



STEWARDSHIP
A manual

The Parish of St Nicholas, Harpenden
with All Saints and St Mary's
1972

CONTRIBUTIONS ON STEWARDSHIP TOPICS

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GIVING - EXTRACTS FROM 'THE PROPHET'

by

Kahlil Gibran

Then said a rich man, Speak to us of Giving. And he answered:

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give. For what are your possessions but things you keep and guard for fear you may need them tomorrow? And tomorrow, what shall tomorrow bring to the over-prudent dog burying bones in the trackless sand as he follows the pilgrims to the holy city? And what is fear of need but need itself? Is not dread of thirst when your well is full the thirst that is unquenchable?

There are those who give little of the much which they have - and they give it for recognition and their hidden desire makes their gifts unwholesome. And there are those who have little and give it all. These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty.

There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward. And there are those who give with pain, and that pain is their baptism. And there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue. They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space. Through the hands of such as these God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding. And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving. And is there aught you would withhold? All you have shall some day be given; therefore give now, that the season of giving may be yours and not your inheritors'.

You often say 'I would give, but only to the deserving'. The trees in your orchard say not so, nor the flocks in your pasture. They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish. Surely he who is worthy to receive his days and his nights is worthy of all else from you. And he who has deserved to drink from the ocean of life deserves to fill his cup from your little stream.

And what desert greater shall there be, than that which lies in the courage and the confidence, nay the charity, of receiving? And who are you that men should rend their bosom and unveil their pride, that you may see their worth naked and their pride unabashed? See first that you yourself deserve to be a giver, and an instrument of giving. For in truth it is life that gives unto life - while you, who deem yourself a giver, are but a witness.

And you receivers - and you are all receivers - assume no weight of gratitude, lest you lay a yoke upon yourself and upon him who gives. Rather rise together with the giver on his gifts as on wings; for to be over-mindful of your debt is to doubt his generosity who has the free-hearted earth for mother, and God for father.

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PROMISE - A SUPPLEMENT TO THE DECLARATION FORM

by
Simon Cotton

In thankfulness I acknowledge that all my time, talents and other resources are given me by God to be used to his glory. In response to His love I promise to use them as a good steward, for the worship of God and the benefit of my fellow men. As an earnest of this promise I have:

- (i) examined the use of my time, talents and other resources:
- (ii) made decisions which will produce immediate improvements in the use of these resources:
- (iii) set myself some measurable targets for further improvement during the coming months:
- (iv) made plans to develop my talents so that in future years I will be better equipped to serve God and my fellow men:
- (v) resolved to repeat this examination in a year's time.

Notes on the Promise.

- (i) All those resources, i.e. can I use my time better? Am I making full use of my talents, whether they are talents as a teacher, a musician, a gardener, a good neighbour, a good listener. Is my money being used wisely?
- (ii) For example resolve to spend an extra hour a week in church; get up an hour earlier; apply for a part-time job (married women); offer to assist a youth organisation; seek out a job where your abilities will be fully used. Increase your giving to the church or a charity, or both.
- (iii) Instant conversion is possible for some; for other pilgrims advance must be gradual but continuous. Business experts have found that measurable targets are a great help, for example:
 - (a) resolve to increase your study of the Bible by an extra 10 minutes a week every month for a year. By the end of the year you will have increased it by 2 hours a week;
 - (b) resolve to write an extra letter a week for a month, and then another extra one each succeeding month. By the end of the year you will be writing 12 extra letters a week, and giving fresh pleasure over 600 times a year;
 - (c) resolve to reduce your smoking by one cigarette a day every week, and put the money saved aside. By the end of the year a 50-a-day smoker will have given up completely and could have over £200 a year available for other purposes.
- (iv) For example study for a diploma in child care; take evening classes in home decorating; obtain books from the library on home nursing or speaking a foreign language; join a Bible class.
- (v) There will be many changes in a year; each of us will be older; we may not have the strength to help our neighbours as much as before, but we may have more time, and perhaps more talents.

We may be richer or poorer; inflation may have eaten away the value of our giving, or changed needs made a switch in direction desirable.

Now is the time to enter in your diary the date for next year's examination,

STEWARDSHIP FROM THE BIBLE

The Old Testament.

1. From early times, it was recognised that man owed everything to God and that to offer a proportion of his goods to God was a duty, as an indication of a grateful heart.

David's Prayer: "Blessed art thou, Lord God of our father Israel, from of old and for ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is thine; thine, O Lord, is the sovereignty, and thou art exalted over all as head. Wealth and honour come from thee; thou rulest over all; might and power are of thy disposing; thine it is to give power and strength to all. And now, we give thee thanks, our God, and praise thy glorious name. . . . For everything comes from thee, and it is only of thy gifts that we give to thee".
1 Chronicles 29:11-24

2. Each according to his means was the basic principle. "No one shall come into the presence of the Lord empty-handed. Each of you shall bring such a gift as he can in proportion to the blessing which the Lord your God has given you". Deuteronomy 16:17
3. At first, a tithe was an accepted proportion: "This stone, which I have set up as a sacred pillar, shall be a house of God. And of all that thou givest me, I will without fail allot a tenth part to Thee".
Genesis 28:22
Jacob's promise.

The New Testament.

1. The New Testament shows a change of emphasis.

Tithing was practised by the Jews. "I pay tithes on all that I get". - The Pharisee in the Temple.
St.Luke 18:12

"Alas for you Pharisees:. you pay tithes of mint and rue and every garden herb, but have no care for justice and the love of God. It is these you should have practised, without neglecting the others".
St.Luke 11:42
St.Luke 16:14

Refer also to: "The Pharisee stood up and prayed thus: thank thee, O God, that I am not like the rest of men, greedy, dishonest, adulterous; or, for that matter, like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all that I get".
St.Luke 18:11

2. Jesus taught about the dangers of a legalistic approach. The Pharisee thought that his fasting and his tithing should 'satisfy' God. Willingness to give without stint is required. Refer to the story of 'the Widow's Mite'.
St. Mark 12:41-44

"Here and now, sir, I give half my possessions to charity; and if I have cheated anyone, I am ready to repay him four times over". Zacchaeus
St.Luke 19: 8

It is the willingness to give that is all-important. Otherwise there is a danger of over-estimating the importance of material belongings, of lacking sympathy and of under-estimating spiritual values.

"Beware! Be on your guard against greed of every kind, for even when a man has more than enough, his wealth does not give him life".
St.Luke 12:15

The Successful Farmer
St.Luke 12:16-21

The Sermon on the Mount
St.Matthew 6:25-34

The Rich young Man
St.Mark 10:17-25

You may well sympathise with this young man who had kept all the commandments since he had been young. "One thing you lack: go, sell everything you have, and give to the

poor, and you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow me". Surely, this is what he wanted to do – but he could not bring himself to the final act of doing so.

St.Paul on Stewardship

2 Corinthians 8-9 .

"We must tell you, friends, about the grace and generosity which God has imparted to our congregations in Macedonia. The troubles they have been through have tried them hard, yet in all this they have been so exuberantly happy that from the depths of their poverty they have shown themselves lavishly open handed. Going to the limit of their resources, as I can testify, and even beyond that limit, they begged us most insistently, and on their own initiative, to be allowed to share in this generous service to their fellow-Christians. And their giving surpassed our expectations; for they gave their very selves; offering them in the first instance to the Lord, but also, under-God, to us. The upshot is that we have asked Titus who began it all, to visit you: And bring this work of generosity also to completion. You are so rich in everything – in faith, speech, knowledge, and zeal of every kind, as well as in the loving regard you have for us – surely you should show yourselves equally lavish in this, generous service! This is not meant as an order; by telling you how keen others are I am putting your love to the test. For you know how generous our Lord Jesus Christ has been: he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty you might become rich.

Here is my considered opinion on the matter. What I ask you to do is in your own interests. You made a good beginning last year both in the work you did and in your willingness to undertake it. Now I want you to go on and finish it; be as eager to complete the scheme as you were to adopt it, and give according to your means. Provided there is an eager desire to give, God accepts what a man has; he does not ask for what he has not".

"Remember: sparse sowing, sparse reaping; sow bountifully and you reap bountifully. Each person should give as he has decided for himself; there should be no reluctance, no sense of compulsion; God loves a cheerful giver. And it is in God's power to provide you richly with every good gift; thus you have ample means in yourselves to meet each and every good cause. Scripture says of such a man:

"He has lavished his gifts on the needy, his benevolence stands for ever".

SUMMARY OF BIBLICAL TEACHING.

1. There was a time when the offering of a tenth was an accepted proportion.
2. This became an obligation for a practising Jew.

At the promulgation of the Law, regulating sacrifices and offerings, the tithe was defined as a first commitment for all Israelites:

"Every tithe on land, whether from grain or from the fruit of the tree, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord".
Leviticus 27:30

In the Law, there were both obligatory and voluntary gifts.

- (a) The Tithe – as above.
Leviticus 27:30
Deuteronomy 14:22

Obligatory: there were many regulations governing the tithe. It had to be the first tenth – the first in condition and quality.

- (b) The. First Fruits
Exodus 23:19
Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Voluntary: free-will offerings at the Feast of Weeks.
Deuteronomy 16:10

So, tithing was not regarded as the discharge of all responsibility. It has been estimated that the devout Jew who observed the Law concerning the obligatory and voluntary gifts offered back to God about one-third of his possessions!

3. Later, the meaning of the tenth became lost and it merely became the rule.

4. The New Testament shows a change of emphasis. Jesus came to fulfil the Law and he taught that we should offer the whole of our lives.
5. We render back to God our offerings through his church as members of the Body of Christ. Our offering fulfils not only our duty to give, but enables the Church to act in this material world with material things. Each member of the Body has a part to play, and if this member fails, the Body is weakened accordingly.

(Diocese of St.Albans.)

(Stewardship Advisory Service)

STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES

Theological Considerations

by the Rector, Rev. Peter Graham

My giving is a token of my gratitude.

I learned my own first lessons in Christian stewardship from the present Bishop of Gloucester and most of what follows comes from an address given by him. I love because I have first been loved. I give out of gratitude for all that has been given to me. And if what I give of my time or my money is a genuine token of my gratitude it will be proportionate to my resources - to what I have myself been given. It will have virtually NOTHING to do with the needs of the Church.

So the Bishop of Gloucester writes "the basic principle of which the Stewardship movement has sought to remind the Church is true. That gratitude to God for what he has given us is the mainspring of the Christian religion. Without it every aspect of real religion withers and dies. Without gratitude worship becomes either a dead formality or a cringing act of deference, service becomes a self-justifying impertinence, prayer becomes a whine and morality a reluctant insurance premium. In many aspects of religion Christians accept this as true, however often we fail in the practical application of it. Our trouble in the Church has been that we have simply not applied this principle to our giving. We have substituted other motives - compassion, duty, convention - and the task of the Stewardship movement now, as at the beginning, is to put gratitude back into giving to show people that this aspect of our discipleship has got to be congruous with all other aspects and that if it isn't or isn't becoming so - than the other aspects will suffer grievous damage.

I have always believed this to be the very essence of the Stewardship movement. And I have always believed also - as some of you will have heard me say before - that we did ourselves a grave disservice when we allowed the Americans and the Companies to foist this name 'Stewardship' upon us. The very metaphor 'Stewardship' is incapable of expressing the Gospel. The Christian religion cannot be taught in terms of Stewardship. It is not the right metaphor. The fundamental relationship between a man and God is not to be expressed in this metaphor but in the great Biblical metaphor of sonship.

There are in the New Testament, of course, a whole lot of subsidiary metaphors to illuminate and to illustrate different aspects of our sonship. As God's sons we have got to be, for instance, obedient as soldiers, we have got to be loyal like subjects, we have got to be faithful like stewards, we have got to be diligent like servants, we have got to live together responsibly like citizens, we have got to be keen like merchants, we have got to warn each other like watchmen. We have got to be dependent as branches, as useful as limbs, as solid as rocks and as devoted as lovers. But underneath all these metaphors, co-ordinating all these duties, there is the great fundamental fact of our sonship. When we come to talk with God, when we come, as it were face to face with God., we are to say 'Our Father'. Basically God is not someone-who entrusts to a steward; He is someone who gives to a son.

Now this is, I would submit, not merely playing with words. It is much more important than that. If we try to blow up the word 'stewardship' so that it may include sonship, if we say to a man in effect, 'you are God's steward but you must exercise your stewardship lovingly like a son', then we are getting the whole thing exactly the wrong way round. We are giving priority in the Christian life to the Steward's qualities of faithfulness and of responsibility and integrity, instead of the son's qualities of thankfulness and of joy and of love. We want, of course, both sets of qualities. I am not suggesting that faithfulness and diligence are inferior to joy and to thankfulness; I am only suggesting that, in the life of the Christian disciple, they are secondary rather than primary qualities.

Just as in a human family a child experiences love and gratitude before he begins to practise responsibility, so it must be in the family of God, It must be stewardship through sonship and not the other way round. This is fundamentally the old distinction between faith and works.

You want both. Of course you do. You cannot have the Christian religion without faith or works. In the Christian life you see both, but you only get either, I would submit, if you have got them in the right order. In the Stewardship movement we have got them in the right order. We do base our doctrine on gratitude.

Hence the importance of the tithe. Because historically this is exactly where the tithe starts. 'And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee'. This is why in Stewardship we have always stressed that the determining factor in a man's giving is his income - and not the needs of the Church or of anyone else. We give the tithe as a token of gratitude. Here again we have done ourselves a dis-service by the denigration of the word 'token'. We have spoken of 'token giving' as something to be despised, whereas in fact token giving is exactly what Stewardship is about. The real issue here is concerned with the reality of the token."

St.Paul seems at one time to have had a very common modern attitude to money and the Church. He begged Christians for money to fulfil the needs of the church elsewhere. Then he learned himself how much better in every way was the giving of those who first gave THEMSELVES. Indeed if my giving is to be a token of my gratitude it MUST begin with self-giving. It will involve whatever I have of skills, of time, of material and spiritual resources.

In his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes of the Macedonian Christians:

'I can swear that they gave not only as much as they could afford, but far more, and quite spontaneously, begging and begging us for the favour of sharing this service to the saints and, what was quite unexpected, they offered their own selves first to God and, under God, to us. Because of this we have asked Titus, since he has already made a beginning, to bring this work of mercy to the same point of success among YOU.'

The success Paul writes of is that Christ-like generosity which is the stewardship of a man responding to the unconditional love of God the Father.

TIME

by

Aymeric Jenkins

Decisions about use of time are the most important that a Christian has to make; this is no mere plan for disposition of our own small material possessions as is one's monetary budget, this is the plan for the basic resource of life itself. The first and most vital decision is in the choice of main activity in life, for most of us – what paid job are we going to do? The great majority of people spend a very large part of their waking lives in their main paid employment, and it is here that most of us can make our biggest contribution to others. It is essential to realise that a dedicated approach to our job, be it schoolmastering, managing an engineering firm or assembling motor cars, is a fundamental aspect of total stewardship. It is there that we can make our most important effort as stewards of God's gifts; for it is thus, for instance, that we can help to build the surplus of wealth which can, through-liquidity of money, be used to help others far beyond our own personal contact. Similarly, the housewife contributes vitally by the devotion with which she cares for her family, so enabling them to be more effective in their jobs.

Another high priority for many is their family life. It may be good stewardship, for those whom it suits temperamentally, to remain single in order to devote their lives wholly to a worthwhile cause; it cannot be good stewardship for those who are married to give inadequate time to their partner, and (if any) family.

God must also figure high on our priority list. Time must be found not only for regular worship, but also for private prayer and meditation. Frankly this is a matter of self-discipline. No one is so busy that they cannot manage at least one hour a week for a eucharist and perhaps a quarter of an hour per day for private study or meditation.

When these three over-riding items have been allowed for and a sensible amount of time allowed for sleep, there is left disposable leisure time. There are many possible ways in which the good steward may use this, but among the normal activities which have to be fitted in will be:-

Maintaining one's friendships:

Keeping time to help friends, neighbours and relations in crisis:

Activities in the community and parish which are useful to other people.

Just because we spend a great deal of time when talking about stewardship in discussing this last item, it is particularly important to set it in its context as we have tried to do above.

The skills demanded by this last group of activities are often quite different from those required by our main jobs; some indeed, demand little skill at all – church cleaning for instance. They are none the less important, both because of the community and the parish's need for them, and even more because of our need to give service. For most of us there are really opportunities to help with local parish or community activities and, in spite of the heavyweight public organisation of the welfare state, there are very many gaps the filling of which absolutely depends on voluntary spare time efforts.

Just what decisions any one person should come to in this vital field it is impossible to lay down, because our circumstances and personalities vary so widely. What can be said with certainty is that just as a modern executive, for the use of his personal time, has to make a conscious plan which balances his priorities, so must the Christian, if he is to use to best effect this most precious of God given resources.

STEWARDSHIP OF MONEY

by

Derrick Elliott

Stewardship and money are synonymous to many people. Because it is relatively easy to identify financial needs and equally easy to assess a response in terms of proportions or amounts of money, it must not be assumed that stewardship is wholly or even mainly about money.

Money is one resource we all possess in some measure and the correct apportionment of our finances is what Stewardship of Money is about. What that apportionment is can only be a personal decision, but the vital point is that there should be a decision.

We are all ready to consider money and discuss it in connection with the rising cost of living, the inflated value of our houses or the current round of wage claims. Embarrassment only seems to occur when talk is of money and the church. We should recall that we are The Church and that The Church needs to be as realistic about its finances as it is about all other aspects of its mission.

In this context The Church is often thought to be 'the Church Commissioners with their millions' – millions which accumulated as a result of the giving of our ancestors and which are appreciating in the care of the Commissioners – both examples in themselves of stewardship of money. In practical terms, of the £33.8m which will be needed in 1973 for the maintenance of the ministry (includes stipends, pensions and training) the Church Commissioners will be providing £23.1m. This includes more than its 50% share of the £3m needed for maintenance of vicarages and clergy houses since the County is, in general, not yet meeting its share.

The Church Commissioners will be providing a further £3m towards the maintenance of old or provision of new church buildings and the costs of Central and Diocesan administration bringing their total contribution up to £26m towards an estimated total need of £70m. To meet the difference, parish giving will need to increase by 55% p.a. minimum. At the level of our Diocese of St.Albans the annual expenditure of £135,000 (1970) is a figure which is more comprehensible to most of us. Much of this comes from Parish contributions to the Diocesan Common Fund (95% of which is generally met each year). Our own Parish contribution to this amounts to almost £3,000 for 1972, the actual quota varying annually. The fact that we in Harpenden meet our Diocesan quota is no ground for complacency.

Nearer to home the Parish income by direct giving was £15,000 in 1971 – £100 lower than in 1970, and more than £500 less than in 1969. From this, the major outgoings are:–

Upkeep of the Churches	14 %
Maintenance of the Ministry	26 %
Clergy Houses	3.4%
Diocesan Common Fund	15 %
Charities, Missions & Donations	19.3%

These facts about the Church finance at National, Diocesan and Parish level must be taken in the context of personal incomes. Those have been rising at the rate of 9% p.a. on average which is not reflected in the church income, in Harpenden in particular. National Savings also increased by over £130m in 1969/70. The indication thus is that money is available and the lower level of giving to the Church is not due to poverty, but rather to a failure to respond to the real principles of Stewardship.

Although the level of incomes is generally rising, it cannot be denied that there are many families who are on fixed incomes, and so have their own problem of facing rising prices. To people in those circumstances the stewardship of money is of vital importance if only to be able to exist.

The population of Harpenden also includes a large number of teenagers. Nowadays youth is popularly thought to have too much money. They certainly appear to be more affluent than their

elders remember – but then most of society is more affluent and there are many pressures on young people. Not the least of these is the example set by many parents in being acquisitive. Young people would seem to have a need to reflect on Stewardship of money.

By far the largest group represented in the Parish is the 'average' family. The menfolk and an increasing number of women use their major ability in their full time employment, the rewards of which enable them to support families – house, feed, clothe and educate them. Money earned is also a flexible means of showing care for our fellow men – often in remote areas where any other form of direct caring is not practicable for most of us. However, it must not be thought that using money – whatever the amount – is any alternative or substitute for exercising direct care by correct stewardship of all our time and skills. It is therefore from this major group that the prime response is called for in terms of money.

Considering these three broad categories of people, it is clear that no group or individual in a group can really evade the issue of Stewardship of money, since this does not mean 'giving to the church' but rather a proper allocation of money.

Neither does it imply considering one tenth (or any other proportion) but rather ten tenths of our resources, and although Stewardship does not mean giving to the church it does mean responding to God's love.

To quote Capt. D.H. Doig of the Central Board of Finance, 'what a man does with his money must reflect in a unique way what he thinks about God and his neighbour'.

THE PARISH'S NEEDS AND RESOURCES

by

Sara Cook

In order that it may run efficiently, a system such as a parish must know what are its needs, and what resources are at its disposal, and try to develop these resources to meet its known needs. The balance is not static, and it must be borne in mind that resources and needs are continually changing.

The needs of the parish can be divided into the main categories of time, skills, money and the spirit. Particular ways in which parishioners could contribute to the needs of this parish as regards time and skills range from helping with the production of the parish magazine, volunteering to be an Area Representative or Sector Leader, to visiting the sick, especially in mental hospitals.

Money, of course, is always a pressing need, just for the running and maintenance of the churches and church services, let alone any expansion. Last year (1971) just over £5,000 was spent on maintenance of the ministry, and just under £3,000 on the upkeep of the churches. These costs are always rising and yet the income from contributions from the congregations has decreased by about £1,000 since 1967.

As regards the spirit, there is a need for a greater sense of fellowship and love in the church, for instance a greater readiness to welcome strangers and to join in or even organise outings and other activities.

The resources of the parish are manifold. There are people offering special skills and services such as typing and help for the housebound. There is help available from outside sources e.g. the Mid. Herts Association for Church Social Work. Our representation on this body and others, such as the Harpenden Christian Council and the Diocesan Synod, as well as the participation as individuals, of parishioners in activities of the local authorities, Toc H, British Legion Club, etc., can be regarded as a resource. There are resources of fellowship and mutual encouragement, some on an ecumenical basis, in the many groups meeting for bible study, prayer and discussion, and in such groups as the Christian Drama Fellowship and Mothers' Union.

Our resources should not be regarded as exclusively for our own use. Just as the parish receives benefits from outside sources, e.g. Diocesan grants, we should make our resources available to those who are not members of our three churches. For instance our duplicating equipment could be of service to other denominations in our area, e.g. the Methodists, and areas in which we can work with and for other members of our community are the Helping Hands scheme and mental hospital visiting etc.

MANKIND'S NEEDS AND RESOURCES

by

Jane Meiklejohn

What are people's material needs? Food, houses and household goods, transport and communications, entertainment? Yes, of course; but how many are getting them? Or rather, how many people are getting as much as we do, here in the prosperous West? And if they did, how long would it be before the world's resources were used up?

The world supply of food has been a source of anxiety for some 25 years, anxiety partly allayed by the production of better varieties of cereals (wheat, rice, etc.) by Dr. Norman Borlaugh and his team, in the so-called Green Revolution. This has put off the day when the world will run out of food, but has it put it off for ever? For Soil is another natural resource, and is not unlimited. It is all too easy to destroy soils, especially under hot climates. In Roman times North Africa was the granary of the Empire, but look at it now! First the trees were cut down, and then overgrazing and lack of water control simply destroyed the soils, leaving a semi desert. The same thing will happen on a much larger scale in West Africa, the Congo Basin and South America, if the tropical forests are cleared away in the name of 'Development', 'Productivity', or some such excuse for thoughtless greed.

Power is essential, but some natural power resources are running out. Coal, Oil and Natural Gas are fossil fuels, formed underground by processes that took millions of years. Once they are used up (which may happen in 30 years for oil), there will be no more. Some useful Metals are beginning to get very scarce, too.

Various ways of dealing with these threatened shortages have been proposed. Technology is a possible way out; or is it? Clever inventors may find (and in fact have found) alternative ways of generating power, (Hydro-electricity, direct use of the sun's energy). They are also inventing new foods (food yeast, bacteria grown on waste oil, etc.). These alternatives will help to eke out the dwindling resources of the world, true; but they will help the richer countries first, because technology is developed there. Conservation is a better way - the avoidance of waste, and the most efficient use of what we have. For world-wide conservation to succeed, international co-operation is absolutely necessary. Luckily much co-operation exists already (the United Nations agencies FAO and WHO, fishing agreements), though conservation can be undone by human folly. The civil war in the Yemen caused locust plagues in Africa by hindering the work of international Locust Control teams.

Mankind also has personal needs, for health, education, family life and religion. Disease, disability and illiteracy are wastes of the most valuable resource of all, human beings.

The best solution to the problem of mankind's needs and resources is a moral and spiritual one – a change of heart. If only mankind could renounce the 'profit motive'! By the grace of God perhaps we can.

What should the individual Christian do? Pray for a change of heart, in oneself and in everyone. Waste nothing; waste is a sin. Pay taxes without fuss or dodging, for more national needs are met by taxation than by voluntary giving, however generous. Don't cry out for a reduction in rates, which supply local need even in a place like Harpenden. And don't despair because you can do so little. Remember that Christ took five barley loaves and two fishes, and fed five thousand.