

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)

<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

APRIL, 1960

No. 116

EDUCATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN ADULT

A. M. LIMB, Minister, Shepherd's Bush.

THEOLOGY AS COMMITMENT

L. G. CHAMPION, B.A., D.Th., President, Bristol Baptist College.

SURPRISED BY AUTHORITY

W. E. MOORE, M.A., B.D., M.Th., Tutor, Rawdon College.

AN OXFORD EXPERIMENT

W. M. S. WEST, M.A., D.Theol., Minister, St. Alban's.

TWO EXPERIMENTS IN THE FAMILY CHURCH

THE CHURCH ON WHEELS

S. HUDSON-REED, Minister, South Africa.

LETTER FROM THE BAPTIST MEN'S MOVEMENT

ARNOLD S. CLARK, J.P., President, B.M.M.

OF INTEREST TO YOU

THE WIDER CIRCLE

BOOK REVIEWS

ACCOUNTS

EDUCATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN ADULT

THE following thoughts come from a member of the L.B.A. working party now considering Religious Education and, while that group is in no way responsible for the material, the writer's concern for the subject has been greatly stimulated by their discussion.

The revived interest in religious education has often come through groups primarily concerned with evangelism. A statement issued at the close of the 14th Convention of the World Council of Christian Education admirably reflects this correspondence of emphasis: "without evangelism, Christian education loses its basis and inspiration; without Christian education, evangelism loses its substance and structure". In many parts of the world, notably in America, the Commonwealth and especially the younger countries, it is increasingly recognised that religious education must be a continuing feature in the life of the Christian.

Before we begin to think about ways in which church members can be educated in religion, we need to recognise the immature ideas of the Church currently held by most of them. Instead of labouring this point, let us consider three essential aspects of the Church as a community and draw our own local comparisons.

As Baptists we have always considered ourselves a *gathered community*. While the invitation has always been open, the impression has been created that we are a people called apart, separated from the world, with the object of being trained toward moral and spiritual perfection. In spite of our evangelism, social concerns and reforming efforts, the "closed shop" atmosphere persists. We still talk about "outsiders" and "strangers".

It has been said that the great new concept of our time is the idea of the whole Church as a *missionary community*. At national and international level much is being attempted and achieved, but how far does this affect the individual church member? Most ministers know the frustration caused by pastoral demands made by committed Christians who have never thought of themselves as missionaries. The Church is alive only where the whole community has seen its task in a missionary situation.

The self-centred ignorance as to the Church as a *worshipping community* is a real barrier in the path of effective religious education. We are too introverted. T. E. Jessop has written, "What those of us who have been brought up in the evangelical tradition need to learn is that the worship that arises from the growing apprehension of what God *is*, is purer than the worship aroused by the recognition of what He has done for *me*. Each kind requires the other for its completion, but the centre of maturing religious interest moves away from ourselves, from our salvation, to God's perfect nature." Maturing religious interest requires education.

There is, of course, much more to it than this. My purpose is to indicate the need for a more adult view of the Church at church membership level.

Opinions on education among present-day church members reflect a similar misunderstanding. Education, for most, remains a matter of inspiring, informing and instilling. It is associated with words like school, teacher, class, scholar and lesson. It is considered to be over in the late teens, except where additional knowledge will mean an increased income. Vocational training seems to be viewed with a similar bias.

We should pause here to remember that since 1944, the only compulsory subject on the Day school time-table is R.I. Our long term policy in religious education must rely upon the factual presentation in Day school and we must use such time as we have at our disposal to make these facts relevant to daily living, and aim at the integration of the individual into the Church.

At the adult level, religious education is voluntary and, with the kind of background previously indicated, it is not surprising that so little is attempted beyond school-leaving age.

We need to present education in terms of discovery. We must provide the situation and atmosphere in which knowledge can be turned into experience and experience terminate in the right choice. Education is more than the judicious use of the spoken and written word.

Leading educationalists in this country have recently commented upon the findings of an American research group about methods of learning. Here are their figures.

“A child remembers one-tenth of what he hears, one half of what he sees, two-thirds of what he says and nine-tenths of what he does.”

The comment, in all cases, indicates an unwillingness to be tied down to figures, but there is complete agreement that the general inference is true. Moreover, it also agreed that, even when the lower absorption capacity of older age-groups is taken into consideration, the relative order is still true.

The blinkered conception of religious education as belonging to Sunday School, youth organisation devotions and occasional discussion groups or conferences is not worthy of us. All age-groups in the whole community comprise our field. The whole personality fully developed for Christian service is our aim.

Now consider the function of the minister as an educator. Much is being attempted and achieved through preaching and speaking, but I should like to stress the limitations of such media in the modern situation. Assess the following points against the background of your own experience.

1. The age, development and I.Q. range of the congregation, including the mental, emotional and volitional need of the listeners.

2. The fragmentary nature of sermons and addresses. (The minister is but one voice among many demanding attention, e.g. T.V., radio, day school, youth club, etc.)
Continuity of subject matter is not easily maintained.
3. The passive attitude demanded of a listening congregation.
4. The limited time available within a "set" order of service.

Must we continue to have two similar services every Sunday? Surely one service could be re-arranged to produce an educational set-up providing continuity, variety and participation? If the educational opportunities of worship were used in this way, we might begin to reverse the trend criticised in Emil Brunner's statement: "The Church took the wrong turning when it substituted the technique of the classroom for the technique of the community." If, as Professor Jeffries says, "religious truth is normal experience understood at full depth" we must make some provision to enable all age-groups in our churches to interpret their normal experience at greater depth. What we shall do, must be determined by local circumstances. Vigorous and audacious experiment is needed. The tyranny of our conservative brethren—and sisters—will continue just as long as we let it.

Research into methods of religious education have produced many experiments. Some are old ideas in new dress, others take advantage of social and scientific changes; all should be considered as we plan the religious education of the committed Christian.

The following is a selection of aids to and opportunities of religious education. They can be adopted and adapted to fit the existing pattern of church activities.

1. LEADER TRAINING COURSES.

As well as being constantly alert for candidates for the home and overseas ministry, we must encourage all who are leaders to be trained for their work. Week-end courses, residential conferences, house groups, correspondence courses afford obvious opportunities, and the religious education possibilities in the Baptist Union Certificate and Diploma have yet to be fully realised. The Westhill Training College short-term courses for leaders is also valuable; a six to eight week course designed to meet local conditions will mean some hard work, but will pay big dividends.

2. RELIGIOUS LITERATURE.

Standard publications of good religious books are outside the budget arrangements of most church members. Municipal libraries are most co-operative. A church library can be useful. The popularity of paper backs has opened a new door to religious education. One church has a review of a cheap edition in the monthly magazine and calls it "Paper-Back Parade". Recommendation by the minister, with adequate supplies on the church book-stall, will ensure that some people will read the book who would not otherwise

do so. The report-advertisement content of some of our church magazines could be changed to the educational advantage of the readers.

3. OUTREACH.

Visitation evangelism, neighbourhood and business contacts, coffee bar and street-corner fishing require trained operatives. Those who engage in such missionary work will be conscious of their need for more training. Experience, especially in Scotland, has shown that teaching on the basic Christian truths becomes an urgent necessity in such groups. More rewarding work for the minister!

4. POST BAPTISMAL TRAINING.

Having trained the candidate for this sacrament, many ministers and churches consider their obligation at an end. The further education of these young Christians, of whatever age-group, is of paramount importance. This is not necessarily the minister's sphere. Trained laymen can be successfully used too.

5. TEACHING MISSIONS.

The Roman Catholic educational programme has much to teach us here. Watch the national and local press advertisements. The success of "bible-weeks", too, shows what can be achieved along this line. Tapes are available for those who cannot afford to engage speakers. Well-planned teaching exhibitions can also be booked for churches and groups at a minimum cost.

6. LEARNING BY DOING.

Ninety per cent of the adult population of Britain is the grown-up counterpart of the child who thinks with his fingers. How often the only work we ask church members to do is to build or maintain the church fabric, or to raise money! Utilise the boom in "do it yourself" to propagate Christian truth. Church publicity, materials for teaching aids, local exhibitions, etc., are well within the potential of the average church community.

7. SOCIAL SERVICE.

Practical help given to youth, age and the handicapped is a most productive teaching method. This will need to be linked with worship and prayer to produce maximum effect on the worker. "I can't teach but I can wash an old lady's hair" is the comment of one growing Christian.

8. STEWARDSHIP.

We all need education in this part of the Christian's life. "Every Person Canvas" and similar publications will stimulate our thinking about the education of church members in more spheres than the financial. A church meeting discussing this subject can be a first-class educational session.

When all has been said, personal conversation still remains the oldest and best form of religious education. It is also the most difficult, especially when we are faced with a second generation of

pagans. Those who show special aptitude in this direction need education in order to avoid the stereotyped approach so easily developed in personal counselling.

Perhaps Victor Murray has put our purpose and method succinctly in the phrase "Education *into* Religion". This, he says, is best accomplished in the fulfilment of five needs: something to *know*, something to *feel*, something to *choose*, something to *belong to* and something to *do*. To achieve this we must bring to our educational task imagination, initiative and an actively prayerful attitude.

A. M. LIMB.

2. THEOLOGY AS COMMITMENT

IN his little book "I and Thou" Martin Buber writes about the nature of man's existence. He mentions our response to our environment. "I perceive something. I am sensible of something. I imagine something. I will something. I feel something. I think something." These are responses made by everyone. But this is not the whole of life. Indeed, in a way, this is not life at all. "All real living is meeting", says Buber. Real life is not in contemplation, debate, reflection—but in response and commitment. Take this to the deepest levels of man's existence and it means that true theology is not reflection about the ways of God but personal confrontation by God. God's revelation, as Brunner so strongly argues, is not the imparting of certain truths which may be apprehended by the human mind, but God's gracious manifestation of Himself. Brunner says quite simply, "What God reveals is Himself". In line with this is Buber's sentence that "all revelation is summons and sending". This is a primary word that establishes relationship and involves man in commitment.

This emphasis is important! It makes the valid distinction between theology as intellectual discussion and theology as personal commitment. There is a vital difference between the kind of intellectual discussion engaged in by the members of a B.B.C. Brains Trust who enjoyably present different aspects of almost any theme and then go away to dinner, and the discussion with life in which Albert Schweitzer was once involved, who first devoted himself to some years of intensive medical study and then went away to Africa to care for the burdened of humanity. Real thinking occurs when one is aware that the effect of intellectual apprehension is in fact an experience of being met and personally addressed by life and of endeavouring to make some answer.

This emphasis of course is Scriptural. In some ways it constitutes the main theme of the Fourth Gospel. In this gospel much is said about truth and man's apprehension of it. Yet note how this emphasis upon truth is developed. The word itself is not used of intellectual propositions and abstractions; it denotes fundamental reality. Consequently it is able to regard truth as personal. Jesus

is the truth because he and the Father are one, i.e. eternal reality is identical with his being. "The Word became flesh." This means that knowing the truth is responding to reality and ordering one's life accordingly; so the believer is "he that doeth truth", i.e. he that is committed to God, whose life and deeds express reality. The believer knows the truth in committing himself. Jesus is the truth because He committed himself completely and perfectly. One significant aspect of the Johannine doctrine of the Word made flesh is that theology is commitment.

Our theological task, then, makes this double demand upon us: we must seek to understand the relation of theology to man's life in all its forms, and we must also accept the commitment of theology. Indeed it is really in the commitment that the tension is realised. What, then, is the nature of commitment?

1. THE PRIMARY COMMITMENT IS TO GOD.

The New Testament is quite insistent that since God approaches man in mercy and grace, man's response can only be in the nature of personal obedience. What the New Testament calls faith is an attitude of the person quite different from that denoted by the word "belief". When Paul says that the just shall live by faith, he is not referring to an intellectual apprehension of the nature of Deity or to the mental acceptance of the articles of a creed; he is speaking about an attitude in which, according to C. H. Dodd, "acknowledging our complete insufficiency for any of the high ends of life, we rely utterly on the sufficiency of God". The kind of God to whom the New Testament bears witness, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a Being to whom the only real response is that of "faith", i.e. the believing obedience which is personal commitment. This means that to whatever realm of human activity we may be seeking to relate Christian theology and to whatever tasks the Christian may thereby be called, the primary responsibility of seeking to bring individuals to the response of commitment cannot be avoided. All genuine theological thinking amid the problems of industrial society, as amid the problems presented by other aspects of our society, brings this inescapable obligation.

The realm of industry, furthermore, is just one of those areas of our human society in which are manifest profound needs of the human personality to be met only through the experience of commitment. From all sides we are now receiving the testimony that amid the growing industrial technological society of the twentieth century man is becoming increasingly uprooted. He is spiritually homeless.

"The need for roots" is a title that Simone Weil gives to one of her books. She was a scholar learned in the classics, and a philosopher capable of profound thinking. Yet, feeling the pressure of an industrialised society and wanting to know what it is like to live under that pressure, she worked for some time in a factory. Then

came the war and the occupation of her native France. She felt involved and worked in the resistance movement. Hence her writings present an unusual combination of high intellectual capacity implying genuine scholarship and a varied experience of involvement in the life of our society. Everywhere she saw the need for spiritual roots, and she writes of it as "one of the deepest, but least recognised needs". I gained the same impression from reading Pasternak's "Dr. Zhivago". Here is a sense of vast spaces across which individuals move, all caught up in the events of life but never grasping its meaning or feeling at all significant—individuals who are spiritually uprooted. Similar evidence comes from the work of many psychiatrists. The statement was made recently that one out of every eight persons in the country has received treatment for mental and nervous disorders. We should be foolish to attribute all this to one cause, but at least there is widespread recognition that much of this derives from unresolved anxiety states, and these are caused fundamentally by spiritual isolation or homelessness. Let us not forget that spiritual uprootedness can exist even where a profession of religion is made and customs of religion are adhered to.

If all this possesses some truth so that we should regard with real seriousness the uprooted spiritual nature of modern man, it is obvious that we must not overlook the primary task implied in our theology, the task of awakening this personal response which is true commitment to God.

2. IN THE SECOND PLACE, OUR COMMITMENT IS TO THE WORLD.

Here I am using the word "world" in the sense in which it is used in the Johannine writings, not as the sum total of creation, but as the organised and responsible world. It is the organised society of man with its traditions, customs, institutions, activities. At times in John's writings another element is suggested, that of evil. Thus the first epistle can characterise the world as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life". In this sense the world is not "of the Father", and can be defined as human society organised around man in rejection of God.

Give full meaning to this definition and we still have to say that our theology is commitment to this world. For Christian theology centres in the assertion that God so loved the World that He gave His only Son. What is incarnation but Christ's commitment of Himself to the world? Note that for Christ, the work of bringing men to total commitment to God implied action and events that shocked, disturbed and challenged people. The Cross is a place of commitment because it is so shocking, so disturbing, so horrifying. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Believers may behold His glory and rejoice—but for Him incarnation meant that "He came unto His own and His own received Him not". The cross is the sign of His commitment to the world.

But if Christian theology finds its centre in Him Who became flesh, shared fully the life of the world, accepted it so completely as to die for it, this theology also understands these events as the beginning of the life of the Church.

In a more straightforward manner and without the use of metaphor T. W. Manson has argued in his book, "The Church's Ministry", that the work of Jesus, Who as Son of Man "came to minister and to give His life a ransom for many" is to continue in the Church, and that this constitutes the ministry for which the whole Church is responsible. This is saying in a forceful way that the whole Church is implicated in the organised life of human society as inextricably, as compassionately and as sacrificially as was her Lord. Our task is all the time to try to discover what this implication means and how it is to be worked out.

It surely means the constant effort to understand our society, its pattern of life and behaviour, why people act as they do, what is significant for the welfare of people. Did publicans and sinners listen to Jesus because He understood them?

It surely means too, the constant effort to find clear guiding principles for life and conduct. The great spiritual leaders of Israel had clear plans for the life of society, for the way people should behave in all activities and relationships. This is true of Moses, of Isaiah, of Ezekiel. Are we too timid to work out more clearly and assert more boldly the guiding principles for life today?

It surely means also experiment in activities and organisations exemplifying the guiding principles, suggesting their soundness and strength. A missionary said recently that, whereas the Church pioneered medical work in India, the State now provides better hospitals than the Church can provide; so that the Church has fallen behind in this service. He thought that since the Church cannot match the resources of the State it should pioneer in other fields. That may have application in the realm of industry. The basic point is that the Church should be more firmly convinced that a gospel which proclaims the incarnate and crucified Christ commits her fully to the life of the world.

Yet this also must be said! Since man's life does not consist of the abundance of things that he possesses, nor is man able to live by bread alone, the Church is implicated in the life of the world in order to bring that life, and those who share it, within the dimension of eternity. Because the Church knows that being committed to God it is committed to the world, it knows also that its implication in the world is for the sake of bringing the world to God. That is why, in a materialistic, this-worldly civilisation the Church continues to worship and to call men to worship. But all too often the Church's worship is an escape. Real worship is the worship of a community that knows it is committed both to God and to the world.

Isaiah understood this. What God requires from His people is "to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens . . . to

deal bread to the hungry . . . when thou seest the naked, to cover him". Then, says the prophet "shalt thou call and God will answer; thou shalt cry and He shall say 'Here I am'".

3. THIS BRINGS US TO A FINAL WORD ABOUT OUR COMMITMENT TO PEOPLE.

It is obvious to us all that our Lord's commitment to life in this world meant caring for people. Much of the conflict in which Jesus was involved derived from his persistent habit of caring for apparently worthless people: he talked with a Samaritan woman, he went home with Zacchaeus, he stopped to touch and heal the leper, he blessed the children, he heard the cry of a blind beggar. It was happening all the time. Jesus cared for people because people are worth caring for; they are worth caring for because God cares.

The apostles understood this. It must have been hard for Paul to keep his temper with very scrupulous Christians who were always worrying about the externals of religion: nevertheless Paul calls these quite sincerely the "brethren for whom Christ died". That is the mark of God's care. Christ died. This was not for the sake of a principle or an ideal—or even a theory of atonement. When in the Upper Room Jesus said "This is my blood of the covenant shed for many", He meant simply that He is dying on behalf of men and women. When Paul said that the core of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, he meant simply that Christ so cares for sinful people as to die for them.

Of course all this is familiar! But it does denote a view of the sanctity of the human person that needs emphatic assertion in our society, and it does commit the Church to forms of ministry for the individual which the Church all too often fails to fulfil. According to the first epistle of John Christian thinking makes a clear progression. It begins with the fact that "God is love"; that is a statement about the divine nature. It accepts the truth that the love of God is manifested "because God sent his only-begotten Son into the world"; that is an account of the divine activity. It asserts that "we perceive the love of God because he laid down his life for us"; that is our salvation. Its conclusion is "and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren".

When the Church is faithful to Christ she keeps always in the forefront of her thought, her concern and her activity, the welfare of people as spiritual beings. If this were really so what would the result be in activities on behalf of people and in judgments which the Church makes about our society?

This care for people has some obvious applications in the realm of industry. It means for example the judgment that industry should be organised primarily to promote the welfare of people and that forms of industry which demand a high price in human health or life should be resisted. It has something to say about the effect upon human personality of monotonous, repetitive work and the

need for compensating factors in the lives of such workpeople. It will have something to say about the responsibilities which automation will bring, for just as we have not always faced problems of work, so we are not facing problems of leisure. In our Church life there is not enough concern to realise the ministry to which our Lord has committed us. We care too much for our meetings, our organisations, our projects; we do not care enough about people. But the Church is committed in love to man. Such is implied in Christian theology. How can we present an understanding of this theology and an acceptance of this commitment in our Churches? What does it mean to fulfil this commitment in the industrial society in which God has placed us?

L. G. CHAMPION

SURPRISED BY AUTHORITY

THE phrase is suggested by the title which C. S. Lewis has borrowed from Wordsworth for his autobiography. "Surprised by Joy". Authority, like joy and goodness is a by-product. When joy and goodness are made ends in themselves, they quickly crumble into hedonism and self-righteousness. It is the same with authority. If we go after it deliberately and of set purpose, we shall miss it entirely. Likewise, just as our grasping after joy and goodness is prompted by anxiety, so our concern about authority may be part of "the sinful flight to security". It will be even more sinful if this is humanity's midnight hour, and Baptist ministers be found confusing authority with status!

This is not to deprecate discussion of the subject. In an age in which personal, and therefore authoritative, relationships are becoming increasingly more difficult, and in a denomination which still equates independency with isolationism, serious thought is needed on every aspect of the question. Nevertheless, on whatever level the matter is discussed, the paradox must be observed that authority is not to be found by aiming directly at it. It is a paradox which, like many others, confronts us in the New Testament.

There is a considerable reserve in the attitude of Jesus to His own authority. It is true that the N.T. presents Him on every page as one "with authority": that Matthew's Gospel culminates with the great words "All authority is given unto me"; that Mark, with his "straightways", sets Jesus forth as mighty in deed and word before all the people; that Paul presents Christ as first-born, before and over all creation, and therefore "in Him were all things created" including the "exousiai". (Col. i, 15-16.) On the other hand, when we get back behind the Resurrection, on which all these claims are based, we can discern a certain reticence of Jesus in speaking of His authority and its source. "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things". (Mark xi, 33.) Parallel with this silence is His refusal to give a sign to the Pharisees. (Mark viii, 11ff., Matt. xvi,

1-4; Luke xi, 16.) The point at issue in these last passages was not whether Jesus could perform miracles (they had no doubts on that point), but by what authority he performed them. But Jesus, at this stage, will not openly tell them. Though the claim to authority is there all the time, and though there is a clear indication of its source, it is a veiled claim, and it is clear only to those with eyes to see.

This veiling of His Messianic authority is part of the divine economy of revelation. Man being sinful, God must veil His glory in order to reveal it. That is why "the Hebrew tongue is rich in synonyms for 'hide' and 'hidden', and nothing could more clearly indicate the profoundly religious quality of the biblical mind than its deep sense of the hidden mystery of God". (Alan Richardson: "An Introduction to the Theology of the N.T.", p. 58.) The authority of Jesus is of God, but reverence for the mystery will not allow Him to bandy it about before men, or to cast His pearls before the swine.

May we dare to suggest the root of this veiling? Certainly it is not the secrecy of fear, nor is it the reserve which springs from a despising of the swine, nor is it the superiority found in "mystery" religions. On the contrary, it is the hiddenness of faith; it is the reserve which springs from confidence that that which is hidden shall be made known, and that which has been revealed by Him who sees in secret be proclaimed upon the housetops. This veiling proceeds also from a twofold reverence—reverence for God and reverence for man in the image of God. Nor is this latter exhibited merely in a tempering of the wind to the shorn lamb. It is a reverence that waits upon the free obedience of man. The authority will be revealed to and shared with the man who places himself under it. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He 'exousian'." (John i, 12.)

It is therefore all of a piece with the reserve of Jesus that the characteristic preposition to be used with "exousia" is "hypo"—"under". Not that "hypo" is always to be found with "exousia" or its cognates. When we say that "hypo" is "characteristic" we mean that when the centurion says "For I also am a man *under* authority" (Matt. viii, 9; Luke vii, 8) implying that Jesus is also "*under* authority," he is true to the whole thought of the N.T. on this subject.

In following the usual interpretation, according to which the centurion is saying that Jesus has authority because He is under authority and perfectly obedient to it, we are reminded of what Dr. John Baillie says on pp. 181-182 of "Our knowledge of God": "The knowledge of God first came to me in the form of an awareness that I was 'not my own' but one under authority. . . . But whence did this awareness come to me? . . . I knew that my mother's will was not the ultimate source of the authority which she exercised over me. For it was plain that she herself was under that same authority."

If authority is that under which one is, and under which we must remain, it follows that it is not something to be snatched at, grasped after. So Christ Jesus did not consider His equality with God a thing to be snatched at. (Phil. ii, 6.) For to snatch at anything, even if you already possess it, means that you are anxious about it! The A.V. rendering of Phil. ii, 8: "made Himself of no reputation", brings out the same thought, and counterbalances the doing of things through strife, the sinful concern about esteem, against which Paul warns his readers in vv. 3, 4. Consider the temptation of Jesus from this point of view. In the baptism, under which Jesus places Himself in order to fulfil all righteousness, He receives the seal of His authority. He is the Son of God with power, but still *under* authority. To yield to any of the three temptations would be to treat His authority as something to be snatched at, to be sinfully anxious about. He is the *Servant* Messiah, who must remain under the authority of God, living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, never dictating to God, never putting God to the test, worshipping and serving Him only. (Matt. iv, 1-11.)

In this humble submission to the authority of God, and in the refusal to be anxiously concerned about it, the disciple must be as his Master. He puts himself under the yoke. (Matt. xi, 29, where Jesus explicitly claims authority and reveals its source.) He is called to the "obedience of faith", and, since faith works through love (Gal. v, 6) and love implies the existence of a community, it follows that being under authority is most clearly to be seen in being subject one to another. (1 Pet. vi, 5.) Hence, too, the injunction not to "lord it" over the flock. (1 Pet. v, 3.) The same courteous regard for his fellow-disciples holds the Apostle Paul under the yoke of Christ. Because he is under the authority of Christ he refuses to be brought under the authority of any course of action, however "lawful", if it is not "expedient", i.e. for the community. (1 Cor. vi, 12: "hypo", and with the verb "exousiazō".) From this point of view consider his words in 2 Cor. xii, 11: "I am become foolish; you compelled me". Paul complains that the Corinthians have driven him to this glorying, this assertion of his own authority. There are occasions when, for the sake of the Church, the credentials of its leaders have to be examined. But they are dangerous occasions, especially if the leader himself is doing the examining, as Paul clearly recognised. (2 Cor. xii, 7.) "Foolishness" in the Bible nearly always bears with it the sense of unbelief in action. Paul calls his assertions "foolish" because he knows he is in danger of carrying them over into that dark wilderness where the claims to authority are the fruit of sinful doubt, and are, in effect, a "snatching after" authority and an attempt to "lord it" over the flock.

This article is intended as a cautionary foot-note to the discussion of authority in its various aspects. If we have not the authority we could wish for, may not the fault be in ourselves? Are we truly "*under* authority?" And let us not answer the question till we

have made a searching self-examination, let us say, under the guidance of Kierkegaard's "Purity of heart is to will one thing". Let us beware too, lest our much talking of authority be a sign, as with certain parents and teachers, that we have none! Are we subject one to another with brotherly love? That does not mean, for instance, that we always agree with the Area Superintendents, but it does mean that we give them a courteous and prayerful regard as those whose work is found by the community to be "expedient" for the Fellowship of Believers.

Finally, a word about the authority of Scripture. On p. 18 of *The Fraternal* for October, 1959, Neville Clark speaks of "listening obediently to the Word of God" and of the need of "continuing patient attention to Scripture, seen in the context of ongoing Church tradition in all its breadth and length". Against that we place a recent letter to the "B.T.", on the subject of authority which ended with the suggestion that we as Baptists may yet again lead, in whatever it is we are supposed to excel. This is rather like that brand of Jewish Universalism which desires the conversion of the heathen, but with the Jews of course still leading! We want the triumph of Christ, but we want it through *us*, with Baptists as leaders. It is the arrogant assumption that the Baptist view of things (whatever that is, if there is one) is the only one, or, at any rate, the best one. To think like that is an attempt to lord it over the Word of God. Here, too, we must place ourselves under the yoke, and that means, as Neville Clark points out, submitting to the discipline of learning from all branches of the Church. It is an "agonising task" and humbling too, as when a Methodist like Dr. H. G. Marsh leads us to a richer understanding of our own baptism. Nevertheless, putting ourselves under the Word, and being subject one to another, both in the Church and as Churches, we may some day be—"surprised by authority".

W. E. MOORE.

AN OXFORD EXPERIMENT

THE Baptist Churches in the city of Oxford and the surrounding villages are linked together through the Oxford Fellowship of Baptist Churches. This Fellowship represents thirteen congregations, with a total strength of about 700 members. Once a quarter representatives from the congregations meet as a Fellowship Council and discuss matters of mutual concern. A few years ago a suggestion was made at a Council meeting that a series of talks on the Christian Faith might be organised by Regent's Park College for the Fellowship. After considerable discussion, and in spite of the inevitable prophecy from one or two people that no one would come, it was decided to approach the College. The staff at the College expressed their willingness to co-operate in this experiment and a small group was asked to plan the talks. Very wisely, to hurry the matter along, the small group consisted of one person with several advisers.

It was quickly decided that if anything was to be done, it must be done on a reasonable scale. By that was meant, that there would be little point in having a talk lasting three-quarters of an hour once a week for three weeks and leaving it at that. The course should be more worthy of the subject. So an eight weeks syllabus was planned, allowing for a two-hour talk each week. Again, when this suggestion was put forward the prophets of woe became vocal. But the planning group persisted. There was to be a total of four hours (i.e. two weeks' talks) on the Old Testament, and a similar time allocation was given to the New Testament, Church History, and the Life and Worship of the Church To-day. The next problem was to decide on the time of year. This proved exceedingly difficult. Apparently if it was summer the people wouldn't want to go into a lecture room; if it was winter the people wouldn't want to leave their firesides; if it was autumn the new activities in Church organisations would be just beginning and spring was too near Easter! But the organising group pressed on. With the willing co-operation of the ministers Churches agreed to set aside for the period of the lectures one or two of their usual activities. The lectures were to begin towards the end of January, proceed throughout February, and continue into March. The evening fixed was Friday. The time was 7.15 p.m. Coffee and biscuits were to be served by members of the local W.M.A. group at half-time each week. Details of the proposed course were circulated to each of the Churches and people were invited to register for the course. The announcements about the course made it plain that only those who seriously intended to make the effort to set aside the two hours each Friday for eight weeks should register. The organising group agreed that they would proceed with a minimum of fifteen people. In the event registrations numbered nearly seventy.

The first Friday came and so did the snow. Would those who had registered come or would the pessimists be proved right? About seven o'clock the first snow-covered overcoat appeared on the pegs outside the lecture room, then another and another. Hats, coats, mackintoshes, umbrellas, both of the Oxford variety and of the more respectable kind began piling up so quickly that the organising group from its unseen vantage point realised on the one hand, that the people *were* going to come, and on the other that insufficient thought had been given to cloak-room facilities. But that pile of overcoats, umbrellas and the rest, all dripping with melting snow, remained as a symbol that many Baptists in Oxford were interested in learning more of the Christian Faith. That night about fifty people came. And the numbers kept up throughout the course, in spite of the weather and the inevitable influenza. The average attendance for the eight-weeks was a little under fifty.

It was a revealing and encouraging experience to speak to that company of Baptists. Some had brought note books and busily recorded all that was said; others sat with their eyes fixed on the

speaker and just listened; even the few who had brought the evening paper with them (just in case!) never glanced at it. No group of students was ever more attentive. At question time it was evident that thought had been stimulated, and most of the questions sought rather to elicit more and more information than to start any argument or to express disagreement. A tremendous thirst for knowledge was revealed.

When the course finished in March there was no doubt of its success. Some people asked for more, others for a repetition of the experiment the following year. But the traditional pattern of Baptist Church life could not stand too quickly another disruption—and in any case now that the desire for more knowledge had been stimulated it was better to leave the further teaching to the ministers in their congregations.

This experiment in Oxford is, of course, not unique. All the Colleges at one time or another have served local Churches in this way. But in the light of the Oxford experience some conclusions may perhaps be suggested:

(1). There are, amongst our membership, many who genuinely desire to be better educated in the Christian Faith and who would willingly give their whole minds seriously to this matter.

(2). Many of these people, however, hold positions of responsibility in our Church organisations and, therefore, find it difficult to find the time for the additional regular meeting for Bible Study during the week.

(3). On occasions, for example some time during the current Baptist Union Ter-Jubilee celebrations—when Education is one of the chief emphases—the traditional pattern of Church life might well be somewhat amended for a short period to enable serious teaching to be attempted, either in the individual Churches or in a group of neighbouring congregations.

(4). It is necessary, at all times, to have the pattern of Church life under review to ensure that this desire for knowledge is not underestimated or—worse still—ignored or squeezed out by the “busyness” of the Church. It is fatally easy to shake our heads and to assume that no-one in our Church would be interested in this matter of Christian education. That is what some thought in Oxford and they were proved utterly wrong.

W. M. S. WEST.

Beneath the Cross of Jesus. R. E. O. White. Arthur James. 12s. 6d.

This book is the fruit of many years of scholarly meditation on the Passion of Christ. The scholarship is in the background, but it is there and it gives strength to the writing in these devotional studies, which are lit up by many an apt illustration. The reading of this book will nourish the spiritual life of the reader and will furnish to ministers many seed thoughts for sermons. J. O. B.

TWO EXPERIMENTS IN THE FAMILY CHURCH

FOR the last fifty years there has been a proliferation of Church organisations and activities. There have been special societies for all ages and interests, as if the life of a Church consisted in the multitude of its meetings. That some have been of value to the Church no one could doubt. But that some have outlived their usefulness and linger on because they once served a purpose and we hope they may again, is often scarcely in doubt either. There is one criticism sometimes heard in highly organised Churches that it has never been easy to meet; namely, that their multifarious activities tend to break up family life; that members of a family tend to go down to the Church at different times to different meetings, and are seldom at home together. In some homes maybe that's just as well. But in others, where parents have a strong sense of the value of family life and do their best to create it, it's not so good. Family life is a national asset as well as being of supreme value in itself. There is so much in the world around that militates against it, that it would be a serious thing if it could be shown that in any place the Church was another anti-family factor. But, on the other hand, one of the greatest blessings a Church could bring to a neighbourhood would be for it to bring a stronger impulse to family life and a clear demonstration of how rich and fruitful it can be. For family life doesn't just happen. It is the creation of thought, love and understanding on the part of all the members.

There is, it seems, not a little recognition gaining ground among us today of the real importance of all this. And in some Churches experiments are being made. We give brief accounts of two: an experiment in family worship by Norman Harrison at Bourton-on-the-Water, and an experiment in the family evening by Frank Taylor at Fillebrook, Leytonstone. We are indebted to these two brethren for sharing their ideas and experiments with us.

I. THE FAMILY WORSHIP

For some time the Church at Bourton-on-the-Water had been dissatisfied with the pattern of its worship and Sunday School. The matter was discussed at two special conferences following prolonged consideration in Church meeting. In the end it was felt that no patching or trimming of the old arrangements for Sunday would be adequate, but that a new departure was called for. So they decided to concentrate on the development of a new form of worship on Sunday morning, discontinuing the Sunday School in the afternoon. The key notes should be "Family" and "Worship".

The result has been a new form of family worship lasting for just an hour. For the first thirty-five minutes the children meet separately, opening with a brief act of worship and following on with graded lessons in different classrooms, while adult members of the congregation have their sermon in the setting of a call to worship, brief

prayers, two hymns and a few verses of scripture to lead into the preaching. Immediately after the second hymn the minister gives out the notices, then moves to the Communion Table. As he does so the children enter with their teachers to the accompaniment of a soft organ voluntary. They sit with their parents or teachers as desired, some twelve to fifteen entering the children's choir. As soon as all are settled the minister bids them "as a family" to "stand and say the family prayer". Two children then bring to the Communion Table a Bible and a Sunday School hymn book as a symbol of the unity of their worship with that of the Church, thus giving the children, through their representatives, an active part in the worship. The main lesson, read at the lectern, is on the theme of the whole service, the minister introducing it with a few words to the children summing up what he has just said to the grown-ups, thus unifying the service at that point too. The children's choir then usually sing a hymn, and responsive prayers follow in which young and old participate. The offering is taken up by the deacons, with a child, chosen each Sunday, presenting on a tray the children's missionary offerings previously gathered in their classes. The whole is rounded off with hymn, sanctus and benediction.

One of the great values of this way of doing it is felt to be that the movement of the service is towards the integration of the family (in both senses), and its integration in worship. At the appointed time the children come in, instead of being sent out, and the climax of the service is not lessons for the children and sermon for the adults, but self-offering in prayer and giving and worship and praise, in which all take part actively and vocally together. Another value is that the children take an active and reverent part in the service along with the grown-ups, without giving the impression that their part is a performance which adults sit back and listen to with proud approval—or perhaps the reverse. Their worship is all of a piece with that of the whole Church following an initial period of teaching and preaching. Another value is that parents and children arrive and leave together. In a country district where some live several miles away and come in by car, this is particularly appreciated by parents. There is no waiting about after, nor necessity to come in early to bring the children to school. On Communion Sundays families are invited to remain together, the children witnessing the solemn rite.

The response to this new form of family worship has been so good that congregations have increased throughout the eighteen months since its inception, and several parents come with their children who have not been seen in Church previously. The Church is now far more aware of its children and knows them far better than it did before. In fact this new pattern of worship has proved to be one of the most significant and satisfying things that has happened in the Church for years.

THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
4, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1

To the Members of the Baptist Ministers' Fraternal.

Dear Friends,

Mens Sana in Corpore Sano?

There are exceptions to every rule, Latin tags included, and sometimes even a member of the Ministers' Fraternal, despite the healthy vigour of his mind, may, through illness or accident, be absent from his own pulpit on a Sunday.

I assume your Churches would maintain your stipends. Deacons, however, would also be faced with the need to supply the pulpit and it is not always possible or desirable to call on those who would meet that need without cost to the Church.

We have a Pulpit Supplies Policy which will help your Churches. The particulars briefly are:—

Amount of Benefit. The actual fee paid to the supply subject to a maximum of £5 5s. 0d. per Sunday.

Maximum Duration of Benefit. Fifty-two consecutive Sundays.

Annual Premium. £1 10s. 0d.

The policy is available to Churches affiliated to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, Baptist Union of Scotland, or Baptist Union of Ireland, whose ministers have an unexceptional health record and whose age does not exceed 64 years.

Your deacons should write to me if they are interested.

Yours sincerely,

C. J. L. COLVIN,

General Manager.

II. THE FAMILY EVENING

The Family Evening at Fillebrook is now in its third year. It grew out of this growing concern that there is far too much segregation in Church life today. The varying age-groups, interests and activities tend to function in isolation, without it being realised that in so doing they are making Church fellowship a fragmentary thing. Though they worship together on Sunday they see no need of working and praying and playing and discussing together during the week, or of any fellowship outside their own small circle. The small circles may be good. But the isolation is not so good.

So Fillebrook returned to the idea of the Church as a family, not only on Sunday but during the week, too. And Thursday was fixed as Family Evening. The premises are adequately heated. The doors are open from 7.30-10 p.m., and a multiplicity of activities take place, all coming to a united climax in the Devotional Session; at any time after which people are free to move off home. The evening is designed on a broad basis in the belief not only that the Church is a part of the family of God, but in belief also in the comprehensive nature of our Christian faith and its adequacy for the whole man, body, mind and spirit. Christianity has to do with the way life is lived in all its many forms of necessary and pleasurable activities, and with the kind of personal relationships established as men and women, young and old, rich and poor, do these things together. So there is table-tennis for young people, there is billiards for men, there are table games for older folk, and there are comfortable chairs for those who like nothing better than a cosy chat and a chance to relax and knit. Later on in the evening there is a cultural session, with a talk and some discussion, sometimes on matters connected with our own family life as Baptists, sometimes ranging over the world or going out on to one of its fascinating highways or by-ways, which from His parables our Lord Himself obviously loved. Then, both because of our physical needs and also because they further promote fellowship there are, of course, refreshments.

At the centre of the whole evening is the Quiet Room, where individuals or groups can go aside for prayer and meditation; and where, at a certain hour, for twenty minutes or so, all games ceasing, young and old meet and worship together before resuming their pursuits.

Strangers and visitors are always welcomed. Indeed it is an admirable opportunity for introducing people to the life of the Church and of helping them to feel at home. It is a taste of family life for the lonely, and there is healing in it for those up-sides with life. It can be, too, a sort of ante-chamber to the best kind of evangelism, where the love of Christ is first felt in the family life of His people, and so has some real meaning when the stranger, who has first met it there, ventures at last into the sanctuary and hears it preached from the pulpit.

“ THE CHURCH ON WHEELS ”

DRIVING along a newly constructed highway in one of Africa's fastest growing cities—Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, I caught a glimpse of the largest caravan I had ever seen. In a flash the idea of a “ Church on Wheels ” was born, and later confirmed in prayer. On investigation the caravan proved to be a “ Café-de-movealong ” which had gone out of business. It became obvious that by pruning some gaudy decorations, the interior could be converted into a tastefully decorated place of worship—a church to be taken to the people. Enquiries revealed that £500 would be needed to purchase the caravan, surely the largest caravan on two wheels in the world, with a seating capacity of fifty-five.

A vigorous policy of extension was afoot in our Salisbury Baptist Church and although the deacons were largely sympathetic, the funds were just not available. Prayer was made and a penniless Pastor set out one morning—he returned at night with the necessary £500. There was rejoicing at the Manse and particularly in the hearts of the two donors, one of whom had done missionary work in Palestine, and the other a Rhodesian pioneer, who had walked bare-footed into the country at the turn of the century.

A Church deacon took special leave and with a team of willing workers converted the café into the mobile Church, and on 22nd September, 1957, having been conveyed to its first “ Outspan ”, it was solemnly dedicated to God and to the service of those living in areas where churches had not been built. Dr. Stern, Principal of the Baptist College, was the special speaker.

The purpose of this new venture can best be summed up by the text which adorns the sides of the “ Church-on-Wheels ”: “ THEY WENT EVERYWHERE PREACHING THE WORD ”, Acts viii, 4.

“ *They went everywhere* PREACHING THE WORD ”. The primary object of the “ Church-on-Wheels ” is the preaching of the Word of Life with a view to the establishment of Churches.

“ *They went EVERYWHERE preaching the Word* ”. The “ Church-on-Wheels ” can literally be taken everywhere, provided there are good roads and a powerful tractor. So far, there have been three “ Outspans ”; in each the Church has remained for approximately nine months. Each Sunday a family service is held at 6 p.m., and this is run in conjunction with a Sunday School held in the Government school of the area concerned. The sites for the “ Church-on-Wheels ” are carefully selected and at the termination of the “ Outspan ” the prospects are prayerfully weighed up and, if it is thought advisable, plans are envisaged for permanent work. In the last area a large stand has been purchased with a view to the building of a church, and a minister has been called.

“ *THEY went everywhere preaching the Word* ”. The “ They ” in this case, is a band of laymen grouped together in a Fellowship,

the Kerusso Fellowship, and assisted by ministers and missionaries. A layman has been appointed superintendent. Members of the Fellowship take the lay-preachers' course of the Baptist Union of South Africa and the "Church-on-Wheels" gives the practical outlet for the work they do in the lecture rooms. One of the laymen who preached his first sermon there in the "Church-on-Wheels" is now at the Baptist Theological College of South Africa, and during his vacation, he was called to look after the work of the "Church-on-Wheels" which, by dint of prayerful visitation and enthusiastic preaching was filled with worshippers Sunday by Sunday.

So it is that the Church is finding a way to the heart of the people where they live. Invariably, when the time comes to move on, many, enriched by the preaching of the Word, are sad to bid farewell, but keen to get on with the task of building a permanent place of worship.

S. HUDSON-REED.

Between the Testaments. By Charles F. Pfeiffer. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. \$2.95.

This book attempts to sketch the history of the Jewish people against the background of the Persian and Greek Empires during the intertestamental period. The background history is well enough done, considering the space given to it, but it is too much condensed in places to make altogether intelligible reading.

The scholarly approach is conservative, and critical problems such as the chronology of Ezra and Nehemiah, the nature of the Samaritan opposition to the work of building, the date of the Book of Daniel, etc., are passed over as if they just did not exist. The treatment is rather disproportionate. More space might have been given to the growth of religious ideas during the Greek and Roman periods. The final chapter on "Apocalyptic Literature" is tantalisingly short and, if it be included at all, should have fuller treatment than here accorded to it. Nevertheless, this is a readable book which gives insights into a most interesting period of Jewish life.

D. S. RUSSELL.

Into the Light of Christianity. William J. Schnell. Baker Book House. \$2.95.

The book claims to set "the basic doctrines of the Jehovah's Witnesses in the Light of Scripture". This, in addition to providing us with a considerable quantity of somewhat soulful autobiographical information, is very much what the author, himself a convert from Russellism, does. The book reads like an old-time tract. This very feature, however, taken together with the fact that it is written and printed in an unmistakably "American" style may make it more acceptable to the type of mind attracted by the perversions and peculiarities of the Watchtower Society.

A. R. LISTON.

THE B.M.M.

93, Gloucester Place, London, W.1

Dear Sir,

In my travel up and down the country, questioning men generally as to the possibilities of getting men's Clubs or Fellowships going in our churches, I have often heard it said, "Our Minister is hesitant" and I have been wondering why?

I would have thought that all Ministers would be eager to meet the men already in the Church in such a friendly fashion as is common in Clubs and Fellowships, and to discuss together ways and means whereby jointly they might reach out to men outside the local Church.

It may be there is some misunderstanding of the Nature of Contact Clubs and Men's Fellowships. It should be clearly understood what Men's Movement itself has in mind for outline programmes. It has no time for the Club which makes use of church premises, but takes no interest in the Church itself, and runs a purely secular programme without even an epilogue at the close of each meeting. We realise that an all-religious programme, nicely attractive to church members, may fail to attract the man outside, and I think a judicious blending is very often called for. A session programme could well include discussions and talks on many matters of interest, such as the Constabulary, the work of a Magistrate, and all kinds of other interests; but there should always be devotional meetings and time for Bible study, etc., arranged from time to time, and no evening should end without a scripture reading, a hymn and a prayer.

This letter is being written in the sincere hope that any misconceptions that may have arisen may be cleared and that all our Ministers may feel that the B.M.M. is a faithful ally on which they can depend.

If any are still in doubt, kindly note that we shall be pleased to help and advise further. The Secretary of our Movement would be pleased to hear from any Minister who is concerned about the men in his Church and their coming together.

Yours most sincerely,

ARNOLD S. CLARK,

President, Baptist Men's Movement.

Rambles with Young Folk. John Macleod. Independent Press. 6s.

Most of us find the Children's Address difficult and know the temptation to provide whimsy for the adults, rather than food for the children. These 40 short talks are of the kind to stir the imagination of juniors and younger seniors. Wisely, moral teaching is not the aim, and the spiritual point is made with brevity and force. Most of the themes are drawn from Christian biography, science and art, the last providing some particularly fresh and attractive material. Many have already had wide circulation in the *Christian World Pulpit*, *Sunday School Chronicle*, and elsewhere. They are worthy of re-issue in more permanent form. D. J.