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New Series.

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EDITORIAL.

THE inevitable has happened, and we have to make a considerable cut in the size of the "Fraternal," a casualty suffered in common with even more important journals. Our printer has heartily co-operated with us, and the result is that the present issue, so far as the number of words is concerned, is about the same as hitherto. We regret the less attractive set-out, and if there is a general desire, we must revert to the former size of type with the consequent sacrifice of material.

E. A. Payne has placed us all under obligation for the time and trouble taken in compiling the present issue—which ranks amongst the best yet produced.

W. R. Watkin, of Llanelly, has kindly made himself responsible for the October issue, the contributors to which will be Bangor men, and we hope that in January and April respectively Bristol and Cardiff may supply the material. This plan may have to be modified if the space is required for "Polity" or other urgent matters affecting our Ministry.

Our Annual Meeting was well attended. J. O. Barrett gave an excellent exposition of the Polity Report, cogently and persuasively enforcing its chief recommendations. His address was followed by useful discussion. As an outcome of debate we print an important communication from the Leicester Fraternal.

The Officers and Committee were re-elected and the Secretary announced that the Rev. B. Grey Griffith had kindly consented to collaborate with him in the work of his office: the intimation was heartily acclaimed.

We are glad to report a substantial increase in membership.

THE RELEVANCE OF THEOLOGY FOR PREACHING.

THERE is no space for many words in introducing the articles that occupy this issue of our Magazine, nor do they need much in the way of explanation or preface. The general theme was suggested by some recent words of Dr. Mackay:—

"The mood of quiet desperation that marks our time, and the many-

sided quest of the modern mind for meaning and authority, make Christian theology our most crucial need. It is not an apologetic for religion, or for Christianity, or for the Christian Church that we need most at this moment. What men are craving is that thought become a medium whereby they shall listen to a Voice from beyond and catch the outline of a Face."

The articles deal with the main themes of the Gospel as set before us in the historic creeds. A whole issue might well have been devoted to each of the topics, but the present series shows clearly how relevant are all these subjects to our present situation.

I am myself most grateful to those who have found time, often in spite of the heavy pressure of other work, to write these articles, and I am confident that my gratitude will be shared by those who read and study these pages.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

THE FACT OF GOD.

IN this very title I may be blamed for begging the question, the Editor's suggestion being "The Idea of God" as subject. The time, however, is opportune to steer clear of this speculative term and come out boldly on the concrete and dynamic Hebraic assumption of His reality. God is not an idea we may debate, either casually or furiously; He is fact, final and inescapable. God as an idea we might discuss without incurring any challenge, as did the Greeks on Mars Hill, but God as eternal therefore present reality challenges us at every step and calls us to vital decision.

The assumption of Jesus, typical of the stock from which He sprang, is impressive. You never find Him arguing as to whether God exists; He assumes His presence, and argues on the basis of His nature and way and will. His Church must be as Hebraic in that sense as in many others.

I. DATA DECLARATIVE OF THE REALITY OF GOD.

The whole universe, lock, stock and barrel, is crammed with data bearing on His presence, but space permits us to touch only upon one or two.

i. Nature suggests Him. Begin with the commonest of all facts, our world as a whole. There is nothing dead here, anywhere, at any time. The graveyard even is the emptiest place in all creation; there is no one there. The world is alive! Put a torn branch into the apparently dead soil, sow a microscopic seed, and life leaps to life, and we have our gardens and our harvests.

ii. Man requires Him. It is axiomatic that where there is a need, there its fit supply may be hazarded. If that is true on the lower reaches of life, it must pertain also to those loftier. First of all, man needs God for the explication of his own ambiguous personality. Again, man needs God for the true fulfilment of himself. Further, man needs God's grace for the healing of the tragedy of his soul, the sin-defection that, as nothing else, stamps man as the loneliest thing in all creation.

iii. Jesus reveals Him. A very brief outline must suffice, since the theme is covered elsewhere in this issue.

His unflinching communion with God is as a pointing finger showing where He may be found. The power He drew from Him for service and sacrifice testify to the same source. Jesus ever gave the impression of living at the heart of power. The love He shared with the Father, which also He gave to men, is similarly revelation. The forgiveness He mediated

laid bare the heart of God, a grace and a prophecy. Later, when that forgiveness came back in memory to the apostles, they read it in the deeper dimension of the cross, and only then knew how far did the love of God run.

His self-revelation, called forth as it were accidentally, is the simplest possible statement, but it enshrines the profoundest theology: He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. It gathered up every intuition and vision of the long past of seer and prophet, with the incomparable addition of His own influence upon them. The majesty of God is in no wise lessened by equation with the person of Jesus. Moreover, He is nearer to us than He could have come had Jesus not thus pointed to Himself as the Way and the Truth and the Life. To be at home, therefore, with Jesus is to abide with God. There is no religion of history or any extant to-day that rests on such a fact.

All academic proofs of God break down at some point or other; there is discerned some flaw in the otherwise infallible argument. It is the inherent defect in every abstraction; reality, especially the Divine, refuses to be confined in any syllable, no matter how perfect. But that last cry from the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," holds more proof of God than all the libraries of apologetics in the world. There and then was the fell chance to deny faith and hope, but just there it gave a crowning affirmation. All through His ministry Jesus let fall for sensitive eyes a revelation of God, and with His last breath the deepest, perhaps, of all.

II. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FACT OF GOD.

On the basis of his own experience of God, with its strictly-drawn inferences, the believing heart demands that God be seen as:

i. Intensely personal. The conception of the impersonal or absolute, so beloved of philosophy, is utterly inadequate, while to equate the personal with the absolute is untenable. Only "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" meets man's deepest need. Such a conception shatters into shards every lower category.

ii. One who surrenders Himself daily in the service of His world. God as the slave of His creation is by no means an unwise word-picture. He is never more sovereign than when He is most slave. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" is proof in the highest order of insight. Hence the livingness of the world; it is alive because it throbs with His own life at its heart. He is in it, at the centre and to its furthest circumference, yet is He not absorbed by it. We have the right and duty of proclaiming the fullest possible immanence, while denying vehemently every phase of pantheism and its determinism. He is the life and soul and essence of all that is, the spirit within its beauty and form and power, but there is a remainder that constitutes His essential transcendence.

We must emphasise, however, that it is not the world as a world that most interests Him, any more than a state as a state. Personal Himself, it is for the living souls on it that He has most concern. He has built His world for them, not them for His world. They are the Kingdom of God, not their temporary setting. "ALL things are yours," said Paul, after he had sat spiritually at the wounded feet of Christ.

iii. One, therefore, who sets Himself goals that are only progressively attained through the joint travail of His own heart and that of man. Such faith and revelation make history real and vital. Speaking generally, it was not the speculative Grecian that gave us the sense of history and its tensions. Greece knew a Golden Age only in the far-distant and forgotten past; it was therefore lost for ever. No backward glimpse can bind the

fleeting years, any more than it can make a good ploughman; it is required that one have a vision ahead. This the Hebrews had; they discerned it in God's dealing with them, and they heralded the Golden Age as coming in the purpose of God, and thereby they marked the fleeting years. They saw time on the loom of God.

We must hold, then, that even for God there are serious tasks not yet done, some high goals not yet attained upon which He is engaged, for the completion of which He waits and calls on man. The initial fiat "Let there be ——" is substituted for the more sovereign call "Come, build thou my kingdom with me." "Thy gentleness hath made me great" comes from the beating heart of man.

It does not follow, however, that this connotes the Finite God of Wells' conception, one striving with intractable material, hardly conscious of what He has to do and bear, and engirt with contingency. The God of Christian faith does not groan beneath His burden, nor wait upon greater vision and growing power. His task is sacrificially imposed, with full consciousness of the cost involved, and never outstrips His capacity. He is never thrown out of His stride by unlooked-for emergencies. Love imposes the burden, and only thus is obligatory. It is a burden He easily carries for the love He bears to man. With Him love and power are equal, perhaps identical, and their tasks become His necessity. His adaptation to the human is a guarantee of what we are to be.

iv. In the intuition of the believing heart, nevertheless, there is no diminution of His sovereignty. "I steadier step when I recall that though I slip Thou dost not fall." He is that One-who-is-to-be-obeyed. Nature is wholly subservient to Him (that is, unless our sin has in a measure sundered it from Him, and made it a sharer in our tragedy), but man finds an equally stubborn intuition within himself—viz., his own relative, personal freedom. That establishes a most serious tension in the structure of thought. How can freedom co-exist with full sovereignty? A short cut to any form of determinism, either hard or soft, is barred out, as that would amount to a denial of real freedom. Very possibly we are to-day called upon to dare some aspects of thought that bear upon the prerogatives of God. It is practically axiomatic with us that God's foreknowledge of even the most minute operation is unquestionable. But does not real freedom infer a self-willed limitation of God's omniscience? The question is whether there are really open possibilities. If such are foreknown to God, is not that a virtual determinism? What if for our attaining sonhood He accept nescience sacrificially? Our human world would still be within His eternal world, yet would He accept a stance without it, that as greatly welcomed guest He may be welcomed within it. In Browning's phrase, He stands at a hand's breadth distance: at that distance, that we may realise our growing selfhood; no further, that He may be "a very present help in any time of trouble." A whole vital doctrine of providence is wrapped up in such a vision. Is it not inferrible from His creation of man as personality? When He made man personal, did it not mark a measure of sovereign limitation? "Let us make man in our own image"; how profound and moving a desire! It is a God before whom the heart in us bows in wondering gratitude. Things God commands inevitably; it may be granted that He could, if He could find the will, bludgeon man into servile obedience, a crouching creature. The cross teaches us a greater lesson; He prefers the glad surrender of mind and heart and will than any enforced obedience. That implies that He respects the full personality of the meanest soul on earth. In love He made him, and in love at fullest cost He woos him.

v. He is thus the God of sacrificial providence. He is sovereign, since He can be no other, yet there is nothing in His nature capable of

being built into any determinism, no matter how awe-inspiring. He would guide man with His eye, yet must man look and worship and follow the gleam that flashes between. Any static idea of providence, therefore, is inadequate; God's providence is personal, peculiar to circumstance and soul, and from moment to moment. So Jesus knew, and so He taught. It is elastic enough to build itself within even the will to and the act of sin. Joseph's words are pertinent: "Ye sent me not hither, it was God, in order that I might preserve you alive." Yet it required the willed co-operation of Joseph.

In a word, then, we need to return very humbly and simply to the concreteness of the Bible. In it is revealed a God who wills to be known by this man and that. He is not the Absolute—pale ghost of the real God!—but the Living God who is known only where He chooses to be known; and under His own conditions of revelation. Yet for our exceeding comfort, it is to the humble and contrite heart; to the pilgrim and the stranger, to the last and the least and the lost He wills to declare His grace and mercy. And when one awakens to the wonder of this far-stooping grace, he discerns the reason why he was born—simply to meet God and go home with Him.

"Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.

And He went in to tarry with them."

F. CAWLEY.

THE INCARNATION.

IN the theological controversies of the past forty years—those associated with the names of R. J. Campbell, of Barth and Brunner, and of Bultmann and the Form Critics—issues of the highest importance have been at stake. No one can study the varied approaches to the data of the New Testament and of Christian experience associated with these names without realising their bearing upon the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is indeed the reality of our faith in the Incarnation that is at stake in our assessment of the value of the contribution made by these modern teachers. Incarnation demands not only a revelation of God to men but *a man* in whom God was incarnate. Belief in the Incarnation is the conviction that Christ has come *in the flesh*; and though to know Christ according to the flesh is not Christian faith, it is only as we are confronted with Christ in the flesh that Christian faith is attainable. There were saints in the early Church, there were thinkers of high quality, but few would accept the amazing Gospel of the Grace of God on their authority alone. The existence of a highly organised institution rooted in antiquity, and surviving the shocks of many centuries, though a striking and significant fact, is not adequate proof of the authenticity of its message. Nor can we find sufficient ground for faith in the confused records of mystical experience. If traditionalism and pietism in combination were the ground of our faith, Buddhism would have an equal claim on our allegiance. The truth is that what has carried conviction to millions of hearts is the portrait of Jesus shining through the mists—radiant and uninventible. If we could not trust that, the religion of which He is both the founder and the central figure, would have lost its foremost claim in our allegiance. That happily is not our case.

The Gospels put two questions to us. The first is—What kind of person was Jesus who is called Christ? If we are not in a position to answer that we cannot reach any judgment concerning Him, certainly not the kind of judgment that faith essentially is. Fortunately material on which to form a judgment has not been withheld from us. That the evangelists were influenced in selecting their material by the needs of the Church they served is highly likely and easily understandable. It is

equally clear that they intended to set forth in order not only the beliefs they held, but the facts that inspired them. It is not with biography that they present us. Their method is that of the painter selecting his material with the object of depicting the personality of his subject rather than his superficial appearance. What is amazing is that four—perhaps more—writers working with an art that is entirely unforced should have conveyed to succeeding generations a portrait of a character so clear and vivid, wonderfully self-consistent, and arresting in the highest degree. "The inventor of such a story," declared Rousseau, "would have been a greater miracle than his hero." On that Alfred Noyes comments that "four such inventors would have been more miraculous still." We have then this portrait of Jesus, our loveliest possession, and our part is to bid our fellows consider this portrait and allow Jesus to direct His own appeal to them.

The second question is, Who was this Jesus who is called Christ? It is clear that He was a man, born of a woman, of the seed of David, but equally that He was on a different level from the rest of men. In emphasizing that fact the moderns, from Schweitzer to Barth, have rendered great service. It is a *problem* with which the evangelists present us. Who is this man who talks as if He were possessed of the authority of the Power who created men? Who is this man who claims that in the end He will sit in judgment on every man? Who is this man whose humility will not disdain the lowliest, but who stands apart from humanity in lonely grandeur, unequalled and unique? The answer is the mystery of the Incarnation, a mystery beyond our power to explain or resolve. Explanation means putting new facts in their proper category; but this is a fact without parallel in our experience. We cannot explain human personality, and how should we expect to explain a personality both human and divine?

The mind, however, was given for questing, and cannot but seek to comprehend even the incomprehensible. The result in this realm was the development of Christology, the psychology of Jesus Christ. It has assumed a number of forms in the attempt to interpret the mystery of Grace Incarnate. The classical is that of Chalcedon, where the Church reaffirmed and developed what she had already asserted at Nicea: "We confess our Lord Jesus Christ perfect in Godhead, perfect in manhood, truly God, truly man . . . to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without mutation, without division, without cleavage." The defects in this statement have often been emphasised, and we need not linger over them. The person of Christ is construed in terms that are material in meaning, a criticism that holds particularly of the keyword translated nature. Further, as God is always in control, the humanity of Christ is reduced to the palest of shadows accompanying His divinity, but not really clothing it. What we have is deity and humanity in association, not deity manifest in a human life. Such criticisms might be elaborated at length, but the fact remains that the Chalcedonian Creed is an attempt to deal fairly with the story recorded in the Gospels, and a warning that we may not evade the mystery they embody by disregarding those elements in the story that are not congenial to us.

Have we found more satisfying categories, or a surer clue? The chief contribution of the nineteenth century to Christological discussion was the development of the Kenotic doctrine. Jesus, according to this construction, was the Eternal Word of God, Who, however, at the Incarnation imposed limitation upon Himself. He retained the ethical quality of deity, perfect purity and love. He surrendered those Divine attributes that were proper to the Eternal Word, omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. The theory, though widely held, has been sharply criticised, especially by Dr.

Temple in *Christus Veritas*. The notion that the Eternal Word could abandon His cosmic functions for a season is, he contends, unthinkable. What would have happened to the Creation had that been the case? If, however, we maintain that He fulfilled these functions whilst He was incarnated in Jesus Christ, are we not attributing to the Second Person in the Trinity a dualism that is equally incredible?

Perhaps the freshest contribution to the subject in recent days is that of William Sanday. Turning for help to psychology, Sanday suggested that in Christ humanity and deity were associated rather horizontally than vertically as in the classical doctrine. His mind was human, and the seat of His deity was the subliminal consciousness. "His divinity in finding expression passed through the medium of His human intelligence. Thus He was fully human and fully divine." The theory is extraordinarily impressive. It is not markedly different from the conception elaborated by Dr. Brunner in *The Mediator*, which depends on the distinction drawn by the writer between the personality and the Person of Jesus, the personality being His human mind, the Person, the eternal word lying beyond it. This theory of Sanday is in harmony with what we are told of the operation of great genius, arising unbidden from the deeps as though, in the words of Mozart, "the power were not from but through me." The theory is not without difficulties, but at least Sanday tried to do what the authors of the Chalcedonian Creed had done—to interpret the central mystery of the Christian religion with the aid of the best available clue. That is not a light thing. It has a direct bearing on the problem of evangelisation in the modern world. It is important that we should show that the Gospel, though beyond the grasp of human reason, is not contrary to it.

In the end the mystery remains, and must remain, for we are faced with the ineffable and the inexplicable. We have to insist that this is a mystery with God at the heart of it. We are unfair both to the story which tells of One who spoke as never man spoke, and to our hearers in dire need of light and power, otherwise. We have to insist that this is a mystery of love. Otherwise we are unfair both to the story which tells of One who for our sake took the form of a servant, and to our hearers who feel that He, being incarnate deity, found being good easy, and could not have been a High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmity. It is for that reason that we may regret the tendency of much recent theology to obscure the great affirmation of the New Testament that God was manifest *in the flesh*, entering into the conditions of our human lot and leading a real human life.

Jesus Christ was not, as Dr. Barth affirms, unrelated to family and race. He was born into a particular nation at a particular period in history, and a period that for that nation was of crucial importance. He wept over His own city, and was deeply troubled by the sorrows that their rejection of their national mission would bring on His own people. If he was God Incarnate, then He revealed God in those tears as presently He revealed God on Calvary and in the Garden where He arose. If He was God Incarnate, moreover, then it is a false and a perilously false antithesis in which Dr. Brunner pits belief in Christ the Eternal Word against belief in the teaching of Jesus. If Jesus was the Word of God, He has a paramount claim not only on our trust but on our obedience. If He was the Word of God, we cannot be indifferent to His own words: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?"

H. INGLI JAMES.

THE ATONEMENT.

ONE Sunday morning in the summer of 1900, or thereabouts (says Frank Lenwood), John Morley came into Dr. Fairbairn's study from the garden with a book in his hand. "I've just been reading again," he

said, "the account of the death of Jesus. If that story were preached as it ought to be, it would move the world." The incident is a reminder that it is one thing for a preacher to have a story to tell; it is quite another for him to be able to tell it so as to convince men of its importance for them. Here is where the interests of the preacher and the theologian coincide. "He is the best orator," says a 17th century writer, "who can, with the least noise, cast fire into the affections of those to whom he speaks or writes, and bring down the highest mysteries in religion to the capacity of the meanest hearer and reader." But what is it that communicates "fire" to men in this heart-stirring sense? Mere emotionalism will not do it. There is a fervour which leaves men cold, not hot. The metaphor of fire in this connection must be held to mean not an emotional state only, but a fusing of the hearer's thought, feeling and will in total response to a great theme greatly handled. In the fashioning of that theme by the preacher high theology has an indispensable place.

The history of the Doctrine of the Atonement illustrates this, for one of its most impressive features is the persistence with which, generation after generation, men have wrestled with the problem of interpreting as adequately as they could the saving work of Christ. They have been, like Jacob, conscious of a Presence whose blessing could not be gained without struggle. The very names—Sacrifice, Ransom, Satisfaction, and the rest—are monuments of an earnestness which has outlived all disappointments. And still the search goes on. The question remains open.

This is not to say that, for the Christian mind, the Fact which the theories have sought to interpret remains an open question. The "cruciality of the Cross"—to use Dr. Forsyth's phrase—is too firmly embedded in Christian history for that. The deepest truth about the Church itself is that it is the society of those who have been regenerated through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is not a social club, nor an ethical association, but the fellowship of the redeemed people of God. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The characteristic Christian institutions, too, testify to the centrality of the Death of Christ. It is the dominant theme of the New Testament, which reaches its climax in the song of the angels around the Throne: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength and honour, and glory, and blessing." Nor is the case any different when we consider the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The One whom they set forth is not a hero or a teacher, but a King and Saviour, who accomplished His mission and ascended His throne by giving His life for men. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." Indeed, as John Morley testified, the mere narrative of the crucifixion can carry to men a message of strangely-moving power. East or West, in spite of our imperfect presentation of it, the Cross stands before men in its own right, and draws them to Him who suffered there. In this way our very dumbness becomes vocal, witnessing to a deed whose greatness defies human comprehension. "To understand fully the Atonement," says Dr. Carnegie Simpson, "were to understand these three things and their ultimate relation to each other—the greatest thing in God, which is His love; the strongest thing in the Universe, which is law; and the darkest thing in man, which is sin." The profoundest theory must needs fall short of the truth.

Let us think a little more closely about these two contrasted features of Christian experience—the Fact, and our interpretations of it. Is there any vital connection between these two, Are the theories anything more than interesting speculations, Does it matter very much how near they get to the truth? In other words, is a Theology of the Atonement

necessary for either the preacher or his people? This is a serious question. Indeed, it is *the* question with which this issue of the "Fraternal" is concerned, and, unless we can answer it satisfactorily, neither the "Fraternal," nor the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship, nor the Christian Church as a whole, is worth wasting more time upon. And the answer is surely that Theology is the medium through which, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, the meaning and, therewith, the power of the Christian facts is transmitted from man to man, from generation to generation. No Theology, no Gospel. Without Theology the story of Jesus of Nazareth, beautiful and moving as it is, would be no more significant than that of any other martyr. "Either the Death of Christ was the Atonement for human sin," said Dr. Dale, "or else it fills me with terror and despair." T. W. Manson puts it even more strongly: "The story of Jesus up to the Cross, taken *in itself*, is the strongest argument for Atheism." But he adds: "Taken in its *religious context*, it is the only convincing argument for a God who is Father and King." In other words, the "saving power" of the Cross, as the theme of the preacher and pastor, depends upon his theology. The event becomes significant, not as it is considered in isolation, but as it is related to the character of God and His whole purpose for sinful men.

This interdependence of theology and the great Christian facts helps to explain why theology must needs be a living, growing thing, or lose its power. Theories of the Atonement do not cease to grip men merely because they are inadequate, for, as we have seen, they must always have been that. They get left behind eventually because men have outgrown them. The truth in them gets taken up into the common Christian heritage, and helps to create in mankind a moral and spiritual maturity which must needs express itself in new ways. Thus, the theological restlessness and uncertainty of our time is not, in itself, a bad sign, though it would be if we were content to remain in it. On the contrary, it means that, in the realm of religion, as in other realms, the traditional formulations have ceased to satisfy because men's minds have moved beyond them. New growth is waiting to be made.

In the opportunity and challenge of such a situation we must all share. This is not the place to discuss modern re-statements of the Doctrine of the Atonement. But we should note that their best chance of bringing illumination and release to this generation lies precisely in that deeper realisation of Sin and Grace of which, in the Providence of God, the War may be the occasion. Millions of men and women in all lands are feeling with a new intensity to-day the dreadful power of evil, and the austere authority of the Divine ordinance whereby the consequences of sin are visited in suffering upon the innocent as well as the guilty. May we not hope that this heartrending experience will lead in its turn to a more poignant sense of mankind's alienation from God, and a renewed search for its cure? No one supposes that the power of materialism and scepticism is exhausted; but there is ground for thinking that, under the stress of war's experiences, a graver mood is being engendered, which has in it the pledge of better things to come. Has the Church yet found the right word to say to such a mood? No one can answer that question confidently. But at least we may agree that we all ought to try to find the answer. Nor should the search for a better way of expressing old truths and of interpreting God's redeeming work in Christ be relegated solely to the experts. In the end, the purpose of theology is not speculative but practical, and directed to the needs of the common man. By the same token, the common man, sorely beset as he is to-day by life, must shoulder his part in the task of recovery by being more disposed than of recent years to turn his thoughts inward, and to reflect again upon his case and condition, his origin and destiny, his fundamental relationship to God.

In the last resort, the decisive factor is not intellectual but religious. Readers of Anselm's "Cur Deus Homo?" will not need to be reminded of the intellectual power which there, at one stroke, demolished the traditional theory of the Atonement and established another in its place. Yet that short but potent treatise is even more remarkable for the depth and purity of its religious passion—its absolute rejection of contemporary estimates of Sin, and its profound concern for the honour and majesty of God. Such is the soil out of which a new theology springs. It is to the preparation of such that we may humbly believe the Divine Husbandman has His servants abroad in the earth.

R. L. CHILD.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

OF the various Christian doctrines, that which concerns the Holy Spirit is most difficult of statement. This is primarily due to its comprehensive nature, which permits of no delimitation but involves consideration of practically every other aspect of Systematic Theology. This inherent difficulty has not been lessened for our day by the appeal to "experience" which, beginning with Schleiermacher, has been a significant feature of the main course of Christian thought in recent years. The full results of this particular emphasis are perhaps not even yet fully realized, but no one will deny that it has proved a powerful and disturbing solvent for many ancient dogmas. Moreover, in treating of the Spirit, we lack that abundance of historical material which plays so great a part in helping us to understand the Incarnation or the Atonement. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit has been excluded from the great Confessions of the Church or that others beside the Montanist Tertullian have not been zealous in resisting all attempts "to put to flight the Paraclete."¹ It does mean, however, that relative to other truths the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has received little more than incidental consideration. In view of these facts it will be clear that a complete formulation would be impossible in this article. For such statements the reader must be courteously referred to the standard works on Christian doctrine and to some excellent modern studies of the one in question. Of these the best in English is still perhaps the volume by Dr. Wheeler Robinson. Here we shall only note some aspects of the doctrine which are familiar to every serious mind.

I.

Certain unusual phenomena among the early disciples after the death of Jesus led them to believe in an unseen Power which they began to call the Holy Spirit. The doctrine, therefore, may be said to rest upon Christian experience. Strictly speaking, however, no human experience is entirely independent of the past, and this is true of the early experience of the Spirit, despite the uniqueness of Christ, with whom it was closely associated from the first. The idea of Spirit was familiar in the Jewish circles where the Church began and in the Hellenic world in which it was to grow. The "ruach" of the Hebrew and the "pneuma" of the Greek were important preparations, while the teaching of Jesus had explicitly referred to the immediate future; but whatever the extent of this preparation, it was in the believing company that hopes and promises were finally realized in a common experience of remarkable power and intensity. A decisive point was Pentecost, from which high moment onward, through schism and declension no less than in reformation and revival, the Church has continued to affirm her faith in the Holy Ghost. To-day, perhaps, the younger churches of the East most signally attest His presence.

We cannot lightly deny the abnormalities of Pentecost because they no

¹ *Adv. Prax.* 1.

longer appeal to Western minds. The master musician, indeed, may often have to play though "the instrument be out of tune."² There is an emotional side to human nature which finds its best expression in the Church's praise. It is clear, however, that Pentecost had other aspects in addition to unusual psychic states and "tongues." One of these was fellowship, and this remains so marked a characteristic of the experience in question as to be almost synonymous with life in the Spirit. Less obvious but not less real was the high moral tone of the inspired community and in which Ananias and Sapphira stood no chance at all. Abnormal conditions appeared in other Christian circles outside Jerusalem. They were specially present at Corinth, but the keen mind of Paul was now at work to open other doors and point a more excellent way. In particular he showed the intimate connection between the Spirit and the moral life, between the power of God and the will of man. It is not clear how far Paul distinguished between the Holy Spirit and the indwelling Christ; but with the Fourth Gospel "it is the Spirit, another than Christ, who enables the believer . . . to realize the abiding presence of the incarnate."³ The Fourth Gospel associates the Spirit very closely with revelation, and we may thus say that the New Testament conception of the Spirit's work embraces the whole personality of man. Mind, heart and will are all made subject to the Holy Ghost, a condition eminently congruous with the teaching of Christ which set so great a value on the individual.

The Church has continued to be the special field of the Spirit's activity. Therein He has bestowed diversity of gifts for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry. His indwelling this earthly house no doubt involves "kenosis" or self-limitation on His part, as also does His gracious working in the two great ordinances. But inasmuch as Baptism and the Lord's Supper are used by the Spirit as His media they take on a "sacramental" value from His transforming presence. The ordinances thus become real means of grace both to the believing recipient and to all who are concerned with their administration. The Scriptures, too, have been generally regarded as both inspired and interpreted by the Spirit. The idea of inspiration has been modified from an outward or mechanical conception which regarded the writers as instruments in the Spirit's hand to a more inward one which seeks that inspiration in the deep personal experience behind the written page. The reading of the Scriptures yields ample witness to their power, "making it manifest that in the sacred volume there is a truth divine, a something which makes it immediately superior to all the gifts and graces attainable by man."⁴ The credibility of the Bible, as Calvin says, is largely present in itself; but with him we shall still agree that its full glory and power is realized only "when its certainty is founded on the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit." In the individual, likewise, the good life and even the faith which begins it are His gracious work, "The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling."⁵

II.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the Christian explanation of that vast and growing body of data which the foregoing outline so imperfectly summarizes; and like all religious doctrines it is freely criticised to-day.

² Garvie, *The Christian Faith*, p. 166.

³ Quick, *Doctrines of the Creed*, p. 290.

⁴ *Inst.*, Bk. I., viii., 1 and 13.

⁵ *The Shorter Catechism*, Q. 30.

We can no longer seek refuge in "the coded creeds of old-time godliness," but must be constantly examining the foundations of our faith beneath the dark and moving waters of experience. It is unhappily true that "it is a common thing for doctrines based upon psychological data to exceed the limits of true inference."⁶ On the whole, however, the Church's conception of the spirit of God is reasonable and satisfying, even when it leaves some ancient questions still unanswered in the mind. Here these ultimate philosophical questions must be left alone, but there is space to notice one or two points of common interest.

A very slight acquaintance with comparative religion shows us that "faith" healing was not unknown at pre-Christian pagan shrines and that it may still be found in heathen surroundings. This does not disprove the reality of such healing, but it does suggest that it is not specifically Christian. In the same way it is sometimes argued that the outward phenomena frequently associated with the Spirit may be found in many religions and are not therefore essentially Christian. Emotional and ecstatic states may be found among Moslems and native populations from the South Seas to the Congo. They can be brought about, it seems, by very mundane methods. This is not a serious criticism, however. On any showing, the full content of the Christian experience may be shown to be entirely different from any of these. A more serious challenge comes from a different source. In recent years the emergence of psychology has caused considerable doubt in many minds as to the objective reality of the Spirit. It is argued that the Spirit is simply a creation of the Christian mind which projects its own desires into the realm of imagination. The anthropomorphism which has always haunted Christian thought gives colour to the charge, but on reflection it will be seen that the same objections might be offered to any human experience of reality. The "materialist" has no more solid ground for believing in the reality of physical objects than the religious man for believing in the reality of the Spirit; he has, in fact, less. The ultimate proof that an object is not illusory "can never be more than the general agreement of others, and the general congruity of things, and the general persistence of our perceptions in regard to it." If this be so the greatest reality in man's experience is surely Spirit.

Another question is concerned with the field of the Spirit's activity. The idea of Immanence, stamped with the authority of Greek philosophy, has found a permanent place in Christian Theology. Is not then the Spirit of God everywhere? Few of us would care to deny the existence of "prevenient" Grace, and it will be remembered that George Fox found something like an Inner Light in an Indian. At the same time we must remember that without contact with the Body of Christ no race or individual has ever reached the true Christian plane by this natural illumination alone. The characteristic Christian experience of the Spirit has been Jewish rather than Greek, Transcendent rather than Immanent, and this, despite the obvious difficulties involved, is still perhaps the surest ground to take. The child, so vitally one with its mother and growing up in no other company than hers may yet require a swift extended hand to save it from an unknown danger, or may, for love's sufficient reasons, be suddenly

"Fretted with sallies of his mother's kisses."

As in the Incarnation itself there is an element of uniqueness, so, adapting

⁶ Andrews, *The Christ of Apostolic Faith*, p. 34.

⁷ Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 53-4.

Otto's words, we may say of the experience of the Spirit that it contains "an element which may on occasion profoundly affect us and occupy the mind with a well-nigh bewildering strength."⁸

A brief reference may be made in closing to the Person of the Spirit. The mystery which surrounds the Godhead begins to meet us here, and as we go we may remember Calvin's warning that "Satan, in order to pluck up our faith by the roots, has always provoked fierce disputes, partly concerning the divine essence of the Son and Spirit, and partly concerning the distinction of persons."⁹ Many of our difficulties concerning the Person of the Spirit are due to our habit of conceiving persons as material forms. It is enough to say that if one aspect of His work is to interpret Christ to us, that is, to interpret a Person to persons, then He himself is surely not less than personal. We shall find, in fact, that He is not essentially different from the Jesus of the Gospels, who was himself the image of the everlasting Father; "and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

A. B. MILLER.

⁸ *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 12.

⁹ *Inst.*, Bk. xiii., 21.

THE CHURCH.

THE conception of the Church which is theoretically the most satisfying and, at the same time, practically the most serviceable is that contained in St. Paul's teaching about the Church as "the Body of Christ"—a phrase which illumines for us both the Church's nature and function.

I.

What, then, is the nature of the Church? To appreciate the full meaning of the Pauline phrase, "the Body of Christ," we must interpret it in the light of the Hebrew psychology which lies behind it. The Hebrews thought of personality as diffused throughout the body. They regarded the heart as the seat of thought and will, the bowels and kidneys as the seat of emotion and desire, and the eye and ear, the hand and foot as endowed with a measure of personality, as semi-personal things. Thus St. Paul's description of the Church as "the Body of Christ" becomes illuminating and suggestive. The true Church is a society throughout which the Spirit of Christ is diffused, a body whose members are permeated by the Spirit of Christ, and under His direction and control, the organism in which Christ lives, through which He acts, and by means of which He finds expression in the life of the world to-day. As Friedrich Heiler says: "On all sides men are awakening to the recognition that the Church of Christ is something more than an outward institution for the preservation and nurture of the religious and ethical life, more than the sum of the individual Christians; rather, the Christian Church is a unity, a metaphysico-mystical entity, Christ's Body, and the Fulfilment of Christ. And this doctrine of the Church as a creation and revelation of Christ, as an integral organism drawing its life from Christ, inevitably creates a strong tendency towards the uniting together in a fraternal relationship of Christian men who are separated by external barriers."¹

It is only they who know Christ as the Unseen Master of their souls who are really in the Church at all, for only so can one be a member of the Body of Christ. It is only as we can, with some measure of justification, use of ourselves the Pauline formulæ "Christ in me" and "I in Christ" that we are genuinely Christian. It is precisely this living contact with the

¹ *The Spirit of Worship*, p. 6.

Spirit of Christ that is the burning centre of our Christian faith, and it is only spiritual union with Christ that can ever make us truly members of that Church which is His Body.

That this view of the Church is not a bit of mere theological speculation or a mere highfalutin notion is confirmed by all deep-going Christian experience. We can never get anywhere near the heart and centre of the Christian faith except as we experience in our inner life the activity of the Spirit of Christ, by feeling the daily pressure of Christ upon our consciences, constraining us to Christlike thoughts and words and deeds; by discovering that our vision is being so clarified by the Spirit of Christ that we see all life's problems in His light; by finding that our wills are being so directed and strengthened by the Spirit of Christ that we will ever more and more what He wills; by perceiving that our personality is being taken up into a Personality larger, vaster, nobler than our own, that there is a Divinity shaping our ends and making better men and women of us; by realising that the creative and quickening power of the Spirit of Christ is at work upon us, enabling us to tame the passions of the flesh and to bear those fruits of the Spirit which Schleiermacher called "the virtues of Christ"; and by being kindled by the same Spirit with a passion for the service of God and man. It is only as these experiences come to us that we can be Christian in the full sense of the term, and in proportion as they do come to us we are able to say with St. Paul: "I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." In a word, we are in the Church only as we are actually under Christ's governance, direction and control, so that He is, to some extent at least, finding expression in our lives—i.e., using us as the "Body" whereby He expresses Himself in the life of the world to-day.

The true Church, then, is a *Christocratic* society, and only those who are under Christ's sway are really in it at all, while all who *are* under His sway, be they Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Quaker, or Salvationist, are helping to constitute His Body. "Christ is the Head of the Church which is His Body"—which means, as F. C. Burkitt pointed out, that Christ is "the head, the eyes, the brain, the will, the understanding, and each of us is an atom of the body, of which we form a tiny but constituent part."²

How trivial in comparison are those matters of Church organisation over which such bitter disputes have raged for centuries. Who of us would object to anything the Pope has to say if he were *de facto* the mouthpiece of Christ? Who of us would not submit to episcopal control if the bishops were *de facto* in the true apostolical succession and the *actual* representatives of Christ? The popular Baptist idea that the Church is a "democratic" society is as much likely to lead to abuses as Roman authoritarianism or Anglican episcopalianism. This "democratic" conception of the Church has led to a grave tendency to drag the Church down to the level of a political organisation, and to manipulate its voting power with a shrewdness and a cunning worthy of any political party whip or manager—chiefly for the purpose (as a Yorkshire Church secretary said to me the other day, with unholty glee), "of voting the minister out." In this imperfect world, congregational government may be the best method of church organisation, but it is the ideal method *only under ideal conditions*—viz., when the church meeting seeks devoutly to register the mind and will of Christ, and not merely to give vent to private passion and prejudice.

II.

In the second place, what is the function of the Church? As the "Body of Christ" it is the Church's function to express the mind of Christ to

² *The Christian Religion*, Vol. III., p. 144. (Cambridge Press.)

the world and to carry on the work of Christ in the world. And surely, if there is any task which is infinitely worth-while, this is the one. Well might Carlyle say that the true Church is worth living and dying for. The Church, then, is the organism through which Christ is to find expression in the life of the world. The theme thus raised is so vast that it could not be adequately dealt with in a whole issue of this magazine. In one short article, therefore, one can do no more than touch on some of the more salient things.

(a) The Church is to supply the world with men and women who bear on their lives and characters the impress of Christ. As Anderson Scott has said: "The Christian Church is the only institution in the land which makes it an essential part of its programme to do this great service to the State as well as to the individual, to make men and women good."³ The Church seeks to accomplish this aspect of her mission by bringing people under the personal influence of Christ, the great Master of the art of living, the supreme moral Leader of humanity, the highest moral Reality of the universe, the final and authoritative Word on all ethical issues. The Church is a character-builder. It is part of her task to help men and women to self-realisation in the terms of Jesus Christ. To fail here is to fail abjectly and utterly, and to turn church routine into meaningless mummery. That the Church has achieved considerable success in this department is undeniable. Some of the choicest spirits that the world has ever known have been products of the Church of Christ. That the Church is achieving a large measure of success in this respect to-day is clear to anybody who compares the moral standards and ideals of the average young person in close fellowship with the Church with those of the average young person who knows nothing of the Church's influence. It has to be admitted, however, that the Church's success at this point has been limited to too small a section of her membership. On the whole, the world is not much impressed by the type of character that the churches are producing. Mr. Clutton Brock may have erred somewhat when he said: "It is a plain fact that orthodox Christians do not seem to be better than other men,"⁴ but men of the world would endorse that verdict. If Christian employers were invariably the most considerate of their workpeople, and Christian business men invariably the most highminded and unselfish, and Christian workmen invariably the most conscientious workers and the best comrades, and Christian women invariably the kindest and best neighbours, and if we Christians generally by our high character shone like luminaries in a dark world, the Church would be far more influential than she is. Origen could challenge his heathen opponents to compare the Christian community with any other, and then to decide for themselves where the greater moral soundness was to be found. To some extent, doubtless, we can do the same with our modern pagan opponents, but many church members let the Church down badly. That is why we are sometimes told to-day that the world is indifferent to the Church because the Church is not different from the world.

(b) The churches need radically to change their conception of the pastoral office. They are too apt to regard the minister simply as their own private chaplain, whom they pay to look after their spiritual needs. The result is that pastoral care is confined exclusively to the "ninety and nine" who are safe in the fold. Even in this narrow sphere the minister is often pre-occupied with people's physical complaints. But the Church that is really the "Body of Christ" will take Christ's view of the pastoral office. Our Lord had a good deal to say about seeking lost sheep, and did a good

³ *New Testament Ethics*, p. 1.

⁴ *What is the Kingdom of Heaven?* p. 10.

deal of seeking. Yet if a modern minister devoted some of his time (say) to work in the local gaol, he would be accused of neglecting his "church work" and his "pastoral duties." Or if a minister proposed to hold his evening services in some public hall or theatre—and that is the only way to get at the people—what measure of support would he get from his church? Not very much! The members of our churches are not half enough concerned about the unchurched masses. Again, it can hardly be denied that the Church that is the "Body of Christ" would share Christ's attitude to youth and be profoundly concerned about the spiritual welfare of youth. Yet how few of our churches possess really efficient organisations seeking to promote the all-round well-being of youth? The drift of adolescents from the churches is due in the main to the fact that there are so few people in the churches who care enough about them to labour on their behalf. Occasionally one hears of a minister who has been practically forced to resign because he was devoting "too much of his time to young people." If the churches took Christ's view of the pastoral office, instead of expecting their ministers to devote all their time and strength to the "ninety and nine," they would eagerly support any effort to reach out to the multitudes who are living aloof from God, and would be prepared to lavish more toil and thought and love and care on the task of winning the young for Christ. The tragedy is that on these two vital issues—which, as the Gospels show, are so near to the heart of Christ—the majority of church members are as cold as an iceberg and indifferent as stone.

(c) The Church that is the "Body of Christ" will share in Christ's passion for the Kingdom of God. The churches need to be rescued from their self-absorption, from that type of piety which turns religion into a mere private love-affair between the soul and God, from trivial parochial concerns and from the petty round of mere congregational busy-ness. All too often they resemble spiritual clubs where people play a private spiritual game of their own and get a private satisfaction out of it. As McGiffert says: "How trivial are the demands it (the average church) makes! A decent life, membership in a respectable church, and attendance upon its services, and the expenditure of a few petty dollars annually for its support! And people wonder that Christianity is not more of a success in the world! What is there to arouse enthusiasm in a religion thus interpreted?"⁵ It has been said that the Jewish Christian Church died because it did nothing. Many of our churches are dying for the self-same reason. Only as the thought of the Kingdom of God becomes central in the life of the Church as it was central in the life of Jesus can the Church be delivered from its present triviality and impotence. It is the function of the Church as the "Body of Christ" to remind men everywhere of those eternal moral and spiritual laws which cannot be neglected with impunity, to supply the world with the corrective of a Christian background, to seek to make the will of God the regnant factor in human life. Thus the Church is committed to evangelism—at home and abroad; she must seriously endeavour to bring youth to Christ; she must stand boldly for social justice, for civic, national and international righteousness; she must voice God's will on the race problem—the acutest world problem to-day—and must champion the cause of the brotherhood of man. It is the failure of the churches to strike big notes, to espouse great causes, and to enter upon a high mission, that is, in the main, responsible for their feebleness. Church work may be mean, little, petty and paltry, or it may be grand, noble and sublime—that all depends on whether or not the Church is in a very deed and truth the "Body of Christ," expressing His mind, doing His will, and carrying on His work.

L. H. MARSHALL.

⁵ *Christianity as History and Faith*, p. 238.

THE LAST THINGS.

IF we are to live our lives as God meant us to live them, we need to be convinced that the Universe "makes sense." The purpose of this series is so to expound the Christian Revelation that life's jig-saw puzzle may be seen to have a pattern behind it. Assured of this, we shall be convinced of life's worth-whileness, and be inspired to live, in the richest meaning of that word, "the life that is life indeed."

Our concern is with "The Last Things"—and here, if anything, "sense" must be found. The End must certainly justify itself. We must needs despair unless there be some "Last Things" in which adequate significance may be found. Thus alone shall we be able, as Paul was, to see our affliction as "light and but for a moment," as we look at the things not seen, "for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

How then does the Christian view of these "unseen" things make sense of the Universe, and so make life meaningful and worth while? Well, first of all, for the very reason that they are unseen! For a haze enshrouds the future and renders it uncertain, according to God's plan.

At first glance this seems absurd. How can uncertainty make life worth while? Is it not when he knows exactly what lies ahead that man goes forward with firm tread? Is not his step sure only when his goal is sure? Yes, but the sure step may often be a springless step. Is it not the uncertainty that lies ahead that keeps life from being drab and insipid and imparts to it the thrill of adventure? All this is according to plan, God's plan, and intended not only to add zest to life, but also to give it moral quality.

We cannot stay to argue why this is so; but that it is so admits of no denial. Life, in so far as it has moral value and spiritual quality, must be an adventure into the unknown—the unknown of the immediate future, and, even more so, the unknown of the distant future of "The Last Things." And when our life is properly lived in the full light of God's Revelation of Himself in Christ, then we "greet the Unseen with a cheer," and the great word of the Epistle to the Hebrews about Abraham is true of us: "By faith he went forth not knowing whither he went." And we say with Newman: "I do not ask to see the distant scene, one step enough for me."

It is God's plan, then, that a haze should enfold the Beyond, the immediate beyond here, and especially the Great Beyond on the other side of death. For we are to walk by faith, not by sight. But, while there is thus no complete certainty, neither is there complete uncertainty. It is not the unrelieved uncertainty of utter darkness. Far from giving zest to life and spring to one's step, that would simply engender despair and bring life to a standstill. No, it is not the blackness of night that covers the distant horizon, but the haze of the morning! The sun is behind it, occasionally gleaming through! And in the track of those sunbeams there is certainty, not complete, but enough. Enough for faith to rest upon and for hope to cling to, enough to enable a man to live a triumphant life, justified by faith, purified by hope. "He that hath this hope . . . purifieth himself." Enough, but that is all; "we have enough, but not too much to long for more." So then, by its perfect blend of certainty and uncertainty, the Christian revelation concerning "The Last Things" imparts zest to life and gives it moral value.

Let us then look at some of these "Last Things." This, to begin with: the certainty that there is a Beyond. What if there were not? What if

death were the goal and the grave the end of the road? What sense could there be in the Universe then? No, another world must be brought in to make sense of this, a "new world to redress the balance of the old." Life here consists of broken, shapeless bits, the pieces of the jig-saw puzzle: "on the earth the broken arcs," but "in the heavens the perfect round." So Death must be followed by Resurrection. That is one of the Christian certainties. It is in the path of the sunbeam.

But the moment we become curious about the Resurrection and seek detailed knowledge of it, then the divine uncertainty creeps in, and the haze enfolds the view. Thus (a) we do not know whether the Resurrection follows immediately after death or whether an interval occurs. There are scripture passages which imply a period of waiting, an intermediate state: 1 Thess. 4, 16-17; 1 Cor. 15, 52, 53. As background to such passages we have the expectation of the Imminent Return of Christ, so that the interval was not contemplated as long drawn out. Meantime, however, twenty centuries have come and gone, so that probably most of us cherish those other passages of Scripture (2 Cor. 5, 6-8; Phil. 1, 2-3), where Resurrection immediately follows, and death is seen to be nothing but the passing from one form of existence into another. Neither (b) do the Christian documents afford us any certainty as to the *subjects* of the Resurrection. Is this Resurrection for all or only for some? According to Paul in his defence before Felix, as reported in Acts 24, 15, the Resurrection is universal, for unjust as well as just; but all the references in Paul's Epistles refer to the Resurrection of the just only; and the "one thing" on which Paul would concentrate is by "any means" to qualify for that Resurrection (Phil. 3, 11). Herein Paul follows the Master, for Jesus also is generally silent about a Resurrection of the unjust. There is one passage where He refers to it, and we note that it is in the Fourth Gospel (5, 28). On the contrary, He stresses the Resurrection of the just, and the all-importance of being "worthy" of attaining it (Luke 14, 14 and 20, 35). Indeed, there are great Christian scholars—P. T. Forsyth for example—who maintain that the New Testament proclamation is that only life-in-Christ is immortal. Heb. 11, 35, however, and also passages in the Book of Revelation imply a Resurrection for all, just and unjust alike.

For preaching purposes it were well to remember that this uncertainty is there "according to plan," and the preacher's business is to strike the positive note, and proclaim the great certainty—viz., that Immortal life is *there* for those who are worthy of it.

And who are worthy of it? This brings us to the question of Judgment, another of the "Last Things." Here again we have certainty and uncertainty perfectly blended. Judgment itself is a certainty, inevitably so if the Universe is to "make sense." Something deep in us demands and approves the great word of Paul: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." This law is ceaselessly operative. Its consequences are not always traceable by us, but it is always at work, registering its verdict, if not in visible outward effects, then amid the "unseen things," in the inmost recesses of the soul. In the words of William James: "The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying 'I won't count it this time.' Well, he may not count it . . . but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes."

Yes, judgment is a certainty, a ceaseless process going on in the present and moving towards a climax and consummation in the future. "Sow a thought, reap a word; sow a word, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit;

sow a habit, reap a character, sow a character, reap a destiny." But around that destiny, that consummation of judgment, Revelation allows the haze to gather, and therefore we must not attempt to penetrate it. The Moral Order is an awe-ful reality—side by side with, nay, part of, the Order of Grace, for forgiveness does not mean any dodging of consequences. Here, then, is something that should put earnestness into our living and urgency into our preaching.

Of the "Last Things" one still remains, the "Second Coming." What emphasis should this have in our preaching? The same emphasis that the Christian Revelation gives to it. And once again we have the blending of certainty and uncertainty; the *fact* of the Second Coming stands out clear and unmistakable—but when we begin to ask curious questions the haze gathers, and the details become vague and uncertain. As to the *when* of the Parousia, nothing certain is revealed, and that means we are not supposed to know (Mark 13. 32).

But the Parousia itself is one of the glorious certainties, one of the *facts* in the Good News; it means the triumph of the Eternal Christ, the Complete Conquest of Evil, the Final Victory of the Good. But when we seek to pry into the *how* of this victory, the haze gathers. There are some to whom it seems that Christ at His Second Coming will "force" the world to His obedience and *compel* men to be good! But for others this is the very contradiction of Christianity, indeed an acknowledgment of the defeat of the way of Love the way of the Cross. So Revelation shrouds with uncertainty the ways and means of Christ's victory on His Return. How beautifully has this blend of certainty and uncertainty been expressed for us by W. Y. Fullerton:

"I cannot tell how He will win the nations,
How He will claim His earthly heritage. . . .
But this I know, all flesh shall see His glory,
And He shall reap the harvest He has sown."

All these uncertainties are intended for our spiritual growth, while our life rests on one great certainty—the infinite love of God in Jesus Christ. Here is not merely one of the Last Things, but the last thing of all; the very last because it is also the very first, the Alpha and the Omega. "God is love, I build my faith on that." Anything which clashes with the love of God in Christ may safely be cast aside, indeed must be. So the last things allure, not frighten us.

"O Saul it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee, a Man like me
Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever;
A Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee!"

"Peace, perfect peace, the future all unknown,
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne."

But if we know Jesus is on the throne, then surely the future is *not* all unknown! Hear Whittier, exquisitely blending the certainty and uncertainty of the Last Things:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fringed palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

There is a real "Gospel of the Last Things"; let us preachers proclaim it as the parson of the "Deserted Village" did when he "allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

J. WILLIAMS HUGHES.

CRITICISM OF BAPTIST POLITY COMMISSION REPORT.

(Abridgment of address given to the Leicestershire Fraternal, and sent under its auspices, one member dissenting. The criticism is contributed as an essential preliminary to clear the ground for a further, more constructive article.)

THE report of the Polity is exceedingly disappointing in its adequacy to solve the serious defects of our present Church organisation. That the state is serious is evidenced by at least two indisputable facts—(a) that so many of our men have gone over to the C. of E., the majority of whom were good and capable and neither insincere nor thoughtless; (b) the present pernicious system by which a minister receives a "call" is strongly condemned all over the country by enlightened and thoughtful laymen and by ministers who are perfectly happy in their sphere. The inadequacy of the report arises, in our opinion, from two factors: 1. The personnel of the Polity Commission. Officials of the Baptist Union preponderate. No missionary is on it, although the system under which the B.M.S. works is perforce very different from the "independency" of the Home Churches. What may be termed as "the average working ministers" are also conspicuous by their absence. Another committee should be formed, therefore, with missionary representatives and representatives of good men who are comparatively unknown, but who are the salt of the denomination, and who have experienced the workaday application of our organisation, or rather lack of it.

2. A misconception of the true relationship between minister and Church. After seven years the Polity Commission has arrived at this: "The church secretary will then call a special meeting to vote by ballot and without discussion on the following question: Do you wish the Rev. — to continue as minister of the church? . . . Failing the necessary majority, the pastorate will terminate." What, then, is our conception of the ministry? Were we called of God or of the people? Is the voice of the people always the voice of God? Is every local church to be regarded by us "as both enabled and responsible for self-government"? What about the Laodicean Church?

Has our ministry no authority at all save that with which it is invested by the particular people to whom we minister? What right have we to "reprove, rebuke, exhort" if the rightness or wrongness of our mission rests entirely in their judgments? We repudiate any idea of sacerdotalism, but have we no belief in distinctive grace received through our Divine Call, and through our preparation to fulfil our vocation, and through a sacred fellowship with others who have been likewise called? Is there no Great White Throne before which the humble suppliant may kneel to receive the Divine Commission and the Heavenly Armour for his Holy Warfare at the hands of his Sovereign Lord and King? If not, then what does our ordination as ministers of Christ mean? It would seem, however, that we have grave doubts concerning this authority if we allow that the people to whom we minister must be regarded as the final arbiters of our ministry. The idea that they are is unscriptural. The local church was not claimed to be both "enabled and responsible for self-government" in apostolic days. Granted that there may have been several forms of order and administration, the Church was one and undivided, according to the Pauline conception, even as the Body of Christ is one and undivided. The logical issue of such a doctrine must be that the local church is a part of the whole, subordinate to the whole, and, indeed, having no vital function except as an organic part of the one Body.

Was Timothy called to the Church at Ephesus, or was he sent? He was sent—by Paul. Nor do the Ephesians seem to have been over-jubilant about his appearance among them. Had the choice been left to them, they

might have called Demas, whose ideas were more consonant with those of the city in which the church was. The very title "Apostle" means "Sent," and are we not a part of the true Apostolic Succession in so far as we have been commissioned to witness to the Living Christ and "preach the Gospel to every creature"?

The doctrine that the members of the local church are the supreme and final arbiters of a ministry destroys the spirit of prophecy. The prophets had on occasions to speak in severe terms even to those whom they loved and were members of the Jewish Church, and it may be the duty of Christian ministers to speak in similar terms even to members of a Christian Church, but our present constitution gravely hampers such a responsibility. It may perhaps put to silence the minister concerned. The Apostle Paul once wrote to the Corinthian Church: "Am I to come to you with a rod of discipline, or with a spirit of gentleness and love?" Had that Church remained in the recalcitrant mood in which it was when the Apostle wrote, and been in our modern Baptist system with its conception of independency, it would probably have replied: "We shall not allow you to come at all."

The seriousness of the position is this. In our present system there arises far too frequently the danger that a man must say what is pleasing to his congregation or run the risk of being silenced and turned out of his pastorate, and possibly stranded. Another consideration is that it is bad for the character-building of our young people to be brought up to treat the messengers of God in such a manner, to be amused in seeing "a parade of preachers" coming to their church "with a view," and so to be taught it is right and proper for them to decide on the worth of the sacred ministry by voting.

The recommendations of the Polity Commission are utterly unsatisfactory, because they are concerned with surface matters only, and are but constituting an excuse for not getting to the roots. They all break to pieces on the rock of our independency. At that we must leave the matter for the moment, but it is hoped that the more constructive aspects will be developed in a further paper.

OUR CHAIRMAN.

OUR Chairman, E. Corns Davies, has announced his decision to retire from the pastorate in September, when he will have completed forty years in the ministry, of which fifteen were spent in Islington and twenty-five in Brondesbury. In both his churches he fulfilled a notable ministry as preacher and pastor and won a lasting place in the affection of his people. He has rendered conspicuous service to the denomination, having filled the office of President of the London Baptist Association and for many years has been a member of the Baptist Union Council. At the time of the reconstruction of our Fellowship he was President of the "Fraternal Union" and took a leading part in the arrangements which culminated in the uniting of that society with the Pastoral Session. For the past two years he has been our Chairman. We all thank God for Corns Davies and pray that he may long be spared to place at the service of our churches the help which his talents and experience eminently qualify him to render.
