of concern to which the Church has addressed itself during the last decade; Nuclear war. But what is the response of Biblical people to this and many other issues facing global society today?

Wallis begins by arguing for a ‘new style of life’ where everything is placed ‘in the light of our faith in Christ and the efficacy of the kingdom of God’. He shows how the Gospel gives to Christians different priorities and alternative agendas to that offered by popular culture and economy. The heart of this new style is metanoia, personal transformation, or metamorphosis; much more than a sense of guilt and of being sorry for something. “The witness of Scripture is clear that there is no salvation without repentance, and repentance means a radical break with the past, and a determination to follow the path of obedience to Christ.” (p.8). Thus evangelism must be the call to belief *and* obedience.

He ends the book with a chapter on the New Community, where renewal of the Church comes through the work of the Holy Spirit who produces a fellowship of believers which bears the marks of radical obedience to the Lordship of Christ, and offers an alternative social reality. A new awareness of the meaning of the Faith leads to new styles of life and the waging of spiritual warfare with the ‘principalities and the powers’. Two especially helpful sections are those on the New Community as the ‘Minister of Reconciliation’ and the ‘Power of Servanthood’.

The filling for this Agenda sandwich consists of three ingredients:

1. A plea that the Church pursues the Biblical path of continual non-conformity to the world, neither adopting the stance of conformist

established religion, nor polarising towards the extremes of conservatism or liberalism, aping secular culture. Wallis sees the Church becoming an agent of resistance and change.

2. A description of modern idolatry, ultimately the worship of death itself, together with the assertion that 'America is a fallen nation'. Before we British become complacent, it is soon apparent that the 'theological naïveté of failing to take the Fall seriously' can be applied to Britain as to the USA. However the worship of God, where ultimate values are given to God's kingdom rather than to 'idols', becomes a radical act and a political threat.

3. An analysis of the Powerful and the Powerless (chap. 4) which will warm some hearts and make some inside collars hot! Jim Wallis points to the identification of the Church with the poor and powerless on the grounds that the 'Apostles regard the relationship to money and the poor as a primary test of obedience to God'.

I cannot promise you an enjoyable read. But you will certainly be deeply challenged. 'Agenda for Biblical People' is open ended and leaves the reader to complete the final item ... AOB!!

**Tony Barker**

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# Letter from South Africa

The following letter has just arrived from our old friend and member Fritz Haus. We publish it in full, for the pleasure of those who know him.

'Our dear "English speaking friends" all over the world!

So much has happened since I last wrote to you in 1983 that we will lose touch unless I write **now**. It might well be that some letters will be returned because you have moved house. Some will have gone to Glory, to wait for us who are also "looking for a city whose architect and builder is God" Hebr. 11:10. A foretaste of that "final rest" Hebr. 4:9 we experience already in our lovely "dream cottage" LO EGSAR (Hebrew original of Ps. 23:1 I shall not want) at Stellenbosch, the loveliest town in South Africa. A taste of paradise, just 4 metres from a little brook. Across the banks are strawberry fields and vineyards. After 46 years of active Baptist ministry in 3 continents (Europe, USA & Africa) we are now just ordinary members of the local Baptist Church which I started in 1976 and which is doing well. Now we are volunteers for the Lord, when and where needed. Lisa retired as well, after a life as music teacher, mother, wife and lady of the Manse. The pressured and tight time tables are a thing of the past. We are extremely happy and grateful. Lisa wants to call our place "Rose Cottage" because of the many rose bushes which bloom and delight us almost 10 months of the year. It's our own place, away from the crowds and traffic noises but open to all who call. Just Lisa and I, with much time for each other and things to share like music, reading, gardening, writing and visiting, just as we like (or just resting on the bed!). I tidied up my library, put old records and photos in order and might do some further research into African Baptist History and Mission Life on this lovely troubled continent. My last course in "Pastoral Psychology" at the Baptist Theol. College of Cape Town ended on 8th April. I think I shall have a little break from lecturing since I was on the part-time staff since 1974.

Our children and 5 grandchildren are doing well. Matthias became Medical Director of Janssen Pharmaceutical with a seat in Johannesburg and is frequently overseas. In April he and Lynn were in Majorka, Antwerp, Paris and Zermatt. Now in May he is in West Berlin, Antwerp and London—all on business and medical congresses, where he usually delivers his papers. Elisabeth and her Baptist minister husband Rob Lennox (plus son Rikky) will spend 6 weeks on St. Helena Island with the Baptist Community for courses in EE (Evangelism Explosion) in a teaching and evangelistic ministry. They are engaged in an interchurch Revival Preaching Ministry. In November '86 Rob was 4 weeks in the USA for revival meetings. To Cornelia and her husband John Mellitchey a beautiful miracle happened: After 11 years of marriage Simóne Lisa arrived, against all medical predictions and evidence. They are extremely happy. It's almost incredible to see the transformation of Corny from a career-girl to a tenderly loving mother living for her precious baby.

So we have much to thank the Lord for. He is so good to us as a family. Politically, we know that the Lord is still on the Throne. Here in our country, all Christians of all colours and tribes seek reconciliation and peace. We pray earnestly and daily for our rulers who face an impossible task. Only God can overrule and bring the more than 30 racial and language groups and CULTURES in SA together. Elsewhere in Africa this has not been achieved, even between 2 or 3 groups!!! Please pray for our unruly and troubled Continent. And please write to us lest we lose touch. God will bless and keep us till He comes or calls, or till we meet again, as we plan to visit Europe some time next year, DV. Would you like us to visit you?

Yours, as always,

**Fritz & Lisa (Haus)**

END OF MAY 1987

"Lo Egsar", 54 Lovell Ave, 7600 die Boord, STELLENBOSCH, South Africa.