

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Fraternal / Baptist Ministers Journal* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bmj-06.php

The Fraternal

OCTOBER, 1946

No. 62

THE ARCHBISHOP ENQUIRES

THE Archbishop of Canterbury, on his visit to the Methodist Conference, remarked upon having received no reply to his references to Church union made in his address to the Free Church Federal Council Assembly in the Spring, and added, significantly, that he would like to know whether or not he was pursuing a mirage, so that he might shape his policy for the next two years, prior to the Lambeth Conference.

The Archbishop has taken the initiative in re-opening the question of unity, has indicated a new approach to the problem, that of building a comprehensive Church, in which the existing denominations would take into the new Church much of their existing practice, and has also expressed his willingness to give such a project a high personal priority of demand on his time and strength. This is leadership of a high order, and it behoves the Free Churches to ask themselves, speedily and earnestly, what their response is going to be. They cannot afford to lay themselves open to the charge of indifference to such a proposal, and Dr. Fisher's leadership calls for promptness and decision among the leaders of the Free Churches.

In his Spring address Dr. Fisher spoke of the necessity for agreement upon certain fundamental foundations. Free Churchmen will ask whether this means going back to the old and barren controversies on creeds and episcopacy. If so, they can have little hope that the new approach will lead anywhere. Is it too much to hope that he is looking rather in the direction of the 17th century Irish primate, Ussher, who argued that unity of doctrine was essential, not unity of government?

Even so, Baptists in particular will still find themselves facing formidable difficulties in contemplating entrance into the new Church, but, at any rate, a new and fruitful turn will have been given to what has so often proved a baffling and disappointing quest for unity.

THE FRATERNAL

FOREWORD

I MAY perhaps be permitted in the Foreword to this Regent's Park issue of the *Fraternal* to express a special word of thanks to the Rev. A. W. Argyle for his labours in editing it. The principle guiding its production has been that of securing as varied a representation as possible of Regent's material from sources at home and abroad. It is one of the advantages (and also one of the responsibilities) of Baptist life in the modern world that our people are widely scattered over the earth, and have contact with many different types of life and experience. It is to be hoped, therefore, that this effort to place our English problems against a large background, and to draw upon resources from many quarters will be found both illuminating and fruitful.

R. L. CHILD

THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC PRAYER

ANY discussion by ministers of the duties of their calling is sure to lead sooner or later to a consideration of the difficulty of leading a congregation in prayer. This is as it should be, for the conduct of this part of public worship is at once the most fruitful and the most exacting of all the functions of the Christian ministry—not excepting even preaching, immeasurably great as that is.

The difficulty is due not merely to the fact that the minister, who is required to lead the same congregation constantly in devotion, finds it hard to frame familiar petitions in fresh ways, and to avoid slipping into barren clichés. A more serious thing is that the pastor's work compels him to lift up his voice in prayer for others, whatever the state of his own mind and heart may be. And sometimes, in the very act of praying, he is painfully conscious that his own spirit is cold and unresponsive to what he is saying, and to the God whom he is addressing. All ministers know the experience, and if I try here to say something about public prayer, it is as one who knows only too well the pressure of the problem.

I hope very much that any man who feels the searching nature of this task will not seek to evade it by turning to the use of liturgical forms. I say this not merely because liturgies were not framed, nor should they be used, for escapist purposes; but also because for better or for worse, Baptists are committed by their tradition to the practice of free prayer. And although our freedom rightly entitles us on occasion, to use forms of prayer, yet that is a different thing from abandoning free prayer because it is difficult. I have no hesitation in saying that if we yield to that temptation, some-

thing vital and irreplaceable will assuredly go out of our ministries. Moreover, just because the offering of public prayer is so sacred a duty, the consciousness of personal inadequacy may be, not a disqualification, but a positive condition of success, and one which should provide a strong reason for trying to become more skilled in discharging it.

It is important to visualise this task of public prayer in its totality. True prayer is never an act which can be performed easily and mechanically. To think like that is to sink to the level of the Tibetan and his prayer wheel. Prayer is a function of personality and therefore preparation for public prayer must include an honest endeavour to develop whatever personal gifts we have or can acquire. Do we, for example, sufficiently recognise that praying in public is a strenuous *intellectual* exercise? Not only does it demand intense concentration of mind, but it requires such a just and flexible use of words as cannot be attained without patient self-discipline. Felicitous language rarely springs to the lips of a speaker by accident, for though it may appear to be spontaneous, it is really the fruit of earlier reflection and appreciation. Hence, a minister who sincerely desires to improve his public prayers should be a student of words, and should be turning constantly to the great masters of English prose and poetry in order to enlarge his vocabulary and cultivate his taste. He will find also in such an anthology, for example, as *Great Souls at Prayer*, much which will stimulate and nourish his mind by its wealth of devotional language. Best of all, the language of the Bible provides a never-failing spring of refreshment and renewal. As F. W. Faber said: "Its uncommon beauty and marvellous English . . . lives on the ear like music that can never be forgotten. . . . Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words'".*

Prayer is an affair of the heart, too, as well as of the head. Incidentally, that is why music has always played so important a part in public worship. Its rhythms, like those of great poetry and art, stir and liberate the spirit, purging it of its feverishness, and making it sensitive to higher realms of reality. Prayer does indeed in a peculiar way depend upon the emotions, for it springs out of a relationship of the soul with God which transcends words: Therefore, in order to pray, it is not enough to believe in God with the intellect. The truths of His nature and purpose, as they have been disclosed to us in Creation, in Providence and in Redemption, must be so constantly and gratefully meditated upon that the

*Qu. William Canton, *The Bible and the Anglo-Saxon People*, p. 270.

characteristic Christian sentiments become every day more deeply engrafted in the heart and the reality of the presence of God increasingly felt. As George Fox put it, we have "to feel the Lord's power and Spirit" to gather us to Christ that we may be taught of Him.*

Finally, let us frankly recognise that to pray better in public we must become better men in private. Here is the core of the matter, as Shakespeare knew when he made the King of Denmark say :

"Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will :
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent."

One does not need to be a murderer to discover the solemn truth that prayer and life are indivisible. They react upon one another. And it is as life itself is dedicated more wholeheartedly to the service of God, and as by His grace our thoughts and desires are brought more thoroughly into subjection to Christ, that we may hope that our public prayers will become increasingly helpful to men, and acceptable to God.

R. L. CHILD

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY IN INDIA

I WONDER how widely is *The Christian Minister in India* by the Rev. C. W. Ranson read and studied in Britain. Issued in India in 1945, I understand that an English edition has now been published. Those who have read the enthusiastic review of it by Dr. Warren in the January number of *The International Review of Missions* will surely have been grateful to him for directing their attention to it; for while it deals with facts and opportunities facing the church in India, there are few parts of the Christian world that will not find valuable thoughts and suggestions as well as inspiration in reading its pages. Moreover, the need for provision of a well-trained ministry has, in recent years, in one country after another, been attaining the position of first priority, and this is one of the chief ways in which it is considered that the older churches can help the younger churches; so that all who are concerned with the progress of the world-wide Church should be familiar with this aspect of the Church's life. The following short article is intended not to be a review of Mr. Ranson's book, but rather to throw some side-lights on the same enterprise from one who has had the privilege of working at Serampore for the past thirty years.

Even in India itself we are often blind to the amazing opportunities that lie before us. The Christian church is a small com-

* See Journal I 85.

munity—estimated at some eight millions (of whom about four millions are Roman Catholics) out of India's 400 millions. But in extent of territory and in variety of church tradition, India can be compared with Europe, apart from Russia. Now imagine all the churches in Europe, apart from the Roman Church, in conference assembled, appointing eight or ten commissions to gather full information about theological training throughout the continent and to make recommendations for meeting the ministerial needs of the church in the years to come, with the knowledge that those recommendations will receive from all the churches a sympathetic consideration, and probable implementation so far as funds permit. Or imagine a Senate, again representative of all the Church of Europe, pooling their varied experiences, discussing their varied needs, and producing syllabuses of study that, in the more advanced courses, at least, would be followed by the large majority of the theological students in each separate language area. That would correspond virtually to the present situation in India. Mr. Ranson's book is the result of the investigations and reports of eight such commissions appointed by the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon, which enjoyed the full co-operation of all the churches in the areas they were sent to investigate; and the influence of Serampore with its charter for the granting of Theological degrees, enjoyed by no other body in India, similarly extends to all parts of the Church and of the country. Nor is this achieved by the domination of any one nation or of any one Church. On both the N.C.C. Theological Committee and on the Serampore Senate are Indians, Americans, British, Canadians, Scandinavians: on both are members of the Church of India (late Church of England), the Baptist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and the Syrian (Eastern) Churches. That then is the background.

In thinking back on the discussions of past years, whether of an academic or of a more general character, the absence of heated theological debate has been remarkable and constant. Objection may be taken to the form that a question takes in an examination paper on the ground that it assumes a point of view not universally accepted, and another form of words must be found. Of course, it is impossible to include everything that everyone would like in the curriculum, wide and varied though the choice is, but each college probably has its own extra-curriculum subjects. Is it that we are lacking in theological accuracy? or insufficiently alive to the importance of theological differences? or is it that in face of the great non-Christian religions and the growing materialism even in the spiritual East, we realise how solid and substantial is the one

Gospel which we all share, and how impossible it is to obey the command of our Lord to make disciples of all nations unless we co-operate with one another to the fullest extent that our consciences will allow?

Another point worth noting is that we rarely find ourselves in definitely opposing camps in any issue that is raised. It is not a question of "yes" or "no" but rather one of emphasis and proportion. This may be illustrated by glancing at the two subjects that, out of the very many interesting problems we have faced together, have aroused perhaps the most frequent and animated discussions in recent years. One of these is the question whether the training of the theological students should be of a "practical" or of an "academic" nature—to use terms that are apt to be misleading, in lack of anything better. We all agree in saying "both"—but what should be the proportion of time devoted to each?—and discussion reveals immense variety of view. The Christian Minister in India needs to be versatile (see *The Christian Minister in India*, especially the poem in ch. VII!): he may well find himself the only man with any education in a wide area, and must help his parishioners in their agricultural pursuits and their financial concerns, in legal matters, and in first aid, as well as in their mental growth and spiritual life. Where will he learn these things except in college? Yet he has only three or four years in college, with practically no opportunities for further reading and study after leaving, and unless he has been well-grounded in the knowledge of the Bible, and in the fundamental branches of doctrine and of church history, with some knowledge of Animism and Hinduism and Islam, of what value will his ministry be? Should a "B.D." be the mark of any man (or woman) who has passed creditably through a theological course? or should it denote one who has attained to a very definite standard in scholarship?—and if the latter, what standard? So the battle rages between the advocates of Greek and Sanskrit, and the advocates of first aid and rural reconstruction! But again let it be said, it is not so much a question of "either," "or," but of proportion.

The other main theme recently has been the language in which the teaching should be given—in English or in the various Indian languages; and the answer is that both are needed—but in what proportion? Briefly the position is this: if the teaching is entirely in English the student on leaving college has to re-think all that he has learnt and translate it, often falteringly enough for years on end, into the language his people will understand. If it is entirely in the vernacular he has in most language areas prac-

tically no literature to help him, and he is cut off from association with fellow-Christians in other provinces in India. And when it comes to all-India examinations, such as we are already attempting in the "Licentiate in Theology" course, in six or eight different languages, the difficulties (a) of finding adequately qualified examiners in each subject and in each language, and (b) of maintaining an even standard amid such diversity, may perhaps be imagined but can be truly appreciated only by the long-suffering Registrar of the Senate! Space forbids more than the mere statement of the problem, but this, along with many other matters of moment, is lucidly discussed in Mr. Ranson's book.

In closing I would like to refer to one other point. Disappointment is often expressed that after 150 years of Protestant Christian work in India there are so few Indian Christian theologians. It is not realised how woefully lacking have been the opportunities in the past for any advanced study—and we do not expect great theological works from men who have just passed through a theological college in Britain. A student here and there manages to get a year or two in America or Europe; the rest of the better trained men are eagerly snatched up by their churches and loaded with a multitude of responsibilities that they alone can carry. Their libraries are meagre and books are hard to come by. But the seriousness of the case is emphasised in Mr. Ranson's book, and indication given of plans at last to meet the situation—in co-operation with the Church of the West. Three years ago too a first "Theological Conference" was held at Poona, and plans are on foot for the holding of another such conference for discussion of definitely theological questions to be held in October at Serampore, the secretary being a Telugu Baptist on the Serampore staff.

And, finally, it is good to hold the Baptist faith and enjoy the liberty of the Baptist, in a sphere in which life is all the while being enriched by the traditions and the fellowship of the Oecumenical Church!

G. H. C. ANGUS

THE BAPTISTS' ROLE IN CANADIAN EDUCATION

BAPTISTS have never been afraid of reason or truth. Nor have they ever claimed the monopoly of either. Indeed, it is their consciousness of quest in both fields that has been responsible for what are usually described as "unhappy divisions." The epithet may be false. For just as fission of one kind or another is an invariable sign of persistence of vitality in all organic life, so could the cessation of division among Baptists prove to be to them the

beginning of decay and death. The more lively the consciousness of self-hood, the more inevitable the divisive processes within that self.

If, in regarding our past, we come to suspect that many of the divisions that mark the history of our denomination were based on unworthy emotions, we shall usually find that behind these apparently un-Christian feelings and largely responsible for them, is an insatiable spiritual curiosity that refuses to concede that any individual person or group has discovered the totality of truth, or has the right to command, "Thus far and no farther!" The Baptist denomination is a "perpetuum mobile" or nothing. The most firmly established hierarchy on earth can no more check this movement, including its accompanying divisions, than the Inquisition could stop Galileo's earth from revolving about the sun. Or can it? If ever it does, then the last chapter of Baptist history will have been written.

Though the pursuit of truth is not the whole end of education, it is a large part of it, and the story of the Baptists' rôle in Canadian Education begins with fission, such as is inevitable when, in a communion whose genius finds most satisfaction in creeds crystallised in the past, there arises a personal passion for light and truth. It happened in Halifax in 1827, the same year in which the "defenders of the established order" . . . were planning to establish in London "a college in which instruction in the doctrines and duties of Christianity *as taught by the Church of England* should for ever be combined with other branches of useful education."¹ But in Halifax the situation was reversed. A part of the congregation of St. Paul's Anglican Church turned Baptist! Those were the days when truth was more highly esteemed than prestige. And these "converts" were men of culture, who, beginning by founding Granville Street Baptist Church, went on to form a Baptist Education Society and to open a school in that city, the Horton Academy. A decade later this same enlightened group were to supply much of the impetus toward the founding of Acadia College at Wolfville, N. S., now a university with an established reputation and a sure future.

The Baptist renaissance was astir in Upper Canada, too. About this time there came to the Dominion a number of Baptist settlers from Britain, the fruitage of the Haldane movement in Scotland. These chose the Ottawa valley for their home. Among them were two men whose names are to-day bywords in Canadian Baptist history, John Gilmour and Robert A. Fyfe. Gilmour became, in

¹ Historical Introduction to the University of London Calendar, 1940.

THE FRATERNAL

1831, the first pastor of the First Baptist Church in Montreal. Plans for the founding of a college in that city went forward and financial support was secured from the United Kingdom. One may conjecture that parallel Nonconformist aspirations concerning a university in London "for persons of all religious persuasions" were no negligible factor in loosening the purse-strings of the more missionary-minded in Britain at that time. Thus in Montreal began the first Baptist College in Canada, known as the "Canada Baptist College," and described in a recent issue of *The McGill News* as, "a century-old rival of McGill."² For some years this rivalry was serious. McGill was "rigidly Anglican"; Canada College was open to all. "The College relied on voluntary support; McGill hoped for State support."³ In 1849 the college was compelled to close its doors, partly owing to the great depression of 1848-9 which crippled Montreal business-men; but the disastrous withdrawal of "financial backing" was also due partly to a more familiar cause. "Montreal College was really sacrificed to the suspicions which half of our people entertained regarding the views of the other half on the communion question," says a Baptist writer.⁴ It is possible to take too mournful a view of religious history; youth's vehemence is often a surer indication of vigorous health than the appeasements of maturity.

There is, however, no difference of opinion concerning the contribution which this group of scholarly men in Montreal made not only to religious education in Canada, but to the course of Canadian education in general. Before its doors were closed, Canada College was training students in pure Arts, as well as in Theology. It has been characteristic of the Baptist outlook on education that its vision has not been restricted to the training of ministers in "orthodox" theology or even only in theology. The modern insistence, as, for example, at McMaster University, that a candidate for the ministry shall lay the foundations of his theological training and studies in a regular course in the Liberal Arts is recognisable in these earliest beginnings.

By the middle of the 19th century the Baptists of Upper and Lower Canada had lost both their college and their journal, for the *Baptist Register*, started in Montreal in 1838, a paper which during its life-time had probably no equal in the Dominion, lasted

² The McGill News, Vol. 27, No. 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See Stuart Ivison's article in "Our Baptist Fellowship"—Jubilee Booklet, Toronto, 1939, p. 27.

only a few years. But the Maritimes kept the flag flying! In Nova Scotia, Acadia University was still operating after ten successful years; the newly instituted *Christian Messenger* was still leading the other denominations in the sphere of religious journalism. As yet, however, the Baptists of Ontario had displayed little interest in education, whether sacred or profane. Such Baptist churches as had been formed were slow to co-operate for any cause, divided as they were, not only on the perennial question of open or closed communion, but in their national loyalties, for most of these early churches were American in their origin and American Baptists were preponderantly in sympathy with the Revolution. Indeed, Canada College might have suffered a happier fate had she received support from the Western Baptists in Ontario, but these, strongly under American influence, regarded with suspicion a college under the control of "aliens", as they called the British.⁵

However, Ontario was not to be without its college for long. Dr. Robert A. Fyfe, who had left Canada and spent several years across the border, returned to be the chief moving spirit in the founding of Woodstock College (1859) and its first principal.

The most important rôle in the drama of Canadian Baptist education was played by Senator William McMaster, a wealthy Toronto citizen who willed his entire estate for the founding of the university which bears his name. He had already given generously to the Woodstock project, and when, in 1881, the theological work was moved to Toronto, it was he who had made provision for the new building, called at that time "Toronto Baptist College." Six years later, McMaster University was incorporated, "Woodstock" continuing as a boys' boarding school, with traditions and ideals similar to those of Bishop's Stortford College in England. At about the same time, Mrs. McMaster founded a girls' boarding school in Toronto, thus completing an educational "set," which, while plainly refuting all charges of Baptist illiteracy, was to provide an excellent target for self-righteous reactionaries.

It might be thought by some that a small college planted in the shadow of Toronto University was necessarily doomed to speedy extinction, unless it either lowered its standards in order to attract students or applied for federation with the greater institution. McMaster did neither of these things. Her Charter laid down (1) that "matriculation into the university shall in no sense differ or vary from that prescribed for matriculation into the University of Toronto"; (2) that "in respect of any degree . . . the

⁵ The same division hampered united work among Methodists and Presbyterians also.

course of instruction and the scope of examination shall be as thorough and as comprehensive as the courses and examinations for corresponding degrees in the University of Toronto," and in her own interest McMaster carries out these provisions. Thus true both to her educational ideals and to her determination to dispense with state-aid, she did more than retain the respect of sister institutions in Toronto; and when two decades ago plans were initiated to move the university to Hamilton, a great industrial centre at the head of Lake Ontario, the proposal was received enthusiastically by that city. This transfer took place in 1930.

At the most recent convocation one hundred and seventy-seven degrees were conferred; among the six recipients of honorary degrees were a scientist distinguished for his research in the field of atomic energy and the Minister of Finance for the Dominion of Canada.

This sketch of the rôle Baptists have played in Canadian education in the past may be taken as prophetic of future destiny. McMaster University still cherishes the broad Christian ideals of its founder and was never in less danger of stagnation, spiritual or intellectual, than to-day. Under the vital chancellorship of Dr. G. P. Gilmour it is passing to a period of expansion in all its departments. During the next decade its Board will have to meet many major challenges. Should it decide to decline the questionable rewards of giant enrolments, it will be because, like the denomination whose servant it is, it prefers quality to quantity.⁶

C. H. STEARN

THE CHALLENGE OF GREAT POSSIBILITIES

I HAVE been asked to write an article on some aspect of Baptist life in Australia; but Australia is a Continent and my personal knowledge of it is confined almost to one State. So I shall deal almost entirely with Queensland. Much of what I say would need to be modified if applied to the whole of Australia. In the twelve months prior to September last I travelled over 7,500 miles in Queensland and visited 46 Baptist churches, about two thirds of our churches, excluding branch churches. To give the background of our Baptist work something will first be said about religious life in general.

The standard of living in Australia is very high, and most

⁶ The above sketch, necessarily brief, makes no mention of some other important Baptist educational work, e.g., Feller Institute in Quebec, Brandon College in Manitoba, Okanagan College in British Columbia.

in the cities work short hours. Even during the war there was comparatively little curtailment of luxury and leisure. However, as has been repeatedly seen in the history of civilisation, increase in material wealth is inimical to religion. The masses seem absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure to a greater extent than in England. Sport becomes an obsession, especially in the north, where great sporting events are organised on Sundays. These have a detrimental effect on attendance at church and Sunday school. Along with luxury, as always, goes much immorality which is a serious menace here. The State runs a lottery, and this Government sanction of gambling accentuates a serious moral evil. A tendency towards frivolity and irresponsibility often results, and makes for indifference to the spiritual message of the Gospel. Another factor which has an adverse effect on the work of the church is the great heat and high humidity of the summer. Those of us who remember the semi-torpor which Oxford's humid climate sometimes produced will understand the mental and spiritual lethargy which tempts many to relax completely when work is done. To attend church and give close attention to a discourse often requires a real effort which many will not make. Something of the mental stagnation which is seen in the countries of Southern Europe is found here.

Another important feature of the religious life is the strength of the Roman Catholic Church, which claims to number among its adherents twenty per cent. of the population. This church, owing to its efficient organisation and resolute policy exercises great influence over the Government and public life of the country, and uses it often to further sectarian ends.

This outline of religious conditions here may seem to point rather a gloomy picture; but this background is necessary to understand the peculiar difficulties with which we have to contend here. On the other hand, as there is no established church, the Church of England does not have the artificial prestige which allures many to it in England, and this gives what we call the "Free Churches" a higher standing in the eyes of the public than is often theirs in England.

Turning now to our Baptist churches the first feature to be noticed is that they show to a marked degree one of the main characteristics of the Baptist Church throughout the world—a zeal for evangelism. They are definitely evangelistic in outlook and purpose. The success of a minister is measured largely by the number of conversions and baptisms which he records. In the

main the doctrinal position is rigidly orthodox—of the type generally styled “fundamentalist.” Belief in verbal inspiration would be held by many, if not most, to be a necessary part of a sound faith. There is only one Open Membership Church in Queensland as far as I know. This emphasis on evangelism results in a church that is strong spiritually; but the “yard-stick” method of measuring the success of a minister and a church by the number of conversions and baptisms recorded is productive of a great source of weakness. In many churches the membership is predominantly German, and these seem to be influenced by the Lutheran procedure regarding Confirmation. So child baptism is prevalent in these and is generally followed by admission to church membership. A large proportion of the “converts” are too young really to grasp the significance of the step taken. Consequently many of the members have not experienced a real spiritual change and the foundation principle of the Baptist church—a regenerate church membership—is menaced. In a number of instances these juvenile members later lapse into serious sin and very difficult problems concerning church discipline arise. Close contact with the churches here impresses on me the vital importance of insisting upon a real experience of the Grace of God as a condition of church membership. This does not, of course, mean that only those who can recall the exact time and mode of their conversion should be eligible, but that the “fruit of the Spirit” should be manifest in the life. Nor is it implied that a “decision” to follow Christ taken by a child is not often a genuine response to the appeal of Christ, which should be encouraged by enrolment in a “Junior Church” or by some other means, provided it is not regarded as the equivalent of “conversion” in the full meaning of that word.

The strongly evangelical emphasis of our church here, as elsewhere, sometimes tends to produce indifference to, or suspicion of, scholarship. Consequently the standard of ministerial education is lower than in Britain. As a result there are comparatively few well-educated people in our churches. In the north especially, many classify Baptists among the “queer sects” such as Pentecostals. This makes some people who are concerned about their social position reluctant to attend a Baptist church. Young people who receive a secondary school education often find that our ministry does not appeal to them and they drift away in large numbers. Few holding leading positions in public, professional or business life are found in our churches. This has two consequences. It means that our impact and effective influence upon the life of the

community suffer, and also that our financial resources are very limited, with consequent limitation of our power to extend our witness. Also what is a vital Baptist principle—the right of private judgment in matters not essential to the Faith—is not always maintained as it should be.

The consequences of neglect of ministerial education here are a warning to those who attach little importance to it.

Of recent years there has been a marked improvement in this regard and this encourages us to hope that our church will attain the status which it enjoys in Britain. Owing largely to the vast extent of the State and our limited financial resources the Baptist witness is confined to a comparatively small part of it. The eastern coast is more than 1,500 miles long, but in the 1,100 miles of this north of Rockhamton there are two Baptist churches (exclusive of small branches belonging to one of these). The farthest west we have a Baptist church is at Warwick, about 100 miles from the coast; but the border is 600 miles beyond this; so only about one seventh of this area has our witness. Several Baptist churches have many outposts, some at large distances (even up to 60 miles) from the centre. Maintaining the work of these makes very severe demands upon the ministers and lay-workers. Through staying in the homes of many of our people in the country districts I have come to understand and admire the courage and self-sacrifice of many of our people. Only through their zealous devotion is our work maintained in many outlying districts. Most of our churches are small. We have only one church with over 300 members, and only three with over 200. Two thirds have less than 100. So after meeting their own liabilities they have little they can give for church extension. Generally speaking, however, our people are very generous in their contributions to the church. In this regard they compare favourably with those at home. The slow growth of our church in this state forces upon us the question which is being discussed amongst Baptists in Britain: "Is our independent system working efficiently or does it need modifying?" We ministers studied the report of the Polity Committee of the B.U. of Great Britain with great interest and have decided to give it further consideration with a view to framing definite proposals. I am convinced that whatever may be said about the working of the system in England, Independency will have to be radically modified here if we are effectively to evangelize the vast areas at present untouched by the Baptist witness. As a matter of fact our church here has already moved a long way towards Connexionalism. Instead of the method employed in England of grants being made by the Baptist Union

to independent churches we have a Home Mission and Church Extension Committee. This employs students and ministers and appoints them to churches which are under the auspices of the Committee. As these ministers are employed by the Committee they are under its control, not under the control of the local church. The Home Mission Committee is elected by the Council of the Baptist Union. So this means that a considerable number of our churches are controlled to a large extent by the Union. This system works well. Recently some churches which were formerly independent have asked to come under the control of the Home Mission Committee. Through its activities some churches have been saved from extinction, and several of what are now amongst our most flourishing churches, were established by it. Some ministers prefer to be under the control of the Committee rather than under that of a local church. Plans are being formed by the Committee to establish new churches in several important cities, which will be centres for work extending over a considerable area.

During my travels through this State I was impressed with its great possibilities. Much of its vast area is extremely fertile. It has such varieties of climate that most tropical and temperate crops and products could be grown in great quantities. There are rich deposits of most minerals which industry requires. Several great rivers and fine ports greatly facilitate the development of the country. This State could support in comfort at least five times its present population.

We Baptists should take steps now to make sure that we are prepared for the great future which awaits this State. It is vitally important that the large numbers which will be attracted here should be brought in contact with the evangelical message and spiritual fellowship which are characteristic of the Baptist Church. The problems and possibilities of this State are a challenge. The work makes severe demands but there is the satisfaction of feeling that one is building for a great future. Will any of those who read these words hear the call to "Come over and help us?"

T. C. WARRINER

THE MINISTER AND THE DENOMINATION

THIS paper is concerned to ventilate a difficulty, not to provide a solution. Every minister is constantly confronted by calls upon his time; he could usefully and justifiably fill up every hour of every day and still feel that he had left undone much which he ought to have done. Many calls come from the congregation to

which he ministers, many from the community of which that congregation is a part. Others come from the local Association, yet others from the nation-wide denominational organisations, the B.U. Council and the B.M.S. with their committees, and perhaps also the Free Church Federal Council. Not all can be accepted; how is a man to choose?

In attempting to elaborate the problem I leave out of account the man who is too lazy to be bothered—the sort of man whom Wheeler Robinson characterized as wandering around his garden at 10 a.m. in slippers, endeavouring to summon sufficient energy to attack next Sunday's preparation. Let us hope that that phenomenon will soon be extinct! Nor will I venture to say anything about the proper planning of one's time, though indeed most of us might well take warning from Chaucer's "Sergeant of the Law":

"No-wher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he nas."

There is also the man who might be described as the "honest isolationist." He reminds us that he is appointed to a specific congregation, from whom he receives his stipend and whose care is in itself a full-time job. He is concerned above all else to foster and to develop that single church. He is rarely seen at association meetings. He pleads another engagement to excuse his absence from the local fraternal. Rallies, etc., in the interests of the B.M.S. know him not. Others may carry the burden of such activities; he is a cobbler who will stick to his own last.

We all know and respect him, but is he not quite clearly mistaken? Does experience suggest that the church so served is the most progressive, the most alive? On the contrary! The Isolationist does not achieve his own avowed objective; Isolationism is as barren a policy in denominational as in international affairs. I have dim memories of a time in college when I was called upon to study the philosophy of Kant. I never really mastered the mysteries of "synthetic a priori propositions;" the elusive German thinker was too elusive for me, but one thing has remained as a guiding principle, albeit an ideal rather than an achievement, ever since: "So act that the principle of thine action might be of universal application." If that test be applied to the matter before us the inadequacy of Isolationism is at once manifest, for clearly if every minister allowed himself to be thus monopolised, there would be neither association, union, nor missionary society! Further, so far as these organisations are concerned, certain relevant

facts should be remembered. The minister himself was normally trained in a college provided by the denomination. The church to which he ministers worships in a building which in most cases was fostered in its origins by the association, was in effect provided by the denomination. The B.M.S. which bombards him with information and appeals is not something external to the local church; it IS the local church, working with others like itself, in the service of the Kingdom of God overseas. The relation of minister to local church is not, and never has been among us, a purely private relationship. One paragraph from E. A. Payne's "Fellowship of Believers" may be quoted here. He is describing Andrew Fuller's removal from Soham to Kettering: "The first soundings were made in 1779 and the discussions relating to the matter occupied three years. It never occurred to Fuller that this was a matter simply between himself and Kettering, or between Kettering and Soham. It concerned the Baptist churches in the neighbourhood, and the matter was repeatedly submitted to the leading ministers of the Association." Clearly, then, as long ago as 1779 there was at least the germ of the idea that a Baptist Minister was a Minister of the Denomination, and not simply of the local church. We have not made such rapid strides in the development of this idea as might have been expected, and that I suggest is more a weakness than a strength. Those who have witnessed the ordination of a young man to the Presbyterian ministry will have no doubt coveted, as I have done, a similar sense of the church among ourselves, expressing itself, among other ways, in the actual presence of every other minister in the Presbytery.

I venture to add one word regarding the Free Church Federal Council. Surely this body, still in its infancy, is the right instrument through which we ought to express ourselves on national issues, just as the local council is the instrument through which to work on local issues. To me at least, it seems beyond all argument that our tasks are of such dimensions that it would be sheer stupidity for any of us to attempt them singly, without reference to those many others who share in such large measure both our faith and our message. But it is equally obvious that the strength of the Federal Council resides in the support of the constituent denominations, which in turn very largely depends on the attitude of the ministers. If we really want an organisation which can speak for the Free Churches of Britain with an authority comparable to that exercised by the Episcopate then we must certainly find time to create and develop it.

But my hypothetic "honest isolationist," if he has been able to bear with me so far, may well be moved to retort: "If a man is going to plunge into all this then he is simply bound to neglect his own church." I have even heard it alleged that to spend time in these activities is a dishonest withholding of the service for which a man is paid. It is important, of course, that the local church should be educated to recognize that its minister is serving it when he is in Southampton Row, Gloucester Place, or Tavistock Square. My own experience makes me wonder how any man can sustain a fairly long ministry without the inspiration which comes to him from membership say, of the B.M.S. Committee, with its close contacts with those who have served in distant lands. Who can listen to the reports of newly-returned missionaries without a quickening of the pulse and an enlarged vision?—benefits which will surely be passed on to the congregation the following Sunday. These are imponderables which the isolationist necessarily misses, but they count enormously.

The problem remains, and it admits of no simple solution. But let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and let him at least weigh all the issues that are involved before he determines what his own answer shall be.

H. V. LARCOMBE

OUR JOB

ANY man who has spent thirty-five years in the ministry ought to have something to say to his brothers about the task in which he and they are engaged. I have, but it springs from my failures, not from my successes. What I now write is the outcome of looking back and seeing what I would have liked to be as well as do.

I conceive of our calling as threefold—Prophetic, Pastoral, Priestly.

We are called to be mouthpieces of God. Our first business is to proclaim the Word of the Lord. We make no claim to any exclusive rights: it would be silly to do so. Whether we like it or not God has a way of going outside the official college of prophets. He raises up whom He will and His choice is not always identical with that of the colleges and churches. But our only reason for being in the ministry is that we believe God has called us to serve Him in this way. Since we speak in God's name we should speak with authority. One knows the danger of dogmatism born of ignorance, and that it is not easy to steer a middle course between this and the hesitation born of fear. But we must speak with con-

viction if our message is to convince. I believe the only way to do this is to speak from first-hand knowledge and experience. We must so live with the great truths of the gospel, that with Paul we can speak of "my gospel." I recently worshipped at a little Methodist Chapel and sat under a self-educated working man, and the local circuit minister. It was the former who got across; he spoke very simply from personal experience of the great things the Lord had done for him and every word rang true. The latter appeared to develop a theme which had appealed to him and, so far as I was concerned, completely missed fire. The only inspiration I got was from the text! Our theme is God manifest in Christ, one of immeasurable wonder. We cannot make Him real to man unless first He is most real unto ourselves; out of our own fellowship with Christ will come power to lead others into a living fellowship of faith.

Thus we are called to be shepherds of the sheep. It is often here that our greatest failures lie. Something more is needed than systematic visitation. It is possible to be a faithful visitor without being a true shepherd. Our task is to get alongside our people. They should know us and we should know them in their homes; if domestic circumstances allow, it is a very good thing for them to know us in our homes. We should not be ignorant of their daily lives, the work they do, and the things in which they are interested; we should share in their joys and sorrows. They should be so sure of our friendship that they can share their troubles with us and confess their sins. We may not like the Roman Catholic Confessional, but Confession is often a necessity of spiritual health, and our people ought to be able to unburden themselves to us, because they are sure of our sympathy and love. One of the greatest Christians I have known was an old shepherd whom I taught to read when he was seventy years of age. He had the pastoral heart, each of his flock was an individual concern, he felt responsibility for every one. Perhaps some have a greater equipment than others to make good shepherds but all of us have some power in this direction if we realise the important place it should occupy in our Christian ministry.

I have so often repudiated the idea of a minister being a priest who through his office is qualified to do certain important things which are beyond the power of all outside the priesthood, that I have found it difficult to accept the fact that there is a vital sense in which we are called to the priestly office. When we have shorn off from the priestly idea all elements which we believe have no

rightful place in the Christian conception of the relations of God and man, there remains one function of the priest which we should accept as part of our calling. It does not separate us from our fellow Christians, it does not involve our making claims for ourselves which we do not also make for them. But the mere fact that the whole of our time is free for the work of Christian ministry should mean that we have a better chance of fulfilling this function than most others. The priest is one who stands before God and bears up to Him the needs of his people. I believe this to be one of our most important functions as ministers of Christ. This work of intercession links us very intimately to our pastoral duties. Only in so far as we know our people intimately can we pray for them intelligently.

I am writing on Whit-Monday. Yesterday I reminded myself and my people that the great quickening of Pentecost came to those who were waiting expectantly on God, and that every subsequent outpouring of the Spirit had begun in the same way. It would enrich and empower our ministry if we got into the habit of speaking to the living and present God about our people and their needs. It might do much more—prepare the way for that spiritual quickening which is the only hope of our world with its distracted counsels and sore divisions.

I end as I began: I do not write in the light of achievement but of failure, and in the hope that the experience of one who is nearing the end of his ministerial course may be some guide and help to those who are near the beginning of theirs.

E. MURRAY PAGE

BIBLE STUDY

FOR the first time in four centuries we are faced with a nation that does not know its Bible. Ignorance of Scripture is not confined to any one social class or age-group; it seems to be pretty well universal. It is also true that attendance at public worship is the exception rather than the rule with the majority of our population, but we may doubt whether those who are to be found regularly in our chapels are as well instructed as their grandparents were. It is a tragic fact that the Bible occupies a place in our religious life which is far less prominent than that which it had fifty or sixty years ago. Many of us can remember the rustle that ran through the congregation when the lessons (yes, lessons, not lesson) were announced, as the congregation found the place and followed the text, giving attention both with eye and ear. To-day the place of

one lesson is normally taken by a children's address in the morning, while one is left out altogether in the evening. Now it is quite right and proper that something should be given to the children. But how often is their attention called to the Bible? "Tell them a story" seems to be the universal maxim, and only a small proportion of the stories told can be related directly to any Biblical passage. Indeed, the experience of a pastorless church will suggest that there is a corpus of these stories, which are used by all and sundry. Occasions have been known when the tale of the little boy who sent in a bill to his mother has been told from the pulpit on several successive Sunday mornings. Let us give the children a text and tell them what it means, illustrating by a story if possible, but making the story subsidiary to the exposition. Children really do appreciate exposition, if it is presented in a form which appeals to them, and they will even take the address out of the preacher's mouth at times and insist on giving it themselves. Also it must not be forgotten that an appreciable number of the adult congregation get a good deal more from the "address" than they do from the "sermon."

"Expository preaching" has practically died out. It was said that people found it dull and uninspiring, difficult to follow and of little practical value in meeting the problems and conditions of daily life. But this is really a reflection on the expositor, not on the method. No one who knows and loves his Bible would for an instant admit that it does not minister to the everyday needs of the common man. There are many still living who can recall the magic of Maclaren's sermons. He always took a text and really *expounded* it. In his hands it fell to pieces into its component parts, and the various elements in the truth it contained were simply and clearly laid before the congregation. Maclaren was a great scholar, but his learning was never obtruded; his hearers and his readers were simply conscious of a sureness in the handling of his material which gave them confidence in what he had to say. Even the extreme form of expository preaching was attractive in the right hands. The late J. R. Wood used to take his morning congregations steadily through book after book of the Bible, and when Charles Booth conducted his census of public worship it was discovered that Upper Holloway Baptist Church was the best attended in North London.

Now nobody thought of J. R. Wood as a scholar in the sense that Maclaren was one. But he was a regular and faithful student, a hard worker with a systematic mind. A portion of every day was devoted to study, and he lived to a time-table. To-day we are

apt to be busy with many things, but none of them should be allowed to oust our regular Bible study. This does not merely mean looking up the text for the following Sunday and considering it in the general light of the passage in which it occurs. That is desirable, even essential, but if the Bible is to take its due place in preaching, a good deal more than this is necessary. There should be continuous study of some book or series of books. From time to time a text will reveal itself as a possible basis for a sermon, arousing not only interest, but challenging further thought. Lines of development may show themselves, and may be noted down. Then the matter will be put into cold storage, and await the time when it has matured to the point when it must come out in the pulpit. Ministers (especially young ministers!) have been known to lament the difficulty of finding two new subjects every Sunday, but regular Bible study will result in a store of material ready to hand, and the weekly problem is not to find something new to the preacher, but to choose between a number of possibilities. A conscientious Bible student will probably amass quite a number of good sermons which he will never use, because he always has at hand one that is better than any of them.

But what about the actual process of study? Obviously the ideal is to be free from all translations. The minister who can give an hour a day to soaking himself in the Greek text of the New Testament, or in the Hebrew of the Psalmists and Prophets, will never be without something of profound value to offer to his congregation in worship. The best commentaries and other books will be within his reach, and he will know how to use them, taking them as aids and supports, not as authorities. For his only real authority will be the Holy Spirit speaking to him direct through the ancient language.

One of the tragedies of the church to-day lies in the fact that linguistic studies are losing their place in the training of men for the ministry. Other subjects tend to crowd them out, and there is no doubt that for most people they are the most difficult among all the branches of a theological course. The result is that a large proportion of ministers have to take their Bible at second hand. This means even more strenuous effort in the task of Bible study. Translations have to be compared and their relative values determined—an extremely difficult task if it has to be done solely by intuition. Commentaries have to be tested against one another, the relative stress on different points has to be noted, disagreements have to be reconciled. To err is human, and the greatest of scholars

may (though *very rarely*) make a slip which a novice might detect. The greater the commentary or other book, the harder it becomes to get its full value, unless the author be followed in all his mental processes. Greek and Hebrew may be difficult, but the lack of them will impose a far more rigorous discipline on a serious student of the Bible. Yet it must be undertaken if the Bible is to become again a living force in our church life.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to add the fundamental prescription. All study of the Bible is worthless unless it be carried on in prayer. This does not mean formal speech or even formal meditation, but the spirit and atmosphere in which God is present. We all remember George Herbert's homely lines, and they apply at least as much to the drudgery of study as to the sweeping of rooms.

In conclusion one more remark may be made. The genuine Bible student may never, probably will never, become a popular preacher, drawing crowds to listen to sensational utterances. But he will become a church builder, winning people through the power inherent in the Word of God, and helping them to grow into strong and effective Christians. That, more than anything else, is what we need to-day. If we can bring the Bible back to our pulpits and into the life of our churches, we shall have made no small advance to the end which we have in view, the coming on earth of our Lord's kingdom.

T. H. ROBINSON

AS MAN TO MAN

WE are facing a crisis in finance, although there is no immediate cause for anxiety—in fact we have ventured upon four extra pages in this issue, partly in order to discuss matters with our members. Printing charges have so increased that the cost of a 28-page Magazine, printing and circulation, amounts to £45. This means 7½d. per copy, per quarter—just absorbing the 2s. 6d. annual subscription. This cost would be considerably more, were not all service to the Fellowship rendered *con amore*.

The only other revenue comes from advertisements and the Annual Meeting offering, amounting in all to some £30. Out of this has to be provided the expenses of the Annual Meeting, the cost of running the Library, apart from the purchase of books, an increasing amount as, under the supervision of Westlake, the Library is more widely used. Then there is the heavy postage involved in an endeavour to maintain some modicum of personal interest in our members; the organisation of summer Schools and

other incidentals. In fact, the manifold activities of our Fellowship are known only to a few, and they continually increase.

One item of expenditure should be unnecessary; the cost of applying for arrears of subscriptions. Just now we have to send to 350 men who have not paid for 1946.

The alternatives for dealing with the situation are—(a) increasing the annual subscription, or (b) decreasing the issue of the Magazine from four to three a year: these alternatives will be considered by the Committee.

Personally, we prefer that the subscription remain at 2s 6d. and be regarded as a minimum, and then leave the result to the initiative of our members. The 1947 subscriptions will soon be due, and, when paying to your local Correspondent or remitting to the Treasurer, we hope most of our brethren will make a small voluntary increase.

Meanwhile, we do urge those in arrears to save us the further trouble and expense of repeated applications.

We add that, after sending small love tokens to brethren in their time of need, our Benevolent Fund is completely exhausted.

W. CHAS. JOHNSON, *Treasurer*

SYDNEY G. MORRIS, *Membership Secretary*

A GRACIOUS GIFT

Mr. Stanley Pratt has included amongst gifts made In Memory of his Father, the sum of fifty pounds for our Fellowship. We are sincerely and deeply grateful for this generous gesture which would surely have gladdened the heart of the late Rev. W. H. Pratt, who laboured so long and so faithfully for our B.M.F.

NOTES FROM WALES

Two Baptist Assemblies have recently been held in Wales, the English Assembly of the Baptist Union of Wales at Milford Haven, and the Welsh Assembly at Fishguard. A careful and impressive diagnosis of the present moral situation was given at the former by the President, the Rev. J. T. Jones, whereas the President of the Welsh Union, the Rev. Jubilee Young chose *Preaching* as the subject of his presidential oration. This was a sustained and eloquent plea for a new recognition by laymen and preachers of the centrality and inevitability of preaching in our public worship.

At the Assemblies themselves, the preaching, speaking generally, was of a high standard and there was a welcome return

of the note of urgency and seriousness, together with a deeper theological content.

The two colleges in Wales were able to continue their work, in spite of reduced numbers, throughout the war years. One feature of that period continues to offer serious concern, viz.: the enjoyment by many theological students of military exemption without a public examination of convictions. This resulted in a noticeable drop in the quality of our candidates and the men were involved in a false moral situation without having the necessary spiritual maturity to recognize its peril and overcome it. With the return of men from the Forces (some of whom were converted while serving and entered upon their ministerial career in the Services), we anticipate a steady improvement both in quality and in quantity. To be convinced of the truth and urgency of the Christian gospel under the conditions which prevailed at Dunkirk and at Arnhem, together with other experiences, should augur well for the resulting ministry.

There have been further examples of men leaving the Baptist ministry for secular appointments, partly from economic pressure, and certainly from spiritual incapacity to stand the strain and monotony of lack of recognition within the ministry. There is, also, a growing conviction that the ministry should embrace a wider sphere and function than that of the pastoral office, and some have responded to the challenge of this.

Returning chaplains have had some striking comments to make upon the responsibility of the church in the task of reconstruction, and the East Glamorgan English Association was particularly fortunate to secure from the Rev. A. F. Harries, of Coedpenmaen, Pontypridd, one of his rare but outstandingly able declarations on this matter.

EMLYN DAVIES