

Annual Meeting Religious Services

Official Service at Bristol Cathedral

The Service of Worship and Dedication at the B.M.A.'s Annual Meeting was held in Bristol Cathedral on Sunday, 9 July. At the Great West Doors the robed procession of the British Medical Association was met by the Dean, the Very Reverend D. E. W. Harrison, who also met the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, His Grace the Duke of Beaufort, and conducted him to his stall. There followed the entry of the Civic Procession, led by the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Alderman the Reverend F. C. Vyvyan-Jones, also greeted by the Dean.

Trumpeters were provided by the 16th/5th the Queen's Royal Lancers, under the bandmaster, Mr. D. N. Taylor.

Dr. Ronald Gibson, Chairman of Council, read the first lesson, and Mr. Robert V. Cooke, President-elect, read the second lesson. Prayers were said by the Bishop of Malmesbury, the Right Reverend C. L. P. Bishop, and the Dean.

Concern for Persons and Truth

The sermon was preached by the LORD BISHOP OF BRISTOL, THE RIGHT REVEREND OLIVER TOMKINS, to a crowded congregation. He said: "We are all here with a common concern for persons and for truth. And in that common concern medical science and religious testimony are not as far apart as is sometimes suggested. We are all concerned for persons and we are all concerned for truth. And in that shared concern we are all aware of a shared polarity, or tension—a polarity between a given goal on the one hand, and on the other hand a considerable uncertainty about means."

Medicine, surely, accepted as given something which might be hard to define but which was concerned with health, with life as self-evidently valuable, with human beings as being so precious that endless patience, hard work, and devotion were rightly given to their care. The difficulties arose when they began to ask questions about the means by which the given goal was to be realized, for it was the very means themselves which posed the questions about the goal. They were all—whether doctors, clergy, teachers, or anyone else—living in an age when vast new resources of knowledge were calling into question the goals they sought, precisely because the means for reaching them seemed to challenge the goals themselves.

That had seemed to him to come out very clearly in some of the ethical questions in which medicine and religion had a common concern. He instanced the acute problems raised by the medical prolongation of life, abortion, birth control, and the survival of babies whose weakness or deformity would in earlier generations have meant their early death.

He continued, "It is easier to ask questions than to answer them. But a preacher is supposed to deal, in some sense, with answers." Taking as his text Colossians 1, verses 15-18, he said: "In Jesus Christ, the Christian faith affirms, the concern for persons and for truth meet in a Person who is

the Truth. . . . Christ is the Logos of the Cosmos, the meaning of the world—He is the clue to what makes sense." He then dealt with four areas of Christian "answer" suggested by the passage from St. Paul re-interpreted in the thought of our own age.

On concern for persons, he said: "Whether a man would rate himself a churchgoer, or even a Christian, most of us would gladly admit that in Jesus we see supremely the right approach to people. He has been called 'the Man for others'—His whole life was one of deep concern and compassion; He cared for the whole man, body and soul alike, and He taught that to care about people was to care about God.

"In this aspect there can never be any separation between religion and medicine, and if over recent centuries the two have drifted away from each other it is partly because the Church has sometimes made a separation, which Jesus never allowed, between 'body' and 'soul'; it is partly due to the fact that the increasing complexity and effectiveness of medical science have appeared to owe nothing to Christian faith. But I am sure we can hope for more mutual sympathy at this point, as we all see ever more clearly that a person is an indivisible whole. His body, his mind, his unconscious motivations, his deepest beliefs, and his dependence upon others through heredity and environment are all so subtly related to each other that no aspect of a human being can be fruitfully considered without recognizing its connexions with all the other aspects."

Death in New Perspective

Death was put into a new perspective by Christ's perception that people had meaning only in relation to the God whom he called Father, and so life was grounded in a living God who had death itself under control. A doctor, both as a doctor and as a person, worked among those for whom death was not the last word, and who therefore need never in any final sense lose a patient—or, for that matter, a more deeply loved one.

St. Paul's conception of Christ's victory over "the invisible orders" must be re-interpreted in terms of our contemporary world picture. The phenomenon of man, as interpreted, for example, by Teilhard de Chardin, was to be understood as part of "the connexion between Christ and the known universe—no more intrinsically incredible than it was to St. Paul's contemporaries."

Finally, St. Paul's phrase, "He is the head of the body, the Church," implied that Christ did not stand alone, though He remained unique. He always fulfilled His universal work by calling men and women into a conscious co-operation with Himself in God's purposes.

Increasing complexity of problems demanded increased co-operation in answering them, said the Bishop in conclusion. "Life was meant to be a matter of relationship, of community, of co-operation. Society had no right to expect doctors to answer alone

questions about abortion or euthanasia or contraception, in which parents, relatives, sociologists, teachers, theologians, and others all had their allotted part to play."

Roman Catholic Service

Mass was celebrated in the Pro-Cathedral, Park Place, Bristol, on Sunday, 9 July, at 5.15 p.m. The Bishop of Clifton, the Right Reverend J. E. Rudderham, officiated.

The BISHOP said that divine prophecies showed that there was a deep analogy between medicine and religion. Each involved a recognition that there was something amiss in human affairs. Doctors had to face physical and mental illness. The Church had to face sickness of the soul.

In the actual exercise of their respective ministries many doctors and many clergy would agree that the spiritual and physical or mental health of those to whom they ministered were often closely connected. The modern doctor could recognize there were times when the patient needed the divine more than the physician. The priest should recognize that of those who came to him with supposed spiritual problems some at least were more in need of medical help.

Doctors were doing the work of the Church when they carried out the work of their own profession. "We too easily suppose that the work of the Church is neither more nor less than the professional work of the clergy, but this is not so. The Church is the whole People of God, and she is in action wherever the believer, be he priest or layman, exercised the manifold charity of Christ."

The Church looked with lively interest and sympathy, and with a desire to help, on the efforts of her own sons and daughters in the medical profession. However, it might not be amiss to emphasize that not only would disease never be effectively conquered till man's spiritual ills had been healed but the bodily and mental ills of men were of a lower order of importance than his spiritual welfare and needs. "If bodily and mental health are good things they are so because they enable the human person to function normally and efficiently. But the ultimate good of the human person is something more than efficient functioning of his organism," concluded the Bishop.

Association Notices

Branch and Division Meetings to be Held

HUDDERSFIELD DIVISION.—At George Hotel, Monday, 24 July, 8.15 p.m., annual general meeting.

Correction.—Dr. D. S. HURWOOD moved the motion on the "Refund System" at the recent Conference of Representatives of Local Medical Committees (*Supplement*, 1 July, p. 3), not Dr. Whowell, as reported.