The Endeavour Magazine

A CHRISTADELPHIAN REVIEW

TWO SHILLING

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REVIEW

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GRATITUDE

THE completed New English Bible *will be in readers' hands when this Editorial is read. Since the New Testament appeared some years ago and attracted much attention at the time, it is possible that the Old Testament portion will receive less publicity. For readers of this journal the appearance of the complete Bible will be an important event. The Authorised Version of 1611 is still widely used, though less so in the present generation than up to it. The Revised Version, in both English and American forms, never usurped the esteem accorded to the Authorised. The Revised Standard Version, of American origin, has gained wide popularity at the expense of the A.V., but its use in worship has been limited. The need for a new translation of the Old Testament in particular is obvious. Whereas Greek literature prior to the New Testament, contemporary with it, and from after it has always been known and abundant, the Hebrew Bible was in 1611 the sole surviving body of texts in the language from its period. There were plenty of rare words that occurred only once, and their meanings were often quite uncertain. King James's translators usually followed traditional Rabbinic interpretations, either at first hand or mediated by Jerome's Latin Vulgate. Knowledge of Biblical Hebrew has increased much more than that of Biblical Greek. There is still no body of Hebrew texts contemporary with the Old Testament but outside its canon. However, Phoenician and other inscriptions have come to light and have been studied. Egyptian and Assyro-Babylonian have been deciphered and the civilizations which used them have been resurrected. Much of the previously lost Old Testament world has come to light, and as a result more accurate translations of the text of the Hebrew Bible are now possible. Without any knowledge*

(Please turn to back page)

Preaching the Gospel to the World in the Twentieth Century

by Wilfred Lambert

PREACHING is a one-way bridge. At one end is human society in whatever state it happens to be at a given moment. At the other end is the Body of Christ, that ideal society which converted humans may join. Successful preaching, which results from human activity coupled with divine blessing, is the means of progressing from one state to the other. A recognition of the work of God and Christ in preaching does not in any way diminish human responsibility. "God gives the increase," but man must plant and water with all available skill. The fatalistic view, that because ultimately God draws men to Him, human competence and efficiency for the job are not to be overrated, has no basis in Christian doctrine. Efficiency alone is of course no merit, but indifference to the quality of the presentation of the message is certainly a vice. So far as lies within us we should make the message relevant and attractive to the hearers. Its content, however, must not be compromised in the process.

No one preaches in a vacuum. Even the apostles worked against a background of John the Baptist and other Jewish teachers, not to mention the preaching of Jesus himself. There is always a tradition of preaching in a certain way and of stressing particular aspects of the Gospel. For example, the first century church depended to a large extent on Jewish converts who could not easily shake off the narrow, legalistic side of Judaism. Preaching then necessitated detailed attention to the doctrine of justification by faith, not by works of the law. The 19th century preachers in Western Europe faced a quite different situation. Judaisers were no menace to them, and this aspect was not therefore so vital a part of preaching except where a modern parallel was found. In the first century much preaching was in the open air. The lack of suitable and available buildings for Christian use was part of the reason, but climate favoured out-of-doors. In Northern Europe climate works the other way, and in recent times there has been no insuperable problem in finding adequate buildings for Christian preaching. As society changes the preacher needs to ask himself if his methods are still the most suited to the new situation. A simple illustration can be given from so prosaic a matter as times for the work. Sunday night is traditionally a time for preaching in parts of Europe. For most it is a holiday, while the morning is devoted by the preachers to worship and most consider the afternoon a time of rest. The evening, then, is best suited. There are, however, parts of the world where car ownership is so common that any fine Sunday vehicles in their tens of thousands pour out of the big cities towards beaches and other pleasure grounds and in the evening they return. At that time the approaches to the big cities are congested with traffic-jams up to five miles long. Communities of believers with places of worship along such routes cannot regularly meet for preaching the Gospel on Sunday nights as the traffic would prevent people from reaching the place of worship and from getting away afterwards. A week-night is therefore preferred. This is, of course, a trivial matter, but for many brought up to observe Sunday both morning and evening, such an arrangement is painful, to say the least. It seems like sacrilege to sit at home on Sunday evening. While one can respect such feelings, it would be folly to allow them to override the hard facts of the situation.

In a rapidly changing world the established habits of believers can easily become one of the greatest obstacles to the Gospel. It is not that such things in themselves are evil, but in a given situation they may prevent the most advantageous use of human and material resources. There are two quite separate aspects of preaching. The first is the content of the message, the second is the whole manner of presentation. As any teacher knows, it is one thing to have knowledge, but it is another matter to present it effectively to others. The present articles are concerned more with what to preach than how to preach it, but since preaching the Gospel is not the same as imparting knowledge, a few general remarks on this aspect are necessary.

Among other things preaching is an invitation to join a community. However effective the preacher, he needs as a background a community that by its way of life supports his message. If the ideals he proclaims

are not seen to some degree at least among those who organize the message, then success is jeopardized. The preacher must also be included in the same terms. He cannot preach a way of life to which he does not actively subscribe. In a stable world such principles are almost platitudes: no one would deny them, however imperfectly they were implemented. But in a changing world difficulties arise from doubts as to what a particular community stands for. More perceptive members may grasp the implications of the Gospel for a new situation more readily than the majority, and then the difficulty arises that the majority may impede the preachers' task and frustrate the very purpose of their communal existence.

The bias of Christadelphian preaching well illustrates this point. In the Victorian world in which our community took root and made great progress a certain Christian ethic was universally known and generally professed. Of course many vices were covered up with a broad veil of hypocrisy, and the degraded state of the poor was usually overlooked in the respectability of middle and upper classes. But on the surface some kind of Christian standards were maintained, and respect for the Bible was general. Against this background the distinctiveness of Christadelphians was mainly in doctrine. Preaching consisted of developing doctrinal points which distinguished us from the orthodox churches by appealing to the authority of the Bible. Points of conduct that were insisted upon in the course of preaching were usually the necessity of Christians to refrain from joining the armed services, and marriage within the One Faith. Of course no one doubted that any professing the name of Christ should be honourable and charitable in relations with other men. But because this was common to all churches no emphasis was placed on it in preaching the Gospel.

Today, all this has changed. The Christian ethic is openly challenged and disregarded. Many who in fact embrace standards now so far removed from those taught by Christ are anxious to deny any connection. The age-old conflict between young and old has now assumed greater proportions than usual, for many young people reject their parents' standards. Many who are still loyal at heart to the old principles are confused and do not openly assert their position for fear of seeming out-of-date. Yet no one could say that we are in a world indifferent to moral issues. Protests about injustice are the fashion, however inept and ill-conceived some of them may be. A little while ago it was "Ban the Bomb;" recently racial discrimination, war in Biafra, help for the homeless and other causes. The evils of war and nationalism are now exposed. We live then in an age which is losing its traditional standards, but where the young especially are much concerned with moral issues. There can be no doubt where the Christian preacher has an opening if only he can use it. He should be able to give the Christian answer to the current moral problems, and as Christadelphians basing ourselves on the teaching of Christ and the apostles we have the greatest opportunities if only we would use them. The churches are often too hampered by their centuries of tradition, as is illustrated by the current strife in the Roman Church over the celibacy of the priesthood. A lively community, able and willing to relate the teaching of Christ to the problems of the present generation could achieve much.

Unfortunately nothing is being achieved. The difficulty is that as a community we are accustomed to doctrinal debate, but not to consideration of moral problems. Our speakers and writers are armed with commentaries and concordances to aid the study of this passage or that word. We have never learnt how to extrapolate the Sermon on the Mount to the question of birth control. Our own lives reflect a lack of concern with moral issues, and the contrast with the Quakers' testifies to this. We have readily accepted the increase in material prosperity since the end of the last war without in any way wondering how we stand in relation to Jesus' saying, "How hardly shall they that trust in riches enter the Kingdom of God."

This, then, is one sphere of preaching which needs more attention, and with which the modern world might be more easily interested in our message. The old idea that 'strangers' need doctrine and believers exhortation is no longer true. The 'strangers' are being invited to share a way of life, and we can appeal to them today by telling them just what it involves as much as by offering justification for its theoretical foundations. There is often a misunderstanding about the immediate end of any session of preaching. However much we may wish to communicate some of the fulness of the Gospel, common sense should warn us that often the most that can be hoped for is to arouse interest in the hearers and a desire for more. Stimulation will achieve ultimately much more than satiety. So often it is forgotten that contact has to be made, and cannot be assumed. Once the contact is made, then other things can be dealt with. One of the best ways of reaching an audience is to deal with something that affects them in a real way. A discussion of a current moral problem relevant to hearers is far better than an endless disquisition on types and shadows in the Law of Moses that will appear to have no bearing on life today. A sound Christian answer on such a matter will be the best introduction to the teaching of Christ and the apostles generally.

What are the topics in this area, and how can they best be dealt with? The first question is simpler to answer than the second. There are at present enough issues being talked about in the world at large to offer suggestions. Some have been mentioned above. Others will readily occur. What is needed in the treatment of topics is the ability to develop a particular issue so as to bring out the general principles on which this point depends, so that the basis of the matter is laid forth. For example, a consideration of the moral problem of war is related to the question of the use of force in general, and this in turn to the whole purpose of Christian life. Materialism is the same. It is not enough to condemn it simply. One must be prepared to explain what precisely is wrong with it in the light of Christian teaching. Should we, perhaps, opt out of society like the 'flower people'? If not, how can we justify our opulence when faced with so much poverty in the world?

These are but a few hints of the kind of subject that could be used with effect in our preaching. Unfortunately the answers need to be sought out still. The Sermon on the Mount has to be applied, not merely studied.

(To be concluded)

The Life and Times of John Thomas, M.D.

(7) The Unsettled Settler

by Brian Tighe

DR. THOMAS spent the first four months of his short stay at Longrove building a house for himself and his family. His printing press and office equipment had lain idle since leaving Richmond, when the publication of the *Advocate* had been suspended. It was in fact nearly eighteen months before its publication, in a revised form, and under the name *The Investigator* was resumed.

The laborious work on the farm was done by a hired hand, leaving Dr. Thomas free to undertake medical practice in a small way. Although things began fairly well, a change in the American economic situation led to hard times for the settlers. The reasons for the economic crisis have been mentioned in a previous article. Its most important effect, as far as Dr. Thomas was concerned, was to reduce the price of wheat by a dollar a bushel (a drop of some sixty-five per cent.). This made the use of hired labour uneconomical, especially as the cost of hiring was sixteen dollars a month plus board. An attempt to retrieve the situation by farming 'on shares' was no more succeessful. The practice involved the land owner providing land, farming implements, seed etc. to someone who was willing to supply the labour, in return for half the proceeds. By a supplementary arrangement the man engaged had free board in return for carrying out general labouring duties around the farm. Unfortunately, a clash of personalities led to some disagreement between Dr. Thomas and his 'partner' and the arrangement was prematurely terminated, by mutual agreement. It was in this way that Dr. Thomas found himself farming nearly three hundred acres, single-handed. His wife's continued illness prevented her from offering any help. It seems that the demands of the house and their four-year-old daughter were more than enough for her.

This period of Dr. Thomas's life aged him physically to such an extent that on his return to Virginia a year or two later he went unrecognised by many of his former acquaintances in that city. The work on the farm was very arduous and in an attempt to lessen the physical effort involved he devised several labour-saving devices, much to the amusement of neighbours and passers-by. The *Ambassador* gives the following account of his efforts.

> The Doctor had found it very fatiguing to walk after the harrow over the ploughed land, and he resolved to make some arrangement by which he could ride and drag the harrow after him. He accordingly removed the upper frame of one of the wagons and attached to the centre of the hind axle a long pole, to which he harnessed the horses in front. He then passed the chain round the axle, to the corner of the harrow, and having placed a cushion to the top of the axle, he took his seat, and raising his feet against the forepart of the contrivance, he drove along and completed his work. The contrivance though rather clumsy and awkward looking relieved the Doctor of a great deal of walking and lightened his toil. The Doctor also found mowing a great demand upon his strength and only managed to get through it by resting at the end of every seventh row, lying at the end, under the shadow of a haycock until sufficiently rested to renew his labours. By this slow process he was enabled to cut 14 tons of hay which he housed in the barn. In addition to these labours he had to take care of a Durham bull, five horses, two colts, and a half-dozen hogs, and to milk two cows night and morning. He had never milked cows before, and he found the process exceedingly disagreeable. One of the cows was a kicking animal, a propensity which the Doctor thinks was doubtless aggravated by his awkward mode of performing the dairy-maid's office. He always found it necessary to tie the hind legs of this animal before beginning lacteal operations so as to escape being knocked down, if the cow should attempt any pranks.

A few months of this sort of work convinced Dr. Thomas that a change of occupation was called for. The arrival of winter coupled with an invitation from a neighbouring township to establish a weekly newspaper,

provided the necessary inducement and opportunity. The farm was left in the hands of a tenant who was to look after the property until a sale could be negotiated, in return for use of house and ground and the reaping of the crops.

The invitation had come from St. Charles, a town on the Fox River, some twenty-five miles from the farm. The opportunity to use his printing equipment and editorial talents, even in such a mundane enterprise as a weekly newspaper, seemed to Dr. Thomas a very attractive alternative to farm labouring. The journey to St. Charles was not without incident. The family set out through the snow by horse-drawn sledge on Christmas Day 1841. As luck would have it the sledge broke down and left them stranded in the middle of the prairie. They were fortunately not too far from home, and were able to obtain help from a neighbouring settler. The incident delayed them for a day or two but they finally arrived at St. Charles where Dr. Thomas made preparation for his new enterprise.

Before the first number of the paper was produced misfortune overtook him again. Fire broke out in the building which housed all the printing equipment as well as books and medicines that had been brought from the farm. News of the fire reached Dr. Thomas at three o'clock in the morning. He was told that the building, together with its entire contents, was destroyed and was urged to come to the place at once. Here Dr. Thomas demonstrated his true British dignity. He replied that if everything was destroyed he would do no good by coming out at that hour in the morning, and went back to bed. The fire had reduced the building and contents to the proverbial heap of ashes, and thereby effectively ended all hope of success in the new venture, since there was no possible way of obtaining recompence for the loss. There was apparently great rejoicing among the Presbyterian section of the community at Dr. Thomas's misfortune. They had heard of his heretical views and regarded the fire as "a judgment from Heaven upon him for his infidel sentiments". The town was, however, determined to have its own newspaper. This venture, it was felt, would benefit local commercial interests by bringing them to the notice of people in the surrounding area, as well as providing a medium for the circulation of news. The outcome was that Dr. Thomas accepted a loan of 340 dollars which enabled him to purchase a new office and equipment, at the neighbouring town of Henepin, whilst still continuing to live at St. Charles itself. By this peculiar series of events Dr. Thomas was established, early in 1842 as editor of a weekly newspaper amongst a growing community of settlers. In the same year he commenced publication of *The Investigator*, successor to the *Advocate*. Because of his now tenuous connections with the Campbellite community, circulation was much more limited, and all copies appear to have been destroyed. *The Investigator* ran to twelve issues, ten being published at St. Charles and two at Louisville.

Although Dr. Thomas remained at St. Charles for only a short time, his stay there was not uneventful. Education in America at that time was organised in a very haphazard fashion, by state authorities on an individual basis. There were many small 'colleges', each one chartered by the State and dealing with such subjects as they were able. These were not full-time educational institutions as we know them, and the financial rewards for staff were meagre. Dr. Thomas's medical qualifications became known to a Dr. Richards who was a lecturer on anatomy and surgery at one of these institutions, the Franklin Medical College. As a result Dr. Thomas was invited to become President (Head of Department) and lecturer on Chemistry at the College, a post which he accepted. The arrangement was a convenient one, for it left him sufficient free time to continue his editorial activities.

The college students were regarded with disfavour by most of the townsfolk for a very understandable reason. It appears that Dr. Richards was provided with bodies for dissection "through the enterprise of his pupils", and the people were well aware of this On one occasion a body was missed from a neighbouring cemetery and suspicion at once fell upon the students. Feeling ran very high. Dr. Thomas reported the incident in his paper, and in the course of editorial comment "strove to allay the excitement by remarking upon the necessity of dissection to the qualifications of surgeons, and the groundlessness of the alarm which prevailed." Far from allaying the excitement, the statement was interpreted as an open admission that the College, the paper, and its Editor were engaged in organised grave-robbery. Fortunately the incident died down without permanent harm being done. Some years afterwards, however, a similar case occurred and as a result a mob fired on Dr. Richards' house, wounding him in the shoulder and killing one of his pupils.

Not all Dr. Thomas's experiences in St. Charles were as unpleasant as this. On one occasion he had an amusing encounter with a Mormon elder. The Mormons were a fairly small force in America at this time, the movement having started some eighteen years earlier. Their effect on the political scene was disproportionately large. The following incident is related in the *Ambassador* with obvious relish, casting as it does Dr. Thomas in the role of theological gladiator, belabouring Mormon and Universalist alike, and finally emerging from the battle unscathed.

> Nearly opposite the house in which the doctor lived, on the other side of the street, stood the meeting-house of the Universalists, to whom the doctor, from his position in the town, was known. It frequently happened that their preacher was absent from home and, in such cases, the congregation were in the habit of sending for the doctor to occupy his place. The doctor agreed to officiate on condition of being exempted from the preliminary worship. He did not recognise them as Christians, even on Campbellite premises, and refused to countenance their devotional proceedings. They consented to have his services on this footing. The doctor spoke in opposition to their principles, which consists of the belief that all men will be saved, and that there is no punishment for evil doers beyond the present state of existence. The congregation never directly attacked his positions, but they indirectly assailed him by inviting a

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A New Testament Philosophy for Today

by Arthur Mallinder

IN OUR SEARCH for the "good life" we have a choice of two ways. We can seek it in either material or spiritual satisfaction. Our civilization in its preoccupation with economic welfare has chosen the former. The New Testament advocates the latter. There is more than a suspicion today that materialism is not truly satisfying—we have had the phenomenon of the Beatles sitting at the feet of their "guru," or students trying to find spiritual insight with LSD — there are symptoms of a more general malaise. All is not well with mammon in 1970.

Our consumer-orientated society has been described as the "more and more civilisation." Having left poverty behind with the mass unemployment of the inter-war years, we attained affluence for the majority in the 50's and 60's when we "never had it so good," and now the aim seems to be luxury and leisure for all with more and more gadgets, more pleasure, more money and more sin. Why are we obsessed with this senseless demand for continuous economic growth? As a nation we bemoan the fact that Germany, Italy or Japan may have an annual growth rate of 8%, while ours is a mere 2½% to 3%, and we feel we are falling behind in the race for prosperity. Impelled by the urge for more and more we proceed to destroy the very environment which gives beauty to our existence — hedgerows are uprooted to allow every inch of land to be cultivated, land and streams are polluted by fertilizers and pesticides, and we fast approach a "silent Spring" when birds and wild flowers will be but memories of the older generation. In a recent Third Programme broadcast John Holloway asked, "How on earth have we got ourselves into the position of feeling obliged to squeeze every last ounce of productivity out of the land and air and sea, and under the sea, and spend untold millions saving every minute of time, and then more millions and the best of our intelligence and energy staving off all the impoverishments of life which these desperate efforts themselves bring?" A crazy situation indeed!

The pursuit of material satisfaction carries with it the seed of our own failure because there is an economic law (which operates as surely as the law of gravity) which we call the Law of Diminishing Marginal Utility. This law states that, other things remaining equal, the larger quantity of a thing a man has, or consumes in a given time, the less satisfaction he derives from any given addition to that quantity. For example, if you have only two loaves of bread, an extra loaf could be a welcome addition to your stock, but if you already have ten loaves, an extra loaf will not give you the same satisfaction, in fact it could be an embarrassment. And so with our stage where basic needs required civilization. Having long passed the satisfaction and material things were a positive blessing, in our craving for more and more we have reached a state where each addition to our abundance gives us diminishing satisfaction, or "diminishing utility" in economic terms. The more we get, the less we value it and frustration results.

The pursuit of material satisfaction is therefore self-defeating and we are coming to realise by experience how abundantly true and relevant are the words of Jesus when he declares that a man's life "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." There is a non-satisfaction in additional material possessions above a basic contentment level, and this idea of contentment is the key concept of this New Testament philosophy for life. Paul writes, "Having food and rainment, let us be therewith content," and writing as one who knew both how to abound and to suffer need, he reinforces the exhortation by the example of his own experience: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." The contented man is the man who is truly rich.

But the New Testament philosophy carries the idea a step further by adding the word "godliness": "godliness with contentment is great gain," and this leads to the crux of the matter. Our choice is not between wanting a lot and wanting a little, but between two divergent ways, between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit. We can equate the search for material satisfaction with "the works of the flesh," when motivated by our own lust, covetousness and greed we are guided by our natural animal responses to our situation. For the Christian this sort of life consists of "those things whereof you are now ashamed" and such a life must become increasingly distasteful to one who has been born again.

The term "godliness" on the other hand conjures up the picture of a life in which the fruits of the Spirit have been cultivated, it speaks of a refinement of human nature and a life which is motivated by spiritual ideals. When we look back at Jesus Christ we see such a life in action. It was C. S. Lewis who once

suggested that Jesus Christ was the next step in evolution.* His idea was that for millions of years, impelled by the blind force of evolution pressing ever upwards in response to the Divine Creative urge, life had developed unconscious of where it was going, but the end product, man, *was* conscious, he could choose where he was going, he was in control of his own destiny. He could blast creation to nothingness or progress in wisdom. And to guide that choice God sent Jesus. Whether we agree with it or not, the idea is attractive, for it is certainly true that when we look at Jesus, God is saying to us, "This is the way I want you to develop, this is the way to find meaning and purpose and satisfaction in life. 'This is my Son, hear ye Him.'" (. . . And He became the firstborn among many brethren . . .).

Just as material things ultimately fail to satisfy, so in contrast the satisfaction to be obtained from spiritual things is limitless. The more and more you have of the fruits of the Spirit, the greater the satisfaction. Paul sums it up when he writes, "For the Kingdom of God" (and in the Bible the term "Kingdom of God" does not always refer to a future political organization on earth; sometimes, as here, it is the New Testament idiom for the *really* good life) "is not meat and drink (i.e. material things) but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." This truly is a realistic philosophy for today.

* This suggestion was also made by Hugh Miller, eminent nineteenth-century Scottish geologist. See "The Old Red Sandstone", pages 258, 259 (Dent's Everyman's Library), and "My Schools and Schoolmasters", pages 390, 391, (Collins).

Life and Times of Dr Thomas
(*continued from page* 5)

Mormon elder from Chicago to visit them and preach in their meeting-place. This Mormon elder accepted the invitation and made an appointment. He discoursed on the 4th of Ephesians and preached a very orthodox Campbellite discourse, proclaiming baptism for the remission of sins but his Mormonism leaked out in a concluding remark to the effect that baptism was not valid unless administered by an official of the true church, and that the only true church was that with which he was connected, which he informed them had the prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers mentioned by Paul in his text. When he sat down, the doctor, who was present, rose and remarked that the prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers of Paul's day were able to prove their mission by divine attestation in the miracles they were able to perform, but that in our day, none of the pretenders to the successorship of the Apostles were able to give any proof of the validity of their professions. He remarked that till such evidence was forthcoming, the audience that had listened to the statement of the Mormon elder, ought to withhold their credence to the high claim he had put forth in respect to the officials of the sect to which he belonged. Next day, certain of the Universalists called on the doctor and urged him to debate the question with the Mormon elder, who they said was willing and anxious to hold the discussion. The doctor agreed to meet him, and arrangements were made for the discussion to come off two days afterwards in the Universalists' meeting house. During the short interval, the doctor supplied himself with a copy of the book of Mormon, by means of which he acquired a knowledge of the system to be attacked. Thus armed, he went into the debate on behalf of the truth, against the blasphemous and ignorant assumptions of Mormonism. The debate lasted two days, at the end of which the Mormon elder became exceedingly abusive, denouncing the doctor as an infidel, a heathen, and the devil. After this demonstration the Dr. made his final address to the audience, and declined any further dealings with his antagonist. The latter at once apologised for his vulgarity, and concluded by privately saying that he would be much obliged to "brother Thomas" if he would make a collection for him as he was out of funds. The doctor told the people the request that had been made to him, and remarked that he was no brother of the Mormon's, but he had no objection to say that if they were disposed to give the Mormon anything, they could do so on their own responsibility. The hat was passed round, and the subscription returned, as expressive of the congregation's sense of the Mormon elder's services, amounted to three and sixpence, and an old button. The number of people present would be about 500.

It was shortly before this incident had taken place that Dr. Thomas decided to give up the weekly newspaper. He was becoming increasingly disenchanted with its political associations and the increasing demands which it made on his time. Accordingly he passed the paper over to a Dr. Waite, a Campbellite who, remarked Dr. Thomas, "was ambitious of figuring on the Editorial platform." Dr. Thomas retained his printing equipment and continued with the publication of The *Investigator*, taking such opportunities as occurred to preach in the surrounding district. He soon found that his reduced income was insufficient to meet his needs and decided to take steps to recoup some outstanding debts. In particular, he made arrangements to return to Virginia to claim a sum of three hundred dollars outstanding from the sale of his farm in that state. He decided to take his wife and daughter with him, and in order to finance the expedition, borrowed another forty dollars (making three hundred and eighty dollars in all) from the man who had advanced the loan for the printing equipment.

As events stood, the situation seemed fairly satisfactory. Dr. Thomas was in debt to the sum of nearly four hundred dollars, but against this he had two thousand dollars invested in his farm at Longrove and three hundred dollars owing to him from a previous sale. Incredibly, he was to fall foul of yet another unfortunate chain of circumstances. He returned from Virginia penniless, with the debt of three hundred and eighty dollars still unredeemed!

(*to be continued*)

Endeavour Summer School 1969

An Informal Report

JOEL and Colossians, Existentialism and the Supernatural, Temptation and Vices—these were just six of the topics considered at the Fourth Endeavour Summer School held, as before, at Fircroft College, Birmingham, in August. Diversity was also characteristic of the views of the participants who gathered for study and fellowship and to discuss some of the problems facing the believer and our community in the twentieth century.

Each evening there was a lecture which always sparked off a lively discussion. In "Christadelphianism, Past, Present and Future" we first looked at some of the personalities involved in the rise of the Christadelphian community. We then traced the development and progressive narrowing of Dr. Thomas's views and saw how the long and bitter controversy with Alexander Campbell drove him to adopt an increasingly extreme position. The titles of the other lectures were: "An approach to Christian Unity", "Can we call Jesus God?", "Tolstoy and the Teaching of Jesus", "Medicine and the Bible" and "Temptation".

In the mornings, apart from the main studies, there were members' talks on a wide variety of subjects, but special evening sessions were allotted to a consideration of *The Secular City* by Harvey Cox, an attempt to demonstrate the relevance of Christianity in the modern world. Modern technology is revolutionising our way of life and religion has lost its meaning for most people today. The new situation requires careful study in order to find out what are the needs of people today and the points at which we can make contact with them. If our preaching is to be effective we must be aware of the trends of this civilisation.

The main study for the week—the prophecies of Micah and Joel—was led by Wilfred Lambert who took us through both books systematically verse by verse, allowing a pause for suggestions and comments after each short section. Brother Lambert began by reminding us that God has revealed himself, not continuously in history, but at particular times to meet the needs of a particular situation. Before we can extract anything of value to ourselves from the prophets we must first understand what they meant in their own generation. Their world was very different from ours and it is important that our methods of interpretation should be derived from scripture and not from our modern western preconceptions.

In ancient times when there were no printing presses, and books were expensive, communication was chiefly by the spoken word. The prophets were primarily preachers. Their words were probably not usually written down until afterwards, (Jeremiah being exceptional) and were compiled and arranged so that what we now have is a collection of utterances made on different occasions. In the case of Micah this became clear as we examined the book in detail.

Micah was contemporary with Isaiah, and the results of the Assyrian invasion are foretold in no uncertain terms: "I will make Samaria a heap in the open country" (1: 2-7; R.S.V.), "Evil has come down from the LORD in the gate of Jerusalem" (1: 8-16). The invasion of Judah is referred to

again in chapter 5, where in v. 1 we read of the besieged "ruler of Israel", and in v. 5, 6, of what will happen "when the Assyrian comes into our land".

In other passages, however, the viewpoint seems much later. Thus, chapter four reads as though the Babylonian conquest is past and the southern kingdom has now fallen: "In that day, says the LORD, I will . . . . gather those who have been driven away . . . . the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem" (v. 6-8). In v. 10 Babylon is actually named as the captor.

Chapter 7 brings us to a still later period. "A day for the building of your walls" (v. 11) makes us think of Nehemiah, and the promise in v. 14 that Bashan and Gilead will be inhabited "as in the days of old" is also post-exilic, since these areas were Israelite territory until the Babylonian conquest but were not immediately re-occupied when the Jews returned from exile. These allusions may be either the predictions of Micah or the work of a later compiler. The reference to Assyria in v. 12 suggests the former, since Assyria had ceased to exist by the time of the exile. It must be remembered however that our modern ideas of authorship are quite different from those of the ancients, who considered that the value of a prophetic writing depended, not on its date or human author, but on the content of its message.

The time of Joel's prophecy is not given to us explicitly, but the internal evidence is very suggestive. There is no reference to a king, or to the northern kingdom (contrast Micah) but the priesthood is prominent and the Greeks are mentioned (3:6). A date after the exile seems certain. The first part of the book (1 :1-2 :27) describes a locust plague which, since it is said to resemble an army ("Like warriors they charge, like soldiers they scale the wall"), is descriptive not of an armed invasion but of a literal locust swarm, the effects being made worse by drought (1 :17-20; 2 :23).

Both books contain prophecies of future glory for Israel. In Micah chapter 4 we are shown a time when people will of their own accord propose to go to Jerusalem to seek Yahweh, but it is not easy to be sure to what extent the terms used reflect the intellectual climate of the Prophet's time.

We can easily understand that the altitude of the temple ("as the highest of the mountains") indicates its importance; that "swords into ploughshares" means that men will turn from warfare to agriculture; and that "every man under his vine and under his fig tree" is a picture of security parallel with "none shall make them afraid". What then about Zion and Yahweh and Yahweh's house? Our horizon is enlarged in the New Testament in a way that would have been unintelligible in Micah's time, and we should perhaps regard its spiritual worship, spiritual temple and spiritual Israel as commentary upon this Old Testament prophecy.

Similar considerations apply to those passages which predict the triumph of Judah over her enemies: "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion . . . . you shall beat in pieces many peoples. . . . . The remnant of Judah shall be . . . . like a young lion among the flocks of sheep" (4 :11-13; 5:7-9). *The only known historical situation that would fit* them is to be found in the Maccabaean period, but they surely promise God's final victory over all the forces of evil, as also in the last part of Joel's prophecy (3 :9-21). It was suggested that these descriptions are set within the horizon of the people of the time and that we need to extract the essence and not necessarily adhere to the forms in which it is given, just as in Revelation ch. 21 we are given a picture of blessings but we need not speculate as to their precise form—a city whose length, breadth and height are equal would not be literal.

The second study for the week was based on Paul's letter to the Colossians and led by Ralph Lovelock who dealt with three of the main themes to be found in the epistle, namely Christ the Lord of all, the Church his Body, and the Life of the Church.

As in the case of all Paul's epistles, that to the Colossians was written to meet the needs of a particular situation. A false teaching had arisen in the church which, if allowed to proceed unchecked, would prove destructive of the very basis of the Christian Life. By comparing the arguments and phraseology of the apostle with the teaching which later came to be known as gnosticism, we discover that the ideas, principles and tendencies of gnosticism were already at work in Paul's day. It was these ideas with which the apostle was concerned when he wrote to the Colossians.

The gnostics taught that there was a great gulf between deity and flesh, and that there could be no fellowship or contact of any sort between the two. Since Jesus was a man he could be in no sense divine. In reply, Paul showed that in Christ diety and flesh were united: "For in him the complete being of God, by God's own choice, came to dwell" (1 :19; N.E.B.); "For it is in Christ that the complete being of the Godhead dwells embodied" (2 :9); "in him lie hidden all God's treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2 :4). Christ is Lord of all, his position being akin to that of God himself: "Every power and authority in the universe is subject to him as head" (2 :10).

The gnostics held that man could not approach God directly, but Paul *tells us that in Christ we have met* God face to face. "He is the image of the invisible God" (1 :15). The word "image" indicates something that can be seen. *In* Christ man was seeing God for the first time. "In him the complete being of God . . . . came to dwell" (1 :15, 19).

The gnostics thought that since the world is material and evil it could not have been created by the supreme God. Paul wrote of Christ: "In him everything in heaven and on earth was created . . . . the whole universe has been created through him and for him" (1 :16).

Thus the gnostic attack on the Christian view of Christ drew from Paul these clear and emphatic statements of the divinity of Christ. Since we have usually emphasized the human "side" of Christ we find them puzzling and have tended to ignore Paul's teaching in this epistle. Dr. Thomas, it may be noticed, did recognise this aspect of the work of Jesus as can be seen from his section headed "Deity manifest in flesh" in *Eureka* Volume 1.

To the gnostic human flesh was eternally damned and must be destroyed before man could have fellowship with God. Similarly matter also, the whole universe, being evil, was eternally damned. The gnostic view

was akin to that of the Puritan of Cromwell's time who, when his attention was drawn to the loveliness of a flower, replied "I have learned to call nothing lovely in this lost and sinful world!" In response we have the apostles references to reconciliation, of mankind, and also of all the universe, this being the work of God himself: "Formerly you yourselves were estranged from God . . . . but now by Christ's death in his body of flesh and blood *God has reconciled* you to himself, so that he may present you before himself as dedicated men, without blemish and innocent in his sight" (1:21, 22). "Through him *God chose* to reconcile the whole universe to himself . . . . all things, whether on earth or in heaven, through him alone" (v. 20).

God's instrument in his work of reconciliation is the church. The figure of the body of Christ is familiar to us from 1 Corinthians, but in Colossians the same idea is used to teach a different lesson, namely, *the function of the church in the world. It is in 2 Corinthians 5 that we learn that God calls upon* man's aid in this work: "He has reconciled us men to himself through Christ, and he has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation . . . ." "What I mean is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself . . . . and that he has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation. We come therefore as Christ's ambassadors. It is as if God were appealing to you through us: in Christ's name, we implore you, be reconciled to God! . . . . Sharing in God's work we urge this appeal upon you" (v. 18-21). Now Christ is "the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18), and as a head is useless without a body with its limbs and organs, so it is through his body that Christ operates in the world. It is we who are the hands, feet, eyes and lips of God in the world today.

Not only is God working through the Church, but also suffering still, in us and through us and because of us. Paul viewed his own troubles as a continuation of Christ's sufferings: "It is now my happiness to suffer for you. This is my way of helping to complete, in my poor human flesh, the full tale of Christ's sufferings still to be endured, for the sake of his body which is the Church" (1:24). Thus for Paul the labours and sufferings of Christ were not just an idea in a system of theology but a living reality.

Christ went away, leaving his disciples to continue his work. Christ laboured for men, frequently those of whom respectable people took no notice: "This people that know not the law are accursed." When he found need he used his powers to help and to heal, and this not without cost to himself. We belong to one of the favoured nations of the world. The financial and medical resources available today could do much to help the "have-nots", but we prefer to live in safety and comfort and ignore the needs of others.

Some gnostic teaching tended toward asceticism, other towards immorality. One party thought that because of the corrupting influence of the body on the spirit of a man it was necessary to starve the body of all sensations—only then might a man become righteous and holy. The other party held that since the body was destined to be destroyed it could do no harm and need not be restrained. *Both views were destructive of the Christian way of life.*

To the immoral, Paul wrote, "Then put to death those parts of you which belong to the earth. . . . Because of these God's dreadful judgment is impending" (3:5-8), while earlier (2:16-23) he had attacked the other side: "Allow no one therefore to take you to task about what you eat or drink. . . . Why let people dictate to you 'Do not handle this, do not taste that, do not touch the other'—all of them things that must perish as soon as they are used?"

The gnostics had a creed. Salvation was by knowledge and it was necessary to be correct in every point. It is a sobering thought that the history of the Christian Church has been marked by the formulation of a succession of creeds—statements consisting of historical facts and dogmatic inferences but without reference to ethical conduct. By contrast the teaching of Jesus presents to us a way of life. The phrase "the Way" indicates that Christ's followers were marked out not by creed or nationality but by a distinctive way of life—his life: "the life I now live is not my life but the life which Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20); "it is from the Head that the whole body with all its joints and ligaments receives its supplies, and thus knit together grows according to God's design" (Col. 2:19).

It is this life which Paul enunciates to those in Colosse who were troubled by these gnostic tendencies: "Put on the new nature which is being constantly renewed in the image of its Creator and brought to know God" (3:10). In all things Christ is the pattern: "you must forgive as the Lord forgave you". "To crown all there must be love," and love must direct our whole life as it did for Jesus.

"Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." We tend to relegate this to a form of words used at the end of a prayer, but the real import is far deeper. We should ask ourselves: "This prayer, can I honestly present it as something he would ask for if he were here?" If we are on the brink of a decision, do we imagine Jesus to be present and ask what he would do in such a situation, regarding ourselves as but a limb moving at his discretion? Ecclesial business meetings would be very different if every member present were identical in character, will and emotions with Jesus—"This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you;" "If a man does not possess the Spirit of Christ he is no Christian;" "By their fruits ye shall know them."

If we are members of Christ's body, is it his life that motivates us, or ours? Can it be said of us that "Christ is all, and in all?" (3:11).

The addresses were stimulating and of great benefit spiritually, and although on reflection one might wish to seek clarification of some of the ideas put forward, there is no doubt that the atmosphere of open and frank discussion was of enormous value.

Love is the hardest lesson in Christianity; but, for that reason, it should be most our care to learn it.

WILLIAM PENN

Marriage: Ancient Ways and Modern Problems

by George McHaffie

IN BRITAIN rather more than 400,000 marriages take place every year. Almost one in every eight marriages, however, finds its way to the divorce court. It may be presumed that there are also a vast number more where the strains, tensions and enmities never reach the point of seeking divorce. People are, in general, bad at making co-operative relationships, and marriage, which demands so much co-operation, is bound to be one of the casualties of the major human disability. The problem is not a twentieth century one. It seems to have been accepted throughout all generations that marriage was an arrangement in which mutual happiness gave way to strife in middle life. This depends, of course, entirely on the make-up of the partners. Granted a thorough commitment to Christ on the part of both partners, the essential ingredients are there for marriage to be a pattern of the relationship of Christ to His church.

Practices In Ancient Israel

No one can complain that the divorce arrangements in the Old Testament have lacked attention. I propose only to look at two points. One is the evidence for customary practice and the other what is the probable meaning of Deuteronomy 24 : 1-4. There are not many examples for examination of divorce procedure in the Old Testament. As with the marriage ceremony the event is laconically stated. In the case of Hagar, Abraham's concubine, and for whom the laws of marriage would apply, the occasion of the "casting out" or divorce was the insistence of the first wife, not the husband's wish. It seems also that when for any reason a husband and wife ceased to live together, the bride's father could regard the marriage as invalidated and marry his daughter to someone else. This seems to be the background to the apparently high-handed attitude of Saul in marrying Michal to Phalti in David's absence, or Samson's wife's parents in marrying her to Samson's companion on the grounds that they thought "he hates her." There is even less information on the wife's position. It seems likely, however, that a dissatisfied wife merely walked out and returned to her own family and this brought about the dissolution of the marriage. This is apparently the position of the levite's concubine in Judges 19 : 1-3. Divorce for purely religious reasons was practised in the time of Ezra (Ezra 10).

In Deut. 24 : 1 the picture is of a husband who finds "some uncleanness" or "unseemly thing" in his wife. It would be of great advantage to know what precisely was meant originally by "unseemly thing." The definition was a cause of dispute among the Jews, who, in Jesus' day, had two schools of thought. The school led by Hillel regarded the expression very broadly and covering virtually any cause. The school of Shammai on the other hand regarded the phrase as meaning adultery only.

In support of the position adopted by Shammai the expression "unseemly thing" is akin to the euphemistic expressions used in the Bible for sexual uncleanness. There are only two references in the Old Testament to the giving of a "bill of divorcement" (Isaiah 50 : 1 and Jer. 3 : 8). Both are figurative but both are given to an adulterous Israel. Against this, however, it would seem strange when the death penalty was pronounced on the adulterer and the adulteress (Lev. 20 : 10) that there should also be a provision for an adulteress to be free to marry another. The bill of divorcement was also open to a second husband if he "hated" her.

There may, however, have been few cases where the death penalty was exacted for adultery. The position of Joseph with Mary and his intention to divorce her privately (Matt. 1 : 19) may reflect a general attitude in Israel. The figure of Judah's divorce for adultery does not carry through to the idea of stoning. Shammai may have had more grounds for his limited view of divorce provision than at first appears. Apart from this, however, there was the other customary practices such as seen with Abraham and others which did not conform to the position allowed as a basis for divorce in Deuteronomy.

The New Testament

In the Old Testament we have Israel governed by laws which were appropriate to nationhood. In the New Testament principles of conduct are given for a redeemed community. The church of the living God is a community reconciled to God with itself, committed to reconciling others to God. It should therefore be skilled in matters of reconciliation where there are breaches. It should also be sensitive enough to appreciate that some human barriers are insurmountable.

One of the clearest characteristics of Jesus' teaching is that it is not legalistic, as Paul said, "if righteousness comes by law, then Christ died for nothing" (Gal. 2 : 21, N.E.B.).

Despite this, a legalistic approach to a problem is a great temptation. It gives a feeling of certainty, security and finality. In the history of Christianity numerous petty rules have sprung up which may or may not have much relevance to scriptural statement. On the other hand the application of a principle of love and reconciliation gives a continual challenge to improve one's judgment or attitude. This puts us more in the realms of faith with its lack of the usual security than of law with its blacks and whites.

The most discussed words of Jesus on divorce are found in Matt. 19 : 9. The question put to Jesus concerned the interpretation of Deut. 24 : 1. The reply which He gave has been turned by many into a new law on the subject supposedly with an exceptive "clause." It is as though Jesus's words are legal enactments with sections, sub sections and "clauses." This no doubt leads to a tidy decision on questions of divorce but as with the legalistic position raises deeper problems and injustices. As with legal enactments interpretation tends to squeeze every conceivable meaning out of the words which they could bear. The original intentions of the author become secondary.

If we stand back from the incident and consider the moral attitude of Jesus in general we may find some help in understanding the meaning of His comments. Anyone who proposes a more radical way of life is bound to have questions based on accepted practices put to him. If, therefore, it is proposed that we "turn the other cheek" and "love our enemies" someone is bound to ask what we would do if someone attacked our wife or mother. Jesus had been preaching reconciliation between enemies, compassion to those who had fallen. What then about divorce which seemed to highlight the elements of enmity and fallen humanity ?

Jesus' answer to the Jews is a conclusion drawn from the following principles:

(1) Jesus' great work concerned reconciliation of man to God and man to man. In this quest He saw His followers' duty to resist pride and stoop to help the victims of sin. He Himself was therefore found talking to outcasts, publicans and sinners in His effort to bring them back to God and honourable living.

(2) Jesus' followers were to have new lives and changed hearts. All His guidance was given for such followers. He could hardly determine what a hard-hearted person should do without first his having a change of heart.

(3) Reconciliation in the most unhappy circumstances was seen to be in accord with the heart and mind of God in Jer. 3 : 1 " . . . thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord."

It seems quite improbable therefore that, in the light of these principles, Jesus would merely support the interpretation of Shammai and support the idea that a husband may give a bill of divorcement to a guilty wife. Rather would He expect a husband at least to adopt much the same attitude as He did to the woman taken in adultery. He would help her to amend her ways and sin no more even to the extent of being let down and mocked.

Jesus makes two major points about Deut. 24 : 1. First it was an arrangement for the hard of heart, second He declared that the Mosaic arrangement was not in accordance with the intention of God in creating man. He is not therefore seeking to interpret Deut. 24 : 1 but to take it away. To Jesus the arrangements only led to disguised adultery. A similar judgment may be made of much of the remarrying following divorce reported in the popular press where we may read of celebrities of stage and screen marrying for the third or fourth time following the dissolution of previous marriages. The presumed "exceptive clause" seems to be little more than a statement qualifying the adulterous end result. If unchastity already exists divorce will not lead to it.

If, however, it is maintained that Jesus is permitting divorce on the sole grounds of adultery several moral problems arise. There are many couples whose marriages have broken down beyond all hope of repair but in every other way are attempting to live upright Christian lives. On the other hand there are others whose marriages also have broken down but where both partners in consequence live unchaste lives. In accordance with the theory that Christ permits divorce on grounds of adultery the first of these cannot divorce and remarry but the second may. So the blessing and sanction of Christ supposedly falls on those with the more debased standards. The approach which sees in Christ's statement a law on the subject is in any case self defeating. If in the first case above the partners did in fact divorce and remarry, or if one partner remarried, the remarriage would be by definition adultery. But as adultery is the grounds for divorce and remarriage, the adultery would legitimise the subsequent remarriages. This would reduce the law to meaninglessness but even worse it would be an incitement to immorality in order to obtain a legitimate remarriage !

Other Ramifications

A review of Jesus's comments on Deut. 24 : 1 does not exhaust the ramifications of the problems arising out of marital breakdown. The passage is mainly concerned with the morality of a husband with covert adulterous intention dismissing his wife. Not all marital breakdown fits this pattern and these are aspects which deserve the most sympathetic consideration.

There are probably few marriages contracted where the partners do not see themselves as bound for idyllic happiness. For many the first realisation that their marriage is heading for breakdown comes as a devastating shock. It is quite wrong to assume that marriages only break down because of the roving eye or selfish irresponsibility of one or both. It seems rather as though a disintegrating factor greater than either can control gradually erodes personal relationships until one or other partner, or both, feels total antipathy and physical aversion toward the other.

It is quite clear that long before this stage has been reached the influence and help of friends or marriage guidance counsellors with some experience in dealing with these problems can do much to arrest the decline and reverse the disintegration. The aim of such counselling should be first of all, in an atmosphere of strict confidence, to enable the partners together or separately to discuss their feelings and enmities. This it is hoped may lead to the clarification of issues and underlying causes which may be far from

obvious to the partners engaged in their enmity. It should be possible to promote an ability to look squarely at the difficulties, generate a desire to surmount enmity and restore communication which has probably been one of the first casualties. It may be that no one individual can give to any one couple all the many forms of aid and provide the desirable therapeutic relationship required, and the help of several mature people should be sought. Indeed the active and constructive sympathy of a group is thoroughly desirable.

The worst that a group can do is fasten on the situation as a source of unkind and unsympathetic gossip with members of the group thoughtlessly lining up in support of one or other of the partners. It is in this area that relatives and friends can be thoroughly destructive, worsening the situation rather than healing it. It seems also that many who take a legalistic attitude to Jesus's words on divorce can add an unhelpful feature. By harsh threats, misinterpretation of the source of the trouble and unjust presumptions more unhappiness can be brought into an already despondent situation.

The Final Challenge

After all efforts have been made, however, a position may be reached when the two partners are irretrievably poles apart. In such a situation equanimity can hardly be expected from either partner. All areas of life are affected. Ideals may fade and constructive thoughts on the best use of one's life may be crowded out. Lack of a peaceful attitude at home may well prevent useful study or work and a general enervation and apathy become characteristic. The atmosphere between partners can lead to maladjustment in the characters of children, insecurity and delinqency. In the light of the outcome the marriage was a mistake in the first place. An agreed separation is the solution for some couples, though far from ideal. Some are, however, constitutionally incapable of facing the emptiness which this entails, though it is to the credit of many that, faced with this situation, they can throw themselves into constructive and valuable work in a most dedicated fashion and find a very wide basis of companionship in Christ.

When the disciples expressed their awe at the sublime ideals of marriage which Jesus set out, He replied, " It is not everybody who can live up to this . . . . only those who have a special gift " (Matt. 19 : 11—J. B. Phillip's trans.). These words are true to experience. Many whose marriages have broken up are not able to achieve stability without a partner. It is also a matter of observation that many second marriages have been highly successful in every personal and spiritual sense. From a base of peace and security sound Christian work has been obtained and others have been brought to Christ through their ministrations, and children of the second marriage have been brought up and become enthusiastic Christians. It is perhaps in facing up to this situation that the legalistic approach to the tragedy of divorce is most lacking. To someone whose emotions have been shattered and life rendered empty but now has found a new stability and settled family life, an ultimatum will be issued. He or she will be asked to abandon home, partner and any children before Christian fellowship can be extended. This is to demand a moral heroism from someone whose personality has already been weakened by previous upheavals of an order which is never faced by those who demand it. It is also an unhappy but outstanding example of how a legalistic attitude can drive otherwise kindly and helpful people to extremes of unchristlike conduct. It leads also to the conclusion that as individuals differ in their needs and capacities so the demands of Christ as ministered by the ecclesia must be tempered to each separate case.

What then is Christ's teaching on divorce ? Does He give a yes or no ? I think He would turn this question back on us and ask " What do you personally think ? " Given Jesus's concern for reconciliation ; His striving to see love and compassion born in the hearts of His followers ; His concern for the weak and the fallen, what should our conclusion be ? Jesus's teaching is surely given in a fashion to stretch whatever moral fibre we are found with. If we are born into circumstances of great depravity with minimal standards we can begin by embracing the principles of selflessness, others may reach for greater depth and for those who can cope with the supreme challenges of Christ His teaching is not bounded by legal considerations but is limitless in the ideals at present. The problem for all who would lay claim to Christian fellowship is to have regard for their own ways without seeking to impose their own achievements on their weaker or more unfortunate brethren and sisters.

FIRCROFT 1970

Fifth Endeavour Summer School
1st to 8th August (D.V.)

Fircroft College has once more been booked for our Study Week. The main studies will be drawn from Old and New Testaments as follows: —

The Pentateuch—its origin, value and significance today.

The Background to the Gospels—the expectations of the—time, the miracles, the impact of Jesus, etc.

The study, lecture and discussion sessions will occupy the mornings and evenings. In the afternoon there will be the opportunity for recreation, visits to local places of interest etc. The cost for the full week will be £11 10s.; students half-price; children under 3 free. Bookings should be made as soon as possible and not later than May 30th, enclosing £1 deposit (returnable), to: —

Bro. Ian McHaffie,
Moray Lodge,
176 Granton Road,
Edinburgh.
EH5 1AH

"I was sick and you visited me"

by Paul Pearson

ONE OF THE TRAGEDIES of the welfare state is the state of its welfare. In trying to achieve the material happiness of the greatest possible number the spiritual happiness of the individual is inevitably sacrificed. Such is the lot of the sick.

Although society provides medical services and treatment there is enough evidence around us to show that personal concern for others as individuals is sadly lacking. This unhappy aspect permeates through all levels, from the harassed indifference of the local G.P. to the frightening condition of old people in some hospitals.

Ironically, as medicine is curing the illness of some, it is also prolonging the painful existence of others—others who need our sympathy and help. The machine may be taking over from man, but although a computer may diagnose an illness, it cannot dispense tender love and care to the patient.

We may have become acclimatised to the fallacy that since the state has become responsible for the sick, we can go on our way rejoicing. Most of us anyway tend to shun the thought of sickness through fear of pain and the unknown. Better for it to be out of sight, out of mind. There but for the grace of God, lie I; and like the Levite we pass by on the other side.

Indeed, we may in fact derive some morbid satisfaction at seeing someone else succumb to tribulation. Certainly, the popularity of such T.V. programmes as "Emergency Ward 10" or "Dr Kildare" is due to more than the adulation of its principal stars. As far as entertainment is concerned, people love to see the suffering of others.

Whilst all the emotional defences against, or morbid fascination for, the affliction of others are common to us, true Christianity transcends our oh so human attitudes, directing our hearts and minds towards a better understanding of their needs.

"Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep"—our supreme example being the first perfect "man for others."

We must understand that "the sick" are not a different race or subspecies. How often have we asked how he or she is, when the patient is quite capable of replying for him- or herself. The sick, though often treated as such, are not morons. How often have we made the sick person feel guilty for being ill, either by an unkind jest (itself a defence mechanism) or else pitying the close relatives for having to bear such a burden? Or as Christians, how often do we imply that if the sick had more faith, prayed more, and read their Bibles more, they would not be in such a mess? Can anyone imagine that Christ would have said this to people? Even in these enlightened days sickness still retains its moral stigma.

Whatever our interpretation of a solution to the problem of pain, we can easily see that Christ did not accept philosophically the world's suffering as an inevitable outcome of Adam's transgression. He healed people. We do not possess Christ's unique qualities of healing, yet through the strength of Christ we can bring comfort and help to "the private world of pain and loneliness" and restore a person's self-respect and dignity as a human being at a time when they are the most vulnerable.

"Be not slow to visit the sick; for that shall make thee beloved" (Ecclesiasticus 7: 35). But sick visiting is more than spending an occasional night going to the hospital to eat the patient's grapes or unburden a list of one's own ailments and problems on the sufferer. We must be aware of the needs of the patient, whether they be at home or in hospital. We are misinterpreting the commandment of love if we speculate about the glories of the future kingdom when the patient needs, there and then, assurance and help in the present world. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (James 2: 15, 16). Practical work needs to be done—whether it be cleaning a room, washing clothes, preparing a meal, or running errands. (The state home help service is not perfect.)

Sick visiting should not be confined to one or two in the church. "The members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." Admittedly, many may not have the temperament or personality necessary to bring comfort to the sick. Yet many still may not realize their own qualities of sympathy, comfort and cheerfulness which can strengthen the sick.

All too often we leave sick visiting to someone else. But why? Do we not feel when nodding our assent to a general prayer for those absent through sickness on a Sunday morning that we are failing these brethren and sisters of Christ? Will we be among those on the left hand of Christ at the judgment, asking the question, "Lord, when saw we thee sick . . .?" Even if we cannot visit a card or letter can cheer a sorrowing heart. Surely, with and through prayer we should strengthen the sick, both practically and spiritually, rekindling their dying faith, encouraging them to pray and not to faint, and helping them somehow not only to live with their suffering but also to adjust their lives to the illness.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," knowing that nothing can separate any one of us from the love of Christ, and believing that in His will is our and their peace.

Review

Psychology and Religion: a contemporary dialogue, edited by Joseph Havens. Van Nostrand, 1968. 18s. 6d.

ONE OF THE HAZARDS of reading any book on Psychology and Religion is that since religious belief, faith and attitudes are so personal and intimately related to the writer's frame of reference, and that since a discussion on human behaviour and experience depends ultimately on the writer's subjective view of mankind, then the reader may finish the book disappointed that his own areas of interest or issues of personal concern have not been touched upon.

This 'contemporary dialogue', edited by Joseph Havens, a clinical psychologist, purports "to examine at the most fundamental level possible the confrontation of psychology and religion". The reader may well question what the most fundamental level possible is, but he will no doubt be left with the feeling that whatever this distinguished group of psychologists, theologians and a philosopher have been talking about does not satisfy the claims of the publishers. He may find himself lost in philosophical blind alleys, metaphysical mazes, bogged down in verbiage, or just as the landscape begins to look interesting, whisked away to examine the pebbles on another beach.

This is not to say that such an attempt has failed completely; at least some psychologists are keenly aware of the impact of modern psychology on religious convictions, statements and attitudes. The book is far better than many of its predecessors which rested content to define psychology in Jungian and Freudian terms and religion in a broad, vague philosophical sense, and produce a now obsolete and unhappy blend of both.

Yet in their contemporary dialogue the talkers seem to dodge discussion of certain basic issues. What of the popular notion that psychology has 'explained away' religion, or at least offered an explanation for phenomena that makes a religious explanation unnecessary? This may be on the psychophysiological level (the 'work of the Holy Spirit' in Sargent's 'Battle for the Mind') or the level of social psychology (as in Michael Argyle's book 'Religious Behaviour').

A further difficulty is that the reader's preconceptions of certain basic assumptions underlying religious commitment may be shaken by the theologian who considerably redefines religious terms and modifies orthodox concepts. On page 91 Robert C. Kimball who is arguing in support of Paul Tillich states: "Tillich explicitly rejects the existence of 'a God'—in this sense he is atheistic"—and elaborates on this point, continuing to dismantle the God 'out there': "Thus the 'beyond' from which justification arises is not another reality—it is a perspective on a dimension of the one reality". To which Charles Curran (ironically) a Professor of Psychology retorts: "This view does make difficult a distinction between the functions of a priest and the doctor! As you explicate Tillich, God seems to me in danger of evaporation." If religious terminology is just another means of labelling merely human experience, then it is not surprising that many psychologists find the study of religious phenomena irrelevant.

Yet rather surprisingly psychopathological experiences and their importance in different cultures and the significance placed upon them at different times throughout history are not touched upon by the contributors. One might have thought that psychologists would be interested in the 'voices' and 'visions' experienced by schizophrenics, for here are those who claim direct spiritual contact with God, and are judged in the majority of cases mentally ill and in need of treatment. However, historically and culturally the distinction between sanity and madness, between genuine religious experience and spiritual psychopathology, can not always easily be made. Such is quite evident from reading George Rosen's book 'Madness in Society' and his well-documented article 'Emotion and Sensibility in Ages of Anxiety: A Comparative Historical Review' (Amer. J. Psychiat, 124 :6, December 1967). Andrew C. Smith in his 'Notes on difficulties in the definition of delusion' concludes also that "certainly some people are indisputedly deluded by all the criteria but the borderline is defined by society, can shift, and can be unclear in the individual case" (Brit. J. med. Psychol. 1968 41.255).

We still await a book which attempts to grapple honestly with the problems of valid and invalid religious experiences, with delusions and beliefs, and to come to terms with the historical assertion of the truth of religion and its psychological significance in contemporary secular society.

P. R. PEARSON

HOUSEMOTHER

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Gratitude

(continued from front page)

of what the N.E.B. translators have done it can be said that there will be many surprises for those who have not kept abreast of the discoveries of the last century. (Few in fact have done so.)

Reactions to the new version can be predicted with equal confidence. Broadly speaking no English version of the Bible has escaped a torrent of abuse from some quarter. The earliest were denounced by the Church of Rome, the later ones by Protestants. Even the A.V., despite its later popularity, was torn to pieces by one great scholar of the time as utterly incompetent. There has rarely been much substance in the criticisms. Of course, no translation is perfect, and critics have often failed to see the faults to which they have drawn attention in proper perspective. It is unfortunate that the Bible itself has become the ground of much un-Christian attack. One must ask where users' gratitude is.

Any translation results from a vast amount of learning and effort on the part of a body of men, except in the few cases where a single individual has done all the work. For him, the task is still greater. There is never any question that these men have given of their best, and often they receive no adequate material reward for their labour of love. Yet to judge from some reactions one would suppose that they were a bunch of irresponsible incompetents. Any who wish to offer criticisms of the N.E.B. Old Testament (or of any other version) must observe certain conditions. The first is that they must not ascribe an absurd standard of excellence to whatever translation they are accustomed. Tradition in the preference of Bible translations has no rational basis, but it is a tremendous power. One often reads comments on a new translation which seem to suggest that the more the new version departs from the time-hallowed one, the worse it must be. Of course, the opposite may be true. Secondly, no 'new' rendering of any passage should be rejected until the basis for the translators' departure from tradition has been ascertained. Amateur Hebraists may be unaware of new evidence for the meanings of rare words, but ignorance of that kind does not prove an old rendering correct. Thirdly, no spurious criteria of accuracy or preference should be used. A favourite point that we have been making from a particular passage may no longer be valid from the new translation, but it is perfectly possible that we, rather than the translators of the new version, are wrong. On a given series of arguments it may be possible to erect a substantial case against a particular new rendering. But no translations stands or falls on one passage alone. If for each passage we judge the new rendering retrograde there are 1,000 passages with undoubted improvements, then the new is still better. Also we should not shift our ground to justify our preference for the old, inaccurate and familiar. It makes a bad impression if, after many years of stressing the need to study the words of Scripture to find the meaning, we suddenly prefer a particular version for its literary beauty.

Not all readers of the N.E.B. by any means are so ungrateful. Many will willingly read the new version simply to get what new insights they may, to enjoy the freshness that modern idiom brings, and afterwards to thank God that learned men are still willing to exert themselves so that His Word may be understood by all who will hear it.

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