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# The Fraternal

April 1979

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# Editorial

FEW of us, like the Archbishop of Canterbury, can have resisted the temptation to make a pulpit utterance on the wave of strikes that has so affected our national life this winter. Given the piles of rotting rubbish, the difficulties in getting patients to and from hospital, the school closures, the lengthening hospital waiting lists, the pressure on the pulpit to become a valve for the release of corporate anger is almost irresistible. Unfortunately, the valve is not always selective in what it releases and is particularly susceptible to hot air.

Keith Argyle is an industrial chaplain and therefore has access to a view-point that is not always readily available to us within the church. What he has written will enable us to say a word to our present situation which does not duck the complexities of the issues nor echo the partisan interests of one section of society. A way has to be found out of our present method of wage settlement, but no way should ignore what is being said by those who do the menial and uncongenial tasks within the community.

Readers will join me in wishing C.J.L. Colvin of the Baptist Insurance Company a happy retirement. His advertisements have led us not simply into the intricacies of insurance coverage but also along by-ways of English literature. We have often coveted his gift of apt illustration wishing we could recall a quotation that would shed light on a weightier matter of faith with the same skill as he moves from Shakespeare to fire risks. We shall miss his contributions to our magazine.

## ERRATA

*Page 2* — for Peter Feaser please read Peter Fraser

*Page 11* — "Ministers and Mammon". This booklet is now available under the title "Ministers' Money Matters" — price 60p (add 15p for postage).

# Strikes — A Christian Response

I HAVE been asked, as an Industrial Chaplain, to write about strikes in the midst of the present action by hospital ancillary workers, caretakers, and dustmen. All I can give is a personal viewpoint, by sketching how I see some of the facts, some of the causes, one or two of the options, and a Christian response. This is a highly complex subject, and a short article cannot hope to deal with it adequately.

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## I

First, let us look at some of the facts. As Don Black has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> public spokesmen or the Press, with a host of motives colouring the picture they paint, give us most of our information. If not deliberately playing to the gallery or readership, they approach the issue from the outside. So they select—or are fed—assessments from individuals which are half-truths or obscure the real dynamics. Unfortunately too, union spokesmen are usually very poor at public relations.

My own direct experience is limited to a construction site, chemical plant, engineering firm, and a power station. The withdrawal of labour has taken many forms: official or not, procedural or not, full-scale or selective, total or work-to-rule, long or short-term, involving one union or several. It has been directed against management, or another union, or the Government—or the weather! The construction site is large and complex, labour intensive, and mostly with casual and highly paid labour; strikes are relatively frequent and largely unofficial. The firms in the other industries are small (about 300 employees), jobs are permanent, labour is less intensive, and wages are much lower; here strike activity is very reluctant.

This seems to bear out a recent Government analysis on strikes.<sup>2</sup> Such statistics have a limited use, and of course have to be treated with caution! But they look at the whole picture, and over a longer period. The main features are quite clear: large sections of British industry have very few strikes—they are extremely concentrated in a small group of industries and geographical areas.

The survey covered a typical post-war period (1966-8) and a time when strike activity was high (1969-73). Three quarters of all industries had nine out of ten establishments strike-free. In an average year strikes in manufacturing (60,000 firms) were in only 2% of the establishments, though these were large with 20% of the manufacturing work force. Only 6% of all employees were miners, dockers, shipbuilders, car and steel workers, but they accounted for a third of an average nine million working days lost each year. Britain occupied a middle ranking for strikes among major industrial countries, with 775 days lost in an average year for every 1000 employees in mining, manufacturing, construction and transport. Two fifths of the days lost were due to official action, yet 19 out of 20 strikes were unofficial. Overwhelmingly (85% in an average year), it was male manual workers who struck, and lost ten times as many days as non-manual workers. But the

latter were becoming more active, with 10% of their strikes official compared with 4% for manual workers.

There were 495 unions, 400 with less than 10,000 members. Six unions, with half the total union membership, were involved in 80% of the strikes. But more unions, including white-collar unions, were becoming engaged in such activity (1966: 9%; 1973: 16%). Only 3% of strikes did not involve unions.

The survey saw the causes of strikes in terms of the basic economic issues. Pay disputes were the reason for 50% of the strikes and 80% of the working days lost. "Trades Union Issues" account for 8% only—3% on the status of worker representatives, 1% on inter-union disputes, and 1% on "Who does what?" (though in construction my experience is that it is much higher).

It saw strikes closely related to large unions and large plant size: where there were only 11-24 workers only 15 days were lost per 1000 employees, but where there were over 5000 workers 3700 days were lost per 1000 employees. Secondly, it saw strikes as closely related to the rate of increase in wages and prices, and so to changes in real wages. They are also connected with high labour intensity, a high proportion of male employees—and high average earnings.

As I write, some surprising figures have appeared for last year.<sup>3</sup> Compared with 1977, strikes in 1978 were 13% fewer, 16% fewer people were involved, and 8% fewer working days were lost—nine major stoppages accounting for four-fifths of these. The figures were also significantly down on the average for the previous ten years.

Since then we have seen some groups with low average earnings becoming militant. Official figures, taking 100 to be the average for all industries 1974-8, rated NHS ancillary workers in 1974 as 85.5 and in 1978 as 83.9, and Local Authority manual workers as 81.4 and 82.6 respectively.<sup>4</sup> Their present actions are raising in a sharp way for us the issue of how wealth is distributed in wages. Society demands high services but is reluctant to pay for them. The well paid in their self-interest and greed are always comparing themselves with others in the wages league table, and wanting more.

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## II

How are we to describe and evaluate the reasons behind strikes? The issue really comes home to our Baptist churches when fellow Christians too find themselves on strike. The great embarrassment caused was highlighted by recent correspondence in the Baptist Times. When they are present in church circles, the issue is avoided, or mentioned only in jest; they receive very little guidance.

The fact is that we are all tarred with the same brush. No organisation displays a sense of national responsibility as a strong motive! And in the

heat of any confrontation, our feelings become more polarised. Each contest becomes a trial of strength, even a matter of "survival"—failure will invite authority to trample on us thereafter.

The main motive, as the statistics above showed, is that men want a steadily increasing standard of living. They will usually go for what they think they can get. This is thought a reasonable aim among upper and middle classes, and nothing to be ashamed of. Clients of stockbrokers, and owners of land wanted for housing, also seek wealth without any regard for national benefit. All workpeople have to sell is their labour, and is it to be expected that they will be less selfish?

Another motive is job insecurity. This is likely to come increasingly into play, if predictions are accurate, that 3½ million more will be displaced in the next few years from their jobs by the microcomputer. "Post-Industrial Society" is with us, and this means that the power-base of most of the unions—numbers—will be eroded. The exceptions will be the unions organising small key groups like Civil Service computer operators, and here the power to withdraw labour at critical points will give them enormous power.

Two features in today's culture are giving added impetus to these motives: acquisitive consumerism and wider educational horizons.

Maslow<sup>5</sup> helpfully pointed out five levels of human needs: survival, safety or security, love or belongingness, esteem, and self-realisation. The lowest need must be satisfied before the next can be attended to. But Maslow was no help on the cultural expectations which determine the *weightings* we give to each. Our basic appetites, and standards of security and comfort have been inflated by hoardings and nightly advertising on TV. Our general expectation of an increasing standard of living has been encouraged by deliberate economic policies. As Bishop Newbigin said recently: "Vast resources and immensely sophisticated skills are daily devoted to persuading us to buy ever more goods and services, with the promise that they will buy us happiness". This is the opposite of the more ascetic Christian approach which preaches minimum levels for these, as aiding—perhaps necessary for—satisfaction of higher needs.

The current clash with the Government over the percentage of wage increases is only one of a series of episodes which illustrates this factor. For the increasing cost of living has been accompanied by a series of wage restraints introduced by the Government—voluntary and compulsory, percentages and flat-rate, a pay freeze and a three-day week, price controls and other schemes. Building up against this has been increasing resentment as people *refuse* to accept a reduced standard of living. The inevitable explosion has been especially among the previously non-militant, who have therefore (as they see it) been low-paid. I can only see the pressures making this crisis worse.

The second powerful factor is more equal opportunities in education; this will have more far-reaching effects, when the products of almost universal secondary comprehensive education form the majority in society. Encouragement is more varied and life-long, with day or block release, Open University, education for leisure and the like. People are now more

aware that life can be richer, more meaningful, more creative and truly human. So they are more dissatisfied with humdrum work in the office or on the shop floor, and seize any excuse to get out of it. Even if inarticulate, they are more aware of alienation, and the need for satisfaction in life. (Management as a result is increasingly concerned about motivation). Paradoxically in their search organised religion is rejected: they are convinced that traditional Christianity does not understand their needs, circumstances or questions—and so cannot help.

This is accompanied by an increasing questioning of all authority structures. A powerful ally has been industrial legislation, especially recently, about industrial relations and employment. Forty years ago a man stood in fear of his bowler-hatted foreman; fifteen years ago a workman would usually do what his district official told him. Now in most large industries workpeople fear neither. And the power is rarely wielded by shop stewards, contrary to popular myth. There are of course exceptions. But if they do not do what the men want, they will be sacked at the next annual election.

Due weight must be given to the long-standing phenomenon of “solidarity”, which has both practical and ideological motives. In unity is strength, against all authority which appears to prevent their “just” deserts. Any division is seen as a weakness which “they” will exploit. With this goes the assumption that the gulf between “us” and “them” will never be bridged. Then secondly, the majority vote decides what is “just”, what are their “rights”. They elect spokesmen to express this to management or within union debates, with the status of “delegate”. Of course he often has to speak his own mind, but must immediately face his men to test whether he has their support!

The power base has become increasingly the shop-floor, because amalgamations between firms and between unions have lifted decision makers in both far away from the shop-floor. It is felt that they do not understand the shop-floor, and that procedure for negotiation is too complex and slow.

So it is no coincidence that the State has stepped into the arena of wage settlement, and has become the enemy to the militants. When the smaller firms of yesterday operated in a market of free competition, a strike put pressure on the owners of the enterprise—customers could turn elsewhere for satisfaction, and the firm would have difficulty attracting other custom in their stead. Now the amalgamation of both firms and unions has created a workforce with a monopoly of its labour. The distant management and union officials cannot curb it, so the State must try—operating from crisis to crisis. The workers respond by putting the pressure on the general public to whom the State must answer. There is no power to stop them squeezing the taxpayer; they know they cannot be sacked, as they are the only ones available.

They believe, whether it is true or not, that militancy wins more than is lost through inflation. A workforce in dispute is not concerned with the state of Britain's real wealth, measured in comparison with other countries—only that they become a little richer than they were if possible, in relation to other

groupings in Britain. The relative losers are the non-militant. No wonder the patience of hospital workers and caretakers has worn thin. They see the initial violence in a Government which will not care for them, but uses them as an example or pace-setter for the private sector. But we see the impetus of the problem as coming from the shop-floor workers in the wealth-producing sector. There is an imbalance of power in the State: a constitutional problem, not an industrial relations one.<sup>6</sup>

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### III

In the face of this analysis, what should be our Christian message? What should be the Church's response? Four types of Christian response can be identified in history.

1. The Church as a power in the land, able to make the wayward obey, if not believe in, its decrees. Thus the Holy Roman Empire, Calvin's city states, and the vestiges of Establishment in our society today.

2. The Church ignoring the world as evil or unimportant in God's purpose. So many of the monastic orders, and inward-looking church fellowships today. While trade unions are not impinging on our private lives, they do not figure realistically in our prayers; and Christians are encouraged to spend all their time in church groups rather than serve as officials or shop stewards. Consequently, there are very few committed Christians—and those mainly Roman Catholics—in the active ranks of the unions, seeking to transform their power over the lives of the employed and their dependants.

3. Churches making pronouncements from the outside. So wayside pulpits at present proclaim: "In disputes love your neighbour as yourself". And Dr. Coggan passes judgement from the pulpit. The truth is that we feel "there is very little we can do about it". This impotence naturally makes our judgements harsher, more angry and aggressive. But we are condemning from the outside, without understanding and therefore without love.

4. The unimpressive, but only real and effective, response is for Christ's body to be in the middle of the situation, totally exposed and in constant spiritual danger. We must be the "leaven", "salt", "light", there—corporately. For this was the way of God's only Son. He became the Suffering Servant, one with the sordidness of men. His faith was strong enough to take on board the selfish and fearful drives in all of us (the demand for more money and security), which then as now were so often shaped by the demands and threats of both institutions and culture. Only thus could He prove in His own life and death that God's love is the stronger.

The Church must firstly appreciate the basic issues. The right to withdraw labour, and to invite others to join with you, is an aspect of human liberty rightly protected by law. It is the final sanction against unsatisfactory or oppressive conditions of work. Yet we live today in a highly complex, technologically interdependent society. So the decision to strike by one



group may stop another group working; and not only employers, customers and suppliers, but also the young, the sick, and the aged may suffer—in addition to the strikers and their families. The nature of proper protest must be thought through again!<sup>7</sup>

So our laymen must realise that they have responsibilities—beyond just “doing their job”—in the organisations where they earn their living. Particular disputes illuminate the basic conflict which surrounds them all the time. Their church fellowships must see that their corporate life is impoverished or enriched by their member’s Christian exposure at work. There is no other way but for laymen to be encouraged and built up to exercise their unique ministry there, not just in crises but every working day. They are bound up with others in policies and procedures. The task of reconciliation is at the corporate level, where wide-ranging decisions significantly mould our actions and attitudes, and unless we are constantly engaged at this level in reconciliation, our personality and gifts wither. Christian unionists will see here the need for unions, and their opportunity for good.

A layman cannot exercise this ministry on his own. But his church, with its present preoccupations, cannot begin to help him find the answers to issues. It is impossible as well for one denomination to make any appropriate response. So support groups must be formed across denominations, where laymen can give corporate support to one another in those specific issues which are central to their lives. For as well as a reconciling and enabling role, Christian laymen have a prophetic role to play.

They will have to cooperate with “unbelievers” to effect change. Such a strategy of involvement may call for a different perspective of the way God’s Spirit is at work in society. Laymen must guide each other to act together with allies; for there are genuine but unchurched people who are just as concerned, and whose help is essential. We cannot be an island to ourselves. For the whole created world belongs to God. If we obey His Spirit through such a strategy, He can enable us to bring His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

One specific form that the ministry of laymen is taking now, is through pressure to have more participation in decision-making. Managers and unionists are warming to the new thinking, that they have a partnership and joint responsibility in their enterprise. The practical expression of this has been more communication up as well as down, and more regard paid to the views of all involved, before a decision is taken. So people have felt more significant and respected. Such a vision has drastically reduced the strike record, for instance, in ICI’s vast Agricultural and Petrochemical Divisions. There are signs too that big unions are beginning to consult more with their members—in an effort to be more flexible in a time of increasingly rapid change—and there is vital work here for Christian unionists to do.

What political options are open to us on the national level? These strikes have shown that it is not merely insensitivity or lack of concern, which leads Government to let sleeping dogs lie, and to wait till they snap and bite before doing anything. If they did not, national leaders would be impossibly

overloaded. Government is often by crisis, when drastic action by both sides has shown that the problem is beyond solution. Our piecemeal reaction is to say "This will not do"; such is the demand for restrictive legislation in the current wave of strikes. This has been called "the politics of enraged misery".<sup>8</sup> The opposite of this is "the politics of freedom", which dares to make blue-prints or constitutions—not as idols but as tools—to create breathing spaces in which we are freed to think, to speculate, to believe. Such a strategy is participation. Christians in politics could discover through more real participation on political problems, the nerve to be down to earth and yet to act with sure touch on the large scale. Maybe a Relativities Board or similar national body, which many groups are advocating, to bring some fairness into the distribution of incomes, could be the umbrella for such a politics of freedom. Maybe something quite different is needed.

Those in social and political action recognise that individualistic ethics are inadequate. Of course Christians must not neglect the particular, but we must ask ourselves whether we are stopping ourselves reaching out towards a vision of, and concern for, the whole. The insight given to O.T. prophets was that God deals with the whole nation. Society is of a piece, and we with our roles and responsibilities are part of it. So we have to work within its constraints. In industrial issues this will lead to using the Ethics of Compromise. This means that the solution for now is not what we desire, but what we can achieve, working with free agents. What we desire now will not be the "ideal" in the future, because all social systems are organic and developing and changing shape. We must learn therefore to live with relativities.

This social perspective will demand also new concepts of, for instance, Justice: individual needs must be seen in relation to communal needs. This suggests that a black-and-white judgement of strikers, and what they claim to be their "just" claims, are likely to be wrong. It suggests also that both the strikers, and the corporations and capitalist enterprises to which they belong, *must* see the needs of the wider community. From this perspective, our evaluation of right and wrong in collective action can be very different from an individualistic view.

As Christians, our actions, and judgements of others' actions, must be sensitively open to their manifold causes and repercussions. We should ask about assessments of moral responsibility: "What time-scale are we using?"—most ethics are inadequate because too short-term. We need also to ask: "What are the limits of our concern?" For, as Moore points out:<sup>9</sup> "Sin is the unreality of life other than the small portion of it that one calls one's own ... a monumental indifference to the totality of which one is a part". Christ's concern is the whole world, and He is already out there on the Cross, suffering wounds from many causes, which no observer from afar—or even participant—fully sees. He is still interceding for us: "Father forgive them, they don't know what they are doing". His salvation is a dynamic, ongoing process; Christians believe the victory is already His.

Keith Argyle

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6. Daily Telegraph: 18.1.79: "The wonder is there aren't even *more* strikes".
7. See further: "What sort of Industrial Society do we want?" Memorandum from Industrial C'tee of the C of E's General Synod's Board for Social Responsibility, 20.2.79.
8. Hannah Arendt: "On Revolution" (Penguin 1973) p109ff, 138ff.
9. S. Moore: "The Crucified is no Stranger" 1977 p33.

## 'Ministers and Mammon'

PUT together a roomful of ministers, and set going a discussion about money, and you can be sure of one thing—a wide variety of attitudes and anxieties, and a rag-bag of information and misinformation about the various financial issues that a minister has to deal with.

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It includes major sections on Settlement, Housing (including "Owning One's Own House"), Cars, Income Tax and Family Income Supplement.

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The pros and cons of living in the manse and owning your own house are discussed; reference is made to the larger document on the latter subject that is being produced by the working group of the B.M.F. A section on retirement possibilities will be of help to those over whom the problem of accommodation on retirement hangs like a dark cloud.

A final "epilogue" discusses some of the larger issues that arise from the factual information in the main part of the booklet.

**Roger Nunn**

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# Science and Christ

IN PARIS, in February 1921, the French priest and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin presented a lecture entitled 'Science and Christ or Analysis and Synthesis'. I make no excuse for basing my thoughts on this subject and on his original ideas. I will refer to his work several times in the course of what follows. It will be interesting to examine his propositions in the light of over half a century's advance in scientific and religious thought. What follows is not a dogmatic theology, but a set of personal views and thoughts.

## Introduction

There are, I believe, several reasons why it is important today to examine parallels between religion and science.

Fifty years ago, or more, one could quite reasonably hope to successfully get through the course of one's life without the slightest reference to science. Science was regarded as something of an academic subject with little, if any, bearing on the practicalities of day to day living. Today, however, we live in the Scientific Age, and some would argue, in the Post-Scientific Age, where the implications of scientific and technological advance cannot be readily ignored. Science is a fundamental part of the curriculum of any educational establishment; as important as was Latin fifty years ago. Today, science carries with it onerous moral and ethical responsibilities. Governments look to the ordinary people to have opinions on such issues as abortion, disposal of nuclear waste and the protection of the environment. A basic understanding of scientific principles has become a necessary part of the complete and responsible citizen's life.

Secondly, Christians consider that their religion is an all-embracing religion which is applicable to every aspect of Man's existence. One can hardly, therefore, ignore completely its relationship with such a large segment of knowledge as science.

Thirdly, we must examine the implications of the cosmic nature of scientific knowledge. Centuries ago, at the time of the birth of scientific awareness, science was a singularly terrestrial affair. It concerned itself only with the world about us. Man began, at an early stage, to examine the motions of the stars and planets and yet still considered that the earth was the centre of the universe, the pinnacle of God's creation and that the heavenly bodies existed only because of the effects which their movements and interactions had on our planet. Today, of course, we realise that our planet is but a speck of dust in a huge and infinite galaxy. Science has now become a cosmic study and universal in its application. Drawing a parallel with advance in Christian theology I feel that we uncover a serious weakness. Christian theology still remains, I fear, a very terrestrial affair. The mechanistic approach expounded by the Early Church nearly 2000 years ago has gone on basically unchanged. We in the Church have failed to adjust and apply our religion in a cosmic sense. We have failed to communicate to the Scientific Age, that our theology is every bit as relevant, if not more so, to the mind set in this cosmic context, as it was with the earth-

bound mind of centuries ago. With this thought in mind I wish first of all to examine briefly the methodology, scope and limitations of science and then to attempt to see how Christian theology fits in with this.

### **The Methodology, Scope and Limitations of Science**

Many people today would consider that science has rendered obsolete many other systems of thought and most especially religious thought. Science is unfortunately regarded by many as an end in itself, marking the road to Man's salvation from his pitiful existence of poverty, pain, suffering and eventual death. One can understand how the mass media have helped in spreading this euphoric feeling, but one despairs to discover that many scientists themselves have become so entranced by the secrets of mechanism that they have blinded themselves to the real purpose of science and have failed to realise that, by definition, science must concern itself only in certain limited areas of knowledge.

Scientific methodology consists of observation, experiment and induction. By means of the process of induction the scientist draws up scientific theorems and laws. These laws and theorems can in no way be said to be universal and absolute. They are not based on priori facts. Unlike mathematics, which concerns itself with the axiomatic, self-evident truths, scientific methodology is an empirical methodology. It is built upon observation and experience. A scientific law never says that such and such must happen, but on every occasion in the past this has been seen to happen and thus predicts that there will be a certain probability of it continuing to happen. In the field of mathematical, or axiomatic knowledge, one and one will always equal two. There is no possibility at all of this ever being otherwise. Conversely, science works in the realm of uncertainty and probability. This is its first limitation.

Its second limitation is couched in the philosophy of perception. This is a new terminology which has been used to describe an ancient idea. Those of you who are versed in Classics may care to draw parallels with Plato's 'Theory of Forms'. Since science is based on observation, it is necessarily and inextricably linked to perception by the human senses and thus to a degree becomes a subjective approach. This presents no problem until we ask the question 'Is what I observe an accurate representation of the world as it actually exists in reality?' It has been shown that various animals have entirely different visual and auditory perceptions of the same event. A person who is intoxicated with alcohol or under the influence of drugs will see things much differently to the 'sober' man. Psychologists tell us that perception is affected by a host of mental attitudes, beliefs, emotions and prejudices. Does it necessarily follow, therefore, that what the scientist observes, by whatever means, is an actual representation of reality, or is it bound to suffer from some degree of perceptual distortion? This is the second limitation of science.

The third limitation of science is that it is the study of things which are material. Since it is an empirical methodology, it must concern itself only with the observation of objects, or the influence which other forces have on those objects. Science may concern itself only with a physical universe. Not

much of a limitation, you may say, since we have already said that the physical universe is dimensionally infinite. But science may not concern itself with that which is not physical, in other words, with that which is spiritual. It is for this reason that scientific method cannot be applied to religious issues. Scientific proofs of God's existence, for instance, are not tenable. It is for this reason that it is erroneous to consider that science has rendered religion obsolete. Science and religion have an entirely different approach from each other when applied to a particular phenomenon and thus may co-exist, but remain mutually exclusive.

Allied to this third limitation of the material universe, is the limitation of time. It is regarded by many today that time is a parameter of the material universe; that it is a constraint built into the material creation. In order for an object to exist, it must be defined in terms of its position in space relative to some other object, and at a point in time measured against some other object. Conversely, it is thought, that where no matter exists neither can the concept of time be meaningful. So scientific thought is limited to both matter and time.

This last point concerning time poses a number of difficulties to Christian theology, if it is to be accepted. It implies that since time can only be meaningful where matter exists, in any spiritual existence, time cannot be applied. It has been traditional, for example, to define the concept of eternity in Christian thought as a spiritual or metaphysical existence of an infinitely long time span—existence in heaven starts at the point of physical death and goes on for ever. But now we see that if time stops when matter stops, then these are invalid statements. The passage of time cannot be applied to any spiritual existence. God's existence now becomes atemporal—outside time. Hence we can say with the psalmist 'For in thy sight, a thousand days are as yesterday'. This, at least, obviates the need for the sceptic to ask the believer such red-herrings as 'For how long did God exist before He made the world?'

The failure to appreciate the concept of a spiritual existence outside time has posed problems to many scientific minds who have failed to realise the limitations of their own discipline. I quote from the book 'The Nature of the Universe' by Professor Fred Hoyle, Cambridge Professor of Astronomy: 'I should like to discuss a little further the beliefs of the Christians as I see them myself. In their anxiety to avoid the notion that death is the complete end of our existence, they suggest to me what is an equally horrible alternative ... what the Christians offer me is an eternity of frustration. And it is no good their trying to mitigate the situation by saying that sooner or later my limitations would be removed, because this could not be done without altering me. It strikes me as very curious that the Christians have so little to say about how they propose eternity should be spent'. It seems to me that Professor Hoyle's view of the Christian afterlife has been coloured by a mythical view of heaven which is still held by a vast number of Christians today. A view which has not kept pace with scientific understanding. A view which has probably done more harm than good to the Christian cause.

'Also God has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end'. Eccl. 3:11

So it can be seen that science is not omniscient after all, but has its limitations imposed by methodology, perception, matter and time.

### **The Key to the Universe**

Ever since the dawn of civilisation man has had one great quest apart from that of ensuring his own survival: to find out the key to the universe, the secret of his existence. Ever since man came to realise the infinite time spans involved in the cosmos, he has not been able to accept that life is limited to three score years and ten—to be born and die in obscurity in the midst of a cold and heartless Universe. Man has had an overwhelming feeling that somewhere lie hidden mysterious and powerful forces that direct and control our existence. Ancient man felt that to invoke the spirits of the Universe by religious rites and sacrifice would reveal the necessary secrets of his desire to find what lay behind his existence. In more recent history, men have considered that the secret of the Real lies hidden in nature. He has climbed the highest peaks, descended into the bowels of the earth, penetrated the mighty forests, sought the sources of great rivers, all in an attempt to find the key. But the remote distances of geography have failed to give up their secrets.

If we want to know what makes a watch work, we strip it down. If we want to know what is inside a walnut, we crack it open. So man began to pursue this course in his quest for the key to the universe. He invoked the powers of scientific study to break down the building blocks of nature. The first step that is taken by the mind that wants to know what something is made of, is to take it to pieces and analyse it. The whole of science is essentially an analysis, centred round the notion that the secret of a thing lies in its elements. So in order to find the secret of the cosmos all man had to do was to discover the most basic elements from which it emerged. A daunting task, you might consider, but it is amazing to see with what ease the universe has yielded up its secrets to the analytical method of the scientist.

In the realms of the macroscopic, the stars of the remote nebulae have come under close scrutiny with the aid of optical and radio telescopes. The sidereal structure of the universe has become more apparent as we plot the paths of the stars and planets. Our eyes have penetrated into the remote distances of the vault of heaven. In the realm of the microscopic, we view through millions of times of magnification the minute particles of which matter is composed. Physics has revealed the ultimate make-up of the atom, the building block of matter. The invisible energies which hold together these building blocks have been tracked down and formulated. Heat, light, magnetism, electricity and nuclear forces have been harnessed.

In the realm of organic matter, life itself has been dissected into cellular structure. The chromosomic structure of the biological cell has been separated out. The secrets of genetic heredity have unveiled the mechanism of biological evolution itself. The biological sciences have shown to us the interaction between animals and their environment. Psychology has analysed man's feelings and emotions, his behaviour patterns and needs. Sociology has shown us why men interact with each other in various ways. Medical science has studied the malfunctions which



occur in our bodies and effected remedies. I would like to hazard a guess that in the last fifty years scientific analysis has yielded more about the fundamental structure of the universe than that which has been achieved by man in the scores of millenia that he has walked the face of this planet. Many now feel that we are almost at the very limit of scientific analysis; that there is precious little left which has not yet yielded to the sledge hammer blows of scientific method.

So let us stop here for a moment and consider if we are nearer now to satisfying our craving for meaning, purpose and understanding. Have we found in our atoms, energies and cells the ultimate causation? Is our finger now on the very pulse of the physical creation? The answer surely must be 'No'. Why?

If the student of music wishes to study the work of a great composer, will he attempt to arrive at an understanding by splitting down the work into its components? Will he analyse the notes and the intervals between them as penned on to the five lines of the stave? Will he play one bar at a time on the piano and study it in minute detail? No, of course not. For by so fragmenting the work, has he not just destroyed the thing which he has set about to study?

If the student of art wished to find out why a porcelain statue was beautiful, would he smash it to a powder with repeated hammer blows to make it yield up its secrets of beauty? No, because he too would have thereby destroyed that beauty in his attempt to analyse it.

So, has the scientist in his atomization of the universe caused it to yield up the secret of its unity and symmetry? Has he discovered what is causing the universe to move in a certain direction? Has he discovered the ultimate force which controls our destiny? In short, has he found God? The answer must be no. The answer must be no because the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The universe consists of more than a plurality of basic particles. The complete human being is much more than a collocation of biological cells. If this were not so, the whole of creation would be reduced to a vast clutter of impersonal elements. Freedom, justice, morality, ethics, life, feelings, emotion, continuity, the soul, the Godhead—all these would become utterly meaningless concepts, devoid of any reality. The whole of our seventy years existence on the face of this planet would tumble headlong into a terrifying void of meaninglessness, a pit of formless energy.

Has science, then, been a pointless pursuit? No. It has succeeded because it has been necessary to get us down to the base level in order to make us realise this fundamental truth of nature—that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Teilhard de Chardin would submit that all beings have two poles. One is the lower pole from which it emerges and the other, the higher pole to which it ascends. The lower pole is the point of its basest fragmentation and plurality. The higher pole is the point at which it achieves ultimate purpose and unity. What science has achieved is to lead us in a direction which takes us to the lowest pole, but having arrived there, we now see that we should have gone the other way, we should have ascended towards the point of creative unity in order to discover the key to existence. Teilhard likens

creation to a cone. The base is a random, amorphous mass of plurality, without form or meaning. The base reaches back into an infinite darkness of formlessness. But as we turn to face the vortex of the cone, we approach a point of ultimate unity and purpose. A point where the whole of creation is brought together in perfection and symmetry. A point where a single unifying force consummates all things at the mighty pinnacle of evolution. This point he calls the Omega Point. The capitulation of the hierarchical system of creation.

If a process of scientific analysis took us to the very base of the cone, then a process of synthesis is needed to lead us to the vortex, to the Omega Point. And Teilhard submits finally that the whole of creation is moving slowly and ponderously towards this point. We leave randomness behind and are drawn irresistably towards unity and order, by a single great unifying force, just as a magnet draws particles of iron to itself. We are being drawn to a point where individualism and plurality will cease to exist; where the Multiple will converge into Unity.

What then is this single great unifying force which is working on creation? I would submit that this is the person of Jesus Christ.

Not the Christ of the Godhead, remote and transcendent, but the Christ of the Incarnate Word, the Logos, the Christ who is immanent—involved ultimately in His created order of things. Christ who is drawing all things and all men slowly towards himself, to the Omega Point, where he will finally consummate all things into himself. This is the point of ultimate reason and purpose. At this point man will have outstripped the need for his physical shell which exists by virtue of his multiplicity and individualism and all souls and all spirits will have been brought together in the process of Creative and Mystical Union. I would submit further that Teilhard's Omega Point is synonymous with the concept of the Kingdom of God which our Lord spoke about in his earthly ministry.

'And he said "With what can we compare the Kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade". 'And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the Kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they indeed may see but not perceive and may indeed hear, but not understand".

It is true that the spirit of Christ brooded over his creation ever since the dawn of time, but the concentration of the Multiple into the single point of unity—the Omega Point, is a painful and arduous process. Each single element of the plurality takes part in this laborious synthesis. This is why the Incarnation of Christ was painful and agonising, ending in the ultimate agony of the Cross. The Cross marks the plunging of the Divine Unity into the Multiple. The Redeemer could only draw the creation towards himself by first innoculating himself into the mainstream of the movement of creative synthesis, only by dissolving himself into the plurality of matter in

# THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

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

To the Readers of the "Fraternal"

Dear Friends,

*"Tom placed them (the keys) on the table. He held the bunch by the key of the organ-loft (though it was the smallest) and looked hard at it as he laid it down. It had been an old, old friend of Tom's; a kind of companion to him, many and many a day".*

**Martin Chuzzlewit:** Charles Dickens

Within a few days of the April issue of the "Fraternal" I shall have retired from over thirty-three years of service with "Baptist Insurance". I was previously for eighteen years with the Royal Insurance Group, then on my transfer to Baptist Insurance I was for six years Assistant Secretary, for five years Secretary and for the last twenty-two years I have been General Manager and Secretary.

I believe I may fairly claim that these years have seen a marked development of this Company leading to a very substantial increase in premium income and in reserve strength. Further, during those thirty-three years Baptist Union funds have benefited by over £130,000 from the grants of the Company. It has been a privilege to serve the Ministers, Friends and Churches of the denomination.

Retirement is an inevitability of life and it is better to retire when one feels able to go on than to wait until waning strength and indifferent performance compels retirement.

For most of my time I have carried a bunch of office keys in which the smallest key has been that of the private drawer in my safe which guards the confidential papers of the Company; that key is indeed a hard key to lay down for it has for me "been a kind of companion ..... many and many a day".

But that key and my charge must be handed over and I commend to you Mr M.E. Purver ACII, whom the Board has selected to succeed me. I do not know what form this advertisement letter will take in future, but what I do know is that through Mr Purver's energy and expertise the Company will continue to progress. Its further development will redound to the advantage of all the Ministers, Friends and Churches insured with us.

Thank you for your assistance in the past and in the future of this important enterprise.

Yours sincerely,

**C.J.L. COLVIN**  
General Manager

order, later, to be reborn from it. No longer does Christ brood over his creation, but is inextricably linked with it. In no way can His presence now be dissociated from it.

Our earliest ancestors knew, although they could not explain, that the Universe is one; that all things—stars, stones, planets, animals and men—make up a single order and are interconnected parts of a whole. That they are not though, was obvious to them. The wholeness was disrupted by disease, drought, war and famine and finally death. When the earth suffered, man suffered. When man suffered so did all the world around him. These things affected not only his own health and freedom, but also the whole of creation itself. Man's longing for salvation was not only a longing for his own deliverance from the things that threatened him, but a longing that the whole of creation might be delivered from the forces of disintegration which threatened it. Early man had discovered what the scientist of today has re-discovered; that fragmentation leads to discord; that only a process of synthesis can lead to wholeness. The English word 'salvation' derives from a root which means 'wholeness'. These are the feelings that lay in the mind of the prophet Isaiah which he expressed in his own style; what we have chosen to call the Principle of Creative Union.

*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom.  
The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
and the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall feed;  
their young shall lie down together,  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.  
They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;  
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.'*

In his earthly life, Christ preached purity, charity, self-denial, love of one's fellow man and love of God. He showed us by the Cross the act of supreme sacrifice. These were not the babblings of an early day humanist. He preached these things because these acts are acts of infusion of multiple individuals into a single body and a single soul. These are the things that you and I must do as a practical form of synthesis, leading in summation to the extreme point of unity—the Omega Point. This union is exemplified in a number of ways in our Christian lives. Here we can see the attractive force of Christ drawing us towards himself. Is not the love of a man and a woman a basic example? Here we see two individuals losing their self-identity in care for each other. This culminates in the act of Christian marriage where two individuals become as one person for the rest of their lives. Is this principle of creative union not exemplified in the doctrine of the Body of Christ? The Church is a spiritual and organic union of individual Christians in one mystical body, being drawn towards the vortex of Christ's purpose. The

Church is more than just another form of social grouping like a golf club or football crowd; where like-minded people congregate to pursue a like-minded interest, it is an extension through time of the Incarnation of Christ in man's evolution. When an individual joins a Church, his fusion into the Body of Christ and denial of self is symbolised in his passing through the waters of baptism. Month by month we remind ourselves of this synthetic process as we eat and drink the elements in the service of Holy Communion. This is more than just a symbolic re-enactment of an event 2000 years ago, it is a living and dynamic infusion of our complete selves into the mainstream of Creative Union. Likewise, as we pray to God, we infuse our spirits into a mighty unifying movement, drawing God's creation to its ultimate fruition.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion I would suggest that it is wrong for the Christian and the scientist to be in a state of opposition. These are not separate areas of knowledge, but work together, describing the same feelings and desires of men to seek the truth and salvation. The scientist's analysis has enabled the Christian to define his feelings of synthesis, which he had hitherto not been able to do. By itself, science cannot discover Christ, but Christ satisfies the yearnings that are born in our hearts in the school of science.

If one were to accept the propositions I have tried to enumerate in this paper it would put paid to the views of large numbers of scientists that the world is on its way out, either by slow poisoning, starvation or cataclysm. I take an optimistic view of evolution. Our universe will eventually be drawn by Christ through our present travails towards the point of ultimate integration and union. The works of men will not frustrate the supreme plan of the Godhead. I also feel that these views are not compatible with much of the apocalyptic theology and doctrine expounded in various quarters of the Church. I would consider the likelihood of the world ending tomorrow is a distinct improbability. The world I feel will continue until such time as human souls have been drawn towards the vortex, to a point where they have outstripped the need for physical dependence on material things. What happens to the earth then is a matter of little consequence. It will probably return to become just a part of the vast sea of formless matter and energy. The purpose of creation will then have been achieved. Christ will be glorified as all beings are assimilated into his spirit.

*Isa. 53:11 "He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied"*

**Peter Fraser**

## **Opportunities for Further Study**

SPURGEON'S COLLEGE provides a four-year Course for part-time students who wish to obtain the B.A. Degree in Theology. The Course is validated by the Council for National Academic Awards. Students are required to attend lectures at the College one day every week during each academic term. Ministers especially might welcome this opportunity for further study. There are about six places available each year. Anyone interested should write to The Registrar, Spurgeon's College, South Norwood Hill, London SE25 6DJ.

# **WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION**

## **409, Barking Road, Plaistow, London E13 8AL**

My dear Fellow Minister,

I have only been here a few months, and I am already in the dog house! It is all because of my letter in the last issue of *The Fraternal*, which I began in the time honoured fashion namely "My dear Brother Minister". I should really have been more careful, especially in view of the fact that I have no less than three women Ministers on the staff here at West Ham. I shall not tell you which of them took me to task, although there are those among you who might hazard a guess.

Seriously though, the rebuke I rightly received caused me to stop and think about the great contribution that women have made to the work of the Mission over the years. No-one who knows anything of our history will underestimate the profound influence exercised by Hettie Rowntree Clifford in the early days of West Ham Central Mission, and no-one familiar with our more recent history would want to under-value the gracious ministry exercised by Olga Turl. We are indeed grateful to God for the long succession of Deaconesses, Office Staff and many others without whom our work would have been impossible.

In this connection, I think particularly of Rev. Daphne Pearce and Rev. Margaret Smith. Daphne has worked with the Mission for nearly 25 years now, and although Margaret has only been with us for just over a year, she has made a very valuable contribution to our work. This summer, Daphne and Margaret will cease to be the Wardens of Marnham House and take up their new posts as Wardens of the Sheltered Housing Development to be known as Rowntree Clifford Close. You will be aware of the work of the Baptist Men's Movement Housing Association, and the way in which it has grown and has been blessed by God since its comparatively humble beginnings. It is in co-operation with the B.M.M.H.A. that we shall be caring for more than 60 elderly folk and, in due course, some 20 young people between the ages of 18 and 30. Please pray for Daphne Pearce and Margaret Smith as they shoulder their new responsibilities. Pray for the Local Management Committee which will have the responsibility for the oversight of Rowntree Clifford Close. Pray for the new residents as they embark upon this adventure, that they may feel themselves to be surrounded by a loving and caring community. Finally, pray for the Memorial Church here at West Ham, that the Ministers and members might not only be a blessing but also receive a blessing from those who will come to live amongst us.

Conversations and negotiations are continuing in the matter of the rebuilding of our Old People's Home, Rest-a-While, and the provision of a Hospice for the terminally ill. Perhaps when I write my next letter to you I shall be able to tell you of exciting developments on this front.

I am tremendously encouraged as I visit our churches throughout the land. I feel a new warmth of fellowship, and often a sense of liberation in worship which is very exciting. I am encouraged by a very real and practical interest in the work of our Mission. Please do all you can to promote this interest, for what we do here we do not only in the Name of our Lord, but also in the name of our Baptist people throughout the land.

May God bless you and give you joy in your work for Him.

Yours sincerely,

**Trevor W. Davis,**  
**Superintendent Minister**

## **An Experience in Local Radio**

"IT'S in the can. Let's have some coffee and go home. Don't forget to log the music. I'll keep this copy of the script."

Parting shots after a couple of hours of sweat and tears and a few 'that's no good, try it again'. 'Use the music to emphasise the words.' 'Watch for my visual.' There are other words, lots of them.

The venue for this struggle for perfection is underground at our local radio station and the programme, lasting 28 mins and 30 secs, slots into a live religious record and chat show broadcast for two hours every Sunday morning on Pennine radio, our local commercial radio station. You'll find us sandwiched between the Observer ad., 'always ahead of the times', or 'Morrisons the better way to shop and save', and the news.

It all started when Bradford Council of Churches, who already supported a radio team preparing programmes for the local BBC radio station at Leeds, were asked to help in working out the religious programme content of one consortium applying for the commercial franchise. They won the contract and a joint part-time appointment was made by the company and the council of churches of a man to produce religious programmes scheduled for 2 hours on Sunday mornings, 1 hour Sunday evenings and six 1 minute talks to go out each day except Sunday.

My experience in local radio was limited to four 3 minute talks and a 12 minute report of a visit to Taizé, all put out by BBC Radio Manchester under the tutorship of Ralph Birtwhistle.

Pennine 235 took to the air in 1975 and I suffered for the religious programmes producer. All that time to fill with good material, news, comment and a first service slot! That's the slot we work on. So with my vast experience (?) I volunteered, if he was in a spot, to let me know. He did. Could I produce something for harvest? We've been at it ever since.

We, is a team of 8-12 people, all ages and spectrums of theological opinion and I'm the odd Rev. out. We've worked together for over two years now and have presented some reasonable programmes. That's the opinion of other people as well as our own!! Locally the Beeb seem to give very little time to religious broadcasting and even then concentrate on news and reports which keep ordinary people away from the microphones. Pennine on the other hand set out to be a community radio station with access, where possible, to the local people. Our team and others have certainly appreciated the opportunity of creativity in presenting the Gospel and I feel sure it has encouraged a considerable number of people to become involved in a medium usually preserved for professionals, and that goes for writing as well as presenting. Our team has evolved a pattern of working, whereby two or three hours (our meetings only last one hour at a time) are spent tossing round ideas, bits and pieces of material from poems and hymns to heavy rock music (we find Pink Floyd, E.L.P., and Tomita specially interesting) bearing in mind that the 30,000 or so people listening range over the whole of church life, and none. We take account of the 'feel' of the

station and also the top ten, not to mention our desire to present the Gospel in a lively, interesting and sometimes funny way. Writing the script is weaving together all the material we have decided to include and developing the theme. Then its into the studio for the two hours or so and that's that, until next time.

Not quite. We have used the tapes in visiting people who can't get out to church and don't often listen to the radio and as discussion starters at non-church groups. We've also spoken to meetings in an attempt to recruit more team members. Sadly, whilst people are interested they don't become involved and instead of having several teams we only have one. In one programme we are able to communicate with more people than are seen in all the churches in the city and yet we fail to grasp the opportunities presented to us.

Ours is only one aspect of local radio work, add programmes like phone-ins involving the pastoral ministry, the potential influence of the Christian faith is considerable, and it does not need to be harsh and aggressive in manner, but full of love and compassion.

Last Christmas it was proposed to celebrate communion over the air asking people to have the necessary things ready at home so that they could participate at the appropriate point. This was changed to an agapé feast but some fundamental questions were raised and will be raised again. Participation in local radio isn't a side issue, but a vital means of communicating and a challenger to established patterns of church life and government. More Christians are becoming involved, their expertise is developing, they need support and encouragement.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR LOCAL RADIO STATION/S?

ARE CHRISTIANS INVOLVED?

DO YOU KNOW ANY OF THEM?

DOES THE STATION BROADCAST RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES?

DO YOU FEED THEM NEWS AND IDEAS?

DO YOU ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BE INVOLVED?

ARE YOU INVOLVED?

If you answer negatively, do something about it, please!

If your local station, commercial or BBC, doesn't have any religious programmes, phone-in's or counselling programmes, get in touch with them and ask why.

If you want any more information about Baptists who are already involved in local radio please contact Rev. Peter Pearmain.

If you are involved, let him know for his 'Baptists who's who of local radio'.

Meanwhile - pray for Christians working in local radio, advise programme producers of any in your church who are **willing** and **able** to follow up those in need when asked - think local radio! There are opportunities for Christian witness.

**John Shaw**



# Spurgeon's Homes

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Our growing network of individual homes needs some generous friends. We provide a loving, Christian atmosphere for children "put into care". For many, it is their first real experience of a secure, happy home.

This vital Christian Service is entirely dependent upon voluntary contributions. We hope you and your Church will help us meet the demands of the present hour with your prayers and gifts of money.

Write to: Peter Johnson.

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# The Baptist Missionary Society

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*Is one with you*

*In the work of Christ overseas*

*In prayer*

*In giving and*

*In informed support*

*Make the needs known and avail  
yourself of the help that is  
obtainable from the Mission House.*

Write to: **Rev. A.S. Clement**  
**93 Gloucester Place**  
**London W1H 4AA.**

# Missionary Obligation Today

ROBERT BELLARMINE, Jesuit scholar and cardinal, uncle of one of the first Christian missionaries to India, reproached the Protestant churches of the seventeenth century with not being true churches at all because they were not missionary churches. Well known theologians of orthodox early Protestantism replied "Long ago we were indeed told: 'Go ye into all the world,' but now: 'Remain in the place where God hath placed thee.' ". One wonders sometimes whether for some British Christians the wheel has not turned the full circle, for there is a growing emphasis on mission at home and a fading awareness of world-wide responsibilities.

To be sure, the situation has greatly changed since William Carey expounded the "Great Commission" in his *Inquiry* and called the churches of his day to obedience. The main changes and the problems they pose have already been considered in a stimulating article by Charles Karunaratna and an admirable review of the theology of mission over the last quarter of a century by Paul Ballard. The theologian has of necessity to deal with generalities and ideas. The missionary wherever he may be, or the administrator, has to deal with particular situations and realities—greatly helped, of course, by guidelines and concepts provided by the theologian. In the real world there is no "Church" in the sense of an organization which can deliberate, decide and do: there are churches and societies of churches. There is no "Mission" but missions. There is no "Theology of Mission" but almost as many theologies as there are theologians. Indubitably, the reports and documents relating to the main conferences of the International Missionary Council and the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches have had a profound influence on the thought, policy and practice of the major missionary societies and boards linked with them, but the larger part of world mission enterprise has been that of churches and organizations not affiliated with those ecumenical bodies.

## Churches Everywhere have Obligations in World Mission

How are British Christians today to interpret and apply the words of Jesus in the "Great Commission" (Matt. 28:19f; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:57f; Acts 1:8)? They may be regarded as referring to something that has already happened, accomplished by the apostles and by missionaries down the ages since, from which all Christians still profit. The church is now established in every part of the world. The boundaries now to be crossed are not geographical, but the boundaries between belief in Christ and lack of that belief. This view is not very far removed from that of the early Protestants. As Moltmann has pointed out: "The early Protestant interpretation of the Gospel took its bearings from the event of the justification of the sinner, but not, as Paul did, from the event of the calling of Jews and Gentiles. Consequently it rejected any missionary duty." That churches everywhere, Britain included, are in a missionary situation is generally recognised today. Indeed this was always recognised by Baptists and other Dissenters who cherished the ideal of a

pure and a free church. It will be recalled that the founders of the BMS also founded a home missions society and sent messengers into South-West England. The change that is significant is that those who are in state churches now recognise this fact. But churches everywhere are also in a world situation with obligations in world mission, and mutual obligations and responsibilities within a church that is universal.

### **A Moratorium in Mission?**

The expression: "Missionaries Go Home!" used by James A. Scherer as the title to his well-known book has become associated with the idea of a moratorium on missions as first proposed by John Gatu and later debated by the All Africa Conference of Churches. It may well be that in some of the states of Africa there are too many missionaries, and the growth and the development of the churches are being thereby hampered. All missionary societies do not follow what we would consider to be an enlightened policy, recognizing the authority of the local churches and encouraging initiative and leadership. Little wonder that in such circumstances there are angry and frustrated nationals. But how is the tension to be resolved between the Lord's "Go ye" and the cry "Go home"? The one state in Africa in which the BMS now has missionaries is Zaire. They number fifty-six, of whom only two are ministers (one engaged in training pastors and evangelists, the other in relief and advice to Angolans). The constant appeal of the Baptist Community of the River Zaire is for more missionaries, especially those with theological training, and teachers for secondary schools, and doctors. And in all countries where BMS missionaries serve they do so at the invitation of the local church organization. The one exception is Nepal where a united mission is present by agreement with the government.

It is perhaps worth noting who are those who cry loudest: Missionaries Go Home! Communists do. It was the coming to power of the People's Government in China which brought missions there to an end. Orthodox and fanatical Muslims do. From a number of Muslim states missionaries are altogether excluded. Orthodox and fanatical Hindus do. That is why there are laws in Nepal against changing religion and why a number of Indian states have enacted "Freedom of Religion" laws. South American dictators do. Missionaries can be the eyes and ears of the outside world and the protectors and defenders of the poor and oppressed. Angry and frustrated young Christians, often do ; in some circumstances, rightly so because opportunities to serve and lead have been denied them; but in other circumstances moved by a desire for power, place and wealth, or under the influence of nationalist and anti-colonial propaganda.

Foreign missionaries have always to be sensitive to the situation in which they find themselves and to be willing to withdraw when there are those of the country able to do their work. The main object of all their service is to work for the time when they will be unnecessary and can move on. I would judge that the churches of Sri Lanka are well able to care for mission in their own country if they had really the will to do so; but it could be argued that just as Charles Karunaratna's presence in Britain is of value as a token of the universality of the Christian church, so the presence of an English pastor in Sri Lanka might well have a like value.

Is the era of overseas missions coming to an end? Who can say? There are so many factors to be taken into the reckoning: the vitality of sending churches and their ability to provide finances in a world of ever more complicated currency controls; the general political situation; the power of religious groups, or anti-religious groups, to exclude those who would propagate religious faith; and so on. But the need for increased effort in world mission, and for the pursuing of that mission with a greater degree of urgency cannot be denied. The realities to which Stephen Neill drew attention twenty-two years ago in his *Unfinished Task* are still with us. Christians are in very small minorities in the countries of Africa and Asia, and most of the churches are weak and short of talented, well-prepared leaders. Indeed, it may be argued that the situation is rather less promising now. His hope expressed for Uganda reads rather strangely: "In Uganda nearly half the population is already Christian; progress is still rapid, and there is hope that this may become the first Christian country in 'Africa and the East'." With continuing rapid growth in population, there are in the world now very many more who have not heard the gospel than in the days of William Carey. Policy, methods and organization in world mission are, of course, continually changing to meet changed situations.

### **Relations with Other World Religions Change**

With the disappearance of empires and the emergence of new independent states there has come about a change in relations between Christianity and other religions. In India, for instance, the power and prestige of Hinduism has been enhanced. So with Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Burma. The effects of new wealth on the political and economic power of Muslims is evidenced by splendid new mosques in cities of Europe and the Americas. The attitude of Christian scholars to these religions in their classic expressions has been changing with more emphasis on willingness to hear and to learn, and on dialogue. Some, indeed, appear to believe that God will lead us to a new and fuller religion which will comprehend the truths in all of them, Christianity included.

The great world religions have themselves been changed by their contacts with Christians and the influence of Christian thought and practice.

However, the Christian missionary or the national evangelist rarely meets a person whose faith conforms to the classic description of it in text books. In the villages of the hills and forests of India, among tribal people in Bangladesh, and in Africa they are addressing themselves to people of an aministic or spiritist type of religion. The Hindus of the villages of the great plains and of the ancient towns will be of different sects, their religion related to the observance of festivals, daily rituals and an idolatry which owes more to primitive religion than to developed Hinduism. In the great cities and industrial centres the religion of the majority can be very formal, many of the people, like their counterparts in the West being secular in their general outlook and attitudes. It is essential that Christian evangelists know and understand the beliefs and customs of others, and are courteous and respectful in their approaches in matters of faith and conviction. They

should be ready to recognize goodness and truth wherever they exist and be prepared to encounter evidences of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the most unlikely places. But their task is to help simple men and women to understand their need of a Saviour and to point to Him in whom alone is hope of reconciliation with God. They have to declare the Good News to a person rather than a Hindu, Sikh, Moslem or Buddhist.

### **Has Mission Always to be in Partnership?**

In Asia today, the foreign missionary works within the national church. Those who are, so to speak, in the front line of evangelism are the national pastors, evangelists and church workers. In countries where Christians are in minorities there is a tendency for the churches to be on the defensive, primarily concerned with their own members. Religion in such lands is a complex which includes social and political factors. To change one's religion involves changing one's community and in some situations one's politics. Among Christians there are many who are nominal, being within the Christian community because their parents were before them and because there is no other community into which they would fit. It is possible for nominal Christians to rise to positions of influence and responsibility within the church committee and in church institutions. There are, therefore, a number of factors which continue to make the churches less zealous in evangelism among those of other faiths than we would hope. The problem then becomes that of persuading the churches to declare the Good News to those outside.

And the question can then arise for Christians in other lands: Can we leave the small national church with responsibility for evangelism in its own land, or ought we to go into that land, if admitted, whether or not the national church agrees? What ought policy to be regarding a country like Sri Lanka where the total Baptist church membership is under 2,000 and when there are well trained and well equipped pastors for their churches? Missionaries from outside would not appear to be necessary to meet the needs of that community. But what of the millions of Buddhists and Hindus? Should we not be involved in evangelism among them? Is it sufficient just to urge a reluctant local church?

At this point it might be right to ask: Has there in the last half-century been too much emphasis on the church? Can those who are concerned with the declaration of the Gospel in word and deed in relation to man in his total needs remain confined within present church structures? Is not our obligation in mission to make known the good news of the Kingdom or Reign of God rather than to plant churches?

### **The Challenge of a Multi-Racial Community in Britain**

Christians in Britain are aware that there are large communities of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in a number of British towns and cities. Why send missionaries overseas, when there are these mission fields on our doorstep? Part of an answer is that we do not really send many missionaries overseas—not even one-tenth of one per cent of our members! A more important answer is that these communities are now part of the total

community of the British people and are therefore within the scope, so to speak, of home mission. Their presence is certainly a challenge to British Christians, as is the presence of Jewish people and secularized people who would call themselves atheists and agnostics. Those who have had experience overseas can give valuable help in advice on customs and in language. But it should be remembered on the one hand that fewer missionaries today are involved in direct evangelism among those of other faiths and on the other that communities of Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus here are in minority groups, on the defensive, and with attitudes and sentiments different from those of their co-religionists in the homelands where they are in majorities.

### **Rich Nations and Poor Nations**

Some of the most serious problems relating to world mission today arise from the fact that there is so great a disparity between the affluent countries of the west and the poor countries of the Third World. Since the beginning of the modern era of Christian missions the churches involved in sending have been in the main the countries of Europe and North America, and the countries receiving have been in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In terms of Christian stewardship it seems only right that those who are wealthy in materials and trained personnel should share generously with those who are not. But in experience it proves extremely difficult to establish right relations in Christian fellowship between those who can always give and those who must always receive. How difficult it is to solve this problem! Of course, it is good to encourage preachers and leaders of overseas churches to come to our country and minister to us. Of course, it is necessary for us to listen to what they have to say to us in our situation. But usually they have come at our expense and to be our guests, dependent upon us. They find themselves in a situation where they have to ask for more and feel they have so little to give. It may be argued that the gross inequality of poor Christians and rich Christians, poor nations and rich nations, is one of the greatest hindrances to the spread of the Gospel today and the establishing of a world Christian fellowship within which Christians can speak to one another and serve one another as equals.

Little wonder that Christians become involved in world politics and that "Liberation" theology is formulated and propagated. Ought not Christians everywhere, and especially those of the richer nations, to be striving for equality and justice by every means within their power?

### **The Church is Universal**

If a day should come when it is no longer necessary to send out missionaries to propagate the faith, because everywhere churches have been established which are self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating, will it not be necessary still for Christians to be willing to go and live and serve abroad? How else will the universal nature of the Church be recognised? And from the point of view of the churches from whence they came, will they not be missionaries? The concept of "missionary" is all

the time changing. The missionaries whom we send to Brazil on their arrival become pastors within the local Baptist church or growing town. To us they appear primarily as missionaries. To the Brazilians they may appear primarily as their own church workers. There are, of course, significant differences. They are maintained and supported from outside the country; they have the protection of an organization of considerable size and power; they can withdraw, or be withdrawn. And as they are not nationals of the country, they can, of course, if the government so wills, be expelled. It is the vulnerability of the missionary which makes it so difficult for him to decide how far he can become politically active in relation to the problems of the country in which he serves. There are times and situations where he may decide that it is God's will that he remains silent or inactive because it is better for him to remain and continue his work. There are other times and occasions when he must speak out and act, and take all the consequences, including imprisonment or expulsion or both. There are for all sincere and serving Christians inescapable dilemmas, in which faith can be put to severe tests.

That churches everywhere are in a missionary situation is obviously true. But what does this imply for relations between mission at home and overseas? Some say they are one. But does this not depend upon how words are being used? For there is a world of difference between mission in Manchester and London and participation in mission in Calcutta and Delhi. Different methods and means have to be adopted. Historically British Baptists have associated together in a missionary society as a means of being involved in world mission "beyond the British Isles" and in Unions for the strengthening of their ministry and mission in these islands. In that Baptists are independents or congregationalists as to church order, is it not in the local church that the unity of mission should be apparent? The local church within the missionary society plays its part in mission overseas, and within local associations and national union shares its resources or receives aid in mission at home. The two aspects of mission should never be viewed as in opposition, nor should they be causes each with its own supporters. All Christians are always and everywhere involved in both. There is no reason to believe that institutions will remain unchanged or indeed should do so. But the relations between the BMS and the four Unions, the churches in membership of which support it, is bound up with the relations between those four unions themselves. And the future of the Unions and the Society is related to the future of separate Christian and national denominations.

**A.S. Clement**

# Notes from the Committee

THE Committee met at the Church House on Monday March 12th. Twenty four members were present. One new member, A. Evans, representing South Wales was welcomed.

Two main items of business were transacted. The first concerned Pastoral Sessions at the B.U. Annual Assemblies. Our secretary reported that Alan Webster, Dean of St. Paul's was unable to fulfil his engagement to speak at this year's session; but the Bishop of Edmonton had agreed, at short notice, to take his place. We are assured that the Bishop is a very acceptable speaker. At our previous committee it was resolved that the Pastoral Session at the Nottingham Assembly in 1980 should be a deliberative one and that a small steering committee be set up to make the necessary arrangements. The following have been appointed to act in this capacity:- The Chairman; The Secretary; N. Plumb; A. Coffey; and R. Burnish.

Local Fraternalists are earnestly asked to co-operate by considering what subjects could be considered for discussion and since there are many practical problems in arranging such a session in the hall which probably will be allocated to us, any other ideas will be welcome. Please send your response to this appeal to the secretary, W.H. Wragg, at the very earliest opportunity.

The other main item was the presenting of the Report on Ministers Housing, prepared by the sub-committee set up for this purpose.

The report, the result of much hard work and painstaking research was received with grateful thanks to Michael Walker, Jim Clarke and Peter Coleman, who formed the committee. It was resolved that this Report be published as a separate document and be issued free to members of the Fellowship by including it as a supplement to "*The Fraternal*". It was agreed that copies be made available to others at a price of 50p per copy (including postage).

Other items on the agenda included Finance (Annual Statement of Accounts for presentation to A.G.M.) and Reports on Membership; Library; Editorial Board and Probationers School.

There are opportunities for exchanges with U.S.A. ministers. Anyone interested should apply to the secretary of the Fellowship for details.