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SYNCRETISM

PERHAPS the writer of this article may be allowed, in self-defence, to state that he has been asked to contribute this account of the nature of syncretism. It is always difficult to know exactly what is in the mind of an enquirer with whom discussion has not been possible. However, the dictionary definition may serve as a useful starting-point: " Syncretism—the attempt to sink differences and effect union between sects and philosophic schools ". The basic idea implied in the word is the combining together of ideas and practices derived from widely separated religious, philosophical and cultural circles. Whether one regards this as good or bad will depend upon one's philosophy of history and how one evaluates religion in its many and varied forms of expression. If one regards Elijah as the representative of the true worship of Yahweh, then any attempt to combine this with baal worship will be regarded as an unhealthy syncretism destructive of the true faith. For the stricter Judaism of the post-exilic period, any attempt to reconcile Jewish and Hellenistic ideas and practices was regarded as anathema. On the other hand, Philo of Alexandria evidently thought that Jewish religion and Greek philosophy could be united in a fruitful synthesis or syncretism.

From the very beginning of our faith, Christians have never been able to avoid the problem of interpreting the gospel in forms of contemporary culture and thinking. When does this become syncretism and is it good or bad? Presumably Christians would condemn it when such a combination of Christian and alien ideas becomes fatal to what Christians regard as the essential nature of the gospel. Yet the problem is very complex as any student of early Christian doctrine and history knows. Was Christianity distorted, for example, when it came into active encounter with the Graeco-Roman world? Harnack would have said Yes. The Hellenising of the gospel perverted Christian truth and transformed it into a series of metaphysical affirmations of somewhat dubious validity. On the other hand, Dr. G. L. Prestige in *God in Patristic Thought*, confidently declares: " I do not believe that the importation of Hellenic rationalism to expound and explain the facts of Christian history was illegitimate " (p. xiii). How far was the doctrine of the Trinity a philosophical distortion of the Christian understanding of God given in historic and revelatory events, or how far were Greek terms stamped with a Christian meaning which preserved the basic nature of the gospel? I agree with Dr. Prestige in answering, " Very far ", to the second half of this question.

Certain modern examples come to mind also. When Schleiermacher, in the eighteenth century, wrote his Addresses on Religion to its cultured despisers, was he furthering the cause of the gospel by expressing it in terms relevant to men of the Enlightenment and of the Romantic movement or was he the villain of the piece, as Barth and Brunner maintain, who led Protestantism seriously astray?

Is he another case of syncretism in the bad sense, trying to combine the incompatible? The same sort of question may be asked of a man like Paul Tillich. Is he, as some have claimed, the Aquinas of the twentieth century, offering to modern man a summa of Christian truth, subduing to Christian purposes all the varied streams of modern philosophical and theological thought from existentialism to depth psychology? Or is he a modern gnostic dissolving the historic realities of the divine redemptive acts into the play of symbols? Is he the twentieth century champion of the authentic gospel or a purveyor of a syncretism in which the nature of the gospel is transformed beyond recognition?

To answer questions of this kind, certain basic matters have to be settled. First, what constitutes the authentic gospel? Second, how far can it be expressed in contemporary cultural forms without distortion? The risk of this latter consequence has always to be taken, even if the results have sometimes been unfortunate and possibly disastrous. Christianity can never contract out of its cultural setting, even when it reacts strongly against it. Syncretism is only an object of suspicion if one starts with the assumption that God has revealed Himself once for all in a manner decisive for the whole of humanity. A faith such as Christianity, which declares that by None other Name can man be saved, must inevitably look with suspicion upon all attempts to place its Lord on the same level as the lords many and the gods many of different religious and cultural contexts.

There are today, however, and always have been, those who reject this exclusive claim of Christianity and look for a synthesis of the various spiritual insights and truths believed to be present in all the great religions. No less a person than Arnold Toynbee, in *An Historian looks at Religion*, seems to be offering us a synthesis of Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism. While he has repudiated the suggestion that he is in favour of an artificial syncretism which is only a mechanical combination of incompatible religious elements, it is clear that it is a kind of syncretism, albeit of a refined and superior kind. Continues Toynbee: " The missions of the higher religions are not competitive; they are complementary. We can believe in our own religion without having to feel that it is the sole repository of the truth " (p. 298). Dr. Radhakrishnan of India has made the same point, contending that Hinduism is catholic enough to embrace the truth of all religions without asserting the exclusive superiority of any.

It is not my purpose in this brief article to attempt a Christian answer to this kind of syncretism. I have been asked simply to bring out the meaning of this term. Suffice it to say that it seems to me unlikely that Christianity can survive in a recognisable form if it abandons the exclusive nature of its claim for Christ. This does not necessarily mean a blanket denial of any truth or value in the non-Christian religions nor does it involve the negative judgment associated with the names of Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer. Dr. H. H.

Farmer's Gifford lectures *Revelation and Religion* is a fine example of a sensitive and sympathetic appreciation of all the varied expressions of the religious spirit of man, together with an unfaltering grasp of the uniqueness of the Incarnation. The Christian, however, can never allow his syncretism to reach a point where he cannot declare that God has spoken unto us in these latter days in His Son in a manner without parallel before or since.

R. F. ALDWINCKLE.

Suggested reading: *An Historian looks at Religion.* A. Toynbee. O.U.P. 21s. *Revelation and Religion.* H. H. Farmer. Nisbet. 17s. 6d. *The Meeting of Love and Knowledge.* M. C. D'Arcy. Allen & Unwin. 12s. 6d.

BAPTIST CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

AS I look at the Baptist churches in this land I am repeatedly appalled and sometimes ashamed that such buildings are still used as centres for Christian worship and evangelism. It may be that I am super-critical because of my direct link with and, therefore, great interest in Architecture, but I receive a very sympathetic hearing within our denomination when I begin to criticise some of them. The fact is many people are tired of buildings that were designed according to the standards and aesthetic ideals of a previous century. And I also think that the unbelieving public who visit our churches are influenced by them too, and unconsciously think that our religion is outmoded as well. We cling to our old buildings as if they were treasures from a past age when many of them are simply a hindrance to the work of God in worship and evangelism, apart from being a drain upon the pockets and patience of our young Church members. I would like to see the day when a congregation, tired of their building and recognising its faults, pulled it down and built another even it it cost them everything!

Having said all this I recognise that there are some delightful buildings in use today which have been designed well, with a due regard both to members and to visitors. But unfortunately they are pitifully few.

What happens, however, when a congregation does want to build? What can it offer to an architect saying, " This is what we think is a typical Baptist Church "? The designs and styles are legion. Every century has produced its quota of buildings for worship and the Baptists have not been far behind in producing something different at the turn of each century. It may be helpful to consider the differing types and examine them each in turn to see if they really express what we as non-conformists believe. For simplicity I divide them into three, the Puritan meeting house, the Victorian compromise and the twentieth century nondescript.

The Puritan meeting houses were mostly built in the seventeenth century and just after. Unfortunately all too few of these delightful buildings remain, although they can still be found in market towns,

gracing the locality with their dignified appearance. Many do not look like religious buildings at all and resemble civic buildings. Their interiors are rectangular, often with a gallery on three sides, a central pulpit and baptistry, with the communion table on the main floor level within the body of the pews. They mostly lack the unattractive decoration which crept in at the beginning of the Victorian era. They are bright, simple and yet noble, the central table and pulpit expressing the centrality of the Lord's Supper and the preaching of the Word of God. This planning did not come by chance. It came originally from Calvin, as H. L. Short indicated in a talk on the third programme in 1955. "Calvin was a bitter opponent of the Catholic Mass; in its place he put what he and the puritans called the Lord's Supper. It was celebrated, not at an altar at the far end of a chancel, but at a table in the midst of the congregation. Many Calvinists actually sat at the table for the Lord's Supper. This meant a complete rearrangement of the furniture of a church. In countries where Calvinism became the established religion, the medieval church buildings were taken over and remodelled inside. A notable example of this is the great church at Amsterdam, where the Kings and Queens of Holland are crowned. It is a late medieval building as big as a cathedral, but at the Reformation the chancel was screened off and no longer used for services—only the nave was used for worship. Halfway down one side of it, against a pillar, stands a high, elaborately carved pulpit with the seats facing it from east, west and north. A third of the people sit, therefore, with their backs to the place of the former altar. On Communion Sundays a great table is set the length of the nave and at it the people sit for Communion." He went on to say that when the Puritans were in the ascendant in the Church of England, the same kind of thing was done in many of our English churches and cathedrals. "In the reign of King Edward VI, Bishop Ridley of London, who later died at the stake for his Protestant faith, ordered communion tables to be set up in the midst of the Churches of his diocese and the altars to be destroyed. . . . But the Puritans were ejected from the Church of England in 1662. By the Toleration Act of 1689 they were allowed to build meeting houses for their worship."

The second group, the Victorian compromise marked a retrograde step in non-conformist architecture and unfortunately its vogue involved the destroying of many of the meeting houses. Possibly the majority of our Baptist churches in use today belong to this group. The plan remained fundamentally the same with the central pulpit and table; but instead of the simple classical elevation and decoration of the meeting house, there was applied the medieval or Gothic treatment. Every opening and window was spanned by a stone or terracotta arch. The square meeting house with its flat ceiling gave place to a building with a large towering roof truss which made the void above the congregation uncommonly high and very difficult to heat. I remember a Congregational church which was

built in this way, I used to attend it as a small boy and could never understand why clusters of gas jets used to burn high up in the roof space. I later found out that it was to warm the roof space and so avoid down draughts.

This association of the Gothic style and the free, open plan of the non-conformist meeting house was the greatest mistake that architects and builders ever made in the history of free church architecture. The two do not blend together.

It has been said that it was due largely to emotional and intellectual factors, for it was considered that the Gothic style with its associations with the parish church lent itself more easily to reverence in worship. Certainly the clear cut difference between the Anglican church and the chapel of the Puritan was diminished. As H. L. Short, in his talk on this subject said, this change " was in accordance with the liturgical, devotional ideas which were gaining ground among the non-conformists. The old meeting house was being despised ".

The churches of the last group, the twentieth century nondescript, have no distinguishing feature by which we can point them out. They appear to be due to the variety of the theological points of view held by Baptists. There is no set pattern or plan. Architects who have been loath to repeat the error of the Victorians have had little to guide them except the likes and dislikes of the local church. The plans vary from the meeting house to almost the medieval cathedral. The treatment of the elevations, both externally and internally, betray the influence of men who consider that the parish church is the only true type of church building, and that concrete and glass are the only building materials available. Pulpits can be found on the side or in the centre, and the communion table may be hidden away in an imitation chancel. Many of these experiments have extremely good features which can be commended to our congregations, but as there is no unifying link in the architectural world of the Baptist denomination these remain isolated and are very rarely repeated. Most of these designs have been born of individual architects who have had to gather as much information from various sources as they themselves could. Hence much valuable information which could have been gained from other churches has never been discovered till too late.

It is not possible here to enter into a long and detailed discussion of what a Baptist church should look like and where each piece of the furniture should be placed, but in my view the old Puritan meeting house pattern is more an expression of our evangelical belief than anything else. It was the conviction I tried to express in the design of Spurgeon's College chapel.

One last word about the architects invited to design our buildings. Let us try to assist them. Many know little of our worship and our ways and will welcome enlightenment. For example, the architect of a church in Surrey had little idea of what went on in a Baptist church so he attended the services to find out and, as a result,

designed a most beautiful meeting house. The Baptist Union has published a booklet to assist churches contemplating the erection of a church building, but it is all too inadequate. I would like to see a panel of experts get together and compile a list of practical suggestions which could be added to this present publication. The addition of sketches and photographs of some traditional Baptist meeting houses would be most valuable to an architect. Often he is ignorant of such small matters, for instance, as the depth of a baptistry, the height of a pulpit and the reasonable proportions of the pulpit rest. All such necessary details could be suggested. Many of our churches are suffering today because of the blunders made in the past through lack of vital information. This dearth of instruction is not just a local phenomenon, enquiries about Baptist church design come also from overseas.

The Rev. Raymond Collier of Texas, one of the " Venturers " who visited our land this spring, told me that the Southern Convention of Baptists have a central information department that will guide a congregation through all stages of their building programme. An expert can be sent direct to the church to advise the members how to approach certain stages of their scheme. He can offer plans which will help their chosen architect and assist him where he needs direction. We are not in the strong position of our American brethren, but we could go a long way to make up where we lack. Even one committee or one full time architectural adviser to the whole Union would be kept extremely busy. Much information could be gained from overseas and from churches which are blessed with excellent premises, and this could be made available through a central channel. We have our Youth Department, etc., why not an " Architectural Department " or " Building Bureau "?

May these thoughts, poorly expressed perhaps, turn attention to the rich heritage which is ours in the Puritan meeting house, and stir up action in higher circles to implement this plea for a centralised pool of information for our brethren seeking to redesign and construct new churches.

C. M. MEASDAY.

BUILDING A NEW CHURCH AND MANSE

IT is commonly believed that a church on a new housing estate means hard work and difficulties. Well it does, of course. But so, I imagine, does any other church. The hard work and difficulties are simply of a different kind in a new area—and, to be honest, they are often much better than the kind to be encountered in an " established " church. The sense of freedom is refreshing and the evident worth-whileness of it all is invigorating. Growing-pains are probably more bearable than stiff joints!

No two churches I have yet come across have been the same; and the circumstances attending the building of a new one vary so

greatly that nothing more than general considerations can be treated here. The people you have to do with, the money available, the size and shape of your land, the neighbourhood and the sponsoring body all have an important influence on the shape of things to come. In our own particular case the money came from the sale of a down-town church, the site was allocated by the local authority on a Council house estate, the surviving remnant of the old church sponsored the new project and we were, I believe, fortunate in the people with whom we had to deal.

What has our experience taught us? One thing is the value of having the right advisers from the beginning and of doing the job properly. This means having the design done by an architect and the quantity surveying done by a quantity surveyor. It also means spending some money, of course; but I am convinced that the alternatives are false economies. An experienced and authoritative clerk of works comes under this heading, too. These men have been trained for their job and, besides knowing what they are doing, they assume responsibility for seeing the whole project through from the beginning to the end of the maintenance period. Between them, for example, they see that you do not pay for work done until it has been done to their satisfaction. They earn their money.

It is natural, perhaps, to embark on a venture of this kind with too many preconceived ideas. You like a certain style, or want the vestry to be in a particular relation to the church, or you may have seen a bright idea in somebody else's new church and wish to incorporate it into your own. So you lay these pet notions before the architect and say, " We want this and one of those and that done in a nice cream "; while he, gentleman that he is, heaves a silent sigh and thinks hard thoughts about you trying to do his job for him. What he would very much prefer is for you to tell him in what ways you are going to use this building, and then leave him to produce a sketch plan for your approval. You are likely to find that he, too, has some good ideas and that they probably suit your purpose far better, and fit more snugly into the whole scheme and into the neighbourhood. You will have hard thinking enough to do in providing him with his data. All too soon the time comes when it is too late to change your mind about how much cupboard space the Sunday school will use, where you will keep the step-ladder or whether to have a deaf aid. Give him the information he asks for; it is **his** responsibility to design a building to meet your needs.

This is not to say that you will retire from the active scene until summoned, to be told what you're going to get! You will be consulted, probably *ad nauseam*, hundreds of bits of paper will be scribbled or doodled on, only to be scrapped; and it is during this period that you will need to be strong, both in endurance and in determination. For while your architect may be a gentleman, he will also be human. He will be loath to abandon some cunning little detail simply because you won't have enough storage space and may try

to convince you that you won't really need it anyway. But, with your experience, there are some things you know better than he; so if you **must** have economical heating and don't seem to be getting it, shout—and go on shouting for it until you do. You will have to pay for it if you don't!

Yet there will have to be compromises, because your ambitious quart of big schemes is not likely to come out of the pint pot of your budget. Here, then, it is important that you should be clear on the question of priorities, and it is not at all obvious where these lie. For not only must you be able, say, to weigh the value of this extra space against that useful fitting; you will have to set future maintenance and repair costs against the value of that space—and even consider whether your money is not better spent to achieve the psychological effect of a good line and pleasing decoration than something larger but merely utilitarian. The architect will be full of ideas for spending your money, but you must be satisfied that what he plans provides for what you need most.

When economies are necessary, as they must almost always be when this stage is reached, it is often wiser to make a straight choice between alternatives than to accept a general scaling down of the whole scheme. Such wholesale compromise might well result in a church or manse in which you are frustrated at every turn, instead of being able to do at least some things as you had hoped.

All this takes a long time and a great deal of work, and you will be deeply involved. But at last the time comes when the Bill of Quantities goes out to contractors for tender. Unless there is a special reason, like having a builder in the church who will do it for half price, be advised by the architect if he is local and knows the contractors concerned. There is usually a clause in the accompanying letter to the effect that you will not be bound in any way to accept the lowest or any other tender. One may build cheaply because he does not build well—though you would not, of course, have invited a tender from someone you were not prepared to consider. Yet such a factor might well influence your choice between two close tenders. Or, if you are hiring rooms until your own premises are ready, the difference between one contractor's promise of six months and another's of twelve months might make the first cheaper, even though his tender is a little higher. A penalty clause in the contract will encourage him to keep up to schedule.

The contract signed, site works begin (all things being equal!) on an agreed date, and you soon realise that your worries have only just begun. You might have thought that all but a few decisions had been made, but as the building puts on weight you will steadily lose it yourself—and you might be in bed for the opening because you haven't been able to go before! But that is still months ahead and in the meantime it is necessary that you or someone should be on hand to make snap decisions at any time. The electrician will

want to know at a moment's notice whether you want a switch here or there—and one day it will make all the difference to the operator of the film-strip projector which you choose. Or you will suddenly be asked if the lock on the vestry door should have the same key as the kitchen.

You will become a familiar daily visitor to the site and may get the nickname " spare clerk of works "; but you will find the wisdom of having the services of a clerk of works who knows his job, whose word is law and whose favourite phrase is, " Rip it up ". To know that faulty materials and workmanship will be spotted by someone who knows all the tricks of the trade undermines any doubts you may have about getting value for your money.

So things go on over the months and it is gratifying to see what was at first an incredibly small patch of ground interlaced with footings grow up into a building. This it appears to do in a series of jerks; nothing much seems to happen for a few weeks and then suddenly it is transformed—the main framework goes up overnight or the roof goes on. Slowly at first, but accelerating all the while, the opening day comes nearer. One big problem on the way, getting more acute as time goes by, is the question of Sunday work. You would do well to have this understood when inviting tenders and then written into the contract, for Sunday working is a problem for the church and the lack of it is a problem for the builder who wants to keep his men.

Quite early on (say a year before the opening) you must start thinking of furnishings. If your new church is modern in design and decoration you will not be very interested in the stock productions, and it is worth knowing that leading manufacturers of modern furniture would not be uninterested in an order of the size you would place. Their experts would be at your disposal and they would probably offer you a contract price.

Many ministers are severely handicapped in their work by an inadequate manse; so if a new one is to be built it is worth giving considerable thought to its design. There will be successive ministers, so don't prevent the future church from inviting a man with three teenage children because the manse was originally designed for a childless couple. In addition to housing the family there will be people to entertain, both for meals and overnight; and the minister will need a study, which must not be too small—for it is difficult to think big thoughts in a cramped space, and his wife will be grateful if he can receive callers there. This all indicates generous proportions; yet, stipends being what they are, it must be an economical house to live in and maintain. How many fires must be lit each day? Could one do the work of two? Since ministers have here no abiding city there must be plenty of storage space, where he can keep such things as the gas stove he had to buy for himself in the last church and may need again in the next one but doesn't now. Curtain

tracks should be made a permanent fixture . . . and so we could go on. But the main principle remains—think how it is going to be used, remembering that it is not just a house but a minister's house, and then let it be designed to fulfil this purpose.

Your energetic and thoughtful participation at every stage will be amply repaid in the future, but it will be with great relief that you turn from the erection of buildings to devote your full attention again to the edifying of the church.

R. P. TAYLOR.

CITY AND CHURCH CO-OPERATE IN YOUTH WORK

SINCE I have now completed three years at Bilborough, it is possibly a good time to try to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the unique situation in which I find myself. Bilborough is a large post-war housing estate just two miles from the centre of Nottingham, with the largest percentage of teenagers of any area in the city. From the beginning Youth Work had been particularly difficult, and had presented the City Council with one problem after another. It was, however, still surprising, that they agreed to the appointment of a parson, who would in their eyes be a Youth Club Leader, but who would also be responsible for the founding of a local Baptist Church. They agreed to pay half the salary, and in October, 1956, the appointment was made, with the help of the Home Work Fund and the Nottinghamshire County Baptist Union. Perhaps I ought to say that my position was balanced on the Anglican side by the appointment of an Anglican layman, who would also work as a Youth Club Leader in Bilborough, and whose salary would be found in a similar way to my own. Unfortunately, this man only stayed for one year, leaving to find his comfort in the arms of Rome! A part-time appointment only was made in his place, but this has not led to the slightest antagonism on the part of our Anglican brethren. Indeed, one of the happiest aspects of the work in Bilborough, is the excellent co-operation which exists between the Anglican Church and our own.

But what, you might ask, did the City Education Committee expect me to do? My task was to run an open Youth Club (the Roman Catholics have kept careful watch to see that it is really open) with a membership of at least one hundred, for five nights a week. Fortunately, they did not expect miracles, and were quite willing for me to reach this position in easy stages. I inherited an excellent small Club, which had been founded by two Baptists, and had met fortnightly during the winter months, for the previous three years. This Club provided me with a solid nucleus of members, some of whom are still members of the Club today. Our Club was situated in a notoriously tough area for Youth work, and it is a fact that the other two open clubs in our district have both been closed down on

several occasions and completely reorganised, with changes of leadership, because of hooliganism. It was, therefore, extremely fortunate for us, that two policemen were led to attach themselves to our Club, and their presence undoubtedly helped to establish the very high standard of behaviour, which has prevailed from the earliest days. Not, I must hasten to add, that they ever acted in the Club in their official capacity, but they were both born Youth leaders, and are still doing excellent work in their respective spheres of football and music.

You will hardly need me to tell you that the biggest problem in Youth Work is to find suitable leaders, and it is in this sphere that we have been particularly fortunate. We have nine men and six women, who give generously of their time and talents, and who are eminently suited to the task to which God has called them. This is the more surprising when one remembers that we have a B.B. Company with ten officers, a G.L.B. Company with nine officers, a closed Youth Club, a Junior Girls' Club, and a Youth Fellowship, all running in the same church. Indeed, out of a total church membership of one hundred and nine, we have no less than forty who spend at least one evening per week engaged in Youth Work. Consequently, we are now in a position to open the Club on five evenings per week, and have a membership of approximately one hundred and seventy-five, aged from fourteen to twenty-one years.

Our winter programme is as follows:—

Monday	Badminton and Football Training.
Tuesday	Boys only. Table Tennis, Billiards, Darts, etc., Band Practice.
Wednesday	Girls only. Table Tennis, Netball Training, etc.
Thursday	Dancing (Rock 'n' Roll type).
Friday	Badminton.
Saturday	Football (two teams) and Netball.

In the summer, Tennis and Cricket are added to the above list.

Since we run in close conjunction with the local Evening Institute, which is held in the same school campus, we make no provision for educational pursuits such as Woodwork, Pottery, Needlework, Cookery, etc.

What then are the advantages of this situation? They depend of course whether you look at them with the eyes of the City Council, or the local church—but in both cases, it is true to say, that financial considerations loom large. The city is, I think, pleased with its side of the bargain, in that it is getting the services of a Youth Leader for half the normal cost. What is even more important, is that it is getting the services of the voluntary workers, since it has been proved that a parson Youth Club Leader is in a much stronger position to recruit volunteers. Incidentally, the city provides the premises (a local school), and makes generous grants towards equipment. From the church side, I hope that they too are pleased, since they have been able to " enjoy "(?) the services of a trained minister for half the

cost. Since I have been helped by such an able body of assistants, it cannot be argued that my Youth work has led to neglect of my pastoral work, and the facts themselves give the lie to this. The Church was founded in April, 1957, with forty-seven foundation members, and the membership now stands at one hundred and nine. There have been thirty-eight Baptisms (very few of these young people), attendance at the evening service has averaged two hundred and the offerings £13 10s. 0d. for the first seven months of this year. In no sense would it be true to say that the work of the Church has suffered, as a result of this novel appointment.

But probably what you really want to know, are my own personal feelings on this matter. I must confess that I have found the past three years immensely thrilling and tremendously satisfying. I have never been happy with a narrow conception of the ministry, and have always believed that one must minister to the bodily, as well as the spiritual needs of men. I have also felt that much of our Church Youth work is engaged in making good young people better, instead of trying to help those who desperately need help. Too much of our Youth work is done solely to fill the empty pews, and with such an attitude I have little patience. Of course it pleases me to see young people coming to church, and joining its membership through Baptism, but I do not assess the value of our Youth work via such media. I am convinced that much of our best Youth work has been done with young people who are as yet far from the doors of our chapel, but not, I believe, from the arms of Christ. In our open Youth Club we aim to reach those who scorn the B.B., the G.L.B. and all the usual Church Youth activities. Our set-up forbids the formal intrusion of religion into the Club, but the young people know that the local Baptist parson is their leader, and that the helpers are Christian men and women. Surely the best way of commending Christ, is by the lives we live, and not by the words which we speak.

On more specific matters, the following advantages are worthy of mention. I am sure that my fellow ministers will understand the feeling of independence from the local church which has been mine, due to the financial help which comes direct to me from the City. The Youth Club is governed by a Management Committee appointed by the City, and it has been clearly laid down from the beginning, that matters concerning the Youth Club cannot be discussed by the church. Nevertheless, there is a strong Baptist element on the Management Committee which guards against the opposite danger. I find it quite impossible to speak too highly of the Director of Education, the Assistant Director and the City Youth Officers for all the consistent help which they have given. They have been the best of employers, and any criticism they have given has always been constructive, and never unkind. I can assure you that some Baptist Diaconates could learn much from these people. Again, my position as a City Youth Club Leader has undoubtedly made it

easier for me to visit the local schools, and be received into their manifold activities. Also I am certain that it has been useful to be known in the area, not only as a Parson, but also as a Youth Club Leader—it has given me a useful additional string to my bow, when I have been standing on the doorstep.

You will notice that I have said nothing about the disadvantages in the situation; this is because I can honestly say that I have not found any. Perhaps they will appear in the future, but certainly they have not yet obtruded their ugly heads. You may think that it has been hard work trying to do two jobs, but I can quickly assure you that I have worked no harder (and possibly a little less hard) than any other Baptist Minister who is trying to do his work to the best of his ability.

R. J. HAMPER.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM UNDER FIRE

I have been given opportunity to reply to the adverse comments on my chapter in the volume *Christian Baptism* made by Principal Kevan in his recent review-article. Those who read the " alternative " review offered by Principal Russell may well feel that the two commentators could profitably be left to argue things out between them, without benefit of intervention from me. Nevertheless, it may contribute to clarification if I use the opportunity so kindly given. Dr. Beasley-Murray described my earlier work on sacramental theology as " early rains ", and expressed the hope that these presaged " the appearance of latter rains also ". It seems I have unwittingly produced a cloud-burst that has caused Mr. Kevan to reach for his umbrella! If so, I am the more anxious that what follows here should feel like gentle dew.

That my interpretations and theological restatement may be false is indubitably a fact. But this is not quite the issue. The reviewer is not concerned to offer arguments that may be refuted. Space limits him to " observations "—and naturally so. I may then be excused from attempting to present again the reasons for the views I have advanced. Those who read the whole volume under discussion and are prepared to add to it " An Approach to the Theology of the Sacraments " will have the material to hand, and will, I hope, excuse any lapse from the lucidity of expression for which I have sincerely striven. Here I confine myself to attempting some explanatory comment about two significant matters on which the reviewer touches.

He is worried by references to the efficacy of baptism and its spiritual effectiveness, and by the claim that it effects initiation into the Church. I understand his alarm, and frankly confess the difficulty of finding words both accurately expressive and also free from the blinding associations of historical controversy. What we are concerned to state and preserve is our understanding of the biblical

theology of the sacrament. We are persuaded that, in accordance with the whole principle of divine dealing with humanity in creation, incarnation, resurrection, the spiritual gift and reality is " embodied" (in this case, sacramentally); that it is reality for us only as embodied reality; that fidelity to scriptural witness forbids any separation of sign and signification. There is no question of efficacy without faith, or of baptism being automatically determinative of final destiny. There is no questioning of the freedom of God to act outside the sacrament, should He so choose. But there is an unqualified rejection of the absolute Zwinglian dichotomy of nature and grace; there is a sure conviction of the priority and constitutive function of the divine action; there is a confident reliance upon the effectiveness of the divine promise. We believe in the efficacy of the Word spoken. Why not the *verbum visibile?*

The other substantial point of difference seems to be the problem of the relationship between Old and New Covenants. I do not find it very helpful to be told that the covenantal differentia is one of " elevation " or of " manner of dispensation ". This tells me precisely nothing. My own conclusion was that the nature and measure of continuity and discontinuity cannot be stated in terms of simple generalisations, but must be worked out in each particular case on the analogy of the Christ-event and by constant reference to it. The reviewer demands " a more thorough exposition ". The demand may be a fair one. But I should be happier with it were I more certain that he had realised that the subsequent extended discussion of the christological pattern was an attempt to provide just that. No one would deny the complexity of this problem, or its cruciality. But I would have hoped it to be sufficiently obvious that my examination of " discontinuity " was a provisional attempt to illumine what the reviewer calls " a change in the manner of dispensation ".

It is clear that some difficulties will arise from the fact that I have written in an idiom that is strange to many of my brethren. Perhaps a word of explanation may be permitted here. The reviewer calls attention to the statement in the Preface that the book was written " to make it clear to members of other denominations how Baptists view these matters "; and he rightly ridicules the idea that my own contribution is representative of anything that might normally be in the mind of the Baptist minister. The purpose of the concluding chapter should, however, be remembered. It seeks to state a theology of baptism and a defence of believers' baptism in the context of contemporary discussion. The difficulty with traditional Baptist presentation is that it so often completely fails to move in the thought-world of the opposing views. This does not mean that it is necessarily wrong; but it does tend to make it ineffective. I have no desire to be esoteric. I believe profoundly in the soundness of the biblical and theological approach I have adopted. And it seems to me to have the added advantage of coming to grips with the paedobaptist case in the terms in which it is increasingly being presented. My brethren may

disown me. But I suspect that any acute paedobaptist theologian will be in no doubt that here is a challenge that cannot be *evaded* precisely because it is rooted in the *common* ground of contemporary biblical thinking. In that way I must hope to have served the Baptist cause.

But the last word in answer to this review must be one of sad regret. The reader will note how often the word " Baptist " recurs. We have held up before us as standard of reference " the Baptist view ", " the Baptist understanding ", what has " normally been held by Baptists ". It is a dubious historical comprehension that imagines that there has been an unvarying Baptist theology of baptism these last three centuries. But even that is not the really serious issue. One of the few statements of this volume that the reviewer explicitly approves is the assertion that " all ecclesiastical tradition must be tested by the apostolic tradition as embodied in Scripture ". Is it Baptist tradition alone that is to be exempt? Is it alone to be held as sacrosanct?

Of course it is not as simple as all that. The defence will be that the Baptist tradition is precisely the apostolic tradition. But this is the claim made by every Church in all good faith. The fact is that it is always and inevitably one's own tradition of which one is least critical; therefore it is here that reformation is both most difficult and most urgent. To listen obediently to the Word of God even when it appears to threaten to undercut our most cherished foundations may be an agonising task. But this is what being a Reformed church means. When we dismiss an argument because it is out of harmony with our tradition, we are no better than Rome.

What is needed is continuing patient attention to Scripture, seen in the context of ongoing Church tradition in all its breadth and length and approached with the best tools and the most adequate devotion we can supply—and a willingness to follow the Word of God wherever He may lead. In its own way, this review is as significant as the book it dissects, and should be read and re-read with equal care. For it proceeds on assumptions about which, for the sake of its health, its freedom, and its future, our denomination must one day soon make up its mind.

N. CLARK.

DOSTOIEVSKY: A STUDY IN PROPHETIC REALISM

LORD DAVID CECIL, in an essay on the English Poets, draws attention to the varied contributions made by European nations to general culture. He says, " Every great nation has expressed its spirit in art: generally in some particular form of art. The Italians are famous for their painting, the Germans for their music, the

Russians for their novels. England is distinguished for her poets ". This acute observation would be difficult to challenge in spite of the wide breadth of its field.

The works of Dostoievsky and Tolstoy, Turgenev and Gogol, to name only four Russian novelists, are sufficient warrant for his high placing of the Russian novel in world culture. The stark realism of the Russian novel has left an abiding impression upon the creative writers of both the Eastern and Western world. This is particularly true of Fydor Dostoievsky whose books have been in the hands of English readers for many years now; his first novel being published in England as *Poor Folk*, in 1846, three years before he was arrested and sentenced to exile in Siberia. His only crime appears to have been membership of a study circle, which met to read and discuss Fourier and Proudhon, and " taking part in conversations against the censorship, reading a letter from Byelinsky to Gogol, and possessing information about a secret printing press ".

On 22nd December, 1849, forty-four men, including Dostoievsky, were taken out on the Drill Square and sentenced to death. After being lined up before a firing party and standing, half naked, in the morning frost, the first group were blind-folded and tied to posts to await shots which never came. It was a deliberate hoax perpetrated to torture the prisoners. At the very moment when the rifles were raised to fire a rider came on the scene bringing the Emperor's pardon. The sentenced men were to be imprisoned in Siberia, Dostoievsky's sentence being commuted to four years' imprisonment and four years' service as a private soldier. These men had faced an ordeal worse than death itself, and it is not surprising that one of them went mad and the others all carried marks of their mental and physical suffering for many years.

Dostoievsky spent four years in exile, living among murderers and outcasts, and the period had a fateful influence on his later life and work, producing a spirit at once bitter, suspicious and taciturn. But it also produced in him a counter-spirit of understanding and love. It was this tension of love and bitterness, mistrust and kindliness, which prompted his great novels of social revolution. It was of this kind of background that Kierkegaard wrote when he averred: " I have determined to read the writings only of the men who were executed or who were in danger in some other way ".

The prison experiences of Dostoievsky were reflected in *The House of the Dead.* Only in the last year of imprisonment was he allowed to read books, for all the life of the prison was based on determination to show " the tyranny of a will other than one's own ". The long years of confinement, task work and hopeless endeavour made life for him " a constant hell, a perpetual damnation, the days falling away drop by drop like rain on an autumn day ".

At Tobolsk the party of prisoners were halted for six days and here the prisoners were visited by the wives of some of the survivors

of the Decembrist conspiracy of 1825, who had followed their husbands into exile and remained there during the years which followed. From one of them Dostoievsky received gifts of money, food and clothing, and a New Testament; the only book which prisoners were officially allowed to possess. That New Testament was the greatest influence of all during his time of exile and his daughter says of it: " He studied the precious volume from cover to cover, pondering every word and learning much of it by heart ". " Throughout his life," she adds, " he would never be without his old prison Testament, the faithful friend that had consoled him in the darkest hours of his life." The little book meant sanity and hope, faith and reverence, the difference between life and death.

Of the general situation in Siberia, Dostoievsky wrote: " Imagine an old crazy building that should have been broken up as useless. In the summer it is unbearably hot; in the winter, unbearably cold. All the boards are rotten. On the ground filth lies an inch thick; every instant one is in danger of slipping. The small windows are so frozen over that, even by day, one can scarcely read; the ice on the panes is three inches thick. We are packed like herrings in a barrel. The atmosphere is intolerable ".

Yet, with that background of degradation and squalor, Dostoievsky could still write: " One sees the truth more clearly when one is unhappy, and yet God gives me moments of perfect peace; in such moments I love and believe that I am loved; in such moments I have formulated my creed, wherein all is clear and holy to me. This creed is extremely simple; here it is . . . I believe that there is nothing lovelier, deeper, more sympathetic, more rational, more manly and more perfect than the Saviour: I say to myself with jealous love that not only is there no One like Him, but that there could be no one ".

Nekrassov, the poet, himself an exile with Dostoievsky, has given an unforgettable picture of the novelist and his influence upon many of his fellow prisoners. He shows us Dostoievsky, like some male Florence Nightingale, carrying, not a metal lamp of comfort, but the Light of Life shed from his little book. From it he read to his fellow prisoners the stories of the Gospels; the words and deeds of the Master. He became to his fellow exiles a prophet and seer; a father in God and a friend in need. He rebuked their blasphemies and sins; he comforted like a mother and guided them like a pastor. From his knowledge of science and art he sought to broaden their minds and strengthen their hearts with his exultant faith.

A. E. Baker has written of this influence in *Prophets for a Day of Judgement*: " He had a strong conviction and a passionate feeling of one-ness with all the degraded, destitute masses in their suffering, so meaningless, so helpless, in their docile obedience, and in their acceptance of the agony that life means for them. Every one is

THE GOSPEL AND THE LIFE OF TODAY

CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

seeks to relate the one to the other, and to show how the Gospel meets men's needs.

The Rev. C. H. Cleal will be pleased to receive enquiries at the Baptist Church House and to visit Fraternals to open discussion and answer questions.

The Citizenship Department, Baptist Union, 4, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1

A NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL YEAR HAS JUST BEGUN

During this time the second year of the Baptist Union Ter-Jubilee Celebrations will be introduced, focusing our attention on Christian Education and Training. Help to improve your children's work in this year, by starting a training class, by regrading the school adequately, by giving more definite and systematic Bible and background teaching to the teachers, by showing a personal interest in the children.

Possibly we could help you in your preparation by supplying copies of our free leaflets on the work of the Sunday school.

Write to the Sunday School Adviser,
The Young People's Department, Baptist Union,
4, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1.

guilty, he teaches, every one must repent of his share in the callous and thoughtless sin which produces this suffering ".

In almost all his novels you will find the tattered New Testament of Dostoievsky maintaining its bridge-like service between human need and divine compassion; bringing faith and hope to the sinners whose story he is telling, even as that same Book brought faith and hope to him in the dark days of imprisonment. In *The Possessed*, toward the end of the book, we read of Stepan Trofimovitch, his hopes of worldly ambition forever banished. There he lies, a shadow of his former self, and by his couch sits Sofya, reading the New Testament and finding in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Book of Revelation the words of comfort and peace they both so much need.

In *Crime and Punishment*, forming one of the most poignant scenes in the whole of literature, we find Raskolnikoff, murderer and outcast, in the sordid hovel which Sonia calls home. A harlot and a criminal, both desperately conscious of having missed the way. On a chest of drawers lies a book—The Book, and Raskolnikoff asks Sonia to read to him. " Sonia opens the Book: her hands tremble: the words stick in her throat. Twice she tries without being able to utter a syllable." Then she reads a passage and its message comes like calm after the storm, bringing to them both the Resurrection glory. " She closes the Book . . . the dying piece of candle dimly lights up this low-ceilinged room in which an assassin and a harlot have just read the Book of Books." For Dostoievsky, the tiny candle beam is symbolic of that Light which ever radiates from Him who is the Light of the World.

Nastasya, writing to Aglaia in *The Idiot*, pictures Christ, not conventionally, but as Dostoievsky had so often imagined Him. " Artists always draw the Saviour as an actor in one of the Gospel stories," she writes, " I should do so differently. I would represent Him alone. The disciples did leave Him occasionally alone. I should paint one little child left with Him. The child had been playing near Him, and had probably been telling the Saviour something in its baby prattle and He had listened, but now He was musing—one hand resting on the child's bright head. His eyes have a far away expression. Thought, great as the Universe, is in them. His face is sad. The little one leans on its elbow, on His knee and, with its cheek resting on its hand, gazes up at Him, pondering, as children do. The sun is setting. There you have my picture ". Yes, indeed! There you have Dostoievsky's own picture too, of a Saviour who measured the Universe against the span of a child's hand, hearing the sad news of humanity in the prattle of a little child.

When Dostoievsky was dying in February, 1881 (English Calendar) he asked for his New Testament and opening it at random asked his wife Anna to read. The Book had opened in the first Gospel and she read, " And Jesus answering, said unto him, suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness ". Giving the Testament to his son, Dostoievsky said, greatly moved: " I shall die

this day ". The Testament which had lent light to his path in life was to lead him out into the world of light, for at half past eight that night his premonition came true.

Neither his sufferings, which were great, nor his hardships, which were many, could erase from his mind and heart the vision of the Christ which he had caught from the pages of the New Testament; the Christ who had been so real to him in the days of his imprisonment. It was precisely because he saw therein hope for himself that he could never dismiss hope for others. The outcast and the betrayed; the fallen and the disconsolate; all must come to that same end, and all could find the same mercy.

Like so many realist authors, Dostoievsky paints with fiery pen the sinning, the unhappy and the fallen. But where he differs from other realist writers, is in the touch of redemption which is never lacking in histories. Dostoievsky never pictures the sinful and fallen without picturing in the same terms the good and the true and the just. In his *The Journal of an Author*, he says: " If a conviction of immortality is indispensable for human existence, this conviction is presumably the normal condition of mankind; and if this be so, then the immortality of the human soul is an indubitable fact ". The recurring pattern of sin and redemption is perhaps seen at its best in *The Brothers Karamazov* ". Dmitri Karamazov is the man of sinful passions; Ivan is the intellectual sceptic; and it is Alyosha, the younger brother, who has been brought up in a monastery and returns to the world who is able to bring the light of the Christian ideal into everyday life. Here is the symbolic theme which recurs like a refrain through all the novelist's work! Ivan, the principle of evil, and Alyosha, the Christian ideal man; and between them Dmitri finding redemption and faith in the midst of sin and suffering.

For the minister, no novelist repays serious study so much as Dostoievsky for he mirrors in his work the kind of concern which should be in the heart of the pastor as he seeks to interpret in terms of redemption, the world's great need.

WALTER FANCUTT.

THE FRATERNAL LIBRARY

THE library is a well established part of the work of our Fellowship. The fact that over 500 books are at present in circulation among more than forty Fraternals is proof of this. Recently two more Fraternals have become linked with the Library and the purpose of this article is to mention the method and advantages and possibilities of the Library so that others may also be encouraged to take advantage of the facilities offered.

There is now a good supply of books in the Library and if a Fraternal wishes to make use of them it asks for a box of books. This box, usually containing about twelve books, can then be kept by the Fraternal for as long as it is required. If sufficient warning

is given then another box of books is sent for distribution on the day when the circulating books are collected in. The used box can then be returned to the Library. Where Fraternals meet irregularly smaller groups of ministers or even individual ministers have a box of books to themselves and work on the same principle of request and return to the Library. It is also possible for ministers to borrow single books as required.

There are at least two advantages in this Library scheme. First, it is possible for a minister to have a book on loan for a fairly lengthy period without any problem of renewal or fines. Second, it is the task of a library not only to provide books when they are asked for but to stimulate interest in a wide reading of books. By the box system a minister can well be introduced to books that he would not otherwise read.

There is a possible further use for the library. It may be helpful to prepare boxes of books on single or related subjects. Then a Fraternal could borrow a box and by allocating a book per member have a series of papers prepared for the Fraternal meetings, maybe over a period of a year. In this way both the Library and the local Fraternal would be achieving something worthwhile. There are obviously many possibilities for subject matter for such boxes and the librarian will welcome enquiries along these lines.

We are grateful to the managers of the Particular Baptist Fund for the grant of £100 per annum that enables us to obtain new books regularly, and we are sure that ministers will find an increasing use for these and the other books we already possess.

B. W. O. AMEY.

EDITORIAL NOTE

We apologise to our readers for the late arrival of the July and October numbers of *The Fraternal* and for the slightly smaller size than usual of the current issue.

Those of our readers who live abroad may not be aware how publications in Britain have been held up recently by a somewhat prolonged printers' dispute. But that is the reason. And no one is more sorry about it than our own printers, Battley Brothers, from whom we receive such excellent service. It does, however, give us the opportunity of saying on behalf of Baptist ministers the world over a sincere " thank you " to them for all the trouble they take and the excellence of the job they do.