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# The Fraternal

OCTOBER, 1948

No. 70

## EDITORIAL

### THE CHURCH AND COMMUNISM

WILL Karl Marx prove in the long run to be an ally and not an enemy of the Christian faith? Judged by the recent pronouncement of the Roman Church on the subject an affirmative answer to the question from that quarter is unthinkable. According to the Roman view Communism is of the Devil, an enemy to be fought tooth and nail in a life and death struggle.

The Anglican Church has also declared its mind on the matter, and, to our view, in a more Christian and positive way, for while the Lambeth Declaration speaks in a forthright fashion about the evils of Communism it also recognises that Communism, in its passion for social justice, offers a challenge to the Christian Church.

If there is any pronouncement from our own denomination on this issue we venture to hope that it will avoid the barrenness of a merely negative tirade. We have to reckon with the fact that in many lands Communism has attracted not only some of the natural thugs of the world, but also some of its finest young men and women because of their discontent with the evils of capitalism and their concern for a juster social order. Is there not something to be learned from a movement which can inspire men and women with a passion for disinterested service and a willingness to make any and every sacrifice in the cause? Can such a movement be *wholly* of the Devil? Is it not much more likely to be a mixture of good and evil, truth and error? When we recall the power of Communism in lands of poverty and exploitation is it not even conceivable that though it is based on a false philosophy of life it is God's judgment on an unchristian social order? Let us by all means recognise the evils of Communism, but also go on to ask what God is saying to us Christians in the rise of this movement. May He not be summoning us to a deeper understanding of the social content of our wide-ranging Christian faith?

The Student Christian Movement is doing a useful work in publishing books which expound the significance of Communism for Christian faith. Alexander Miller's "The Christian Significance of Karl Marx" (3s.) and J. M. Cameron's more recent "Scrutiny of Marxism" (2s. 6d.) may be mentioned. We are glad to know

that a book on the subject is shortly to be published by the Carey Kingsgate Press from the pen of H. Ingli James. It will be read eagerly by those who know him as a man who, while rejecting the lop-sided materialism of the Communist, is no whit behind him in his concern for social justice. Ministers are not called to become experts on the merits of dialectical materialism, but they ought to know what issues are involved in the impact of Marxism on Christian faith and ethics. It is only on the basis of knowledge in these matters that they can be helpful guides to others.

Canon Alan Richardson, in his fine book, "Christian Apologetics," suggests that Karl Marx is one of the (unrecognised) allies of the Christian faith in the fight against rationalism. It is a stimulating suggestion. There is certainly something stimulating, and for us ministers immensely encouraging, in the fact that the Communist movement has as its goal the ideal of social justice. The means it employs to achieve its ends are often evil, but the goal itself is one with which the prophets of the Old Testament were certainly in sympathy. May not the present weakness of the Church be in part due to the fact that we Christians have been content with conceptions of the Kingdom which are too narrowly individualistic, less than Biblical in their depth and range?

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### WIDER STILL AND WIDER

Dr. Arnold T. Ohrn, the newly appointed Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, writing from the Queen Elizabeth on his return from the meetings of the Alliance Executive, sends us the following message. The suggestions contained are excellent but their carrying out would mean more organisation and a special fund. Our brethren on the Continent would have to be enrolled as Associate members and their subscriptions provided. Can this be done?

The message begins: "I have to-day for the first time had the chance of reading a copy of your magazine and of making the acquaintance of your organisation. The thought struck me, what a good thing it would be if Baptist pastors on the Continent could be drawn into that circle of friends which you British have organised! During this summer's travel in various countries I have met many of these men, some of them isolated from colleagues who can share their thoughts, some of them bereft even of the books which once were their solace and source of inspiration. Would it be possible to arrange for correspondence in English between British pastors and pastors in the countries from Norway to Italy? Do not we Baptists need to strengthen our consciousness of belonging to a great World Fellowship?"

## THE SACRAMENTS

IN the January *Fraternal* an article entitled "The Ordinances" sought to discard the term "sacrament" and to view Baptism and the Lord's Supper primarily as opportunities for expressing our dedication and gratitude to God. To look on them chiefly as occasions for the bestowal of grace was regarded as selfish, untrue to experience and unbiblical.

The present writer is not greatly concerned to defend the use of the term "sacrament," though its loose employment by certain writers is scarcely adequate ground for rejecting it. He does, however, deplore that a fellow-Baptist, in a discussion on the nature of the sacraments, should write with scarcely a reference to the Scriptures. Experience has abundantly shown that we cannot take the Bible for granted in this or any like enquiry. Constantly we have to recall Paedo-baptist colleagues from building on the sands of tradition and individual fancy and make them examine the New Testament foundations. If we, of all people, find ourselves in opposing camps over this subject, we need to take our own medicine and turn again to the documents of our Faith.

What is the chief end of Baptism? There can be little doubt that the general emphasis amongst us falls on its value as a means of confession and that other significations are subordinated to this main idea. It is normally held to make no difference to the condition of the baptised person; its virtue lies in the expression of spiritual realities already appropriated. Such a view accords with that of the article quoted: Baptism is our act for God, our response to His appeal for obedience.

Without denying the confessional value of Baptism, we suggest that it is a secondary, not primary, meaning of the rite, and that the additional conclusion mentioned above is a pure rationalisation, impossible to be squared with the New Testament expositions of the matter. In every explicit mention of Baptism it is regarded as the supreme moment of our union with Christ in His redemptive acts for us and our consequent reception of the life of the Spirit. In Rom. vi, 4-8, the statements, "We were buried with Him . . . united with Him by the likeness of His death . . . our old man was crucified with Him . . . we died with Christ," and their counterparts of resurrection with Christ, all imply that outward expression and inward experience should coincide, rather than that the latter precede the former. Paul interprets his language for us in Gal. iii, 27, "As many of you as were baptised into Christ did put on Christ"; the act mediated the experience of receiving Christ. So also 1 Pet. iii, 21, views Baptism as the occasion of declaring a good conscience towards God and participating in the resurrection life of Jesus Christ.

Manifestly, union with Christ and sharing in His life cannot take place without receiving the Holy Spirit. If no explicit Scripture

linked Baptism with the gift of the Spirit we should have to postulate the relationship. Why, then, should we be at pains to deny that Titus iii, 5, refers to Baptism? "Not by works of righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing (or laver) of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Comparing this with Acts ii, 33, we infer that Baptism initiates the believer into participating not only in Christ's death and resurrection but also in the Church's experience of Pentecost; the three moments of redemption are regarded as fused into one experience in the act of Baptism. Paul's statement, therefore, "In one Spirit were we all baptised into one body," must be taken to relate water baptism and Spirit baptism as ideally concomitant events in individual experience.

If this be valid exegesis, how can one assert that the important thing in Baptism is what we give to God? Without minimising the necessity of faith and confession of Christ, such a view is tantamount to esteeming our act of surrender to God as of greater value than His gift of Himself to us.

The objections taken to this view are usually on other than exegetical grounds. Free Churchmen are disinclined to believe that a sacrament can have such significance. It seems aimed against the teaching that a man is renewed in spirit and made heir of salvation on the exercise of faith. It makes Baptism operative instead of symbolic of a crisis already accomplished in the believer. It postpones the operation and gift of the Spirit from the submission of faith to the reception of an outward ordinance.

Yet it is precisely in that word "postpone" that the key to the problem seems to us to lie. For the New Testament knows nothing of postponing a baptism after conversion. Every recorded baptism takes place immediately upon profession of faith, the instances are too well known to require statement. In the primitive Church conversion and baptism are so indissolubly linked together that they may be regarded as a unity. In such a context to speak of a Christian dying and rising with Christ and receiving the Spirit of Pentecost in baptism is no magical concept, for the submission to the rite was the occasion of surrender to Christ. This is no setting of a sacrament over against repentance and faith, as though Baptism made conversion unnecessary, but the intertwining of the two so that baptism is a part of conversion. It is only when that primitive relationship is separated that sacerdotalism creeps in and *opus operatum* becomes the watchword instead of the New Testament principle *nullum sacramentum sine fide*.

Baptists seem to have overlooked the fact that they have been almost as culpable as others in breaking asunder the unity of conversion and baptism. It has become an established custom

to introduce a probationary period between a man's profession of faith and his confession of it in baptism and joining the Church; sometimes it is three months, sometimes six, while if the person is younger as much as twelve months. Baptism thus tends to become a kind of promotion in discipleship, a first milestone in the Christian pilgrimage, instead of initiation into Christ and the Christian life. The main excuse offered is the necessity of giving a new convert instruction so as to establish him in his faith. We grant that this is necessary, but who said it should precede baptism? Contrary to popular opinion and practice, the whole New Testament set-up of doctrine and organisation is based on the assumption that instruction in doctrine is for the baptised Christian, not for the enquirer.\* If that seems like putting the cart before the horse it is only because we still are not used to the fact that *kerugma* precedes *didache*, the gospel before doctrine. Dodd and Brunner have surely taught in vain if we have not grasped that, yet our practice belies what they have striven to demonstrate.

If under modern conditions we fear to baptise converts straightway, then let us recognise that in so doing we have changed the nature of baptism. The New Testament declares that it is the transition of the believer from one world to another, from life estranged from God to life in Christ; whatever else baptism twelve months after conversion may bring, it cannot bring *that*; to teach that it will, is to head straight for Romanism. But let baptism once more be regarded as part of conversion, the moment of supreme surrender rather than the expression of a believer's obedience, and we shall be free once more to teach the New Testament doctrine of Baptism.

It is to this serious view of Baptism that former Paedo-baptist theologians like Barth and Brunner are now turning, not to the concept of an ordinance whose prime significance is the action of the candidate. It is this conception which certain leading Anglican theologians are now urging their denomination to face and with which they are endeavouring to bring their present practice into line (see especially the report of the Archbishops' commission entitled, "The Theology of Christian Initiation"). It would be the height of irony if our generation witnessed New Testament Baptism being championed by the theologians of Paedo-baptism communions while Baptists themselves lapsed into a sub-theological view of the rite by which they are named! If we are to take that opportunity, which Wheeler Robinson foresaw a generation ago would come, of leading the Body of Christ to the true view of Baptism, we shall do it only if we rise to a clearer apprehension of it than we appear to possess to-day.

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\*Note the significance of the fact that the Gospels, as well as Epistles, were primarily for believers. Luke i, 4.

There is much we would like to say about the Communion Service if space permitted. We constantly hear repeated Paul's record of the Institution in 1 Cor. xi, 23-26, as of course is right, but why is the significance of 1 Cor. x, 16, so frequently ignored? There the Lord's Supper is defined in terms of communion with Christ, and of His people's unity with Him in the breaking of bread and taking of the cup. Similarly, even though we deny entirely a sacramental interpretation to our Lord's discourse in John vi, and modern scholarship is on the whole not prepared to do that, we nevertheless ask whether there is any time when John vi, 57, is more truly realised than at the Lord's Table? If not, then are we being sacerdotal in coming to the Table for spiritual sustenance?

The writer has often reflected on the reason why Baptists hold the communion service once a month only (the second observance rarely affects the majority of a church's membership). Is part of the reason the tendency among us to restrict the significance of the communion service to the narrowest limits that Scripture can bear? However it may be, the fact remains that the primitive churches came together on the Lord's Day to *break bread*, and for such other exercises of worship as they were free to carry out; whatever else exigencies of the time denied observance, this was paramount. For the New Testament Acts ii, 42, xx, 7, suffice, while patristic evidence is too well known to require citation.

As his appreciation of the significance of the communion service deepened, the writer felt that there was no scriptural or theological justification for the usual practice of our churches. He called his church together to discuss making the communion service integral to morning worship, with the exception of the first Sunday of the month, when the normal evening observance was to be retained. Despite fears expressed as to the effect of the service on non-churchmembers and the possible deterioration of its significance through familiarity, it was decided that if the principle was right we must act accordingly; and so we did.

According to our previous contributor our morning attendances should have diminished; instead they perceptibly increased. When the position was talked over after a trial period, not one member wished to revert to the former custom.

The writer urges his brother ministers to consider this matter afresh, not from the point of view of expediency but of principle. That God is not bound to sacraments and that they are abused in some denominations may be freely admitted; the point is, if the New Testament can be taken seriously, He has ordained them for the normal use of the Church. The issue is not simply whether we hold a communion service once a month or more, but rather that if this is the ordained mode of the Church's gathering together for worship, ought we not to observe it? The answer of reason is ratified by experience: there is no occasion when the corporate

worship of a church is so intense as during the communion service; there is no occasion when the unity of Christ's people is so felt as during that service; the fact that other persons take part in the prayers of thanksgiving and worship enables us to express clearly and constantly the priesthood of all believers; the very elements of bread and wine perpetually set before us God's redemptive acts and help to keep Christ central to faith.

Where Scripture and experience corroborate one another so completely, why go another way?

G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY.

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### OUR THREE-FOLD TASK

IT is now just over four years since my college career ended and I bade a fond and grateful farewell to those walls in which

I had studied and played and made friends with some of the best men I ever hope to meet. My student days were over; my days as a minister had begun. The task that lay before me seemed august indeed, and clearly defined; it was to be the spiritual leader of a community of some two hundred souls and to guide them forward towards the increase of Christ's kingdom. The intervening years have brought a deepening sense of the augustness of this task and a clearer view of its ultimate purpose, and for that I give thanks. But a difficulty, unforeseen in those idealistic college days, has arisen. And in raising it here, I like to think my name is Legion, and that I speak in the name of many.

Here it is. How can a minister best lead a community of people, almost every one of whom agrees as to the ultimate objective in view, and almost every one of whom has a different idea of the best means of getting there? "One the object of our journey"—so says the hymn, and it is true. But how can we get that unity of spirit which shall integrate our energies and set us marching in step along the same road like a great army? Having asked my question I must try to answer it, and let me hasten to add that my answer lays no claim either to originality or to scholarship. It is the word of a learner, and nothing more.

Our task would seem to lie in three main fields, all of which overlap in practice but which may be treated separately for the purpose of clarity.

First of all, the field of Worship. So many of our people live in little worlds of petty interests and narrow horizons, and if they are to be united in a living and advancing fellowship, they must start by becoming citizens of a larger world. And if our worship is the majestic thing it should be, it will lead our people into that larger world in which trivialities are seen in their right perspective and wider horizons open even for the most



short-sighted. It will set before them the vast dimensions of the "worth-ship" of God in His sovereign power, inscrutable wisdom, and infinite grace.

The worship that does this for our people will not be too deeply influenced by the minister's own likes and dislikes, nor will it bear too deep an imprint of his own personal experience. We must see that we do justice to all the sides of God's character that have been revealed to us, even those on which we personally may not find it easy to speak. Some may deplore a slavish adherence to the Church's calendar, but at least it ensures that the great truths of our faith, from Advent to Trinity Sunday, are properly recognised. I do not suggest that with an excess of zeal we should attempt fifty-four sermons on the Trinity—two on the prescribed Sunday and on each of the twenty-six successive "Sundays after"—but are there not some of us for whom even one sermon on this great theme would be an innovation?

Entry into that larger world which worship can bring will also give to the local community the sense of belonging to a far greater fellowship than is represented in any one building on a Sunday morning. Our worship should remind us of our unity with the great world-wide Church of to-day and with those who down through the ages have had faith in Christ. What a liberating experience it would be if the walls of our churches could be (figuratively, of course!) knocked down, so that we could see that holy and innumerable fellowship to which we belong! And what better way of achieving this than by including in our worship some of the great classic hymns of the Church, such as the Magnificat, the Te Deum, and some of the Psalms, in which we link hands across the oceans and across the centuries with our Christian brethren?

There are difficulties, of course. But the worship that sets forth all the "worth-ship" of God will not only be less monotonous but a positive enrichment to the people whom we lead. R. C. Gillie has a delightful phrase: "There must," he says, "be precision of aim. God in His mercy often guides a poorly aimed arrow from our bow to a target which was either unseen or apparently beyond our range. But there is no reason why we should draw our bow at a venture Sunday after Sunday." What is the aim of our worship? It must be to recognise the "worth-ship" of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which claims from us in return a living sacrifice of body, mind and spirit.

The second field in which our task lies is that of Fellowship. When we invoke the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in the Benediction, we are thinking not so much of the companionship of the Spirit as of that living, spiritual fellowship among believers which is created by the Spirit. And that fellowship needs to be fostered if our community of well-meaning individuals is to be knit together into an integrated whole. There are many ways in which this

may be experienced, and surely one of the most important is the meeting during the week devoted to prayer and Bible study. Must we not look in meetings of this kind not merely for an addition of Biblical knowledge, but for a simultaneous growing together in grace ?

The faithful nucleus whom I am accustomed to see at the mid-week meeting are no doubt typical of many such gatherings. A few are conscious and unashamed Fundamentalists, a few are equally Liberal in their outlook, and the rest would not claim allegiance to either party, though it is doubtful whether they would join with the late Bernard Manning in saying, "A plague on both your houses!" Yet all would confess with gladness that as we have studied and spoken and prayed together there has been a refining grace and a deepening experience at work in us. It is not to be expected that we shall always agree with one another, but if we are to advance we must certainly appreciate and respect one another in the bonds of that Christian love without which, whatever else we may have, we are nothing.

The fellowship thus begun will not confine itself to the prayer-meeting but will go with us as we roll up our sleeves and go out to the strenuous tasks of the Kingdom. There is a fellowship realised in service which can bind together men of different temperament and outlook in a wonderful way, as we have seen in Commando Campaigns. Yet almost instinctively it will turn for its nourishment to prayer, for it is when we are on our knees, like Dr. Orchard and his Methodist minister friend, praying in silence for an hour until the tears ran down his cheeks, that we are nearest to each other.

And thirdly, the field of Evangelism. The evangelistic note will, of course, have its rightful place in our regular worship, and we must not neglect it there. But if our Church-members are to be welded into that living unity which we have in mind, they must be given opportunities of putting their faith into action in an attempt to contact and win others. And while we may talk a lot in general terms of the duty of the ordinary member to be an evangelist, I believe it is we ministers who have to create the opportunities for them to use. A regular monthly People's Service, with printed invitations, has put into my young people's hands a weapon which they have used with heartening results in the work of evangelism.

If we create the opportunity, our people will usually follow, and it is this willingness to follow which constitutes the real proof of their evangelistic zeal, rather than the holding of certain prescribed tenets of belief. Journeying one day with a friend, I asked him about the religious life of a certain town. His reply will always stick in my mind: "Evangelical, but not evangelistic." The right sort of beliefs are important, but in the end they are useless

unless they produce the right sort of people. And the need of our churches to-day, as they themselves know and as we know, is for evangelists.

Worship, Fellowship and Evangelism—these are the fields in which lies our three-fold task. And if we are willing to do our work with all the grace, patience and imagination that God gives us, our strange and sometimes uninspiring collection of businessmen, farm-labourers, school-teachers, shop-assistants, factory-workers, university students, old and young, rich and poor, wise and simple, will begin to be knit together into that unity of spirit and purpose which bids us, greatly daring, call it the Body of Christ.

IRWIN J. BARNES.

### THE BAPTIST CHURCH AND ITS LIFE

ANYONE who enquires about our conceptions and expressions of Church life has only to read the text books. Most writers base upon John Smyth and Thomas Helwys—no ordinary persons. Do we feel as we study them that our churches are loyal to the principles and practices which gave them birth? I am far from affirming they are not—but possibly there is some vagueness in our minds and loosening of grasp. In some ways our Church life to-day is better than that of our fathers; in other ways it is not so good.

The Church's impact upon the world, so far as any power to transfigure life goes, emanates from the quality of its spiritual life: organisation, propaganda, operations must be coloured by it; will indeed be selected and determined by it. We may be too ready to adopt new forms and means, just because they are novel and make a popular appeal, which are not at all suited to mediate the spiritual ideals we are supposed to cherish. Surely the organisation and polity should wait upon the spiritual ideal, and not be such as to strangle it?

All this is bound up with the distinction made by Brunner between the Church of order and the Church of faith. We must at all costs teach and practise those things which make possible the being and growth of the Church of faith. If the institutional life is so complicated, or so trivial, as to leave no reverent leisure to attend to the significance of the Church of faith, then we ought to make the organisation simpler and more suited to our deepest purpose.

The special feature of our conception of the Church is due to Believers' Baptism, with its emphasis upon religious experience. It would be a fruitful corrective if we reverted more often to such experience as went forward in our own lives. The preaching I heard in my teens was not of the essay or academic kind. It was simple, straight and made much of Christ. One was brought

sharply against the claims of Christ upon the loyalty of the individual soul. At the prayer meeting people talked to Christ as if He were everything to them. They prayed continually for conversions. Not only the minister, but the Bible Class leader and others talked to me—"Did I feel that I loved Christ—did I see my way clear to accept Him as Saviour and Lord?" The emphasis was not—"would I join the Church?" but—"would I decide for Christ?" When I did, I was instructed in baptism, not so much by the minister but in the Bible Class. All the passages were drilled into us until we couldn't help but see the truth. Two men visited and prayed with me and would not be satisfied until they heard from my own lips that I was trusting in Christ. This method is thought by some to be cumbersome. Indeed it may savour a little of presumption and is always delicate; yet I have not found people squeamish about it. I don't see why they should be. A Church has the right to be satisfied of the sincerity of those admitted to her communion, and if people find they can slip into membership without understanding there are definite things to believe and an ideal to aspire to they may soon find it valueless. Leslie Weatherhead says the churches fail because they are cluttered up with unconverted people.

But the point I wish to make in citing my own experience is that, if I am in any measure useful to God's Kingdom, it is due to the fact that I was associated with a Church of faith. The Bible Classes, prayer meetings and Christian Endeavour Societies then prevalent were vehicles of the Spirit in a way that some of our modern auxiliaries cannot be. Where Christ is, where His word is received with faith, there is the Church of faith. To that essential core we must look if we would know the nature of the Church's life.

From that experience flow the three main principles: (1) Diversity in Unity, (2) Right of self-government by the indwelling Spirit, (3) the Sole Authority of Christ. Because these mean spiritual freedom they are always important, since life out of Christ is bondage. Two quotations from John Smyth will save a lot of comment.

"The Church may do any lawful act without the elders (ministers), but elders may do nothing contrary to the body. When the Church is without eldership it has power to preach, pray, sing psalms, administer the seals of covenant: also to convince, excommunicate and absolve, and all other actions, either of the Kingdom or priesthood—and still retain this power when elders are chosen."

Here is spiritual competency, and the want of it, even in churches where there is pastoral oversight, proclaims our spiritual poverty. Then Smyth says:—

"If you knew the comfort and power of the Lord's ordinances as we do and that growth and reformation which is in some

of us thereby, you would be so ravished with the power of God's ordinances that you would acknowledge the Church to be terrible as an army with banners, yet amiable, lovely, and beautiful."

The real life of the Church is imbedded in those two things—in warfare against evil, and in the beautiful. A conception of the Church that is undistorted may come to us by reading the great passage in the Hebrews, every sentence of which breathes a supernatural inspiration:—

"Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all . . . and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant."

A Church which dwells with those mighty centres of inspiration will have an experience of God that is communicable and it will have the passion to communicate it. Without that, talk about arresting decline is largely wasted breath.

HOWARD MAISHMAN.

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### ISAAC WATTS AND HIS HYMNS

**I**SAAC WATTS died on 25th November, 1748. Plans are rightly being made in many parts of the world to celebrate his bicentenary. Watts deserves honour not only by Congregationalists, and not only by Free Churchmen. The best of his hymns have become the treasured possession of all branches of the Church.

Literature about Watts is not very extensive or altogether satisfactory. Thomas Gibbons, a tutor at the Mile End Academy, produced a memoir in 1780. Much more valuable is Thomas Milner's "Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rev. Isaac Watts," published in 1834. Paxton Hood based a characteristically readable biographical study on these two earlier books, and in 1914 Thomas Wright of Olney added a number of new facts as a result of his diligent antiquarian researches. The Independent Press is issuing an English edition of a recent, new and scholarly life by an American author, Arthur Paul Davis. But the best modern introduction to Watts's hymns will be found in the essays of Bernard Manning.

Watts's achievement was a notable one, and there are several strange features about it. He was thirty-one years old when he published his first volume of verse. The first edition of the famous "Hymns and Spiritual Songs" appeared two years later in 1707. This aroused considerable interest and Watts turned almost at once to the making of a metrical version of the Psalter. His

ill-health delayed its completion till 1718. In 1720 he published "Divine Songs, attempted in Easy Language for Children." Then, at the age of forty-six, for some unexplained reason, he ceased writing verses. He lived on for another twenty-eight years. More than forty volumes came from his ready pen. He became almost a national figure. But he never turned again to the composition of hymns. Did he become somewhat ashamed of his more youthful efforts, or suspicious of his undoubted facility at verse-making? Did he wish to be known to posterity as a theologian rather than a hymn-writer? If so, history has given its verdict in no uncertain terms. Watts's "Guide to Prayer" has continued to attract the attention of a few discerning readers, but that was one of his earliest prose compositions, first issued in 1716. No one now talks much about his other works.

Perhaps Watts's own contemporaries misled him. Though Dr. Johnson included a brief essay on Watts in his "Lives of the Poets," his verdict was that of many others. It is an interesting example of how wide of the mark the generation next succeeding may be in its literary judgments. "His poems," said Johnson, "are by no means his best work; I cannot praise his poetry itself highly; but I can see its design." And again: "His devotional poetry is, like that of others, unsatisfactory . . . It is sufficient for Watts to have done better than others what no man has done well."

It is a moot point how swiftly Watts's hymns and psalms were accepted for use in worship. When he was a young man, there was still acute controversy about the singing of hymns. Following the Puritan tradition many Nonconformists would allow nothing but the Old Metrical Version of the Psalter prepared in the sixteenth century by Sternhold and Hopkins, and this had to be "lined out" by the clerk or precentor for congregational purposes. It was at the Communion Service that "hymns" as distinct from "psalms" were first generally allowed. The Baptists, Benjamin Keech and Joseph Stennett, were pioneers in writing hymns for the use of their congregation at the Lord's Table. We know that Watts sometimes heard Stennett preach, and the little collection of thirty hymns "for the Holy Supper" which the latter issued in 1697 may well have influenced the younger man. The third section of "Hymns and Spiritual Songs" was "prepared for the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper." In any case, Watts's verses were the attempt of a younger generation to provide something more satisfactory for congregational purposes than the barbarities of Sternhold and Hopkins, something more varied than the New Version of the Psalms of David by Tate and Brady which first appeared in 1696.

R. W. Dale says that Watts's hymns "must have come into general use even before the death of Queen Anne," but a good deal of evidence suggests that this is too sweeping a statement.

At any rate, outside Congregationalism they made only slow progress. It was their use by Wesley and Whitefield that made them widely known and popular. As a young chaplain in Georgia, Wesley discovered their effectiveness. When the Evangelical Revival began to sweep through England, Watts's hymns played their part beside those of Charles Wesley and other Methodists in providing words for the new song that was in the hearts of the reborn.

This is interesting because there is no evidence in Watts's own story of any dramatic or deeply emotional conversion. As a writer on theological subjects in later life Watts's position was somewhat ambiguous. At the Salters' Hall Conference on subscription to creeds and confessions he was for compromise. He was sometimes described as a Moderate Calvinist, sometimes as a Baxterian, and sometimes as a Socinian. J. Hay Colligan writes of him as "a liberal theologian," though the phrase had a rather different nuance when he first used it from that which it carries to-day. Watts's views on the Trinity, on the Person of Christ and on Election have all been challenged as only doubtfully orthodox. But the hymns a man writes—or if he cannot write hymns, the ones he likes to sing—are usually a surer guide to his faith than his attempts at theological rationalisation. As Dr. Horton Davis has recently reminded us: "If the Puritan would not subscribe to the Apostles' or the Nicene Creed, his praises sounded forth his evangelical beliefs. If he would not say his creed, he sang it." No one can read the hymns of Watts without being made aware of the central certainties of his faith.

Watts stood on the threshold of the Age of Reason, indeed lived on into it. But he was very conscious of the limitations of reason.

Where reason fails with all her pow'rs,  
There faith prevails and love adores.

Five of Watts's poems find a place in Lord David Cecil's "Oxford Book of Christian Verse." They represent him much less satisfactorily than the one poem in the "Oxford Book of Mystical Verse"—the fine stanzas which begin

Far in the Heavens my God retires  
My God, the mark of my desires,  
And hides His lovely face;  
When He descends within my view,  
He charms my reason to pursue,  
But leaves it fainting in the unequal chase.

What Baron von Hügel called "true creatureliness of feeling" comes out again and again in Watts's verse. He would have understood Karl Barth's emphasis on the gulf between God and man.

Watts did not offer his friends a theological system in verse, or a necessarily comprehensive selection of subjects. There is a

strange lack of order or framework in "Hymns and Spiritual Songs," though the volume begins fittingly with "A new Song to the Lamb that was slain" and ends with twenty doxologies which remind us of how characteristic in Watts is the note of praise and thanksgiving. Watts was a convinced Protestant of the Puritan tradition. His Protestantism and his patriotism find expression again and again, sometimes in rather amusing ways, as in the verses for 5th November and in the "Praise to God from Great Britain." It is more important to note how closely Watts keeps to the Bible. This is one of his greatest sources of strength and accounts for the enduring quality of so many of his compositions. Much of his writing was but the putting of Scripture into verse.

But Watts had "a canon within the canon." A rough survey of the contents of the first book of "Hymns and Spiritual Songs," which consists entirely of metrical paraphrases, shows that of the 150 pieces 60 are based on the Old Testament and 90 on the New. Of those taken from the Old Testament 9 come from the Psalms—a foreshadowing of the complete metrical version he was later to undertake; 7 from the book of Job; no fewer than 20 are based on passages from Isaiah and 14 from the Song of Songs. Of the 90 New Testament paraphrases 31 are from the Gospels, 41 from the Pauline Epistles and 15 from the Book of Revelation. Watts is interested in Scripture as conveying with divine authority a plan of salvation. He believed that man had been rescued from mortal peril by the intervention of the Son of God and that only by faith in the Saviour could he escape destruction. It is the great cosmic drama of man's redemption that occupies Watts's mind and draws out his praise and adoration. It is this theme which underlies all his songs and paraphrases. It is in terms of the mighty act of God in Christ that he interprets the Psalms. Many of the most treasured of Watts's "hymns" are from his Christian version of the Psalter, among them "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun" (Psalm 72), "Our God, our help in ages past" (90), and "I'll praise my Maker with my breath" (146). "'Tis not a translation of David that I pretend," Watts wrote to Cotton Mather, "but an imitation of him, so nearly in Christian hymns that the Jewish Psalmist may plainly appear, and yet leave Judaism behind." He wrote scathingly of the mere repetition of the Psalms in Christian worship. When we have been uplifted by some noble words, "yet," he says, "the very next line that the Clerk parcels out to us, hath something so Jewish and cloudy, that darkens our Light of God the Saviour." Who will deny the truth of that as applied to the Psalter in the form in which it is attached to the Book of Common Prayer, or as it appears in the Chants section of Nonconformist hymnals? Watts wanted to concentrate the attention of the worshipper on the divine-human figure, the God-Man, Christ Jesus. To the titles, offices and work of the Saviour, Watts returns again and again.



No one can study Watts's hymns, with all their occasional crudity and triteness, without realising that they are the work of a great Christian believer. "The most passionate product of his genius" is in the third section of "Hymns and Spiritual Songs":—

When I survey the wondrous Cross  
Where the young Prince of Glory dy'd,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Those lines will be sung so long as the Church militant is here on earth, for they are part of the song of the Church triumphant and of those angelic choirs whose music so constantly sounded in Isaac Watts's ears.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

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### SOME COMMENTS ON THE OFFICE OF GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

THE issue of *The Fraternal* devoted to the work of the General Superintendents has aroused much interest, and it is to be hoped that the reprint of the articles will have a wide circulation in the denomination, for there is still a certain amount of prejudice and ignorance concerning the office.

One or two reflections have suggested themselves to the present writer. The first is this: that the post of General Superintendent is no sinecure, notwithstanding the economic security it carries with it, and its freedom from the unceasing toil of preparing sermons and addresses—though no doubt the Superintendent soon becomes aware of the limits set upon the repetition of sermons and addresses by press publicity! Generally speaking the life of a Superintendent is a hard one, involving continual journeys, great sacrifices in home life, all too little time for unhurried study, reflection and prayer, and for some, attendance to much wearisome detail. This aspect of things is too little recognised.

A second reflection is that the office has established itself in a remarkable way in the comparatively short space of thirty-three years. It can be confidently asserted that only abysmal ignorance makes possible the occasionally heard assertion that we could manage quite well without the Superintendents. Their leadership in the areas, their ministry of counsel and friendship to churches and ministers, and their vital part in the settlement of ministers are of inestimable value to the life of our denomination. There is special honour due to the pioneers in the office for the work they wrought and the confidence they evoked, but the calibre of the most recent additions to the ranks of the Superintendents may be taken as an indication of the increasing regard in which the office is held among us.

Mention of the part played by the Superintendents in effecting settlements leads to a third reflection. In some respects this must be the most disappointing aspect of their work. I notice that Mr. Motley in his article makes the point "that in 1946 some 80 settlements were effected and over 800 nominations were made." It would be interesting to know if the 80 settlements were all effected through the nominations of the Superintendents, or whether that is the total of settlements during the year. In any case it is clear from what Mr. Motley says that again and again they are frustrated in their efforts to settle ministers by the nominations made by others, especially, no doubt, ministers. His plea that the Superintendent should be made acquainted with suggested nominations is both weighty and reasonable, and the present situation constitutes a summons to all of us who have influence in these matters to pass a self-denying ordinance on our enjoyment of the influence we possess, and work closely with the Board. The college Principals obviously have a special position in relation to the men they train, though here also there is need for close collaboration between them and the Superintendents.

Although the Office has become an integral part of our denominational life it must be recognised that it involves a serious withdrawal from the man-power of the pastoral work of the churches, and that at a time in which we are suffering from a grave and painful shortage of men able to lead our largest churches. This ought to make us concerned to see that the withdrawal from the pastorate—the front-line trenches of our warfare to-day—is fully justified by the service which our Superintendents render to the denomination. Taken together the Superintendents are a strong team of men, embodying an impressive concentration of gifts of leadership, preaching power and organisation. Are they making their maximum contribution to the life of the denomination?

It is an encouraging sign that the denomination is eager to see our Superintendents fulfilling in ever larger measure the role of spiritual leadership. It was with that end in view that they were first appointed. "The General Superintendent's first concern shall be the spiritual life of the Churches and the exercise of a spiritual ministry, especially by encouraging ministers to deeper study and more constant prayer, and the Churches to more steady evangelisation by Sunday School work and all other means of winning the world for Christ." The reaffirmation of this conception of the office by the Polity Committee and its assertion that "the time has come to give our General Superintendents larger opportunities of exercising such a ministry" were warmly welcomed, together with its suggestions as to how this may be more fully achieved. It is spiritual leadership that is the greatest need of the hour. At present their leadership flows into the life of the denomination mainly by the single stream of the personality and work of the individual Superintendent. The Rev. Henry Cook

has been the foremost figure among us in the evangelistic movement which resulted in the issue of the pamphlet, "Speak—that they go forward." More recently it has been a deep concern for the future of our village churches felt by the Rev. Harold Tebbit which has led to a group being formed to investigate the matter. I should like to make a plea for the *corporate* spiritual leadership of the General Superintendents, that they should become a kind of spiritual cabinet, the spearhead of spiritual leadership in our denomination. After all, what other individual or body of individuals in the denomination has so intimate a knowledge of the churches and the religious condition of England as the Superintendents? The work of the Union is now so many-sided and the responsibility of its General Secretary within and without the denomination so varied and exacting that it is manifestly impossible for him to undertake the responsibility I have in mind.

The new General Purposes and Finance Committee of the Union has to handle such a large and varied body of business that it cannot be expected to give spiritual leadership to the denomination. The point may perhaps usefully be made here that if the Superintendents are to give corporate spiritual leadership there must obviously be adequate liaison between them and this Committee.

I would illustrate my plea by referring again to the plight of the village churches, the gravity of which it is not easy to exaggerate. Hundreds of them are threatened with extinction. If there had been a general recognition some years ago that this situation, involving the disappearance from many of the villages of England of any effective Gospel witness, was the kind of matter to which our Superintendents should turn their united attention, a field for their combined operations, we should undoubtedly have had a report long since recommending measures to deal with the situation, and the whole position might have been very different from what it is. Again, Mr. Inqli James speaks in his article of some of the problems now facing the denomination; among them dying churches in our big cities, and the need for specialised ministries. These are problems which call for just that *corporate* thinking for which the General Superintendents are well equipped.

Mr. Motley tells us in his article that ministerial settlements comprise "the main work of the Superintendents' Board," although he adds that at many of its meetings some other matters are discussed, but they obviously have to take a secondary place. If they are matters of first-class importance I should like to see them taking at least an equal place, and I believe it is only as they do that we can gain for the denomination the maximum service of which our brethren are capable. No doubt the carrying out of such a policy would mean some changes in present practice. It would certainly mean the extension of the meetings of the Superintendents' Board. It may perhaps be argued that our Superintendents are

already so burdened with meetings of Executives, Committees and Sub-Committees that it is impossible to burden them still further. My answer to that would be that it is a matter of priorities, and that the denomination cannot afford to allow its General Superintendents to spend their valuable time and energy on concerns which make it impossible for them to give their maximum spiritual leadership to the denomination.

The thesis of this article may perhaps raise a question in the minds of some about the dangers inherent in any policy which would increase the power of the General Superintendents. Would this not be a step towards an episcopal conception of the office? The answer is two-fold. In the first place, it is only a greater measure of *spiritual* leadership that is contemplated, an extension of the individual spiritual leadership which has always marked the best of the Superintendents. Now that the office has been set free from the limitations formerly imposed upon it by its connection with the Sustentation Fund we ought, in the interests of the denomination, to provide them with an opportunity to exercise that corporate spiritual leadership from which it would so greatly benefit.

Secondly, the Baptist Union Council provides an excellent parliament for considering, and, if necessary, challenging, the proposals of official persons or bodies within the denomination, and it can safely be left with the responsibility of seeing that the Superintendents do not abuse any new opportunities with which they may be entrusted!

The General Superintendents have already earned the gratitude of the denomination for the service they have rendered to it. There is a still greater service they can *together* render, and it is for the denomination to encourage them to do so.

JOHN O. BARRETT.

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## CONGREGATIONAL RETREATS

**T**HOSE who first organised Retreats for Ministers encountered everywhere a prejudice against the word. On all sides was heard the cry, "We don't want to retreat; we want to advance!" It was surprising that such a superficial criticism should have come from men whose daily task it was to use words accurately and to distinguish between their various shades of meaning, but it was interesting to note that after experiencing a Retreat, the critics usually became enthusiastic advocates. It came to be realised that, just as an army must sometimes retreat to higher ground in order to have the advantage in attack, so the Christian Army must sometimes retire from the world in order that a fresh attack may be launched upon the world from more sure spiritual ground. In Ministerial Retreats we have discovered that Jesus calls not only

to activity but to rest. "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while," He says—though the verb used (*anapauo*) suggests that the rest is only to be temporary, with a view to further activity. Indeed, we have found that we have only exchanged one kind of activity for another. The rest is not mere quiescence. We may be resting from the bustle of everyday life, but it is that we may be the more spiritually active. We have come away from the Retreats grateful for the uninterrupted time of meditation and prayer. We have gone back to our ministries refreshed with renewed spiritual strength and a fresh vision for our task.

Returning to his congregation, many a minister must have wished that his members could have a like experience. Some do indeed get such a quickening at Conferences and Conventions and the Summer Schools. But, even so, the need is only partially met. The primary aim of a conference or school is usually to instruct, and frequently too little time is given for silence and prayer. Moreover, only a very small proportion of our members are able to attend such gatherings. It might be practical in some churches for the minister to take a section of his congregation away for an occasional week-end conference. With a group of young people living and playing and praying together, the minister would find it easy to give that intimate instruction in the devotional life which is so essential if we are to have a body of strong Church members. Such would, however, be impractical in most churches. Does this mean that the main body of our members can never know the renewal which comes at a well-conducted Retreat? The purpose of this article is to plead that the benefits which we have derived from our Ministerial Retreats should be shared with our congregations. If we who are set apart for the Ministry need a "temporary retirement for religious exercises" (as the Oxford Dictionary defines a Retreat), how much more the members of our congregations, caught up in the hurly-burly of modern family and business claims and jaded by the noise and racket of twentieth-century civilisation.

Now the ideal would undoubtedly be that the minister and his whole congregation should go away together for a few days to a quiet conference house. As that is impossible, we can at least arrange an occasional week-end in such a way that more time than usual is set aside for quiet meditation. Here is a suggested scheme for such a week-end.

In a first Retreat it is wise not to attempt too much. A Friday night session might be added as people came to realise the value of such a Retreat, but at first one should aim at two sessions on the Saturday, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. These should be held in the church, and the co-operation of the organist should be enlisted. If the congregation is small it should be confined to a limited area of the building. During the interval

between the sessions tea may be served in an adjacent hall. To take a meal in silence is not characteristic of Baptist genius and should not be attempted, but it can be tactfully suggested that the topics of conversation should be such as will not break the atmosphere of the Retreat. During part of the time letters from missionaries might be read or selections from a spiritual biography or devotional classic. The sessions of the Retreat should be kept short for the concentration demanded, both spiritual and mental, is tiring. They should be begun and ended punctually and great attention should be paid to timing so that adequate time for quiet meditation is given. The addresses should not be regarded as the chief feature. They are of value only in aiding meditation and self-examination. Many of our members who live rushed lives or in crowded homes will greatly value the opportunity of thought and prayer. The opening address should make it clear that the aim of the Retreat is not so much to teach new truth as to make operative in their lives the truths already known. In the silence God has a chance to speak to us and we have the chance to make our own the unsearchable riches of Christ which are already ours. It should be understood that the Sunday services are to be regarded as a continuation of the Retreat. The sermons should be in harmony with the main theme of the Retreat and, wherever possible, the Sunday should close with a Communion service at which there should be a corporate act of re-dedication.

Here is a specimen syllabus for a Retreat of two sessions. The general theme of the Retreat is Church Membership.

SESSION I. *Saturday afternoon, from 3.30 to 5.*

- 3.30. Hymn (an act of praise).
- 3.35. *First Address. The Purpose of a Retreat.*
- 3.45. Prayers : (i) For the help of the Holy Spirit.  
(ii) For the knowledge of God's Will.  
(iii) For a generous spirit in obedience to God's Will.
- 3.50. Hymn. "Master, speak! Thy servant heareth."
- 4.02. *Second Address. The privilege and the responsibility of the Church Member.*
- 4.10. Silence.
- 4.15. Prayers : (i) An act of Praise (read together the Te Deum).  
(ii) An act of Confession.  
(iii) Intercession for the whole Church.
- 4.25. Hymn. "Glorious things of Thee are spoken."
- 4.30. *Third Address. The Character of the Church Member.*
- 4.40. Silence.
- 4.45. Prayers : (i) An act of Confession (read together Psalm 51).  
(ii) Petition for a Christlike character.
- 4.55. Hymn. "O for a heart to praise my God."
- 5.00. Break for tea.

SESSION II. *Saturday evening, from 5.30 to 6.30.*

- 5.30. Hymn. "Jesus, stand among us."  
 5.33. Invocation. Read together the *Salvator Mundi* (Chant 126).  
 5.35. *Fourth Address. The Devotional Life of the Church Member.*  
 5.45. Silence.  
 5.50. Prayers : (i) Self examination.  
                   (ii) An act of Confession (read together Hymn 247).  
                   (iii) Silent Resolutions.  
 5.55. Hymn. "Join all the glorious names."  
 6.00. *Fifth Address. The Lord and Saviour of the Church Member.*  
 6.10. Silence.  
 6.15. Prayers : (i) Thanksgiving for our Salvation.  
                   (ii) The Offering of ourselves.  
 6.25. Hymn of Consecration.  
 6.30. Benediction.

This syllabus is merely to illustrate the kind of lay-out of a session. It underlines the importance of timing, stresses the place of silence and shows how the hymns and the chants in our book may be used not only for singing but to provide material for corporate acts of Thanksgiving or Confession or Dedication. Such sessions remain quiet and unemotional but they can be very searching, making a sustained appeal for the surrender of the will to Christ.

The method of a Retreat is very simple, but it is capable of infinite variety and freshness. It can, for example, be used with sections of the congregation. It forms an admirable preparation for the Annual Meeting of the Sunday School to have a Retreat of one session in the afternoon followed by tea together and the General Meeting in the evening. The subjects for such a Retreat would be "The Sunday School Teacher's Task," "The Sunday School Teacher's Needs," "The Sunday School Teacher's Resources." It will be realised that such afternoons provide an admirable opportunity for giving help in methods of prayer, in reading the Bible and for teaching the difficult art of meditation. And, whether the Retreat is used for the whole congregation or for a group only, there will be two valuable by-products—the discovery of the value of the hymn book as a devotional manual and training in the use of silence. Both of these discoveries will bear rich fruit in the private devotions of the members and in the public worship of the Church. Such Congregational Retreats, prayerfully prepared, can be instruments in the hand of God for the deepening of the spiritual life of a Church and Congregation.

THE FUTURE ORGANISATION OF THE CHURCH  
FOR WORK OVERSEAS

THE B.M.S. and the modern missionary movement began, in Fuller's words, in "the working of our brother Carey's mind." We take that for granted. But there was more in it than that. It was part of a new surge of evangelism sweeping through our denomination. It can be traced in part to Bristol College, where as the Bristol Education Society under Dr. Caleb Evans, efforts were being made to evangelise many parts of Southern England and Wales. In Bristol were men like Samuel Pearce, John Sutcliffe, James Hinton (who later took the Gospel to "the heathen villages" around Oxford and got a grant from the B.M.S. towards it), William Steadman, Joseph Kinghorn and Joseph Hughes (later the founder of the Bible Society). The foreign mission was not so much a separate venture as a part of a new evangelistic movement in the denomination. Neither the foreign nor the home mission was the begetter of the other. They emerged and ran side by side as Baptists awakened to a new sense of responsibility to carry the Gospel to the heathen, wherever they might be found.

This is important because it may well be a pointer to the future: a church with the missionary spirit will strive to spread the Gospel at home and overseas. There is no doubt that the B.M.S. has helped to keep that spirit alive in our denomination. When we have been tempted to see our task as that of merely "holding our own" the B.M.S. has kept in our minds the call to evangelism. To-day we see the Church everywhere as a minority set in pagan and heathen surroundings. That is true of the Church in the West and in the East. And that is how Caleb Evans and Carey and Sutcliffe saw it. Because of that they felt the urgent call to evangelise at home as well as to send the missionary overseas. We should do well to look at the wholeness of our task and see that its challenge is the same everywhere. The new surge of life for which we pray, and for which we should be preparing, will not break out in one direction only. It will almost certainly express itself as a new surge of evangelistic effort at home and abroad.

As Carey was the architect of the mission abroad so was Fuller the architect of the organisation at home. Their method was to tour the churches and enlist their help. When missionaries came home they were used to press the claims of the mission. The General Baptist Mission followed a similar plan when the Orissa Mission began. In 1840 the Bible Translation Society was formed. The Zenana Mission, formed in 1867, and the Medical Mission, in 1901, enlisted help from the churches by appeals and deputation, and by forming local committees in the churches. These auxiliaries to the B.M.S. made their separate appeals, sent out their own candidates and planned their own organisation at home until in 1925 they were merged into the one Baptist Missionary



Society. To-day the home organisation is unified. So also is the overseas work, but whereas the home side has been, through the B.U., brought swiftly under single direction, the foreign work has taken longer to unify. The auxiliaries had developed their work with a certain measure of independence. It was possible for some pieces of work to grow because of "private enterprise" on the part of a missionary. Like the expansion of the Empire the several parts of the B.M.S. and its auxiliaries went in wherever they found an opening. Only in recent years has there been an all-in policy and only with the publication of Dr. Williamson's report has it been possible for the first time to have a total survey of our fields, our commitments and our opportunities. For the first time we are able to relate that to the capacity (economic and personnel) of the churches at home. How to do that without over-reaching our resources or under-estimating the generosity of the churches, is one of the immediate tasks. The outcome will largely shape the future organisation of the churches at home for work overseas.

Another task facing the churches is the relationship of the B.M.S. to the Baptist Union. Unlike the Methodists, the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterians, each of which has a Foreign Missions Board under the wing of the main denominational organisation, Baptists have a completely independent Missionary Society. Indeed the B.M.S. may be said to be more thoroughly representative of the Baptists of Britain since it has in its membership many Baptist Churches which are not members of the Baptist Union. But the times in which we live are showing us the necessity of achieving a closer union between the B.M.S. and the Baptist Union.

1. It is necessary because we need to see our task as a whole, home and overseas. The immensity of the task demands it. The more we can find unity in spirit and service the sooner we shall see the fruit of our efforts. When you think of some of our churches, it is impossible to say which they are : B.M.S. or B.U. They are both. They serve both and are equally at home with a B.M.S. Meeting or a B.U. Rally. So with many of our ministers and laymen. That's how it ought to be with the denomination as a whole. Let us get together and look together at our total task.

2. The simple grounds of efficiency and economy are driving us to it. The multiplicity of organisation is tending to produce top-heaviness. It is a most welcome development to have the Carey Press and the Kingsgate Press united in one publishing house. But for the fiasco of the Assembly in 1938 we might by this time have had more sections of our denominational work co-operating closely if not united like the two Presses. We shall have to come to it. It can't be rushed. We may have to wait for Anno Domini to clear some obstructions. But we might as well make up our minds, and begin to plan for it.

3. Whether we like it or not the younger churches are forcing us to face the question of unifying our own denomination. They want to know where they belong. As members of National Churches in the World Council of Churches, they want to know who are their opposite numbers in Britain—the B.M.S (to which they have hitherto “belonged” but which has no place as such in the World Council) or to the Baptist Union. New alignments are taking shape and we at home are getting left behind because we are out of step.

4. There is also the larger question of church union. There are all kinds of problems created by our semi-detached condition. For instance, if anything comes of the conversations between the Free Church representatives and the bishops, and the Baptist Union goes into a united or federal scheme, how far does that involve the B.M.S. ? Or if the Ceylon Baptists, under the B.M.S., join the proposed United Church of Ceylon, how far is the B.U. affected ? On both issues it is difficult to see how we can speak as a denomination when we are not a fully integrated body of churches.

There are other grounds for believing that closer union must come before long and with it, we believe, there will be a saving of effort, money and confusion. Such union will result inevitably in a better union of organisations within each local church, as outlined in the Baptist Youth Movement scheme. The home organisations may learn much by fusion with the missionary organisations : they may, for instance, learn to make much more of their opportunities for propaganda purposes than at present.

We cannot forget the Colleges which train both ministers and missionaries. The kind of missionary required in the future may well be mainly of the specialist type, or men with unusual gifts. To forecast accurately is not possible : but our Colleges will do well to keep their curriculum from becoming too rigid. Unusual demands may call for a more flexible training course for some of our men.

I look forward to the next twenty-five years with keen anticipation, not to say with relish. We are going to see some interesting things happen to all the churches and not least within our own denomination. All the glory is not in the past. The future also has its glory if we are big enough men with big enough hearts and minds. If the changes that are needed are to take place then much grace and liberal-mindedness will be required : and much charity. The flexibility and versatility of our future organisation may well depend upon how many men of such spirit our Colleges can send forth in the next decade or two. Such men will be greatly needed. If we are true to ourselves it will be as we catch the spirit of Caleb Evans, who has been described for us by one who knew him as a man “who abhorred a narrow and sordid spirit : a liberal man who devised liberal things.”

W. W. BOTTOMS.

## THE FRATERNAL BLACK AND WHITE

ONE of the dangers of our age is potted thinking. We like to get everything tied up under a snappily worded label. We like policies expressed in slogans. The catchword may thus dominate in the council chambers while truth cries forlornly in the streets. The problem of South African race relations suffers from that treatment. It can be too easily dismissed as a "colour bar." Then it is easy to gather ammunition for a critical onslaught. A slight acquaintance with the situation, however, soon reveals that a simple statement is impossible, first of all because the problem varies with individuals. Europeans have all shades of feeling concerning the natives, some may hate, some may be kindly disposed but helplessly ineffective, and others may be very forceful in the effort to uplift. Natives too may vary in their attitude to the European, some having a smouldering hatred, and others, like an educated native whom I know, who declares that his people need us and depend on us. Secondly, the racial problem cannot be taken alone, for it is inseparably linked with problems of culture, economics and politics.

At this stage it is impossible to say that South Africa belongs to the black man and so the whites ought to get out instead of complicating the situation. The warfare of neighbouring tribes for the domination of southern Africa was ended by the invasion of Europeans generations ago. Now, white people as well as black claim South Africa as their birthplace. The clock of history cannot be turned back. Also, white men's initiative, wealth and labour have made this barren, mysterious country, which was once only a cabbage-patch for sailors, into a prosperous and rapidly developing land. It would be sinful to depart even if it were possible. Why then is the racial situation so bad?

One of the reasons is in culture. Natives are flocking to the towns from the countryside for employment. They may have been very raw until then, but they rapidly pick up a veneer of civilisation. It is not surprising that they should be forced to live in certain areas. Their ways are not European ways, as a visitor to any location soon knows. This is not helped by great overcrowding in poor houses with inadequate sanitation and other services. Johannesburg alone is short of more than 40,000 native houses. The education of swarms of children, who are often without parental influence, presents a huge problem. The breakdown of tribal life has helped in a degeneration of morals. Crime is by no means a monopoly of natives, but in some places some of them are a menace to the security of person and property. There are few recreational facilities to occupy spare time in more gentle and profitable ways. Dirt, disease, and inefficiency are continual complaints against some of the native workers. Only a few can get to colleges and universities. Then why is not something done to give better

housing, education and recreation? That is where the problem shifts into the field of economics.

It must always be remembered that there are about nine million natives to about two million Europeans in South Africa. The burden of the development of all sections of the peoples must fall on the Europeans, for they alone have incomes on a taxable scale. All help for the native population must be on the sub-economic level at present. It is not surprising, then, that development is slow. British people have not been free of complaints when taxes rose steadily to pay for the education of their own children, and the development of their own social services. What would it be like to bear the burden for a people four times as numerous as your own in addition? The burden has not been neglected. Europeans in South Africa get rather impatient of a one-sided criticism that fails to see the good that has been done, and many will admit the need for more and better aid. Why, then, do the Europeans not train the natives for more efficient service, raising their income and standard of living so that they can bear their share of the social requirements? In some quarters there is a definite resistance to such a policy, based on a fear that the training of the native will undermine the security of the skilled European worker. One may talk airily about principles of economics and work creating work, but it is as well to recognise that this fear is not without some foundation. It is not a problem that can be solved by the statement of a principle or the sudden issue of a government decree. Europeans with a definite standard of culture and living have got to live in order to work for the ultimate development of South Africa. Natives, as yet, are unable to develop a full and satisfying life as individuals, families and communities. The economic servitude of the native must come to an end, that is certain. The method is a matter for careful development.

Here the problem drifts into the realm of politics. At the moment in South Africa there is a white oligarchy in the form of a democracy. Natives have no real say in the government of the country or of themselves. With all due respects to doctrinal democracy, it is easy to see the difficulties of its application in a country where the populace is not homogeneous, as it is in Great Britain. There is solid basis for a European fear of committing racial suicide by meeting all the native demands and giving the franchise to such a huge native majority, especially at the present stage. What, then, can be done? There are two main views on the matter. The first is a policy of separation, putting natives in separate areas and allowing them to develop and govern themselves. There are two big difficulties in the way. One is the fact that the native is now so bound up in the economy of European South Africa that it is practically impossible to foresee how he can be detached from it. The other is the problem of finding the land for such a project, with its attendant problems of soil conservation,

water supplies, industrial development, migrant populations and settlements. The second policy is one of development. The native should be counted as a subject for Christian trusteeship, given increasing incentives and facilities for education, the attainment of a higher standard of living and, ultimately, full citizenship. This enlightened policy seems to grip a large number of Europeans now. A fear still lingers, however. Can this policy be pursued without ultimate assimilation?

This is necessarily a very sketchy review of a most complicated situation in which nothing at all has been said of the additional problems of the Asiatic. If it sets the brethren praying for South Africa it will have done its work and this great land will be helped along its difficult way.

E. WILLIAMS.

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## CHRISTIANITY AND HISTORY

IT is natural in a period of widespread uncertainty and unrest that thoughtful minds should be moved to reconsider the story of mankind, in the effort to discover whether there be any coherent meaning in human life. It is to this great problem that E. C. Rust directs our attention in his recent book, "The Christian Understanding of History." As he explains, he is concerned, in particular, to consider the relation of "salvation," or Biblical history, to the general history of the world. What help may we find in the one towards the understanding of the other?

The main contention of the book is that the Biblical record explains why human history must always appear to human reason as a vast enigma. Man as revealed in that record is in rebellion against his Creator, debased and impaired in every part of his being by the fall. His reason is a "cracked mirror" which at the best reflects truth only in a distorted shape. Sin, moreover, has not only darkened reason but brought disorder and confusion into the situation in which reason seeks meaning and purpose. History is the story of a humanity that by its own act has fallen under the domination of "the demonic." It is the story, moreover, of a humanity that being under the domination of the demonic is under the wrath of God; and even God can bring order into the situation only as He "breaks through His wrath" and breaks down the power of the demonic. "He must break the demonic bondage that holds the whole race in thrall . . . If He is to forgive sinful men, then something must take place which shall satisfy the Divine anger. Only so can the Divine mercy prevail over the Divine laws, and restoration be made possible on the Godward side."

The second thesis maintained in this book is that Biblical history is the record of how this has been done. The race, impotent to break its bonds, is under sentence of death, and from that sentence it cannot escape. The demonic can be defeated "only if the Divine judgment is met on behalf of the race by One Who has faced all that men face without succumbing to the wiles of the demonic and thus tastes for us that death which He Himself does not deserve." Christ satisfied these conditions on the Cross. By penitent faith we may share in His penal sacrifice. Our sin has been expiated and we enter into a new order of life. Thus God in Christ has created a new humanity revealing the real meaning of human history.

That, briefly and most inadequately summarised, is the argument with which Rust presents us. It is set forth at length and with a wealth of illustration adding considerably to its weight and impressiveness. Few Christians will deny that the conclusions Rust draws are in the main true. Yet doubts keep creeping in. The argument is sound, but is it not a little unbalanced, a little unfair even to fallen human nature? Are the majority of our fellows as much given to what Rust, following Niebuhr, has called "God Almightyness"? One thinks of neighbours, indifferent to religion but toiling with self-sacrificing devotion and without a thought for their own safety in the effort to help and succour the suffering during the Blitz. One thinks again of the multitudes of quiet folk day by day patiently following the path of duty, dull though it must often be, often in obscurity, or pain or loneliness. Is there not, despite the demons, a light that lighteth every man. One wonders, again, how human beings can be expected to grasp the truths Rust propounds seeing that human reason is impotent to comprehend them. Is there not a certain incongruity in the fact that Rust should spend his energy elaborating a closely reasoned argument aiming, as he avers, at "substantiating the validity" of Christian teaching over against the rival philosophical systems of our time? To what, in his readers, is the argument addressed if not to the reason in them? Rust indeed explains that what reason cannot discern faith may grasp, but that suggests two questions: What is faith? and, Faith in what? In answer to the first question, faith is defined as "a total act of our whole being"—an act, then, in which reason has a part along with feeling and will. The answer to the second question is that the object of faith is the revelation running through the Biblical record and in particular the salvation which in and through that record God has brought within reach of simple men. "Men are judged by their attitude of faith or unbelief towards the Christ Who on their behalf has acquiesced in the Divine judgment and paid all their debts." One could wish that this great matter had received rather fuller treatment, for Rust has not altogether avoided what Brunner has described as "the cardinal

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error of equating revelation with the communication of doctrine." Nor has he taken sufficiently into account the saying of the Master that those who speak a word against the Son of Man may be forgiven, but not those who malign the spirit of goodness. The former may be merely ignorant or stupid or misled by the kind of training they have received; the latter sin against the light that is in them.

It would have been helpful, indeed, if throughout the book Rust had devoted more attention to the teaching of Jesus and to the testimony of His life. The Barthian school has been accused of denying the reality of the Incarnation, by ignoring the great central declaration of the New Testament that God took flesh, not to conceal but to reveal His glory to man. One would not for a moment suggest that Rust has fallen into that error, but the great danger of recent theology consists in a tendency to minimise the importance of the Jesus of history. If God was indeed in Christ then it is at our peril that we ignore what Christ said and what Christ did, not only on the Cross but throughout His life. One cannot feel that Rust has paid adequate attention to it. He has not completely escaped the danger, inherent in all theological reconstruction of the historical event, of treating Jesus rather as a lay figure fulfilling a predestined rôle in a great plan, rather than as a human being Who in His own character and bearing and attitude to sinful men reveals the Divine nature.

This book raises many further problems that we must reluctantly disregard, but a word must be said on the central problem that Rust is concerned to clarify—that of the relation of Biblical history to the secular history of the race. On that he speaks, as he confesses, with a rather uncertain voice. He cannot admit that the demons are omnipotent even within this present world. He rejects the theory that the kingdoms of the world have been handed over to the powers of evil, "so that its history can have no final significance in the redemptive scheme except as a process from which men need to be saved." He specifically states that God is *the writer of history*, though what He is writing remains uncertain. It may be that human art and science, the achievements of reformers and statesmen, all the patient effort of those who have striven to establish freedom and justice in the earth, have contributed to the fulfilment of God's purpose, but all are vitiated by human sin and human pride. Rust's final conclusion is, "this does not imply however that God may not be accomplishing something despite man's sin in the technical, economic, scientific and sociological developments of man's civilised life. This the Judgment will make plain."

One has the feeling that there are two strains running through this book—one derived from Barth and his school, the other natural to Rust. I hope it is not disrespectful to say that I prefer Rust pure. The reader may suspect that the qualifications and



reservations with which the book abounds are an indication that the writer is not unaware of the conflict in his own mind. It may be that the suspicion is unfounded, for indeed Rust is dealing with the profoundest matters moving in a region where clear-cut pronouncements can never be in place. It is a great thing that a young Baptist has written a book of such quality on such a theme.

It is a book revealing immense erudition and conspicuous ability—a book to be read thoughtfully, slowly and with critical care. It is indeed a great contribution to theological literature, holding the promise of even greater to come.

H. INGLI JAMES.

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### BOOK REVIEWS

*His Likeness. Devotional Studies in the Person of Jesus.* By J. E. Compton. (Carey Kingsgate Press, Ltd.; 56 pp.; 2s. net.)

A choice series of meditations in the Person of our Lord through consideration of the Face, the Eyes, the Lips, the Voice, the Hands, the Feet and the Heart of Jesus. This kind of writing can easily fail by being commonplace, but the author succeeds in avoiding this by an orderly and thoughtful treatment of his themes. This book would be helpful to laymen who have to give devotional addresses and will stimulate ideas in the minds of ministers. The purpose of the book is achieved in leaving the reader with a clearer impression of Him Who describes Himself as the Life.

*The Church and the Eleven Plus.* A Report of the Children's Work Advisory Committee appointed by the Bishop of Sheffield, 1946. (The Religious Education Press, Ltd., Wallington, Surrey; 64 pp.; 1s. 6d. net.)

This is a report on voluntary religious education in the 11-16 age group. The committee have noted that the change from primary to secondary education by children of 11 years of age is now the time when many are in danger of leaving Sunday School. The report pleads for closer co-operation between religious organisations and the work done through the Agreed Syllabuses in Day Schools and suggests ways in which religious education may be continued and leaders trained for the purpose. Two appendices, one pleading for the formation of parents' groups and the other a bibliography, add much to the value of the book.

*God's Ambassadors.* By Bertha C. Krall. (The Religious Education Press, Ltd., Wallington, Surrey; 112 pp.; 2s. 6d.)

A good half-crown's worth! True stories for Juniors, well written and quite fresh in their choice of people who include the Six Men of Tolpuddle, Mary Wallis (the founder of the Free Church at Ewell), Nansen of Norway, Romany and Dr. Frank Laubach. But where are our Baptist pioneers and leaders? The time seems overdue for the committees responsible for accepting books of this kind to have better Baptist representation so that it does not appear as if all the heroes came from other denominations. B.U. and B.M.S. Youth Departments—wake up!

WALTER W. BOTTOMS.

*Book of the Revelation.* By John O. Barrett. (Carey Kingsgate Press, Ltd.; 5s.)

Our Fellowship Secretary has written an excellent series of studies in this confessedly difficult New Testament book. Referring his readers to the many expositions published, Mr. Barrett sets out to show the relevance of "Revelation" to the life of to-day and in this he succeeds admirably. A worth-while volume for teachers and preachers.

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### B. M. S.

The response to the appeal for the deficit has been really magnificent. At the time of going to press the amount received was £12,464. We rejoice with our Society and especially with the Home Secretary, the Rev. J. B. Middlebrook, whose efforts to secure additional financial help for ever-increasing expenses, are tireless. He must be gratified with the success achieved.

As is generally known, Dr. Ellen Clow, of China, and the Rev. J. H. E. Pearse, of India, have been recalled, to become Assistant Foreign Secretaries. Dr. Williamson and Dr. C. C. Chesterman remaining for a further period to continue their outstanding services. At our Sunday morning Prayer-Watch we will remember them.

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### SUBSCRIPTIONS

The majority of our members have renewed for 1948, but a very large number have, so far, failed to do so. This necessitates the sending of special circulars and entails additional work for the Treasurer. Will defaulters do penance by sending, together with their arrears, the subscription—3s. 6d.—for 1949.

All members are reminded that their dues for the coming year should be remitted in January, 1949.