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The Christian Brethren Research Fellowship

TO LEARN FROM OTHERS

As the editor reports on another page, the last three issues of the *CBRF Journal* have at last begun to provoke that response from members that delights those who understand the real purposes of the Fellowship. Accumulated material enables this issue to be produced as another Members' Issue.

It is the more important, therefore, that we understand what CBRF is trying to do. It is not a 'denominational' fellowship: that is to say, it welcomes contributions to its discussions from all Christians, whatever their church affiliation might be. This is a deliberate act of policy, because we believe that in this way God will have much to teach us, to which our eyes might otherwise be closed. It means that we approach the ideas and practices of others, as we do our own, not to demolish them, but to understand what lies behind them, and why we ourselves and our brethren in Christ act as we or they do. It also means that when we criticise or analyse our own church practices we are not 'attacking' them, or trying to introduce outlandish practices, but that rather we are trying to provoke deeper thought and deeper understanding, by uninhibited discussion.

The issue on *Liturgy* produced an exceptionally interesting correspondence: ranging from the member who wrote 'I would fill this page with Amen's and Hallelujahs for the WHOLE issue' to another who started his letter with 'What a load of nonsense you have produced in the current issue of the CBRF Journal' (he was not the same member as the one who was heard to refer to the issue in conversation as 'a load of cod's wallop'!). Whatever our views, there were lessons from that issue which are of great importance to us all. Liturgical forms of worship try to produce four results which are of supreme importance: to produce an atmosphere of dignified reverence, to produce concentrated thought and worship which compresses much into little time with no sense of strain or inappropriateness, to produce a constant coverage of the great themes of Christian doctrine which is of the maximum educative value, and to retain the spiritual heritage of earlier generations. It would be no small result of that issue, if we all gave more constructive thought as to how those four objects might be attained through more spontaneous forms of worship: perhaps the matter of self-discipline is not irrelevant!

SOSTHENES

NEWS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

ANNUAL MEETING. Saturday, 28th October 1967, in the Small Hall, the Friends' Meeting House, Euston Road (near Euston station). Subject: **THE CHURCH —ITS LOCAL UNITY.** Fuller details will be circulated.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS. Members are asked to notify the Secretary immediately should they change their address. Numbers of copies of the *Journal* are returned after each mailing, usually marked 'gone away', and no further issues are then sent until a change of address is notified.

SURVEY ON FREEDOM FOR WOMEN WITHIN THE CHURCH. One member made the justifiable criticism that the terms of the questions posed (CBRFJ xiv) were too extreme on both sides, and that it was unfair to pose the questions in the context in which they appeared. The extremity of choice was in fact deliberate, as only strongly held views would then be expressed. 34 replies were received, of which 24 expressed support of propositions B for complete freedom for women within the services of the church, 8 supported the extreme alternative, and 2 expressed qualified views on opposite sides.

OVERSEAS REPRESENTATIVES. Mr. Frank Horton (Institut Emmaüs, 1806 St. Legier, Switzerland) will act as overseas representative for Switzerland and French-speaking Europe. Dr. J. K. Howard is now back in Britain, and can no longer act as Central African representative.

BACK NUMBERS OF JOURNAL. Can be obtained from the Publications Office. See details inside back cover.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

JAMES VAN SOMMER, AN UNDENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIAN AND MAN OF PRAYER

T. C. F. Stunt

Some years ago there appeared in the *Echoes Quarterly Review* for 1957, an article entitled *James Van Sommer: Missionary Enthusiast*¹ by one of the editors of the Review, Mr. W. T. Stunt. In this article the writer described a magazine called *The Missionary Reporter*,² edited by James Van Sommer from July 1853 to January 1858. The story centred around a number of Christians in North East London who had a burden for Missionary work. James Van Sommer was one of them, but apart from his magazine there seemed to be little definite information about him. Through a series of coincidences, the present writer has come across several sources of information about the missionary enthusiast and his circle and they may be of interest to others.

James Van Sommer was born in 1822, into a fairly prosperous business family.³ His grandfather, James Van Sommer, was Secretary to the Managers of the Stock Exchange.⁴ The younger James was trained as a solicitor and in 1870 he was given by Matthew Coulthurst of Coutts Bank, the legal practice of Coulthurst's late brother Henry who had been a friend of the family of Van Sommer's wife. At least one of Van Sommer's sons went into the business and the family name continues today in a distinguished firm of solicitors.

It is not clear where the Van Sommer family lived when James was a boy, but by 1847 he was living in or near Hackney and was included in the little group of Christians who met to study the Scriptures and out of which had grown the little assembly of Brethren which met each Sunday at Ellis's Room, Hackney. One of the leading figures in this group was William Thomas Berger. Converted as a young man in 1833,⁵ Berger

had discovered the power of the Scriptures and the usefulness of Bible study in a small group. It was through his brother who was a Methodist that he met the famous naturalist, Philip Henry Gosse.⁶ An account of the friendship is given in Gosse's own words in his biography, from which we extract the following: "Until I knew the dear Bergers, I was not aware that a movement of this character was in existence; nor had I so much as heard, during my three years' residence in Hackney, that in a little retired building, called Ellis's Room, a body of Christians holding these views met every Lord's day. Quite early on my new friends invited me to take part in a meeting held weekly at their house, for studying the Holy Word. Of such a "scripture reading", now so common, I had never heard. I found sitting round a large table in their dining-room, each with a bible before him, about ten persons—William and Mary Berger, George Pearse, Capel Berger, Edward Spencer, Edward Hanson, James Van Sommer, and perhaps one or two more; and I took my place in the little company.⁷ This was in 1847. In the following year Gosse met Miss Emily Bowes who used, each Sunday morning, to walk over to Hackney from Clapton where she lived, to join these Brethren. In November they were married at Tottenham from the house of Robert Howard.⁸

Clearly the Hackney group was in close contact with the assembly at Brook Street, Tottenham, where John Eliot Howard and his brother Robert were leading figures.⁹ At both Tottenham and Hackney there was great missionary interest. George Pearse who was in the little study group that Gosse described, and Richard Ball of Taunton who had left the Society of Friends about the same time as the Howard brothers,¹⁰ began to edit in 1850 *The Gleaner in the Missionary Field* which in 1853 became exclusively occupied with work in China under the name of *The Chinese Missionary Gleaner*.¹¹ Pearse was the Secretary of the Chinese Evangelisation Society through which Hudson Taylor first went to China.¹² Taylor himself was a frequent visitor, in the early 1850's, to the assemblies at Tottenham and Hackney and it was at the latter that he met W. T. Berger (whom we have already mentioned) when George Pearse took him and his future brother-in-law, Benjamin Broomhall, to lunch with the Bergers one Sunday after morning worship.¹³

It will thus be seen that James Van Sommer, while at Hackney in the 1840's and at Tottenham from 1851 to 1857, was in the midst of some considerable missionary interest. Berger, who was to prove a faithful friend to Hudson Taylor as the China Inland Mission's first home director, married Van Sommer's sister Mary in about 1847.¹⁴ Missionary interest, however, was not confined to China. The pioneer missionary, Anthony Norris Groves, visited Tottenham in October 1852, and on November 1st he noted in his journal that he had brought the subject of foreign missions before the brethren at Tottenham and 'they hope, in union with the believers in Hackney, Orchard Street, and other places, to form an effectual committee to care for these things.'¹⁵ On March 13th 1853 he observed: 'There is an increasing interest about missions especially at Tottenham and Hackney . . .'¹⁶ Three or four months later James Van Sommer began to publish *The Missionary Reporter*.

The contents of this magazine are admirably described, together with Van Sommer's missionary principles, in the article mentioned above.¹⁷ The missionaries referred to in the magazine worked in a wide variety of countries and the magazine must have proved very informative to those who read it. But the great object was to stimulate local churches to have direct relations with missionaries. Van Sommer wanted every church to be a missionary society, supporting the work overseas by gifts and especially by prayer.¹⁸ He believed in prayer more than many Christians, and spent a great part of his life trying to encourage other believers to pray more and to pray corporately. From his writings it is possible to follow the development of his thinking in this respect. In 1849 he became a Sunday-school teacher¹⁹—a work which he continued when he moved to Tottenham after his marriage to Mary Arnott. He was also involved with the work of the London City Mission.²⁰ In both these spheres of service he was troubled by the fact that very few of the Christians with whom he was working enjoyed real liberty in public prayer. The first time he arranged, at his own home, a study period for Sunday-school teachers, he 'spent parts of many days in composing and recomposing a little prayer, learned it by heart, escaped from the drawing room while the tea was being removed, prayed it all over again in private with much perturbation of mind, and finally uttered it with my fellow Sunday-school teachers, feeling much relieved when it was over.'²¹

He saw a similar problem at a meeting of the London City Mission when the superintendent failed to turn up. 'Several of us felt it was desirable that the meeting should be commenced with prayer, but there was a general unwillingness to be the one who should open his lips.'²² Eventually someone read some collects from the Prayer Book, but Van Sommer could not but be struck by their inappropriateness. Over the years he came to value the freedom of extempore prayer without despising the composed prayer of his younger days. Such an interest in the practice of prayer was an obvious asset to a missionary enthusiast.²³ *The Missionary Reporter* announced prayer meetings and clearly Van Sommer's work as editor was designed to promote *informed* corporate prayer. In later years (c. 1869) Van Sommer produced two excellent little pamphlets which could well be reprinted today with profit: *Prayer Meetings: Practical Suggestions*; and *Practical Suggestions on the Use of Scripture in Extempore Prayer*. Some of the advice and warnings in these pamphlets clearly comes from the heart of one who has pondered deeply over the problems of both personal and corporate prayer.

The suggestion in the latter of these pamphlets is often ignored today. To pray simply in the language of Scripture that is open in front of the person praying is both easier and more comprehensible, but instead we so often fall into the error of the pharisees and think that a short prayer is not as good as a long one. Other advice is equally relevant today as it was a hundred years ago when Van Sommer gave it. 'Those who pray aloud have to be careful lest they add to the temptation of passing from *supplication* to God into *meditation*..²⁴ 'It sometimes happens that the assembly

do not find themselves assisted in praying to God by the supplications of those who engage in prayer; in which case the latter would probably feel it right (or if they do not, it might be desirable for some elder Christian) to ask them privately to refrain from that which they design to be an assistance, but which others do not find to be so'.²⁵ 'Everything approaching to loud vociferation should be far from us . . . Some years' experience of prayer meetings leads me to the conclusion, when I hear an excitable prayer, that it is a delusion to think that it arises from fervency of spirit. The cause is sometimes a nervous temperament in a truly Christian man . . . and sometimes . . . excitement of what the Scripture calls the flesh'.²⁶ The present writer was reminded at more than one point when reading the tract on *Prayer Meetings*, of that admirable little tract by the late W. E. Vine entitled *Leading in Prayer*, which also could be usefully reprinted. Far too many writers on this subject avoid practical problems and as a result frequently render their work less useful than it might have been. Van Sommer had no illusions on that point. Today we may be no longer frightened by extempore prayer as some were a hundred years ago, but it would seem that many other failings have not changed much.

In 1857 James Van Sommer moved from Tottenham to Eastbourne.²⁷ The family seem to have also had a house at Reigate where his second son, William was born in 1859. He was named after William Berger who had married his father's sister, and whom we have mentioned, and who had a large estate nearby at East Grinstead²⁸ where the children used to play. At Eastbourne Van Sommer continued to encourage meetings for corporate prayer and Bible study. Describing the latter, at a later date, he wrote: 'No-one presided. The passage to be considered was always known beforehand and it was with some a subject of previous study. The exact meaning in orderly detail of words and sentences came into view, which has its place even with well-educated persons . . . This meeting was sometimes attended by several ministers, some coming from a distance—even seven on one occasion—and by twenty or twenty-five private Christians, being residents or visitors'.²⁹ His suggestions for such gatherings are again very practical. Those likely to take part should not sit together. Speakers should not address individuals so as to avoid breaking the corporate nature of the meeting. No-one should be afraid of pauses in such a study circle.³⁰

In 1873 Van Sommer moved back to London and bought a house in Wimbledon, where he lived until his death in 1901.³¹ It seems likely that in this last period of his life he worshipped with an Anglican communion as his wife and daughter were buried with him at St. Mary's Wimbledon. One of the pamphlets that he published at this time was entitled: *Lay Service: its nurseries and its spheres*, which made further practical suggestions about work in Sunday schools, the Y.M.C.A., Family Prayers, Christian visitation, Scripture reading meetings, and public addresses. The use of the word 'lay' would seem to point to an Anglican readership.³²

If this was the case we may have here some tangible evidence for assessing the influence of early brethren upon evangelical Christians in communion with other denominations. Clearly, Van Sommer carried much of his earlier experience with him into his new ecclesiastical connections. Today, and indeed fifty years ago, extempore prayer is a commonplace among evangelicals of most denominations though it evidently was not in the 1840s and 50s. Philip Gosse had never heard of a Scripture reading meeting in the 1840s though he was a Methodist of the more primitive type. Perhaps the proliferation of such meetings among evangelicals may have been, in some measure, due to men like Van Sommer.

Similarly one can detect the ecclesiastical principles of earlier years in another later publication of Van Sommer. In a booklet entitled: *Outline of Scriptural Facts, past, present and prophetic*, we read the following: The Church's 'name in its own proper unity is *The Church of God*. As such it does not possess in addition any earthly name as Roman, Greek, Protestant, Established, Dissenting etc. Still in a subordinate sense, a local assembly of those who have repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a Church.

'Were local Churches all pure and perfect it would be otherwise; but this being not so, local churches do not in the aggregate, form the Universal Church, but every individual believer whether in a local church or not is a true member of the one Catholic Church'.³³

This approach continued to be coupled with an emphasis upon the insignificance of denomination. Van Sommer had learnt at Hackney and Brook Street the value of a non-sectarian outlook and he carried this with him. In his book on *Lay Service* he observed that one of the blessings of working with the Y.M.C.A. was that denominations were forgotten.³⁴ The whole question is treated very valuably in another of his works which, up till now, has only been found in the Library of Count Guicciardini, in Florence.³⁵ The booklet is entitled: *Christian Catholicity distinguished from Roman Catholicity*. It was a lecture to the Y.M.C.A. at Eastbourne in March 1870 at the time of the Vatican Council and the decree of Papal Infallibility. The principle enunciated by Van Sommer is no less valuable today, and with three brief extracts from it we shall close. 'Christian catholicity embraces a l the flock and all God's servants . . . By God's servants I mean all who, loving the souls of men tell them of the provision of God's love through His Son and through His Spirit, and seek to train the followers of Jesus to put on His holy and loving character, to tread in His footsteps and to learn His mind. This breadth of view becomes the children of God.' The Christian 'may be called indeed, of the Established Church, a Baptist, a Wesleyan, a Congregationalist, a Presbyterian, of the Roman Catholic Church, of the Greek Church. This is partly his own matter and partly the result of his birth; he was born such in the language of men . . . Sectarian feelings and strife and jealousy are altogether out of place here. It is not a question of what denomination to join. It is darkness or light, the power of Satan or the Kingdom of God; having life or not having life'.³⁶

General Note

It is important to recall that though the Christians in the assemblies at Tottenham and Hackney were called Brethren, their direct contact with the leaders of the movement in the West Country (apart from Bristol) in the 1830's was not very great. It would not be true to say that they were separate from them from the start, but clearly at Tottenham there was comparatively little internal division over the sorrows of 1845-9. This may indicate a greater measure of independence than is often imagined. It seems that the great dispensational question was not so fiercely debated among these people with the result that though prophetic questions were not ignored, they did not become such a bone of contention.

Perhaps it is significant that Groves found these people more responsive to the challenge of missionary labour. Together with the assemblies at Bristol, the North London meetings derived more in origin from dissenting denominations whereas the Irish and Plymouth leaders were almost entirely drawn from the Established Church. This may explain the truly non-denominational emphasis of men like Müller and the Howards which so influenced the circle of which James Van Sommer was a member for a time.

Notes

1. *Echoes Quarterly Review* (Bath, Vol. IX No. 4. Oct-Dec. 1957. pp.18-23, (hereafter cited as E.Q.R.)
2. *The Missionary Reporter* (London 1853-8 hereafter cited as M.R.).
3. General details of James Van Sommer and his family unless otherwise stated are taken from *Records of the Van Sommer Family* (Bath 1945) which contains the pedigrees and a memorial of James Van Sommer's younger son William.
4. There are several works on financial subjects by him in the Library of the British Museum.
5. W. T. Berger. *The Wages of Sin and Eternal Punishment* (London 1886) p.1, also see Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor. *Hudson Taylor* (London 1911-18) vol. II p.25, (hereafter cited as *Life of Hudson Taylor*); J. C. Pollock: *Hudson Taylor and Maria* (London 1962) pp. 114-5. (hereafter cited as *Hudson Taylor and Maria*).
6. Edmund Gosse: *Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.*, (London 1890). This book was written seventeen years before the notorious *Father and Son* and is far more reliable. (Hereafter cited as *Life of Gosse*).
7. *Life of Gosse* pp. 377-8.
8. *Life of Gosse* pp. 217-8.
9. *Life of Hudson Taylor*. Vol. 1 p.116 see also D. J. Beattie: *Brethren: The story of a great Recovery* (Kilmarnock 1940) pp. 79-84 and H. Pickering: *Chief Men among the Brethren* (London, 2nd. ed. 1931) pp. 58-60.
10. For the controversy with the Society of Friends see *The Inquirer* (London) vol. 1 (1838) passim. Ball was baptized by immersion by B. W. Newton, at Exeter in 1837, *Inquirer* vol. 1 p.64.
11. *Life of Hudson Taylor* vol. 1 p. 90; M.R. No. 1 p.2.
12. A somewhat critical assessment of the work of the C.E.S. is given in *Hudson Taylor and Maria* pp.22, 31-2, 34-5, 48, 67-8, 78-9. These criticisms do not detract from the fact that Pearce and his co-workers were facing up to a challenge that few others were prepared for. The fact that they accepted Taylor and sent him to China when he was only 21 is considerably in their favour.
13. *Life of Hudson Taylor* vol. 11 p.25 footnote.
14. *Life of Gosse* p.377. Philip Gosse gave the date as 1843 but it must have been after 1846 when he returned from Jamaica. See p.213.
15. *Memoir of Anthony Norris Groves* (London 1st ed. 1856) p.488.
16. *Ibid.* p.494.
17. See note 1.
18. M.R. No. 1 p.8.
19. *Practical Suggestions on the Use of Scripture in Extempore Prayer* by James Van Sommer (London 1869) pp.7-8.

20. Ibid. pp.5-6. Social problems were not neglected by early brethren as much as one is sometimes led to suppose. In the *M.R.* No. 1 pp.57-9 there is a review (of a page and a half) of a pamphlet entitled *London by Moonlight*, which dealt at some length with the problems of prostitution in London and Christian work relating to it—a subject rarely even mentioned in Victorian England except by men like Gladstone.
21. *Practical Suggestions* etc. p.8.
22. Ibid. p.5.
23. Though never (in the traditional sense of the word) a missionary himself, Van Sommer's enthusiasm seems to have infected his children. Two of his daughters, Ann and Elizabeth were missionaries with the Egypt General Mission and the Nile Mission Press. A grandson by another of his daughters, Catherine, was Dr. H. W. L. Paddon of the Grenfell Mission in Labrador.
24. *Prayer Meetings: Practical Suggestions* by James Van Sommer, (London, 1869) pp.12-13.
25. Ibid. p.9.
26. Ibid. pp. 14-15.
27. Information kindly supplied by Mr. H. C. Hitchcock, from the *Brook Street Chapel Register*. The date is not 1851 as stated in *E.Q.R.* p.22.
28. See *Life of Hudson Taylor* vol. 11 p.26; and *Hudson Taylor and Maria* p.114.
29. J. Van Sommer: *Lay Service: its nurseries and its spheres*, (London ?1884) pp.29-30.
30. *Lay Service*, pp.30-31.
31. Information obtained from the register of burials at St. Mary's Church, Wimbledon. *Records of the Van Sommer Family* gives 1908 as the date of his death on Chart IV, but this is incorrect.
32. A later edition (?1884) of *Practical Suggestions* gives 'Prayer-book' with a capital 'P' whereas in the earlier edition there was only a small 'p'. Similarly the later edition describes the collects in the Prayer-book as 'very, very, good', instead of merely 'very good', as earlier. See *Practical Suggestions* etc. (1869) pp. 6-7, and *Extempore Prayer* (?1884) pp. 4-5.
33. J. Van Sommer: *Outline of Scriptural Facts, past, present and prophetic*, (London, ?1884) p.11.
34. *Lay Service* (London, 1884) pp.12-13.
35. Count Guicciardini, as an exile in England was well acquainted with the Brethren in London and was probably a frequent visitor at Tottenham and Hackney, thus knowing Van Sommer. The booklet in question was possibly sent to him by William Berger who in later years lived at Cannes, (*Life of Hudson Taylor*) vol. 1 facing p.492, 11 p.560) and who, according to Count Guicciardini's biographer was 'one of the great benefactors' of the work in Italy. S. Jacini: *Un Riformatore Toscano dell'epoca del Risorgimento* (Florence, 1940) p.236, see also p.260.
36. J. Van Sommer: *Christian Catholicity distinguished from Roman Catholicity* (London 1870). Page references have been mislaid. The reference number in the Guicciardiniana, Biblioteca Nazionale, in Florence, is 18-12-1.

CORRESPONDENCE

Each of the last three issues of the *Journal* has resulted in a constructive correspondence. We are not only grateful to members who have contributed to this, but are glad to present a selection from their letters in this *Members Issue*.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS TODAY

THE EDITORS OF ECHOES OF SERVICE, 1 Widcombe Crescent, Bath, Somerset, have written at some length to the editor concerning Dr. J. K. Howard's review of the book by Professor R. I. Rotberg of Harvard University. (CBRFJ xii, pp. 34-46):—

Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia

Dr. Howard referred to an account of the founding of Johnstone Falls mission contained in Professor Rotberg's book. The editors point out that, while Professor Rotberg does not state the sources from which he obtained his account, there is no evidence in their possession which supports it, and indeed a considerable amount which contradicts the tenor of the story he gives. They have sent the editor a considerable number of detailed extracts from contemporary correspondence which indicate that the attitude of the missionaries concerned was honourable by any standard: and in particular that a fuller quotation by Professor Rotberg of the letters from which he quotes brief extracts would have given an impression almost the opposite of that which is given in the book. The manner of quotation from one highly respected lady missionary of the time does seem, indeed, to cast a wholly unmerited slur upon her memory: a slur which her correspondence shows to have been quite unjustified.

Professor Rotberg later refers to the part of Brethren missionaries in helping the Bantu chief concerned: the details given by the editors more than corroborate this part of the account given in the book.

MR. A. M. SAX, (International Society for the Evangelization of the Jews, 10 Dovedale Road, Liverpool 18) writes:—

I was very glad to read the letter from my friend Mr. H. L. Ellison. I spend a lot of time visiting Assemblies speaking about my work among the Jewish people and find it very disheartening at times that all people seem to ask for is a demonstration of the Passover Table or some other illustration of Jewish life; in fact only recently an Assembly wrote to ask if I could let them have an illustrated talk on one of the Jewish Festivals and I replied that I hoped they would be coming behind us in our work. God has taken care of the past and will also look after the future, but expects us to do something for the present. The reply was that they would still like an illustrated lecture of a Jewish Festival but perhaps I could bring it up to the present day! I left the Hall with a gift for our work, but one finds that what Mr. Ellison said is so very, very true—work among Jewish people is something that so many in the Assemblies take little notice of. It is also true that in other parts of the Christian Church our

work attracts little attention, but then other parts of the Christian Church do not profess the same admiration or the same wordy willingness to do something about 'the Lord's ancient people'. Perhaps the letters from Harry Ellison and myself may move certain of our brethren to do something, and even if it is to disagree with us, at least it will bring the Jew to mind and draw attention to our work.

D. C. FLEMING (G.P.O. Box 2642, Bangkok, Thailand) writes:—

Most missionaries would say they are seeking to build local indigenous churches. They would profess to believe in the autonomy of the local church, the priesthood of all believers, the exercising of spiritual gifts in the Church, and the government of the church by a plurality of elders, but in practice all this is often replaced by a situation where the missionary exercises an authoritarian rule, or at the best manages to see that nothing is done in the church unless it first passes him and bears his mark of approval. This latter can be done very subtly, but is effective none the less. And this would appear to be the root of the whole problem, namely a fear by the missionary to let the control of things slip out of his hands. This does not necessarily imply wilful duplicity on the part of the missionary, but rather a lack of ability to put into practice that which he teaches. It is clear that many today are seeing through this outmoded pattern, but as C. S. Lewis once pointed out in a different context, 'the whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it.' (*The Abolition of Man* p.55). It is only too possible to see through the futility of a certain activity without being able to pin-point the cause or suggest a remedy.

We all justify our actions by reference to the apostle Paul; not to, would be to admit that we were wrong. Yet, without wishing to embark on yet another analysis of Paul's travels and methods, it is plain that Paul got his churches functioning in a remarkably short time compared with us today. To talk about the universal language and the readiness of synagogues as preaching places does not constitute a sufficiently good excuse for us to remain content with our lack of progress. There is more to it than that. Rather it seems that what has been overlooked is the clear statement in Matthew 28: 19-20 that we are to make disciples of people, baptize them, and teach them all things which the Lord commanded. Yet we are either unable or afraid to go ahead and put this command into practice.

So often one hears the expression 'We think he may be a believer'. Apparently no one ever asked him. He may have been coming to meetings for years but never has anyone got him aside and tried to explain to him point by point the Christian gospel. And by the Christian gospel I do not mean a casual sermon at the end of which we append a command to accept Christ as his own personal Saviour; but rather the great truths of God and His character, the nature of man especially in relation to this God, the hopelessness of man, and the justice and love of God as seen in judgment and in the person and work of Christ. It is no wonder few get saved. They do not know why they should be saved. An interesting sermon on a

Bible story even with a scriptural call to faith and repentance will be lost on a person if he does not know there is a God to whom he is accountable. Of course it is not within us to create faith within another, but with a systematic and thorough teaching with the individual we are likely to find out where his deficiency lies, and so discharge our responsibility more effectively. But what often happens is that a person who shows interest is looked upon as a 'sign of encouragement', and is treated as good subject matter for prayer letters and discussion, while little positive approach is made to him. If finally he does get converted he has by this time developed the same attitude as was shown towards him, and so settles down as another 'addition to the numbers'. That is, if he gets baptized; which is the next obstacle.

How often we hear it said that 'we are hoping he will see the truth of baptism soon', generally after he has been a Christian two or three years. Or there is the other statement: 'We think he is a Christian but don't feel he is ready for baptism yet'. Surely if he is a Christian he is ready for baptism according to the New Testament. If he is not ready for baptism then it must be because he is not a Christian. The new life of Christ is the New Testament requirement for baptism, and if we gave baptism its New Testament significance then maybe our fears of a person 'going back' would be allayed. Most of our problems are self-created through a lack of faith in God and in His Word. If we looked upon baptism as the open testimony to faith in Christ in a public place before the eyes of all, instead of a sort of ecclesiastical coming of age, then we would surely be nearer the New Testament. For most of us our baptism was greeted with congratulations and handshakes all round. We were 'in'. If we had lived in New Testament days it may have been met with stone throwing and the spoiling of our goods. We would have been 'out'. In a heathen population a person who will go up to the local park and be baptized in the park before all, is not likely to make his stand lightly. We have a positive commission to baptize our converts; the book of Acts tells us how.

The argument will be raised that we must wait for evidence of the new life, but for the early missionaries baptism was that evidence. They adopted a forthright approach. They did not sit back to see if their converts would 'go back' or 'go on'. Sometimes it is little wonder that converts do 'go back'. What happens is this. After they make a profession, they are then taught assurance, complete with proof-texts. It is impressed upon them that they are Christians and are God's children, but they are excluded from the fellowship as if they were not. They are taught eternal security and told they can never be lost, but are not baptized in case they go back. Some do drop off out of sheer discouragement—'just as well we didn't baptize him'. If we are to teach them assurance we must show them that we have assurance too. If they have been taught the gospel, have believed, been baptized, been unconditionally received as our fellow believers (not just as new converts), and taught to practise their part with us all in the study and propagation of God's Word, then they will mature more quickly and have great joy and purpose in their Christian life. Within

the two years that they otherwise would have been waiting for baptism, they should have developed into strong leaders in the church. It is our job to *make* disciples.

Paul sent off his letters to the churches he founded sometimes only a few months, and at the most only a few years, after he founded them. He did not look upon the new believers as babes for ever. He taught them great truths of Christian doctrine from the outset, and made it the point of his prayers that God would give them the understanding of these things. He had faith in his prayers to God and in the Spirit of God who indwelt the new believers just as truly as He indwelt Paul. When he was confronted with a group of Christians who remained spiritual babes, he did not pamper them, but chided them in very forthright language. He had no desire to see people of no spiritual discernment. He intended to give people the whole counsel of God.

We need this spirit of Paul. We are inclined to think of ourselves as having so many centuries of Christian teaching behind us, so much of a Christian way of life at home, so much background from Sunday School and parents, that we cannot possibly expect these people to reach our state of spiritual discernment and maturity. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact the absence of some of this background could be an asset, in that new believers will search the Scriptures in the light of the indwelling Spirit, not in the light of established traditions. These people are indwelt by the same Spirit, Who can enlighten their minds just as He enlightens ours, and they have the same Bible as a guide. Maybe in some places they have not the political, social or academic standards of the homelands, but the potential is there no less. Some who have had very little even of primary education can develop great ability and discernment, not simply in giving thoughts on an isolated verse, but in carrying out Old and New Testament background studies, and expository and doctrinal studies. It has by no means been proved that the increased affluence and higher education even in the homelands has resulted in a higher general standard of spiritual ability among the church members at large.

It is either ignorance of the situation, lack of faith, or a false sense of spiritual superiority (or maybe a bit of each) which prompts missionaries to say 'You couldn't teach them that; they'd never understand it; it's far too hard for them'. In practice we have proved the opposite to be true, and in fact have often found that the converted pagan is more teachable than some at home whose minds have been conditioned to a certain pattern of thought. We should not look patronisingly upon these folk as simple country Christians. The reckoning from a higher world may be the opposite.

Frequently the complaint is heard that one method after another is tried and none seems to be more effective than another. Hence we get even more and more methods each year. Apparently 'disciple-ing' people has never really been attempted seriously. 'Make disciples, baptize, and teach' was the commandment. Paul went forward with this commission

and his Bible. He had no schemes, programmes, equipment, or publicity department, yet he got remarkable results. In fact the absence of these aids could be an advantage in building a self-functioning church.

All missionaries like to speak of a New Testament church, but by this expression we should not understand simply a church where Christians are free to take part at the Lord's Supper without a chairman officiating. A church may have this characteristic meeting and not be functioning properly at all. There is an all too prevalent attitude which looks upon the missionary as the evangelist of the church (sometimes the pastor and teacher too), while the responsibility of the local Christians is to attend meetings regularly. It is even possible to have Christians studying the Scriptures and teaching other believers, while the evangelism is all left to the missionary. The church is still not self functioning. And if they see the missionary cluttered up with his equipment, rushing around the place keeping up his programme, they will gather the impression that unless they have that amount of equipment and that amount of time, they cannot do effective evangelism. Here, possibly more than anywhere else, the missionary must be careful of getting in his own way.

It is tempting, when the need is so great, to engage in an enthusiastic round of activities, but it is possible for these activities to slow up the process of independence in the church. The missionary, by the very nature of his work, must be a leader, but the more activities he starts the more it all revolves around him, and the less likely it becomes for the locals to take over. If however he sees himself as necessarily dispensable in the growth of the church and actually works, not just theorizes, to this end, he may not be stuck in the one place for twenty years after all. But the longer he stays there the more it becomes his 'baby' and the less he wants to part with it. He fears division if he goes. Maybe they won't carry on all the things he has imposed upon them. He then finds all the reasons why it would be impossible for him to move out. Again the problem is one of his own making.

We must teach the locals to do evangelism. By this I do not mean taking them with us to give out tracts on the corner, or having them lead the singing at the open air meeting. The foreign missionary and the local believers can do one and the same work, namely, teaching people the truths of the gospel (not just Bible stories); and a well instructed local believer will do that far more effectively than a foreigner. Therefore they must be taught the Scriptures continually, and be taught also how to impart their knowledge to both non-believers and fellow believers according as they assess the need.

Apart from Sunday, which is given to teaching for the Christians, our time we find is divided fairly evenly between teaching believers and non-believers, generally individually or in groups of two or three. Within months new Christians can in turn be teaching non-Christians or even other new Christians. They are taught positive witnessing; that is, not just a word or two as a reason for not going to the movies, but actually

teaching any who show interest in their beliefs. They are not encouraged merely to invite people to meetings (where they will hear someone speak to the Christians anyway) but to teach them themselves. Once the missionary helps them through the first few times they soon find confidence. Also, by the Christians teaching themselves they do not convey the impression that they are introducing them to the foreigners' religion. Even in a Buddhist stronghold with a strictly adhered-to state religion there is no shortage of contacts. Most of our contacts have been made by the local Christians either at university, college, work, or in their local neighbourhoods. Because work and study hours are not all uniform throughout the city (Bangkok) it is possible for someone to be teaching someone almost every morning, afternoon and evening. Anyone prepared to adjust his time can therefore make a suitable balance between his Bible study, evangelism, and general contact with the heathen population in his normal vocation. He does not have to give up his job and become a full-time national worker in order to do effective evangelism. Giving all this teaching is not by itself going to make people become Christians or better Christians as the case may be. But it will give them a better chance.

In terms of world population this may sound a small effort. But what does not? Yet in the long run a small self-propagating church should be no small force. Our existence as Christians is testimony to this. Reaching the masses with a radio programme or a tract may not be reaching them with the gospel, as any who have listened to radio programmes or read tracts will realize. All things have their place and use and we must never be so narrow or irreverent as to limit the Holy Spirit's activity to the particular thing we are doing. It is only too easy to think that our plan is the divine plan, when actually it may just happen to be the particular plan that suits our personality and inclination best. One day it will all be put to the test.

Of course the above outline is no formula for success. We have yet to take into account the missionary's personal life, the place of prayer, and many other considerations. But at least we have made a start.

MR. STANLEY J. BAKER (The Mission House, Naphill, High Wycombe, Bucks) writes:—

I have just finished reading the Special Christian Missions number of the CBRF *Journal*. It is very stimulating and I congratulate you on it!

1. Right away we are told it is a 'largely American contribution' which makes me ask once again why it is that the Americans have taken the lead in missionary matters in our day—there must be some reason. If we can understand this we may be able to think our way through many other pressing problems. I understand that a speaker at a conference on evangelism held recently in a Latin American country said 'Because the United States is going down hill, like Britain before her, we in Latin America must take over the responsibility of world missions' (Sunday School Times, 24th September, 1966 and the I.F.M.A. News, November-

December, 1966.) From reports that I hear I think that this might be true and might be the explanation. North America has had the lead for some years now. It is possible that she is now on the decline but most of us have not noticed it. Charles Troutman, writing in the Summer 1966 number of the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, on *What Really Keeps Students from Volunteering for Mission?* certainly suggests that this is the situation. I do not, of course, mean that he says this directly, but it seems to be implied in all that he writes. Meanwhile Latin America moves forward with the 'fastest growing Church in the modern world'. This is a great change for it is less than thirty years ago that we were talking of South America as the 'neglected continent'! If we in our day would hear 'what the Spirit saith unto the Churches' we cannot overlook the situation in Latin America. Neither must we despise the many true missionary-hearted stalwarts from North America for there are still many of them, even if modern American Christian youth seems to have lost much of the zeal and interest in missions which was typical of their fathers! Perhaps we have failed to honestly face up to the truth of the fact that we, in the United Kingdom, live in a very real mission-field situation, notwithstanding the long list of Missions and Churches that are listed under the British Isles in the *World Missions Handbook*.

When Dr. McGavran writes 'every mode of mission should be submitted to the test of whether it does in fact operate to multiplying churches in receptive populations' he gives the strong impression that he has little interest in evangelism among Muslims and Jews. I would be rather inclined to think that one reason, among others, for the lack of response in the Muslim world is that missionaries have in the past done exactly what he advocates—avoided it to concentrate upon those places where there is a greater response! So the Muslim neglected world becomes more and more neglected and more and more missionaries go out to join those where there are already a good number proportionally at work.

Moreover I wonder if McGavran does not sometimes 'hit the wrong ball'. I find it hard to believe that readers of the *CBRF Journal* honestly think that missionary work is 'building Christ into the foundations of Brazil' or 'maintaining a Christian presence in modern industry' or 'doing urban work' (whatever that may mean!). I have met many missionaries who are evangelists and others who are pastors and teachers, but as far as I know all of them without exception have worked towards the establishing and multiplying of churches. Even educational and medical missionaries have this end in view. Do we constantly under-emphasize and betray church planting? I do not think so, although it may be conceded that we may have gone about the job in the wrong way sometimes.

I wonder if Donald McGavran has in fact voiced Roland Allen's thesis? Although I have read *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* and *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, and the Causes which hinder it*, I feel that Donald McGavran is pleading for something rather different to what Roland Allen was pleading for! It seems to me that Roland Allen

pleaded for a return to New Testament methods, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, but that Donald McGavran pleads for a kind of missionary strategy which ignores the fact that 'the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and wither it goeth', and that this illustrates the way in which the Holy Spirit works. Is our commission to preach the Gospel to all men, or only to the more responsive? If response is our measuring-stick then we must write off the mission of the Son of Man as a failure, for few responded there in the hard Jewish mission field in which He laboured. In the training of the twelve Our Lord was a 'Church-builder' but it was a very small Church on very barren and unresponsive soil! Yet the travesty of the argument is that this should have been, according to the rules of anthropology, sociology, and psychology, the best possible soil for the Gospel! For were they not God's elect nation, whose lives were built upon the rules and laws of the Old Testament, and was there not a strong messianic expectation in many hearts?

Do we not need to return to the doctrine of the Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and then bring ourselves to the place where broken, cleansed and yielded, He can use us just as He wills and when and where? Would not this be of far greater service to the Church of Christ than hundreds of books on various aspects of Christian mission, useful though they might well be? I love the books on Christian missions, including the Christian Missions number of the CBRF *Journal*, but I fear that we will get too clever, even to the point that we will feel that we have a right to dictate to the Holy Spirit because we have studied missionary strategy and we think we ought to know just where and how He should work tomorrow. Are these fears foolish or unjustified?

3. 'Missions . . . deceived by their own promotional work'. Here I am in full agreement with Dr. McGavran! Mr. Padilla, is I believe, right when he says that 'missionaries have often been expected to make dramatic presentations of their work in order to maintain among their supporters a "romantic" image of their vocation'. You may say that no society expects this of Brethren missionaries. No, but the congregations at home still expect it! The result is that our whole outlook on missions is distorted. We have learned that this not only concerns the missionary and the Church at home, but also the young Church on the mission field for somehow the information leaks out that missionary deputation in the sending countries is not always exactly honest. How much we all need to examine our motives and to search our hearts!

4. Mr. Padilla touches a most important point when he says that the large majority of churches in Latin America have no concept of the meaning of Bible exposition. Is this not also true of the sending churches? Is it not true on the mission field *because* it is true at home? Have we not reproduced overseas the same type of church-life that we have known at home? Nothing is more urgent than that this should be put right, beginning with our home congregation, and that without delay! Our own little congregation may be self-governing under the Lordship of Christ but yet have an influence on other congregations across the world.

5. I am surprised that Mr. Padilla thinks that the Gospel has been persistently withheld from the educated and I am inclined to think that what may be true of South America in this respect may not apply to other parts of the world. It seems strange indeed that Christians have been blamed on the one hand for giving too much time and effort to education, establishing Christian Colleges and Schools, and then that others feel that nothing has been so much neglected. Again we may think that the methods have been wrong, but we cannot say that the Gospel has been withheld from students. I do not have the facts at my finger-tips here and now, but I do remember hearing it said that many of the leaders in Africa today trained in Christian schools and Colleges for there were no other places in those days where they could be trained! I would not wish you to quote me here for I ought to establish my case but I believe that there are a number of Christian Colleges in Asia. I have heard it said that spiritual results from the work in these Colleges has been poor. Nevertheless I would think that percentage-wise the professionals and students have had their share of Christian witness. We must remember that up to quite recently they have been but a small fragment of the population in most mission fields. Yet when I have said all this I agree that we ought to do much more in our own day if only because of the changed situation, for the student world has almost burst the seams on our day of hunger for learning and progress.

6. Students can be reached through literature but the illiterate can only be reached through the personal messenger. May that not be why so many missionaries concentrate on work among the less educated? It is even expected that radio witness must be followed up with some kind of Christian literature, which puts the illiterate at a disadvantage!

7. Is the educational level of Bible School graduates as bad as Mr. Padilla would have us think? I have met some missionaries whose educational attainments might be small, but whose love and zeal for the Lord has been great (a more than sufficient compensation!) but I know of not a few University graduates who have also attended Bible School, and I would think on reflection that they would at least equal, if not outnumber, those who worked under an educational disadvantage. Moreover we must not forget that many have keen and enquiring minds who have not had the opportunity of a more advanced education. Honestly, I am puzzled; where is this anti-intellectualism and lack of concern to face honest questions? I would think that there is nothing that so sharpens the mind as sincere honest Bible study. Christian workers ought to be Bible students, and therefore ought to have alert minds. On the whole I have found this to be true among the missionaries I have met. Again we may feel that educational, medical, radio and literature missions are the wrong methods (I do not, but others may!) yet let us be honest enough to say that these methods require at least average, if not above average, educational attainments.

8. Mr. Padilla tells us of a lack of well trained national leaders, but I have met missionaries from Asia who are disturbed about over-trained national leaders. Trained to such an extent that they are discontented to go back and serve the rural congregations from whence they came, and that in countries where the great majority of people live in the rural districts. Some feel that the Churches could be built up quicker and the missionaries could withdraw to take up other work if these nationals had only been trained to the level of leadership required for village communities.

9. I agree that there is no limit to what God can do through students who have caught the vision of Himself and of His purpose for humanity, but I would say it is just as true that there is no limit to what God can do through *anyone* who has caught the vision of Himself and of His purpose for humanity! Such talk sounds to me very much like limiting the Holy One of Israel. I think Mr. Padilla would probably agree with me in this, but we ought to be careful how we write and speak for it is very easy to give someone who could do a useful work for God an inferiority complex. Education cannot compensate for lack of consecration, and in all honesty consecration is the harder and more costly attainment!

You will observe that I have said nothing about the articles on *Contemporary Africa and Christian Strategy* and *Roland Allen*. That is simply because they do not raise questions in my mind in the same way as the other articles. I think they are good and well written, although I doubt if Brethren have much to learn from Roland Allen. I think they were well in advance of him in understanding the teaching of the New Testament. In saying this I do not wish to underestimate Roland Allen for he was a great Christian thinker and a man of strong conviction. I do think that to follow out his line of teaching to its full logical conclusion would bring one almost to the Brethren position.

Have you ever read *The New Testament Order for Church and Missionary* by Alex Rattray Hay? I have, and I feel that more than anyone else he is the man who has developed Roland Allen's thought. I am surprised that few people get excited about this book and wonder why. I would love to see this book reviewed in the *CBRF Journal*! You did not even think it worthy of a place in your bibliography!!! Oh dear!

Thank you for the missions number of the *Journal*. It has set us thinking along the right lines and is just what we need. May God use it to make us more efficient as we undertake the most important job in the world.

A SETTLED MINISTRY

MR. ERNEST M. TRENCHARD (Bolivia, 42, bajos izqda., Madrid 16, Spain) writes:—

In discussions on Church government and ministry it is rarely pointed out that, if a model exists, it must be found in the teaching and practice of the apostle Paul at a time when the concept of a universal Church was at length clearly understood. A transitional period, in the course of which a

group of Jewish believers, thinking of themselves as the Chosen Remnant of Israel, were gradually led to the understanding of a Church built up of believers from Jews and Gentiles, is a matter of history in the Acts of the Apostles. This is not stressed from the point of any dispensational theory, but for obvious historical and psychological reasons. The 'inevitability of gradualness' was underscored by the Master Himself in the Upper Chamber: 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth'. (John 16:12, 13). But it would be childish to think that the Holy Spirit's continued teaching was complete as soon as He had fallen upon the company of believers on the Day of Pentecost. If Peter already understood the universality of the Church as composed of Jews and Gentiles when he said that the promise was 'to all that are far off, every one that the Lord our God calls to Him' (Acts 2:39), then the visions and guidance of Acts 10 become nonsensical, for there would have been no door to open to the Gentiles. He clearly refers to the whole *diaspora* of Israel, who were the heirs of the promises—at least as far as Peter's understanding took him on that day. The Holy Spirit continued His teaching work as they were able to bear it.

All that is said of the Church in a favourable sense over the period described from Acts 2 as far as Acts 13 is exemplary ethically and spiritually, but does not provide models of Church organization and ministry—at least, directly. The Church-community in Jerusalem had to be broken up by persecution, the Gospel had to spread over Palestine—probably in close association with the synagogues—Saul of Tarsus was to be called and prepared, before the establishment on a large scale of local churches, whose members were drawn mainly from the Gentile world. The question should be this: What happens in these churches after the full recognition of Paul's apostleship? In the writer's opinion it is very unsafe to deduce an order of deacons from the temporal organization of Acts 6:1-6 because the normal character of the local churches had yet to be established; but it is unjustified to refuse to understand the recognised work of deacons in the local churches after the clear instruction given by the Teacher of the Gentiles in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8-13. This by way of example.

It is well known that Luke is very sensitive to atmosphere, and while he continues to refer to the first missionaries to the Gentiles as 'Barnabas and Saul', he indicates the prevalence of early Jewish Church tendencies which had not yet understood the apostleship of Paul. From Acts 13:13 the leadership of Paul was evident, as an Apostle in whom the signs of apostleship were clearly seen, so that Luke changes his terms to 'Paul and his company'. The specifically Gentile ministry of Paul was recognised by representatives of the Twelve in the circumstances of Gal. 2:7-10, and Paul himself insists again and again not only on his apostleship, but also on his function as a teacher of the Gentiles (Col. 1:21-29; 1 Tim. 1:11-14; 2 Tim. 1:11-14). He was not only a missionary strategist, but the God-appointed teacher in all that refers to doctrine and practice in the revealed 'mystery' of the Church.

The writer is not trying to make the point that all the congregations in the Roman provinces did exactly the same things in exactly the same ways, as local circumstances were bound to have their influence in practical matters. But he does believe that Paul was inspired to hand on a deposit of doctrine on the one hand, and on the other to establish the general lines of local church organization and ministry. The companies of the 'saints' were not just 'fellowships' on the basis of life in Christ, free to manifest this fellowship as they pleased. 1 Cor. 4:17 cannot be ignored: 'I sent to you Timothy . . . to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church'. In this context Paul's 'ways' cannot be individual idiosyncrasies or moral examples, but his ecclesiastical 'ways' or norms and as to these G. G. Findlay remarked: 'The "ways" Paul and Timothy observe, and to which the Corinthians must be recalled, are those inculcated uniformly in the Gentile mission'. Even about the 'minor' matter of the veiling of women Paul says: 'If any one is disposed to be contentious (let it be understood that) we recognise no other practice, nor do the Churches of God'. (1 Cor. 11:16). On the matter of orderly ministry according to gift, Paul insists: 'If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord' (1 Cor. 14:37).

At the very least we are called upon to study the Pauline pattern and to observe its essential principles. The matter is greatly simplified if it is recognised that the exact teaching of developed doctrine, of order and ministry was given by Paul, as the Apostle called and inspired for this very thing.

MR. DAVID G. LILLIE, (39 Rydon Lane, Countess Wear, Exeter)
writes:—

I was most favourably impressed with the way Mr. Prime developed his thesis right on until one comes to the section headed 'The Pattern'. I should imagine it must have gone down well with the particular audience for which it was intended. The insistence that our Lord's ministry was essentially one of teaching and preaching would have found general assent. I would also assent to this, but am curious to know why, in view of the scriptures quoted, Mr. Prime virtually ignores the ministry of healing and exorcism which seems to have been inseparably bound up with our Lord's teaching ministry.

For example, one notices that on page 4 (lines 1 and 2) although the words 'teaching' and 'preaching' are in italics for emphasis, the word 'healing' is not thus emphasized. This discrimination, it would seem, reflects the viewpoint of the one who gave the address rather than that of the Holy Spirit, who caused the words to be written originally.

It is interesting to see that Luke 24:19 is quoted in support of this emphasis, seeing that Luke here places 'deeds' even before 'words' in his description of the Lord. This he does again, of course, in Acts 1:1.

Reading on, I was delighted with Mr. Prime's clear presentation of the character of the ministry within local churches which from a study of the New Testament would appear to have been normal in those early days. I was just beginning to wonder how the footnote description of Rev. Derek J. Prime on page 3 would fit into all this when I came to the above-mentioned section!

After clearly enunciating the Scriptural practice of the vesting of the spiritual oversight—involving the tasks of ruling, teaching, and pastoral care—in a group of responsible men called elders, we are suddenly introduced without any explanation to a special 'ministering elder' who is elevated above his brethren to the role of 'presiding elder'. That one of the elders in any given church may virtually find himself in such a position is not denied or objected to in principle. But it is clear as one reads on that Mr. Prime has something more in mind than might at first meet the eye. By the time one has reached the end of the paragraph there has emerged the familiar form of 'The Minister' of Non-conformist tradition, complete with stipend and manse, and clerical collar (optional)! It is true that for the purpose of consistency within his thesis, Mr. Prime still attaches to this person the designation of 'elder'; but it would be interesting to know whether, at Lansdowne Evangelical Free Church for instance, this would be the normal way in which the average church member would think or speak of their 'Minister'.

Moreover in the concluding section of his address Mr. Prime discloses several interesting facts regarding the ministry at Lansdowne which do not seem to accord fully with his own concept of how the ministry in New Testament churches was usually conducted. Although he does not stress this as much as it is stressed in Paul's main passages on 'the ministry' (Romans 12, 1 Cor. 12 and 14, and Ephesians 4), Mr. Prime does suggest the existence normally of a variety of gifts all of which should be used for the edifying of the body (i.e. the local church). But in the last section of his address it appears that he has to be absent from Lansdowne before others who have gifts of ministry are called upon to exercise them!

My earnest hope is that those brethren who attended the Conference with high expectations that someone would give a lead to the cause of 'reform' whereby the pattern of 'assembly' procedure would be brought more into line with that of the familiar free church tradition, will have noticed and taken warning from the anti-climax which comes at the end of Mr. Prime's address.

Reforms there should be; not to speak of 'the sound of a rushing mighty wind'; but not, I hope, in the nature of yet further conformity to the deadly institutionalism of traditional christianity.

MR. T. C. F. STUNT (Flat 2, West Hill House, Motherby Hill, Lincoln) writes:—

Dr. Rowdon's most interesting essay is a valuable contribution to our growing enlightenment as to what early Brethren really did and did not say. It is encouraging to see the hoary legends finally nailed with chapter and verse!

The real weakness of the movement seems to have been that they never faced up to the place of tradition in the continuing life of the church. They failed to appreciate the farsightedness of Paul's injunction to Timothy that he should teach what he had learned, from Paul, to faithful men who could be trusted to teach a fourth generation.¹ Dr. Rowdon's section entitled *Training for Ministry* refers to Brethren's observations as to what qualifications are necessary for ministry, but there is no indication as to how they thought later generations should be trained. Apparently the problem did not occur to them.

There are several possible reasons for this. One may have been their expectation that the Second Coming would occur in their lifetime. Another could be the ages of the leading figures in the movement when it began. In 1830 some of them were ridiculously young. Newton was only 23, Müller, Wigram, Soltau, Congleton and Craik were 25, Hall was 26, Darby was 30, and Groves was 35. Our reading of books like *Chief Men among the Brethren* preconditions us to think of them as the Methuselah patriarchs which they were much later, after dominating the movement for the best part of fifty years.

Another reason may be related to certain social considerations. 'There is in it' wrote one of the earliest critics of the Brethren Movement, 'an aristocratic atmosphere, a kind of Madeira climate, which suits the tender lungs of the gentility. Gentlemen and ladies dissatisfied with the forms of a carnal Establishment can join the Plymouth Brethren without being jostled by vulgar Dissenters'.² This wealthier element who usually had an unearned income and more leisure, were able to devote a good deal of time to study and ministry. Thus all too often wealth together with age became a qualification for holding a place of authority. This can be shown from several examples.

Dr. Rowdon quotes the testimony of E. K. Groves, 'the eccentric son of A. N. Groves', who 'could claim that the ministry of Müller and Craik did not impinge on the freedom of others to exercise 'a like privilege.' However, we get a fuller picture, if some-what disillusioned, if we supplement *Bethesda Family Matters* with E. K. Groves's more outspoken volume *George Müller and his Successors**. That Müller was head and shoulders above his fellows at Bethesda was admitted even by such a critic of Christianity as John Addington Symonds who was brought up there.³ But Groves drew a startling picture of what his position was in effect at Bethesda in later years. Müller's holy and blessed life 'made him an example to others, and a constant referee in all matters of walk and doctrine. The annual report of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution confirmed the confidence of the church in their pastor, and by degrees his judgment took the place of all individual exercise of conscience. It is not in human nature to be always receiving such regard, such implicit confidence, alike from old and young, without at last accepting the honour as a matter of course, and wielding corresponding authority'.⁴ Groves then continues, asserting that the elders, chosen by the pastors, and the

deacons elected by the fellowship used to hold meetings on Friday evenings in the Bethesda Vestry. Even if the members of the meeting were entirely unanimous in their opinions, their decisions would always be cancelled if Mr. Müller felt they interfered with the interests of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution.⁵

This does not seem to me at all surprising considering the respect in which Müller was held by all but it is indicative of the way in which an older patriarch can dominate unduly. It was in the face of such domination that the Brethren's failure to train their younger men became very apparent. Groves' testimony is relevant again. 'When the earlier teachers who were profound students of Scripture, passed away, their places were filled by idle or busy men, who repeated to the best of their ability the same exhortations and comments that they had always heard on these occasions'.⁶

This slavish imitation was observed by several writers, though usually by writers outside the Brethren circle who visited meetings occasionally or only once and therefore were able to notice habits that others within the group had lost sight of. Edward Nangle, the so-called Apostle of Achill, was well acquainted with the early brethren movement in Dublin.⁷ One of his criticisms was over just this issue. Speaking of a meeting to which he went he wrote: 'The speakers were all uneducated men of the artisan class; and without a single exception their effort at display in the use of big words, and abortive attempts at oratory, left no room for any feeling but that of thorough disgust'.⁸ Similarly a Scotch Baptist, Dr. John Epps, who was invited by G. V. Wigram to visit an early meeting in London, remarked in his journal: 'Mr. Wigram possessed by nature a quite, gentle manner, his voice was low and he had a melancholy intonation: his mode of speech was slow and languid, specialities interesting in him, as belonging to him; but when these specialities were assumed by others they became absurd. We could not but notice how, most probably unconsciously, the speakers imitated Mr. Wigram'.⁹

There were two ways in which the Brethren could have avoided this sort of second-hand ministry. One would have been to train young men for ministry. The other alternative which was what usually happened, was that men of education or at any rate articulate men who could express themselves took the lead, whether they were spiritually gifted or not. As we observed before the factor of wealth played a crucial part. As over the question of age, so here, a perusal of *Chief Men among the Brethren* will substantiate the point. When aristocratic ancestry is lacking all too often it seems that a naval or army training suffices in its place. As E. K. Groves observed: 'A forlorn Brethren's meeting was exactly suited for the development of gift in a retired military officer or civilian. Requiring no support of a material kind from those who formed the assembly, he was free to expound Scripture as he pleased, especially if he undertook to make up the deficiency that constantly happened in the matter of rent and expenses'.¹⁰

It may be objected that these observations are based upon the evidence supplied by critics who may not be reliable. This is because usually those in favour of the system refused to admit the weaknesses of it.¹¹ If the criticisms were not valid then, few will deny that some of them are not valid now. One sincerely hopes that the discussion of the issues raised by Dr. Rowdon and Mr. Prime will lead Brethren to take quite seriously the need for training their young men and women according to the gift that God has given them

*[References to *George Müller and his Successors* must be read as subject to the obvious psychiatric disturbance from which its author was suffering—Ed.]

Notes

1. 11 Tim. ii.2. For a comment on this verse by J. G. Bellett and some discussion of the implications relating to the appointment of elders see *Two Nineteenth Century Movements, Evangelical Quarterly* (Oct-Dec. 1965). Vol. XXXVII No. 4 p.229.
2. J. C. Philpot: Review of the Christian Witness, in *The Gospel Standard* No. 75 Vol. VIII (Mar. 1842) p.83.
3. Horatio Brown: *Autobiography of John Addington Symonds*, London 1895, pp.17-19.
4. E. K. Groves: *George Müller and his successors*, p.24.
5. *Ibid.* pp.24-5.
6. *Ibid.* p.375.
7. Edward Nangle: *Apostle of Achill* p.44.
8. E. Nangle: *Recollections of the Separatists*, Dublin: 1867, p.29.
9. *Diary of the late John Epps*, ed. Mrs. Epps, London (1869) p.209. Epps also remarked: 'What we felt to be a great want in them was the spirit of *cheerfulness*; the most oppressive gloom characterised the meetings at that time'. P.209.
10. E. K. Groves: *op. cit.* p.375.
11. An exception is H. Craik: *New Testament Church Order*, London: 1863.

Recognition or Ordination ?

MR. GEOFFREY KING (72 D'Arcy Gardens, Kenton, Middx.) writes:—

Unless together with our discussion there comes a commitment to pray and to act in response to what God is teaching us, then the vision will evaporate and the will fossilize.

Dr. Rowdon has shown how the early brethren re-acted against ecclesiastical ordination to the ministry and shifted the emphasis from an outward appointment which conferred both a fixed stipend and social privilege, to the inner call of God together with the recognition by the church of the appropriate spiritual gifts. Thus the ministry in our assemblies has rested on no external authority but (ideally at least) upon the principle of recognising the call of God on the basis of the gift (grace; charisma) demonstrated by the individual. But what do we mean by recognition ?

First we ought to notice that 'recognition' is not a Biblical word. I mention this not because it can therefore be dismissed as wrong or unimportant, but rather in order to point out that the significance of the idea of recognition is not determined directly by Biblical exegesis but by common usage and also to warn that its employment could therefore imply a denial or a passing-over of other clearly Biblical terms or practices.

Second, it would appear that in many places the significance of recognition has become devalued. All too frequently it means nothing more than that a person is invited to speak according to an annual rota. Or again sometimes it means that people notice ('recognise') that brother 'X' speaks more often than, or more profitably than brother 'Y'. Sometimes it is used to refer to the fact that brother 'Z' has been invited to attend a fortnightly meeting of the 'oversight' for the discussion of assembly affairs. Such usage would seem to be a patent devaluation of the term.

Now whilst I believe the emphasis of the early brethren was right in its insistence on the recognition of God's call by the test of spiritual ability, (it is to be noted that the puritans held a substantially similar view¹), it seems to me that we have neglected what the Bible calls ordination or appointment to the ministry of the Word. It is important to realise that ordination does not just mean 'the laying of hands' (apparently a widely used practice in New Testament times). That was just the method used in a solemn act which was symbolic of the appointment of an individual to a God-planned ministry and the spiritual fellowship of the church. It is to be noted that in the case of Timothy the ordination was performed by his elders, was the occasion of the reception of the necessary charisma, and was accompanied by prophetic messages.² The occasion would seem in many respects to be parallel to that of the ordination of Paul and Barnabas to their God-appointed ministry of planting churches.³

It would seem that our practice of recognition (even at its best) misses something of importance in the New Testament practice of ordination in which the ministry of the Word was committed to gifted men and these men were publicly 'committed' to the ministry. The commitment of the Word was not to all and sundry but 'to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also'.⁴ Mr. Prime's distinction between 'ruling elders' and 'teaching elders'⁵ may be relevant here in reminding us that not all who are elders are called and equipped for the ministry of the Word, though all must be the kind of men who are always looking for the opportunity of building up the spiritual life of the assembly.⁶

Let it be said that we are not here discussing the pros and cons of a paid ministry. That is a further question to be discussed in the light of Biblical principles and local needs. Rather we are exploring the way in which the New Testament churches appointed men to the ministry of the Word in order to point to the way in which we might better ensure that in our churches there are men who, called and equipped by God, are devoting themselves to the regular ministry of the Word in the settled local context. Such men, we feel, ordained by the church in an act of committal and fellowship, would see it as their primary duty to equip themselves for their work by the study of the Scriptures and prayer and any other training of a practical nature which is necessary to the understanding of the Scriptures; to the art of preaching and to an appreciation of the relevance of the inspired Word to the actual life of men and women in a secular world.

One or Many

The plurality of elders (see Dr. S. Short *The Ministry of the Word*) has been the consistent concern of brethren since the early days. Dr. Rowdon has drawn our attention to this question in its traditional form—one or many? It seems to me that in our present situation this is an inadequate formulation of the question. So much so that it is blinding us to the real nature of the present problem in our assemblies. Vehemently and contentedly we argue for ‘many’ instead of ‘one’ and yet in many of our churches we do not have anyone who is exercising a regular settled ministry of teaching the Bible. The early brethren re-acted to the one-man ministry of the established and dissenting churches alike in order, surely, to provide a certain freedom for ministry by visiting prophets or an inspired individual in the congregation on an occasional basis but also, and more important, so that *all* those called and equipped by God to minister the Word should be able to do so. There was to be no monopoly by one man. But equally the ministry was not just to be left to anyone who happened to ‘feel led’. What we seem to have done is to have made the fatal step of accepting ‘plurality’ but rejecting ‘diversity’; of attacking a monopoly of the Word by one man but not giving sufficient heed to specialisation within the body of believers or elders. We have a superfluity of men who can ‘give a word’ but a dearth of men who are devoting themselves to teaching the scriptures in a particular local church. Many assemblies have a number of men who on Sunday night or during the week travel long distances to preach or teach for 30 minutes, but how few have anyone capable of sustained, systematic ministry, who by the example of their lives and the power of their teaching over a number of years, have clearly built up the local community of believers. And even where such men are available they are not being used. Thus we have the tragic sight of gifted men finding opportunity for ministry elsewhere and not infrequently our young people, hungry for adequate teaching, are off to join them. Surely what we must do is to stop campaigning over the question of one or many and begin to pray and to work that each of our assemblies has AT LEAST ONE man called and gifted by God who is committed (preferably by Biblical ordination) to the ministry of the Word and the up-building of spiritual life and witness on a settled basis . . . And suddenly we are afraid. Afraid of what such and such gospel hall will say. Afraid that one man will gather to himself the authority that belongs to the group. Afraid that our complacency will be challenged. Afraid that somebody at last will begin to wield the Scriptures as a sword and that it will hurt. Afraid . . . of change . . . of God!

Ministry or Ministers?

Finally I should like to suggest that the things to which I have drawn attention here are based upon the conviction that we ought to be concerning ourselves less with ministry and more with ministers. The classic Biblical passage is Eph. 4:8-12 where Paul speaks of the gifts of the ascended Lord to His church—‘and his gifts were some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastor/teachers’. The Lord has given us MEN

'for the work of the ministry'. Yes, men. Each of them has received from Christ the charisma necessary for his ministry. The whole body in turn should receive the ministry they give as necessary for its progress to maturity. But the crucial point is that God has given ministers. Or as Paul says in 1 Cor. 12: 18 God has 'set' them in the church. And if we do not recognise and appoint and USE the gifted men that God has given us then just as surely will they be used by others, whether it be in a free Church ministry on a permanent basis or by another assembly on an occasional basis.

I conclude therefore, that we should be making it a priority in our prayers, both privately and publicly, to pray that God will raise up for us in the assembly where God has placed us a man whom God has called to a settled ministry of the Word. And God *will* provide (perhaps has already). When such a man is ready for it, that man should be publicly appointed to his ministry in an act of committal and fellowship, and then used to the extent that he feels able and the church feels profitable. But if God should give two or three or four such men according to his infallible wisdom, let each be recognised and ordained, and let each minister as they are able to the one congregation. Or even perhaps the need of another church, where there is no-one thus gifted, will be met, not as now by half-an-hour's ministry three times a year, but by the setting apart of a man for ministry in this other locality. For the Lord's gift of men for the ministry is for the whole body, not in the sense necessarily of an itinerant ministry, but in the sense that one church may feel called to share permanently with another church one of the men God has given to it.

1. See 'The Call to the Christian Ministry', an article by David Smith in the *Free Grace Record* Vol. 4, No. 4 esp. a quotation from John Owen on the necessity of spiritual gifts—'no outward call or order can constitute any man an evangelical pastor'.
2. 1 Tim. 4:14.
3. Acts 13:2, 3.
4. 2 Tim. 2:2.
5. 1 Tim. 5:17.
6. 1 Tim. 3:2 'apt to teach'.

MR. CHARLES G. MARTIN (64 Robson Road, Worthing, Sussex) writes:—

Dr. Short's paper on *The Ministry of the Word* is welcome and worthy of close study. His thesis of plurality is granted widely (e.g. A. M. Stibbs' *The Christian Ministry* and Lightfoot's famous essay on the same subject) though the support he adduces is wider and more closely applied. The section I found most arresting is the last three pages with his analysis of the advantages of multiple ministry. This presents a case so powerful that it opens a wide area in which discussion might proceed further. In view of these advantages, why, in fact, did the early church leave the blue-print and settle for monepiscopacy during the second century. Also if the revival of this view in the last century was so manifestly a return to the primitive pattern why has it not persisted in power, and why do the writers quoted above not regard it as worthy of mention?

Dr. Short does not specifically link his points one and five, but these appear to have been curiously joined and stood on their heads by Ignatius to urge that danger from persecution and heresy was best met by monarchical means. Ignatius' letters and example influenced churches so deeply and widely that the Montanist reaction failed. Or was there some other factor? To write this phenomenon off simply as man's inherent ability to wreck God's ideas seems a little arrogant, and Broadbent's thesis of the remnant does not give a complete account of those (apparently including many equally godly) who organised their ecclesiastical affairs differently. Perhaps members well versed and documented in the period can throw some light on this.

As to the second point, documentation is even more difficult since it is so highly polemical. Like Montanism, the early Brethren movement was as much a reaction against current abuses, and the product of new personal experience. The lack of disorder or abuse of freedom may be attributed partly to two factors. The members were 'first generation Brethren' who had come from communities accustomed to discipline and instruction. Many who might have rejoiced to share audibly in the worship would nevertheless expect to be silent and listen while others expounded scripture. Also, among the founders, there were many who by their natural gifts and training were by so far the more able to teach that their recognition was inevitable. With the less regulated background of the second generation, and the failure to attract (or train) leaders who stood out, there appears to have been a steady decay of original vigour, and a slide into rigidity or anarchy. Again, perhaps some member can give us a fuller analysis of this.

Another area of possible progress is Dr. Short's point at page 19 'gift raised up within the church—not imported from 200 miles away'. The majority of assemblies, I gather, have speakers for ministry appointed by the oversight. Is Dr. Short urging that this selection should be from among themselves or assembly members? In practice it all too rarely is. Speakers are more frequently invited from a distance than locally. Locals go distances to talk to congregations whose needs they do not know. There are cases of course where the 'imports' have experience and quality not available locally, but this accounts for only a minority of the circus. Can we have information from assemblies where an attempt is made to assess local needs and ensure continuous connected Biblical ministry to meet them? Some assemblies publish a syllabus which would be regarded by others as a limitation of the liberty of the Spirit.

At the breaking of bread service little selection is exercised, though local elders do (often with considerable grace and tact) suppress what is clearly unprofitable. Such ministry is usually (and preferably?) very short and directed to the stimulation of worship rather than exhortation of exposition. Perhaps the thesis is not applicable here.

Coming so soon after the 'Why I left the Brethren' issue, with its repeated charge that ministry is muffled, muzzled or muddled, Dr. Short's paper stated a positive ideal which could be a challenge. I have much

sympathy with the 'leavers' who say quite frankly 'Yes, your theory is excellent, but it just does not work. There's a lot wrong with Anglicanism—or whatever—but at least I can exercise my gift, and this is a good boat to fish from'.

How can we set the local house in order and bring the ideal nearer execution? Is there no stable position between Ignatius and Montanus?

LITURGY

MR. FRANCIS F. STUNT (49 Heathfield Road, London, S.W.18) writes:—

Nowadays the decent obscurity of a mere signature is denied one who writes to *The Times*. The cult of personality extends even to *The Witness*. The 'exclusive' use of initials (J. N. D., C. H. M. etc.) belongs to an age long past and one's attainments and associations are paraded in an Editorial blurb, sometimes to the embarrassment of relatives and friends. For my part I must admit to being the unworthy male progenitor of your Anglican secretary and contributor, Philip Handley Stunt, whose second name came to him indirectly from a saintly West Country parson after whom the 'brethren' Missionary Handley Bird and the Anglican Bishop Handley Moule were named. Philip's rather innocent parents felt the name had ecumenical over-tones!

One sympathises with the plea for the use of modern Translations. The work of Coverdale and Tindale has survived for 400 years and one feels some doubt whether recent versions will manage as well. A word of warning is necessary about the projected liturgical experiments. They might prove more ephemeral than those of Cranmer and should certainly be purged of the Stunt family's weakness for an extended vocabulary. Of course Philip's family and close friends know well the fun he gets out of all this but do other readers see that his tongue is all the time in his cheek? Will they believe that the Fellowship is really seeking some spiritual advancement? I hope I may be forgiven for not treating this very seriously.

When the chaff is winnowed away Philip's suggestion amounts to this: that brethren churches (why only they?) should evolve in such a way as to attract other Christians who have no definite convictions about such things as believer's baptism and church order and who yearn for something aesthetically satisfying. Frankly this is all very 'old hat'. No research can establish that the early brethren or, for that matter, any ecumenically minded Christian would ever settle for this kind of lowest common denominator however much they might want to abandon denominationalism. Many of our churches welcome paedo-baptists, Anglicans and others. (Had we not done so Philip would hardly have got into his present office with freedom to use the 'we' and 'our' of his article.)

The fact is overlooked that many have joined with us because they found a fixed liturgy inhibiting. Are they to be driven away?

The present pathetic attempts to obtain agreement on a revised Canon law and liturgy should be a warning against any such impracticable experiments. This sort of Darbyite uniformity (Darby was trained as an

Anglican) was rejected by the open or independent churches of brethren. Philip's knowledge of our fellowship is too limited for him to realise that reform is a continuous process. Frequently major reforms and changes are effected in the liberty of such Churches in a mere fraction of the time required for any change in other contexts. One of his mistakes is to assume that the pattern he describes is universal. In fact it is not even so in the Anglo-Saxon context. Thousands of independent Churches exist and others continue to spring up all over the world. Their languages differ. Many of them do not know of 'the Brethren' (either open or exclusive) as a sect. The Anglo-Saxon Brethren history means nothing to them. They are not 'brethren' proselytes but learn from the Scriptures something approximating to that which we have learned—to baptize believers, to remember the Lord Jesus in breaking bread and drinking wine, to worship in freedom and simplicity, to welcome those whom Christ has received and to seek by the foolishness of preaching to extend the offer of salvation to fellow men and women. It has proved, and will prove, impossible to confine such manifestations to Philip's sort of precious strait-jacket. Peter discovered such a truth in the house of Cornelius.

Are people to take the CBRF seriously? If so, I suggest, that spurious introspection should be abandoned—spurious, that is, when contributors are not working from within. Attacks from outside always tend to crystallise internal attitudes however wrong. Reform can only come through those other contributors who are committed to loyal Church fellowship, lovingly caring for their fellow members, suffering the vagaries of temperament and insensitivities of ignorance, spending and being spent in local worship and witness. If the CBRF wants to be taken seriously let it seek for the spiritual insights which led the brethren of the 1830's to a pathway of renunciation and self-sacrifice. The exclusive errors of J.N.D. are rightly to be discarded, but his earlier example of a self-denying pathway of poverty and toil should be remembered. If one of us plants but one church for the hundreds he planted we may perhaps be permitted to find fault with the practices of some other Churches which fail to offer us aesthetic satisfaction.

MR. E. DONALD SCOTT (Castle Court, Parkstone, Dorset) writes:—

As always I have read with great interest your latest issue on the subject of Liturgy. May I make the following comments:

1. As one of the 1 per cent. whom you mention in Note 11 on p.48, now a lay reader in the Church of England, previously an Assembly elder, it is heart-warming to read Mr. Stunt's proposals for positions of ministry and even of authority to be envisaged for members of other churches within the sphere of re-constituted assembly life. Whilst one is not entirely clear how this would be brought about in practice, presumably it rests upon the principle that the matters which divide recognised Christian denominations pertain not to the 'esse' but to the 'bene esse' of the Church. If this is so, may I suggest that one further step in the practice of 'open-ness' is required? That is in a willingness to take part in the

services of other Christians, and not simply to ask other Christians to join in ours, however reformed we may be. Only so will the suspicion be overcome that here are people who regard fellowship, beyond a certain point, with other groups as contamination—hardly a fruitful atmosphere in which an invitation can be extended to the undoubted blessings of assembly life. And this can be done NOW, without waiting for a long process of phased development.

2. Is it wrong that choice of denomination should for some people be governed by questions of expediency in the Lord's service in a contemporary situation (as for example if one is on the Staff of an anglican School), rather than by questions of its relative merits or organisational rectitude? If wrong, would not this therefore invalidate the whole liberating argument of your issue? If right, how blissfully open would such an attitude leave the path of re-entry into Brethrenism, should circumstances indicate this—which again, I take it, is rather the point you have in mind when you refer to 'an available mount'? And this too is a position which can be taken up NOW.

3. Glorious though the possibilities opened up by your articles are—of a liberated, enlightened Brethrenism becoming the focus of evangelical life in the 20th Century, it would, I suggest, be a pity if the members of CBRF, by a process of inversion, in seeking for an acceptable norm of Church life became over-occupied in the same sort of time-wasting discussions as are still continuing, for example in Anglican-Methodist conversations. Is there not also the possibility that we are being called to find the Church in a yet more radical return to New Testament situations—in drawing-rooms and works canteens, where Christians meet in the Name of Christ? At any rate we are far more likely to be able to welcome our uncommitted neighbours to such 'meetings' than to any recognised form of church service to-day. Should we ask for more—and are not such people to be our first concern, even before the interests of our brothers in the next compartment of the organised Church? Since the time is short, and these things can be done NOW, this might mean continuing to take part in the 'formal services' (to re-quote the Archdeacon of Doncaster on page 17 of your issue) of existing denominations, whereas our real concern evangelistically, and even pastorally would be elsewhere. And after all, can the church not be in my house—or even, at my job?

MR. J. R. CASSWELL (Morar, Overdale, Ashtead, Surrey) writes:—

I have read the April 1967 issue of the CBRF *Journal* with great interest, and in thinking over what I have read, I have ventured to jot down, I fear somewhat at random, some idle thoughts of an idle fellow, in the hope that they be of more than personal interest.

We have, indeed, come a long way from the position of Sir Robert Anderson, who, when preaching, would take no part in the meeting other than giving the address, on the ground that all the rest was 'religion' with which Christianity had nothing to do!

My first re-action on reading what your contributors have written was that if the desire for more liturgical form to our meetings is wide-spread—and no doubt it is—then this is not an indication of spiritual progress on our part, but an alarming demonstration of our spiritual decline. Every movement of the Holy Spirit seems to have been towards greater simplicity rather than the reverse. Thus the services of the Church of England were far more simple than those of Rome, those of the Presbyterians and the Independents more simple than the Anglican, the class meetings of the Methodists more simple still, and the trend was seen at its height in the meetings of the Quakers and the early Brethren. (I propose to follow Mr. Philip Stunt's excellent plan in the use of capitals and lower case letters to distinguish Brethrenism from brethrenism.)

It sometimes seems as if the avant garde take an almost masochistic pleasure in afflicting their souls over the short-comings of Brethren ways of doing things. Brethren have, indeed, much over which to mourn, but surely it is what we are that is so grievously wrong rather than our methods. It is a fantasy of childhood always to suppose that the grass in our neighbour's garden is greener than our own. As one who came originally from a neighbouring garden—and a very good one at that, though not the same one as that in which Dr. Tripp was nurtured—I can assure your readers that it is not so.

Mr. Somerville-Meikle is entirely right to insist that things must be done decently and in order. Undoubtedly they were so done in the early days of Brethren—as among Quakers—and if it is otherwise to-day it is because we ourselves are not decent or orderly, not because of any essential weakness in our methods. Incidentally, it would be very difficult to support a case for a liturgical form of service from the passage in 1 Corinthians which Mr. Somerville-Meikle has in mind in his reference to things being done decently and in order.

Sir Winston Churchill regarded with the healthy scepticism of the non-expert the claims of the critical school to have discovered heterogeneous sources for the Pentateuch. I regard with the same kind of scepticism the attempts of modern New Testament scholars to establish the use of a liturgy in the first century church from allegedly liturgical fragments—snatches of hymns and of credal statements—in the text of the New Testament. On the same principle a critic two millenniums hence could suppose that Christians of our day use a liturgy containing the words 'All One in Christ Jesus' from the frequency with which those words occur in our writings.

It must be sadly confessed that Mr. Clines is entirely correct in charging Brethren with rigidity and formalism, but in his thinking the tendency to masochism again seems to be very evident. He may be right in extending the meaning of the word 'worship' to cover almost any activity that could take place in any Christian meeting, but it is quite certain that many who are regularly exhorted in the words 'Let us worship God in' doing this or that have no conception of what the word really means. For the

sake of clarity we may confine ourselves to the word 'adoration', but is there any reason why we should not have a meeting once a week exclusively or mainly for adoration? It is probably the highest exercise in which a human being can engage. Admittedly there is no essential reason why the meeting for adoration should be linked with the breaking of bread. It was not so with the Quakers, but the two go very well together. Many Christians from outside Brethren circles, on a first acquaintance with a breaking of bread meeting, have expressed a longing for something similar in their own churches. The late Montague Goodman told me on one occasion that he once had as his guest for a week-end Dr. Douglas Adam, one of the best known Non-Conformist preachers of the first quarter of this century, and the minister of Highbury Quadrant Church, a church exhibiting most of the features desiderated by the contributors to the two most recent issues of the *CBRF Journal*. He had never been to a breaking of bread meeting, and at his own request accompanied Mr. Goodman on the Sunday morning. On the way home after the meeting he said to Mr. Goodman in his deep, sonorous Scottish voice:- 'You people understand *worship* as no one else does'.

The analogy Mr. Clines draws between private and public devotion is both false and dangerous. As Dr. Graham Scroggie pointed out years ago, in private devotion one may laugh or weep or fall flat on the floor. None of these things would be seemly in public worship.

Again, Mr. Clines is not comparing like with like when he compares a breaking of bread meeting with Morning Prayer in an Anglican Church. He should compare it with the Communion Service in an Anglican—or Free—Church, and he would find that the breaking of bread meeting is probably richer and more varied in content than the Communion Service of any other body of Christians.

Would that Mr. Clines were right in saying that Brethren know all about the past, present and future aspects of salvation. All too few of them seem to know anything of its present aspect. But many of them do understand what George Cutting called the three aspects of forgiveness. They know that the question of their acceptance with God has been settled for ever. Many who recite the General Confession every Sunday are never clear on this point. This was the state of affairs in the Established Church in Mr. Darby's time, when many, like those in the Church of Rome, would have considered it presumptuous to say that their sins were *all* forgiven. Darby's insistence on the concept of 'purged worshippers' was—and is—therefore vital. Without it, it is impossible to engage with any joy or liberty in Christian worship or service, or to know any real rest of heart. Confession in public, then, if it is to be anything more than a vain repetition, could be highly dangerous. This was one of the weightiest charges brought against the Oxford Group Movement, and though it was no doubt greatly exaggerated through prejudice it was not without substance. At the same time, Brethren, like all other Christians, need to pray constantly in the words of Psalm 139:- 'Search me, O God, and try me. See if there be any wicked way in me'.

Space forbids much more in the way of comment on Mr. Clines's article, but I am much disturbed by his expression 'the action of God that is to occur in the Lord's Supper', page 10 fin., and—in reference to Christ—'the giving of Himself in the sacrament'. Perhaps I am reading into his words far more than Mr. Clines intends, but they seem to me to be perilously like the doctrine of the Mass, and far removed from the Lord's own words about the simple (family) feast of remembrance.

In answer to R. H. Fuller's question—quoted on page 13—'What if this ostensible and often ostentatious devotion to the principles of spirituality turns out to be not spirituality at all but British Pelagianism?' I can only say 'What if it doesn't!'

Before making a few random comments on Mr. Stunt's very ably written article, may I suggest one or two general considerations? The contenders for written liturgy seem to have overlooked one vital point. The founding fathers of the Church of England were, for the most part, men of God who had to do with a people that was almost entirely illiterate. Printed books, even Bibles, were of no use to them. They could only fall back on memory. For such a people, on grounds of expediency, there might have been some case for a regular liturgy. In the vastly different circumstances of to-day, is it not at least conceivable that those same godly men would have considered a liturgy a disadvantage rather than otherwise. It was this same factor of the presence of some illiterates in their gatherings that led the early Brethren to read a hymn right through—as an aid to memory—before singing it. Those Brethren who still do this are indeed slavishly following a tradition that now has no significance.

Another point for consideration for those who find themselves unable to discern a pattern of church life in the New Testament is that the Brethren form of gathering for worship would seem to be the natural mode if the church is indeed a company of purged worshippers with no distinction between clergy and laity. That is to say it is not an artificial form fitted by the Brethren on to a living organism, like a ready-made and ill-fitting suit, but the form in which the life of that organism naturally finds expression.

Mr. Philip Stunt's paper starts off well enough. His diagnosis seems remarkably correct, and one recognizes only too clearly how right Montague Goodman was in saying that 'Brethren to-day are not the Brethren of 100 years ago', and how right also was the speaker at the CBRF Annual General Meeting in 1965 who said that 'Brethren want a repentance fellowship'. These statements give the correct angle on Mr. Darby's somewhat over-emphasised doctrine of the Ruin of the Church, and should have given Mr. Stunt the key to what is needed at this time. Having made a remarkably accurate diagnosis, he seems to prescribe the wrong remedies. In the first place, Mr. Stunt, who is so commendably careful to cite his authorities and sources, is equally careful not to cite the source of the quotation on page 33, 'enthroned God in the life of the community, not seclude Him in the precincts of the sanctuary'. This is

certainly not a Biblical concept, for the Bible teaches that 'the whole world lieth in the evil one', and the community certainly has no wish to enthrone God in its life. In fact the whole idea of 'public worship', as Mr. Stunt and Mr. Clines seem to understand it, is quite un-Biblical and probably goes back no further than Constantine. This is probably the crux of the whole problem. If by a 'mount of communion' is understood a 'place of worship' where all who are disposed to attend from any particular locality can find a little of what they fancy to do them good then clearly some sort of liturgical order as envisaged by Mr. Clines and Mr. Stunt will have to be devised. This is certainly not what Mr. Darby meant by a 'mount of communion', which, in his view, was a spiritual centre where all *Christians* would gather as members of a family around the Lord's Table in a simple act of remembrance and adoration. The concept of the family as against a heterogeneous collection of religiously-inclined individuals is absolutely fundamental to Brethrenism—and to brethrenism! Mr. Stunt's 'mount of communion' would seem to be a hotch-potch, composed of ingredients taken from all the denominations around—an effort to please everybody which would most certainly end in pleasing nobody. He applies this principle even to church architecture—there have been some excellent Brethren halls built or rebuilt in the last thirty years, like the one in South-West London where Mr. Stunt's family have worshipped for several years past—but the trouble is not that Brethren halls are architecturally bad—many of them are—but that over the door in all too many cases is written 'Ichabod', and those inside do not realise it! As to the use of a lectern, those who worship in buildings that have one are not notably more closely acquainted with the Word, or more loyal to its teaching than are Brethren. Those who, like Presbyterians, carry a copy of the Word on a cushion in front of the minister have been equally as ready to disregard its authority as those who place it in an honoured position on the lectern. It is unwise of Mr. Stunt, also, to cavil at Brethren on the ground that they afford less opportunity than do others for those present to take audible part in the worship of the assembly when it is well known that the late Tom Allan, the leader of the 'Tell Scotland' movement, said that if he wished to get someone to lead in prayer in a lodging-house meeting or other informal gathering, he had to ask one of the Brethren, as no one else could do it! Evidently their participation in 'congregational worship' had not got them very far.

I do not find that 'liturgical gift' is mentioned among the gifts of the Spirit either in 1 Corinthians or in Ephesians, and though the lists given in those two epistles may not be exhaustive I would be very chary about adding to them. Nevertheless I do agree with Mr. Stunt that true brethrenism would involve a recognition, by giving opportunity for practical exercise, of spiritual gift in other brethren, whatever their ecclesiastical connection.

The avant garde would take from me much that I hold dear. That is not to their discredit if my attachment is merely sentimental, but I am left with the uneasy fear that perhaps they are, after all, looking—and going—backward rather than forward. Having abandoned the (somewhat

insipid) lemonade of non-conformity for the wine of brethernism, or even Brethernism, I do not feel disposed to go with them! We should all do well to remember a saying of Mr. F. E. Raven that the brethren position is moral and spiritual, and not ecclesiastical. The only road to recovery is moral and spiritual.

When all this has been said, I am one of the increasing number of Christians of all 'labels' who believe that the Lord is going to pour out upon His own the new wine of a movement of the Spirit. Then all our wineskins will be burst, and the bursting of the liturgical ones maybe even more drastic than that of the rest.

MR. CHRISTOPHER D. SCOTT (47 Woodbridge Road, Moseley, Birmingham 13), writes:—

Having read CBRF *Journal* No. 15, I am left with a number of conflicting thoughts, but two clearly predominate. One is, that things do not seem to be as bad as the contributors make out, but maybe this is just because I have been fortunate in the assemblies I have visited. I do move about quite a bit, however. The second thought is that the liturgical solutions proposed would turn out to be a disappointing byway, and not really solve any problems. The evidence for any liturgy in the New Testament is much less than your contributors seem to assume, and indeed it can hardly be found at all unless one is deliberately searching for it, and even then it is of doubtful worth. Two things seem worth thinking about. 1. The Indian (Bakht Singh) Assemblies who are seeking to follow the New Testament pattern have no liturgy. 2. Church history shows that liturgy always increases as life diminishes.

The fact of the matter is that we have got into a rut. We must get out of it, and it seems to me that three things are necessary in order to do this.

1. We have got into a rut in our thinking. We need to get ourselves out of it, and go back again to see what the New Testament says about the manner of church meetings. (For instance there is no scripture which associates worship with the breaking of bread. The scripture associates it with Bible teaching—cf. Luke 22, John 13-17, Acts 20: 1-12, 1 Cor. 11-14. On the other hand I disagree with David Clines on what worship is. A study of the worship of heaven as shown in the book of Revelation shows that it is God centred. As most of what we do is self-centred, it is good to be occupied with the Lord alone sometimes).
2. We need a new hymn book. Our hymn books are notable for what is omitted! Also for those hymns which have been altered to mean something different from what the writers originally meant (in the interests of 'theology' I suppose). 'Light and Love' seems particularly bad—there is hardly a subjective hymn in the book! But our hymn book largely governs the type of meeting we have; the hymns that would make it different are not there!

3. We must get out of the rut of letting men only take part.

Of these the first is the most important, and the hardest to accomplish. How many times have I seen the Lord begin to lead us in an unusual way, and immediately some brother jumps up to drag us back to the subject of Christ's death, which, important though it is, is not the ONLY thing in the Bible. It seems the only thing some people are able to see, however. The other two matters are things which any assembly so minded could put into practice at once, although there may not be any big enough and suitable enough hymn book in existence, which has the great hymns of the church, as well as the best that have come from 'Brethren'. Perhaps someone needs to compile one. How about including some Psalms? It is scriptural to sing them!

MR. R. G. ELLIOTT (7 Cats Lane, Sudbury, Suffolk) writes:—

The views on liturgy put forward by David Clines and Philip Stunt leave me crying out with David: 'If the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do'? But before commenting on them I want to challenge the assumption that the gatherings on Sunday morning of Brethren are comparable with those of other Christians. I suggest they are based on different conceptions of the relationship between God and the church, they are quite dissimilar in character and have not the same objective. In other words, that the term 'public worship' as understood by mainstream Christianity and the Clines/Stunt papers cannot properly be applied to the Brethren meetings.

Having said that, let us consider what David Clines and Philip Stunt base on the assumption. Broadly, I think they make six assertions, mainly critical

1. That Brethren have a liturgy. This ignores the principal reason for the gathering on Lord's Day morning. I have no doubt whatever that if a Gallup poll were taken an overwhelming majority of Brethren would say they met to remember the Lord in the Breaking of Bread. Now everything concerning the Lord's Supper has been laid down by the Lord; what he did, why he did it, what it meant, what we are to do, etc. The whole procedure is a work of the Head of the church and cannot be a 'work of the people'. The five concomitant activities, prayer, hymn-singing, Bible reading, preaching and giving of money all radiate from this, and since they cannot be done simultaneously, an order arises from necessity rather than invention. To call this sequence a liturgy is to do violence to the meaning of the word; but to do so erects an Aunt Sally which David Clines can easily knock down. Compared with, say, the elaborate exercises devised by Stephen Winward it is feeble indeed.

Again, to say that Brethren have a liturgy opens the way for the argument that all liturgies derive from a common source, the practice of the New Testament churches. Philip Stunt says 'there is however abundant evidence for the use of liturgical forms by the New Testament churches'.

I cannot agree with this; it is pure theorising. There is no valid evidence that New Testament churches used liturgical forms but there *is* evidence that they did not. In Acts the churches are shown gathered for breaking of bread, prayer, instruction and sundry ad hoc purposes; in Ephesians and Colossians there are references to church gatherings for mutual admonition and teaching with the use of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, but in none of these is there any hint of pre-arrangement in order or use of words. When we consider the coming together of the church in 1 Cor. 11-14 where, if anywhere, a liturgy should be found, nothing of the kind is enjoined for the eating of the Lord's Supper and as to general worship Paul approves of what they do but reproves the way in which it is done. It was right for the brethren each to contribute 'a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation'. It was not right for them all to speak at once, vying with each other for precedence, or for the women to interrupt with questions and opinions. So Paul calls for order, not of item but of participation.

It is not disputed that there are quotations in the New Testament from hymns and credal statements but the former prove nothing, and the latter were more likely used in catechisms. I suggest that liturgy entered the church when Satan had struck at the Head by dividing the Body into clergy and laity and allying it with the world.

2. The second proposition is that Brethren have a limited view of worship, considering it as adoration only; thus falling short of the wider, better appreciation shown by other Christians. It may be conceded that Brethren do not quite share all the opinions of other Christians about the nature of worship. (Could it be that Brethren just worship without wondering if they are responding to God's activity, or engaging in a two-way traffic or displaying an improper initiative or whatever?) That Brethren consider worship to be only adoration is doubtful. Since there is no central authority, views put forward in magazine articles may or may not be representative. It should be remembered that some very odd ideas are unloaded in magazines from time to time. I should say that the majority of Brethren would state that all they do on Lord's Day morning is worship, including the collection.

Since God is eternal and unchangeable it follows that what He requires as worship must bear the same character and this means that we must start at Genesis to discover what it is. Briefly, omitting all the intermediate stages, we find that worship consists mainly of sacrificial offerings which reflect the perfections of His son and ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving based on the revealed majesty of His person and works. When a special priesthood is formed, choice parts of a sacrificial animal are allotted to the priests and these portions are symbolically offered to God.

As soon as our Lord's earthly ministry began God designated him as 'My beloved son with whom I am well pleased', and his death is revealed to have been 'a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God'. Here then is the

material of worship desired by and acceptable to God. So that we may offer these perfections of Christ in proper form God has created us a royal and holy priesthood and when we gather on Lord's Day it is that we may offer in worship to God all the preciousness of Christ which our own hearts have known, and so much as we can comprehend of the worth of the Son in the eyes of his Father. Together with these 'spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God' we are to offer 'a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name'.

3. Fault is found with Brethren worship because there is no general confession of sins. Although David Clines uses it in a rather different connexion let us consider the bringing of the basket of first fruits as laid out in Deut. 26. He regards this as stressing the initiative of the church, but it is precisely the opposite. The whole initiative is on God's side. He says what is to be done and the worshipper obeys. The first thing he is to say is deeply instructive. 'I declare this day . . . that I have come into the land which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us'. He is to have a settled consciousness of his position, He then acknowledges the weakness and helplessness of his human condition and he remembers the mighty work of redemption which brought him out of bondage into the realm of blessing he now enjoys. He is to follow all this by worship and rejoicing. Now, how odd it would have been if this Israelite had begun by pleading 'Lord have mercy on me! Deliver me from Egypt, save me from bondage! There is no health in me, bring me into the promised land!' Yet this is just the incongruity which is advocated by those who want to introduce a confession of sins into our worship. It is even worse in our case. God assures us in the plainest terms that He has 'made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with him and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' and that He has 'blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places'. We have, in fact, 'come into the land'.

Moreover, as has been said, we have been made a holy priesthood. Think with what care God cleansed and anointed His priests of old so that they should not enter His holy presence with sin upon them; think how all this has been transferred to us, as revealed in the letter to Hebrew Christians; then think of the glorious conclusion, 'since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water'. The sanctuary is, of course, 'our present and our endless home' and it is unfortunate that some of our hymns and prayers rather suggest that on Sunday morning we enter the Holiest at 11 a.m. and leave it at 12.30 p.m. It is not easy to harmonise spiritual truths with time and sense, but the truths set out above are peculiarly apposite to our gathering, as the priestly family, to worship God.

How wholly unfitting is it then, at such a time, to keep saying 'Have mercy on us, miserable offenders. Spare Thou them O God which confess their faults, restore Thou them that are penitent' and all the rest of it.

This is to enter God's holy presence with sin upon us, and totally ignores the position in which God has placed us as priests and worshippers.

The inclusion of a general confession of sins in the Prayer Book order of service is an unhappy legacy from Rome, which taught the doctrine of uncertainty in order to work the Purgatory racket; and uncertainty has produced the general confession. I do not believe that Anglicans as a whole have any assurance. If the Lord's Prayer has a place in our morning meeting, as to which I am not clear, it would be at the end, and if a brother recited it then I should be with him in spirit.

To guard against misapprehension two things need to be said here. First, confession of sins and thanksgiving for the forgiveness of sins are two different things. To recognise the position into which God has brought us involves the remembrance of how it was done and must call forth a wealth of thanksgiving to the Saviour who 'bore our sins in his body on the tree' and to God who 'gave him up for us all'. Second, the recognition of our priesthood and duties does not at all imply any 'sinless perfection'. 'If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves'. The one who is most at home in the sanctuary is surely the one who is most aware of his many sins and failures to present the image of his Master to the world. David Clines sees the danger of isolating ethics from religion and the danger is very real: but this should not cause us to disbelieve the many plain statements in the Word of how God sees us in Christ, or count as meaningless the equally plain statements of our relationship to God as a holy and royal priesthood.

4. A further complaint is made that 'the Brethren order of service lacks any theological justification'. This sounds serious but on examination proves to be groundless. I deem that an exposition of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be theological, and this is what Brethren present on Lord's Day morning. The Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, and worship is given to the Father; the Son seeks the remembrance of those for whom he died, and he is remembered in the way he himself devised by eating the Lord's Supper; the Holy Spirit desires to reveal the truth of Christ to the members of his body, and to this end He draws from those to whom He has given the gift such utterances as will edify, encourage and console the church. The worship of the Father leads logically to the remembrance of the Son and from the pure table blessing flows in ministry of the Word by the Holy Spirit.

It is true that this image is often blurred, owing to spiritual laziness and lack of understanding. Too much or too little time may be devoted to one or other person of the Godhead with resulting poverty in what is offered and what is received. It is also true that the wealth of hymnbook and Bible is insufficiently exploited; but our insufficiency does not alter the fact that the design is beautiful and theological.

5. We now come to the criticism that in the Brethren form of meeting there is a 'lack of evident congregational participation'. This is taken a little out of order but it seems better to deal with itemised objections

together. By using the word 'evident' I expect Philip Stunt is guarding the idea that participation must of necessity be vocal: but the general effect of his argument is that vocal participation is a necessity. I suggest that this is only so if the organisation of a church is such that without it the congregation would be no more than an audience. In the case of Brethren I have already sought to refute the assumption that their gatherings are comparable to those of other Christian bodies and I believe that the majority of those who gather to meet the Lord at his table do so with an intelligent appreciation of what is said and done. That is, they really do participate in the efforts of the Spirit to guide the company in its worship, whether it be vocal or meditative. I am supported in this view by the number of times I have found after the meeting (in several different Assemblies) that sisters have had in mind hymns and portions of Scripture which have, in fact, been used. I am not convinced that we should sacrifice spiritual maturity for the sake of a more obvious form of congregational participation, which can all too soon lead to deadness.

6. Philip Stunt complains also that Brethren make too little use of the arts. If it could be shown (a) that these make worship more acceptable to God and (b) that the time when they were most used was the time of the church's greatest spiritual power, then by all means let us have the fullest range of man's creative genius; the soaring spire, the cruciform building and the whole gamut of 'smells and bells' which we are told have such symbolical significance. In fact, Scripture assures us that acceptable worship is in spirit and in truth, that God 'does not live in shrines made by man, nor is He served by human hands'; and the time when the church was making the greatest use of the arts was obviously the time when, with the Head of the church outside, the Body was gaily chanting 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing' and its creed was 'Ipse fecit'. We shall be guided how far to use the arts if we reflect that a building can only house the worshippers and the arts can do no more than serve *them*.

7. Having thought of some of the defects found by David Clines and Philip Stunt in the way in which Brethren behave on Lord's Day morning we can almost hear them lamenting with the Persian poet:-

Ah! love, could thou and I with Fate conspire
To change this sorry scheme of things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then
Remould it nearer to our heart's desire?

The 'heart's desire' in this case is that by means of liturgy, the arts and complete modernization, Brethren worship should be remoulded, so that Brethren might once more be 'an available mount' for all believers, leading to an integrated local church.

This is beautiful but wholly unrealistic. The Christians who at present form any given local church are already associated with some visible section of the Church Universal, and each such section, Anglican, Baptist, Salvationist or whatever label it may have, has its own distinctive doctrines, methods, forms of government and so on. The bodies themselves are

certainly not going to surrender these, and if their members are lured away by the New Look Brethren it will lead to warfare, not integration. Spurgeon had some very bitter things to say about Brethren in this connexion.

Nor indeed is there any reason why we should try to secure the sort of visible local church which Philip Stunt desires. The ecumenical road is well seen to be littered with losses. Every Christian body has some distinctive contribution to make to the witness of the Church and the true expression of the one body lies, I believe, in the recognition of differences and the refusal to let them divide. This enables Christians of various labels to unite for prayer, Bible study, evangelism and social service but makes it unnecessary to deface any particular image.

It allows, too, for the common use of gift, but here it should be said that where Brethren are trying to do this, it is, so far as I can ascertain, almost entirely one-sided. There are Halls where the saints are sometimes dazzled by a dog-collar in the pulpit at their morning service, but I have yet to hear of an Anglican congregation being led in their morning worship by a real, live Plymouth Brother! Even the Free churches seem to limit their invitations to an occasional evening service.

There seems to be no case for insisting that Brethren should become liturgical in the sense in which the term is used in these papers. When the earliest Brethren were moved by deep dissatisfaction to leave their religious systems they did not devise some liturgy for the new gatherings, nor was it lack of liturgy which brought to an end their recognition of all believers. If liturgy was not thought necessary in the beginning why is it now such a thing to be desired? The fact is that from the Brethren standpoint liturgy has some disastrous effects.

1. It demands a supervisor. 2. It does not give each priest freedom to respond to the moving of the Spirit. 3. It leaves no room for meditation. 4. It tends towards deadness. 5. It inhibits spiritual progress. The same ground is covered every time without any advance. Adopt a liturgy and Brethren have nothing left to offer anyone. Their whole reason for being has gone and they become an inferior imitation of the other bodies. I say inferior because it is improbable that the man in charge would have the training in theology, homiletics and public speaking possessed by clergymen and pastors. He might not even be described as 'Rev.' and how poor *that* would be! It is true enough that there are faults in Brethren, that opinions need reconsideration and practices need to be overhauled; but is it really necessary to blow up the ship in order to get rid of barnacles?

Finally, let me ask David Clines and Philip Stunt to forgive me if I have said anything to hurt them. I do recognise their sincerity and their desire that God should be honoured among us. And I do heartily agree with Philip Stunt that the time is overdue to relegate the A.V. and Sacred Songs and Solos with all reverence to a museum.

Miscellaneous

MR. K. G. HYLAND (9 Hatherden Avenue, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset) writes:—

Mr. Graham Brown's survey (CBRFJ xiv) is of great interest, but it occurs to me that on one point some comment is needed.

When I was faced with the questionnaire, and looked at the wording of the query on baptism, Essential or Desirable, I had to say to myself—'Essential for what?'

Did it mean that to teach believer's baptism is essential? If so then my answer would be—yes.

If it meant however that, for church membership, to have been baptised as a believer is essential, then my answer would have to be —no.

I would feel that, for one, I was faced with a dilemma, and that the question needed to be further sub-divided.

The church to which I belong does not insist that a person must have been baptised as a believer to become a member. We are therefore delivered from the difficulty faced by a 'baptist' church, which has to accept as 'adherents' persons who have only received infant baptism.

It would be interesting to know if others who were delegates at the National Assembly felt this to be a dilemma.

(It might interest some to know how George Müller and Henry Craik were helped in this matter by Robert Chapman. The reference is to be found in 'The Lord's Dealings with George Müller'. Vol. 1, page 200 ff.)

MR. H. L. ELLISON (Moorlands Bible College, Holcombe, Dawlish, Devon) writes:—

I admire Mr. Brown's interest and care in giving us 'a small scale survey', but I want to question the advisability of publishing such an item in CBRFJ (CBRFJ xiv).

At a time when polls and surveys based on a small number of people in the sample prove surprisingly correct, many, in spite of Mr. Brown's warning, will take the figures as far more important than they are.

Before any such set of figures can be of much value, whether the sample is big or small, we need to know whether the opinions given were personal or representative of the church sending the delegate. If they are personal, we need to know the main age groups represented.

Another requisite is that the questions should be understood in the same way. In no case in Table 11 does the total add up to all answering. What did those who apparently did not answer think? Was it that they did not think, were they opposed, or did they just not understand the question?

I was not at the Assembly, but I can make a shrewd guess at the type of Brother who was there. I know what the majority of the delegates understood by a 'clear-cut evangelical doctrinal basis', but I find it impossible to believe that 29 out of the 30 Brethren wanted it. I suspect that they were thinking of something very different.

I am afraid there is another basic weakness in the figures. Many (not all!) of the delegates were playing the noble and ancient game of If. They were expressing their opinions for something which they did not expect to happen; for this I have had not a little evidence. Faced with the reality of the break-up of their denominations and the burning necessity (?) of a union of the fragments many would have answered very differently.

If the Brethren answering did so as individuals, I doubt that much is to be learnt from their answers. There have always been those who worshipped in the Assemblies but did most of their Christian work outside them. I doubt that their answers would have been very different thirty years ago.

DR. J. K. HOWARD (8 Lonsdale Place, Whitehaven, Cumberland) writes:—

The problem of what we mean by the inspiration of Scripture has been a major source of debate for many years and it is likely to remain so for many years to come. I think that all would be prepared to concede that the issue is a difficult one and one, perhaps, to which no final solution will be found, yet it is probably much less central to the Faith than we have sometimes made it. I have no wish to enter into lengthy controversy on this matter, but nonetheless I would like to take this opportunity of clarifying one or two points which Mr. G. H. King (CBRFJ xiv 32) has raised concerning my paper 'Towards Renewal' (CBRFJ xii). Before proceeding any further I would express my appreciation for the courteous and reasoned approach that Mr. King adopts. All too often any departure from the rigid 'party line' of Brethren or evangelical orthodoxy is met by abuse, hysteria or a similar emotional outburst. To the present writer at least, such responses would seem to indicate an inner lack of confidence and a repressed uncertainty, which I believe are also responsible for so much theological dogmatism, especially concerning inessentials. On the other hand nothing but good can result from constructive dialogue and debate.

In the first place let me make my own position clear, although in so doing I realise that, in some quarters at any rate, I am going to be labelled 'liberal' and possibly much worse! It would seem to me that to state that Scripture is the word of God without any qualification is to lay oneself open to serious misunderstandings, and when such bald statements are extended by the inclusion of such terms as 'inerrant', 'verbally inspired' or 'plenarily inspired' we are plunged into a veritable fog of obscurantism. Now I do not imagine that any of us would disagree with Mr. King's statement that, 'God has purposefully chosen to reveal Himself in words,' since words are the normal means of communicating ideas and thoughts and as such they are essential for the apprehension of those thoughts, but they are no more than that. It is a common experience that very often words may fail to convey the thought of one individual to another, and in the same way the words of Scripture often fail to put across to modern man the self-disclosure of God. It is my contention that we are only able

to apprehend the word of God in Scripture as it is brought to bear on our minds by the activity of the Holy Spirit. The illumination, indeed one might say, the inspiration, of the Holy Spirit is as important and essential today for the reader of Scripture as it was for the writers. It is this, and only this, which sets the Bible apart from other books. The Bible is a 'living word' because God speaks through it, not because it possesses some inherent magical quality by which it can function alone; it functions through the action of the God who speaks to us through it. As God speaks to us in the words of Scripture then we are confronted by the word of God, then we are placed under judgment. This living word of God demands from us the affirmation of decision, of trust and of obedience. It is then that God 'makes the *record* of past revelation the *occasion* of present revelation' (J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture*. 1957. Page 197). But without this present inspiration the Bible is a book which, however valuable historically, or even theologically, is not a word from God.

Furthermore there are immense historical, linguistic and other problems involved in the statement that 'when we open the Bible we are reading God-breathed words'. It is unlikely that even that much-quoted Scripture at 2 Tim. 3:16 is really saying this. We would judge that here Paul is demonstrating the limits of the scope of Scripture. The primary function of Scripture is spiritual, it is the norm for the Church's teaching, it is the standard by which error is judged and it provides the ethic of right conduct. (E. Brunner has some perceptive remarks along this line in *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation*. 1962. Pages 4ff.). As it presents the spiritual norms and criteria for the Church, Holy Scripture comes to us as the word of God to our situation, but this does not mean that every word is God-breathed, even 'as originally given', the common escape clause inserted into statements of faith.

If every word is inspired in the sense that it is God given directly, which is, I judge, Mr. King's theological standpoint, then how are we to explain the disregard on the part of the New Testament writers for accuracy in their quotations from the Old Testament? Again such a view poses insuperable problems in any translation work. If, on the other hand, we are primarily concerned with elucidating the underlying ideas of the writers of Scripture then the problem vanishes, we will not be held back by a false reverence for words, but will seek to put into intelligible form the essence of the writer's thought. It is this which seems to me to be the criterion by which any translation of Scripture should be judged—to what extent is it making intelligible the original thought of the writers. In this regard it is pertinent to note that no literal translation of Scripture is remotely intelligible—a glance at Dr. Young's attempt should be sufficient to dispel any doubts on that score.

As we approach Scripture we must surely recognise that there is a variable human element, and it is these variations on the part of the writers in their own spiritual awareness which accounts for the wide variations in spiritual value between various parts of Scripture. If every word of Scripture is equally objectively inspired then every part of Scripture

should be of equal spiritual use, but our personal and church usage clearly makes nonsense of such an idea. Again, to state that every word is 'God-breathed' presents considerable difficulty with regard to such books as say Ecclesiastes, Esther or the Song of Solomon (even the Jews found it difficult to explain how the last found its way into the canon!). I for one cannot believe that these represent the word of God in any objective sense. One could go on giving examples, the fact remains that there is a human element in Scripture, and these human imperfections were not mysteriously removed when the writers recorded their apprehension of the word of God that came to them, any more than they are when we proclaim that word of God today. Here indeed is the miracle of Holy Scripture, that, in spite of the words of men it is, through the Holy Spirit, for each generation the word of God.

I am aware that much of what I have written will be summarily rejected by many, while to others it may appear as controversy merely for the sake of controversy, but I trust that some will see in it an attempt, however inadequate, to express in intellectually honest terms the uniqueness of Holy Scripture as the revelation of the self-disclosure of God through which He continues to speak to us. These are matters which we need to rethink, and in terms other than our traditional hallowed jargon. On one issue, however, I dare to think that we all agree. When we are faced with the immediacy of Holy Scripture all our theories become irrelevant, for then, as God speaks to us in our own situation, we are brought under the authority of God and His Christ. Here indeed is the authority of Scripture; it lies in the fact that through these words I am brought into the sphere of God's authority and hear His word in terms of my situation and my experience. Our apprehension and response to this word of God is a measure of our knowledge of God, for in the final analysis we only know God in terms of our personal experience.

FROM THE MONITORS

Ecumenical Incidents

EXTRACTS FROM THE PAPER READ BY ARCHBISHOP FISHER OF LAMBETH AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF REUNION 1967

All baptised Christians are sacramentally—which also means visibly and organically—united now. *Church unity* exists.

Negotiations for Intercommunion and Full Communion—the modes of formal union—must accept the existence of separate, autonomous Churches into which ‘from the beginning baptised Christians, members of the one Church, have been divided’.

This had not been accepted by the 1920 Lambeth Conference, said Lord Fisher, nor, till recently, by Rome. There could now be no question of *return*, whether of Canterbury to Rome or of Nonconformity to Canterbury. ‘All Churches in the brotherhood of the baptised are running in parallel lines’.

The future lay with ‘creative use of diversity’. Full Communion between autonomous Churches. Episcopacy would guard orders and orthodoxy. Autonomy would prevent any church from becoming too big for its own comfort or that of its neighbours.

In my view (said Lord Fisher) the Churches would be wise no longer to speak of reunion, but rather of progressing *in* unity *towards* closer union.

FROM THE ROMAN CATHOLIC JOURNAL ‘ONE IN CHRIST’
reprinted by permission:—

(From a recent conference at Taizé):—

From this dialogue came a resolution in which the participants clearly affirmed their will to start realizing the sign of the Christian community, the universal Church being the community of the communities. Indeed, if God’s forgiveness is to be taken seriously by Christians, they cannot delay their response to what God accomplished in forgiving their sin of division and acknowledging their mutual forgiveness for the acts of the past. Their response must lead to concrete realizations. So it was decided to set up, wherever they lived, whether in the rich Northern hemisphere or the Southern under-privileged one, small provisional communities of Christians from all denominations who would try to go as far as possible in applying to themselves what is known from the Scriptures of the first Christian community in Jerusalem: ‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers . . . they partook of food with glad and generous hearts . . . they had everything in common . . . they were of one heart and soul’ (Acts 2: 42-46; 4:32).

(Issue 1967-2. Page 193.)

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Christianity and the Arts

D. Whittle

Mowbrays 12/6

Anyone who has been roused by Philip Stunt's plea (CBRFJ xv) to consider the implications for worship of architecture and music may be looking for a suitable place to start reading. The book under review is intended primarily for sixth-formers, but presents a wealth of information in easy style which makes it worthy of a wider audience. The Christian attitude to and influence on Painting, Architecture, Music, Fiction, Poetry, Drama and Cinema, are covered both historically and critically, with carefully selected illustrative examples. It is the first three sections that are of particular relevance to the consideration of worship. The 'somewhat studied disregard of the arts' may result simply from custom, perhaps from lack of opportunity to learn about them, or perhaps from the uneasy suspicion that beautiful surroundings distract from true worship. The book gives material that will help arrive at a more discriminating view, with fair consideration of the function of building, painting and music, giving a basis for thoughtful decision on these matters.

Are Gothic cathedrals outdated as 'rhetorical assertions of the temporal triumph of Christendom?', and is there nothing between this and the purely functional 'liturgical shed'?

Mr. Whittle's discussion of 'pop' hymns is very relevant too: his assertion that popular evangelism is often marked by 'emphasis on judgment in the preaching and on peace in the singing' would provide a fruitful idea for study.

The later chapters on literature are not so obviously related to worship, though the discussion of what constitutes a novel, play or film 'religious' is wide and stimulating. All who are concerned with communication in the modern world could study it with interest.

The book is pleasingly produced and free from high-brow assumptions about readers' present knowledge. It could well make us less open to the criticism (quoted from Ruskin) 'The group calling themselves Evangelical ought no longer to render their religion an offence to the men of the world by associating it only with the most vulgar forms of art . . . It is certainly in no wise more for Christ's honour that His praise should be sung discordantly, or His miracles painted discreditably, than that His word should be preached ungrammatically'.

CGM

Briefer Notices

The following briefer notices will also be of interest to members:—

PENTECOSTALISM. Mr. D. G. Lillie's awaited discussion of the generally unwelcoming attitude of 'Brethren' to the New Pentecostalism with which he is identified, under the title of *Tongues under Fire*, has been published by the Fountain Trust at 3/-. Readers will be interested by the chapter in which Mr. Lillie mounts a vigorous critique on CBRFJ ix, and in particular on the article in that issue by the editor of the *Journal*.

DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT AND POWER. The report of the 1966 Swanwick Conference under this title is now available from E.C.L. (60 Park Street, Bristol, 1) at 5/-. The papers are as readable and important as we expect of the annual Conference of Brethren.

WORLD MISSIONS CONGRESS. The report of this important and penetrating conference of North American Brethren, held at Wheaton College in December 1966, is available from Literature Crusades, Prospect Heights, Illinois 60070, U.S.A. (no price stated). Familiar names on the list of speakers include Dr. R. E. Harlow, Messrs. C. Stacey Woods, Fernando Vangioni and Geoffrey Bull, and guarantee the quality of what is said.

A NEW PUBLISHING VENTURE. Following the recent welcome reunion of separated sections of moderate 'exclusive' Brethren (who are often so much more moderate than many 'open' churches), two publishing houses have united under the name of the Central Bible Hammond Trust, 50 Gray's Inn Road, London W.C.1. The first publication is 'The Kingdom of God' by G. A. Lucas—a painstaking survey of all the scriptural background from the moderate dispensationalist viewpoint. Paperback, 241 pp., price not stated.

HUMANIST: FEBRUARY TO JUNE 1967

February 1967

The editorial notes that Christians now invite co-operation of Humanists on a variety of moral issues. 'There is a great deal of common ground where both believers and unbelievers can meet when they are faced by such problems as crime and punishment, racial prejudice and gross social inequality'. This should not occasion surprise, he says, since morality can stand without religion, and he doesn't like Daniel Jenkins's crack that Humanists are 'the cut flowers of Christian or Jewish cultures'. He is not impressed with the Christian record and 'it would be tedious to enumerate all the reforms Humanists have initiated'. He ends with a welcome note of realism 'We can work together all the better if we admit that some day we shall confront each other across a Divide.'

Billy Graham got only a line or two in July but gets two or three pages now, thanks to Richard Cawston's BBC documentary *I'm going to ask you to get up out of your seat*. Reviewing this, Roger Manvell comments on the growing power of the documentary film, but thinks Richard Cawston has brought 'a straight record of Billy in action so that those of us who want to do our own interpreting can at least proceed to do so on a fair view of the facts'. His own interpretation is that 'it is to (Billy's) credit that he permitted this film profile to be done . . . Billy is a propagandist using methods in many respects akin to those which Joseph Goebbels in the 1920's used to proclaim Hitler . . . Evangelism is basic religious propaganda, and should not be ashamed to be seen so. Billy's sun-tanned sincerity shines from the word 'Go', with all the status symbols of success attached to it in the form of suites in the Queen Mary . . . The result is, I think, the propagation of a kind of rainbow-religion, emotionally comforting, relatively undemanding, and fundamentally bourgeois'.

Pat Sloan 'Religion in Decline' gives an interesting sociological study of the state of religion in Britain and USA. She is still irritated by the BBC with 'its crass devotion to the pretence that its audience is predominantly Christian', but gives some surprising figures (from Bryan Wilson *Religion in Secular Society*)—e.g. weekly churchgoing 14% daily prayers 46%. The influence of the 'American way of Life' in promoting church-

going, biblically-illiterate professed Christians is discussed. It looks as if Bryan Wilson is compulsory reading for anyone wanting to draw conclusions from British and American church statistics. (e.g. USA weekly churchgoing 43%, daily prayers 42%.)

Quote of the month from the correspondence columns.

'Surely a Humanist is the last person to be self-righteous. He should say, 'there but for "heredity and environment" go I'.

March 1967

The editorial comments on the Plowden Report on Primary Education. (This report comes down firmly in favour of Religious Education and the daily Act of Worship in schools, but a minority report by six members argues that R.E. cannot be properly adapted to the understanding of children of this age or to appropriate methods of teaching; that morality can be taught apart from religion; and that the present law operates unfairly against agnostic teachers.) 'A Humanist view is contained in a minority report on the religious issue which we publish in full on p.85 . . . All this is sound sense. So is the recommendation that parents should opt in rather than opt out of R.E. Unhappily the chances of abolishing R.E. now seem remote. The battle for secular education must continue nevertheless. To abandon it as a lost cause would betray the very basis of the Humanist attitude to life'.

Diana Kareh contributes an excellent article on 'Educating the Subnormal Child', giving a clear and sympathetic view of the problems and what is being done to meet them. She makes no reference to the possible part of Religious Education (not even, creditably, to make the party point that in such schools Christians would be faced with the biggest challenge to their 'all things bright and beautiful' world-view!) but shows Humanist concern for the underprivileged at its best. 'These children must not be pitied. Their plight is sad, but it is there, and in most cases irrevocable. They are people none the less for it. In the main, happy people who do not find their lives in the least frustrating or limited. For the parents of these children pity might be spared, but wholesome pity, constructive and helpful. Could you sit-in, take a child out for a walk, mind him while mother gets on with the chores, accept the idea that he, and every one-in-a-hundred like him, is part of our community?'

R. C. Churchill, who favourably reviewed William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* when it first appeared, has had second thoughts. In an article entitled 'Desert Island Myths' he attacks the pessimistic trend in recent novels and Golding's picture of innate depravity in particular. One factor in this attack, is a report of six youths who *did* recently survive quite happily on a coral island for thirteen months without the atavistic disaster of Golding's novel. Churchill points out, however, that these six had 'been educated by Methodist missionaries, like most Tongans'. The article concludes 'The present age is not an age of shallow optimism: it is an age of shallow pessimism, and Mr. Golding is one of its prophets . . .'. It looks as if Christians need to make a little clearer that they are pessimistic only about man without God.

Cyril Marcus (who incidentally writes against a background of personal pain and suffering) returns to the question of Euthanasia. The article mentions again the common Humanist view of the church as opposed to social betterment (whereas Evangelicals see only the Shaftesburys and Wilberforces!) 'The fact remains that almost every effort to better the lot of humanity has been opposed by organized religion—the abolition of slavery was fought by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, child labour in factories and mines was defended by the clergy. Divorce Law reform was retarded for years by the established Churches in both England and Scotland. Anaesthesia was condemned by the Church of Scotland . . . The windows of Dr. Simpson's house in Edinburgh were stoned by indignant churchmen. Dr. Simpson was the Scottish physician who first discovered the anaesthetic properties of chloroform. The catalogue of religious opposition to reforms for the betterment of mankind is almost unending'.

The correspondence columns contain a plea that not all Humanists need belong to the political left. There is also a revealing incidental comment (in a letter about the Dead Sea Scrolls). ' . . . Jesus, for whose existence there is a little evidence from Pagan records. Of course no competent historian supposes that the gospels are biographies of a historical person'. (!)

April 1967

The editorial remarks that it 'is true enough the committed Christians are now a minority in this country, but we must not let that go to our heads. Whereas we count our membership and income in thousands, Christians count in millions'. He ends 'The secularisation of morals is a measure of the progress that Humanism has made. Many people today still write C of E on an official form, but that is not a commitment, it is a reflex'.

Meyrick Carre contributes a lengthy review of nature mysticism in various writers from Wordsworth to C. S. Lewis and concludes that 'a sense of mystical kinship with Nature is not necessarily connected with theistic religion but found also among unbelievers'.

James Plender reviews Barbara Wootton's autobiography *In a world I never made*. From the review it seems as if this would be a good book for anyone wishing to get a sympathetic understanding of a Humanist view of life. Two parts of this framework are worth quoting: 'As I see it, the universe in general must simply be accepted as a totally inexplicable mystery. At least I can see no evidence whatever that it is in any sense anthropocentric that it has been created or is conducted by any divine being with a special interest in the human race: the *capacity* to experience a sense of moral obligation must be reckoned as part of the normal human endowment'.

D. A. Hughes gives an interesting account of A. S. Neill, and his experimental school at Summerhill, under the title 'Crank or Genius'?

Education also gets attention from Sheila Chown in her review of recent publications of the Eugenics Society who apparently hold an 'elitist philosophy' of education opposed to current comprehensive trends. The article and papers reviewed might be of interest to those closely interested in present discussion about comprehensive education.

In the correspondence columns Kit Mouat returns to the attack on the title 'Humanist'. Even bishops and 'the God squad at one of the training colleges' are adopting the term. She would like BHA efforts clearly labelled 'secular Humanist'. The BHA chairman replies that this would 'mutilate the comprehensive character of Humanism and disqualify its claim to universality'. Another correspondent quotes John Wren-Lewis ('a prominent Christian apologist') as saying 'I cannot see how one can possibly believe in such a God in view of the immense amount of suffering in the natural world. I see the natural world as entirely an arena of chance.' The correspondent comments that Wren Lewis's later attempts to put God in the world-view is 'just a silly piece of semantic juggling'.

May 1967

The editorial refers to the political lobbying of the British Humanist Association (for which it has renounced its charitable status) and the printing and educational work of Rationalist Press Association (which retains charitable status). Both associations contain members of all parties and 'any attempt to attach a Party label to organised Humanism would split it from top to bottom. And it is doubtful if any of the Parliamentary parties would welcome our embrace'. The need for RPA still exists as 'there is very little sign in the world of today that better education has resulted in more rational attitudes', in politics or elsewhere.

The first volume of Earl Russell's autobiography is welcomed and reviewed. Such works provide a reminder that unbelievers do not always see themselves in the despair evangelicals imagine to be their lot. Russell, whose upbringing was religious writes 'Throughout the long period of religious doubt, I had been rendered very unhappy by the gradual loss of belief but when the process was completed, I found to my surprise that I was quite glad to be done with the whole subject.'

David Tribe reviews Smith's *Shaw on Religion*, and is not convinced that Shaw's religious views are relevant to the modern ecumenical movement. 'To describe him as a religious man, is to play his own entertaining word-games. Modern theologians are unlikely to turn to him for inspiration.

Sam Heppner reviews Fenby's *Delius*. Fenby, at the age of 21, became amanuensis and companion to the blind composer. The friendship between the Humanist composer and religious young man forms the theme of the book. The reviewer comments 'There

are sections of the book where, in explaining the composer's outlook, Fenby summarises the Humanist case so cogently—and, to his credit, very truthfully—that one almost wonders how he has remained impervious to its arguments'.

A brief notice of *The God I want*—a symposium by various radical Christian writers—shows that these writers are not succeeding noticeably in their attempts to woo the Humanist. The reviewer comments on the title 'The point surely is whether God exists; and if so, and we do not want him, that is just too bad'.

The correspondence columns debate the political affinities of Humanism. One correspondent 'joined because I am an atheist, and for no other reason'. Another sees 'the furtherance of the Rationalist cause' as of 'far greater importance than the much more widely shared Humanist aims of general progressiveness and "do-goodery"'. A third 'far from regarding the opposition of Christianity as our one and only aim', would like to see 'specifically Humanist questions approached positively and constructively from the unequivocal and clearly defined position of an agnostic'.

June 1967

Hector Hawton emphasises again that Humanists are not impressed by the radical theologians' efforts. 'To believe in God but not the Church is understandable enough, but to believe in the Church without God makes no sense whatever'. He therefore sees 'organised religion is beginning to break down everywhere'. It seems a pity that the 'God is dead' school are so easily taken to be the reasonable representation of present Christianity. Humanists appear rarely to have met a sane and responsible Christian commitment.

David Tribe contributes an excellent factual article on Drug Addiction. This traces the history of the problem, and accompanying legislation, in America and Britain. He deplores the trends of the last five years. In 1961 the majority of addicts were either professional people or 'therapeutic' (i.e. hooked in the course of treatment for organic disease) 'satisfactorily stabilised, not part of an addict sub-culture, and 'non-infectious' to the rest of the community'. In 1966 the picture was completely changed. A well-documented article—perhaps good to read alongside the more OK books such as *The Needle, the Bill and the Saviour*. While in no way doubting the supreme importance of the Saviour, Christians might ensure they are as well primed as possible on the legal and medical considerations. May be one of the ways the Saviour will act is by his people (and Humanists) expressing social concern through legislation.

Robin O'Dell writes on the centenary of Madame Curie's birth. An informative article, showing the immense determination and resource of this remarkable woman and her husband Pierre. We are reminded that 'Pierre was a freethinker, and his rationalism, which was shared by Marie, was to sustain them during many crises'. This is a further reminder that Christian faith does not monopolise scientific truth or integrity, and that unbelief does not necessarily hinder the discovery and harnessing of the resources of God's world.

E. H. Hutten, reviewing P. B. Medawar's *The Art of the Soluble*—an account of 'what goes on in a scientist's mind. The article would be of interest to anyone who had not time to read the book, and includes one or two incidental comments that show what goes on in the mind of a Humanist reviewer. 'Occasional misuse and even perversion of a good scientific theory—such as Teilhard de Chardin has done with evolution—must not turn us against the theory in question. To use evolution to prop up religion brings about a frightful intellectual muddle . . .' and on the question of dreams 'Explanation there always is though we may not have found it yet'. Seems a presuppositional act of faith, equal to any de Chardin ever made.

Correspondence columns include one perceptive comment about Nietzsche: 'He was not making a metaphysical statement about ultimate reality, but rather a sociological comment about his own time; i.e. he was the first to realise that, as far as society at large was concerned God was non-functional, non-operational, insignificant'. The correspondent thinks that Humanist writing about Christianity is only helping to keep the illusion alive. 'Let us bury God once and for all, and have done with the whole affair . . . We can then go on to more important considerations'. Another correspondent draws attention to the dilemma of the Humanist music teacher who is supposed to play in morning assembly, conduct carol services, etc. A point worth bearing in mind in present discussions about conscience clauses and provisions in education.

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