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# The Fraternal

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JANUARY, 1960

No. 115

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## EDITORIAL

**W**HAT'S in a name? Much! British Railways, by such names as "The Flying Scotsman", "The Master Cutler", "The Atlantic Coast Express", attract, almost compel, travellers who would be quite unmoved by the number of an engine or the figures on a time-table.

Those responsible for the two trains now running from the Church House doubtless did their best, but "Home Work Fund" and "Ter-Jubilee" cannot be said to carry poetic appeal or deeply to stir emotion. The name Ter-Jubilee has but meagre appeal-value, while any schoolboy feels that already he has had enough of home work. Green books and pamphlets, excellent as they are, do not sufficiently stir the imagination of an average congregation while, in some churches, even the officials have but little idea of the Baptist Train and the fair country to which it travels. A secretary recently announced to a considerable congregation that the July Communion offering would be given to the "Home Work Fund of the London Baptist Association" for its aged and infirm ministers, widows and orphans. The hearers listened with docility and loyally contributed—their usual sixpence!

In so far as this is true, the remedy lies largely with ministers—that is, with you, gentle reader! It is up to the minister to inform and instruct his people by frequent and discreet reminder. A sermon is not hereby requested or even an addition to the announcements, already too lengthy. What is suggested is an occasional remark by the way, in sermon or conversation, a line in a letter, a few words at the Church meeting, a snappy paragraph in a Church magazine, which will make vivid what lies behind the somewhat abstract titles of these important ventures. That Sister in comely uniform, visiting the homes, leading the Meeting in which, too often, the members have their only contact with the Christian Church. Those young people, the citizens of tomorrow, inspired through the leadership of our Young People's Department. The citizens of today, encouraged by another Department, to apply the Gospel to problems of industry and commerce. The S.S. Adviser conferring with those loyal workers, labouring in the greatly changed conditions of our age. Students in our Colleges being trained for their life-work. That recently erected building, perhaps the only spiritual centre on the new Estate, or the village or down-town cause, where our Baptist witness would fail but for help received from our generous supporters. All this and much more; not forgetting the acute financial needs of those bereaved, or the retired veteran mentioned by the Church Secretary as aforesaid.

Such are some shining items on our Contents Bill, such are some vivid facts behind the titles of the Funds and such, in part, make up our Baptist Train. To ensure the continued running of the train money is necessary, and to gain this support we must stimulate, not scold, our people whose generosity, by and large, is an example

to the world. Baptists do not appeal to baser, selfish instincts as do the Romans with their Pools or the Government with its Premium Bonds. They appeal for offerings unselfishly contributed.

In our American and Commonwealth churches the tithing system has proved successful and this is now being advocated in our churches at home—a tenth for the Lord's work. One man went up into the Temple to pray, and informed the Almighty that out of every twenty shillings he kept eighteen only for himself. We deprecate his spirit, but if his example were emulated our needs would all be met. Wages have considerably increased, but this increase has not always been equalled by corresponding gift. In fact, if many would prayerfully contrast their out-goings on small innocent luxuries with what they set aside for sacred purposes, they, like the other man in the Temple, would beat upon their breasts with a "God be merciful to me, a sinner".

We repeat, that we ministers who owe so much to the Denomination are the key to the situation and should be instant in our advocacy of God's work at home and abroad, with no unhealthy rivalry between the B.U. and the B.M.S. Our people need guidance and leadership. There are all too many who are not only ignorant of the Ter-Jubilee and Home Work Funds, but also of what is meant by "the Baptist Union" or the Sacrament from which we take our name. These may well be urged to purchase or to borrow from the Public Library Ernest Payne's entrancingly interesting "History of the Baptist Union" and the volume of essays written by some of our younger scholars on Christian Baptism.

In all these ways, by the blessing of God, an increasing number of passengers will patronise the Baptist trains, as they speed onwards toward that fair country—a better Britain in a more Christ-like world.

S.G.M.

### MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT

**O**UR present arrangements for ministerial settlement are no doubt far from perfect, and we must do all we can to remedy their defects. Nevertheless, if we set them in an historical background it is evident that we have made great progress in these matters.

At the beginning of the present century at least one-third of our ministers were seeking a change of pastorate. In some areas the percentage was as high as 70 per cent. There were one hundred and sixty accredited ministers without pastoral charge—and there was no out-of-pastorate allowance.\* There were many who realised the need for machinery to deal with the settlement and removal of ministers, and under the leadership of Dr. J. H. Shakespeare the Sustentation and Settlement Scheme came to birth. The Scheme brought into being the office of General Superintendent. Those

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\* Rev. Henry Bonser kindly gave me these figures.

who were appointed to the office were to help churches to find suitable ministers and to help ministers to settle in suitable pastorates, or to move from one sphere to another.

*I. How far has the Scheme succeeded?*

It may go on record that instead of one hundred and sixty men out of pastoral charge, the number in that position at any given time today is only a handful—sometimes as small as two. Instead of a third of our ministers seeking a change of pastorate there are at the time this article is being written only one hundred and thirty-six names on the *Confidential List*. These figures reveal a great change for the better.

*II. How does the Settlement and Removal Scheme work?*

When a church becomes vacant the General Superintendent of the Area sends to the Church Secretary a leaflet—*Suggestions for Churches Seeking Ministers*.

The leaflet begins by stressing the importance of the loyal support of the church members during the vacancy and of earnest prayer, "that the man may with God's help be found who is best fitted to become the shepherd of Christ's flock". It goes on to offer the help of the General Superintendent and suggests the usefulness of the appointment of a Moderator for the period of the vacancy. The point is then made that, while due importance should be given to preaching ability in seeking a minister, emphasis should also be placed on his general record and character. It is also emphasised that the deacons or the Pastorate Committee should be united before recommending a name to the church and that only one name should be recommended at a time. The church is advised to seek a settlement without delay and to remember that "for pastoral work and church leadership, age and experience, so far from being a disqualification, are valuable assets". Guidance is also offered in the leaflet regarding the terms of an invitation to the pastorate. What normally happens is that shortly after a vacancy occurs the General Superintendent meets the deacons of the church, discusses with them its needs and opportunities and the conditions of pastoral service, and then makes suggestions to them about the filling of the pastorate. He continues to keep in touch with the church by correspondence or by further visits until a settlement has been made.

At the beginning of every year a book is prepared for the General Superintendents by their Secretary, containing the names of ministers on the *Removal List*, that is of ministers who have given notice to their churches of their intention to leave within the next nine months, or of ministers whose pastorates will terminate within the same period at the request of their churches—invariably a very small list of up to twelve names. Then follows a list of students leaving our theological colleges in the summer, and then the *Confidential List*, containing the names of up to one hundred and fifty ministers

who have indicated to the General Superintendent of their Area their readiness to consider a fresh sphere of service. Many of these ministers are in no hurry to leave their present pastorates and sometimes decline an invitation before eventually removing. The book also contains the names of men who have been approved as candidates for ministerial recognition, of full-time Lay Pastors and Unaccredited ministers who are ready to consider a change of sphere, and of deaconesses available for settlement. The book is kept up to date as the year proceeds by the inclusion of new names on gummed slips.

At their monthly meeting in London the General Superintendents review first the names of ministers on the *Removal List*, regarding each case as one of urgency, and with a view to making recommendations to churches. Consideration is then given to the names on the *Confidential* and other lists. At intervals the attention of the General Superintendents is concentrated on three ministers from each area whose names are on the *Confidential List*. These are names which have been brought forward by the Superintendent concerned. This ensures that there is no possibility of anyone being inadequately thought about in the general ministration. In addition, a list of churches seeking ministers is prepared four times a year, containing a brief description of the church and the amount of the stipend it offers. This list is worked through quarterly so as to help the churches to find ministers.

### *III. Do the churches co-operate in the Scheme?*

The overwhelming majority do. And this includes the larger and more influential churches. In the North-Eastern Area, with which I am myself most familiar, and where it might be thought that rugged independency would continue to affirm itself, the vast majority of settlements are brought about through consultation with the General Superintendent. It is not true that once a minister settles in an aided church he is likely always to remain in one. Ministers are constantly moving from aided to unaided churches.

### *IV. What difficulties are encountered in the working of the Scheme?*

(1) Imperfectly educated churches.—Although great progress has been made by the churches in co-operating in the Scheme, they sometimes depart from its spirit by ignoring the advice of the General Superintendent and inviting two or more ministers to preach with a view to settlement, close on one another's heels. Or a church may say "We will hear a few men before we really think seriously about settlement". Such unworthy approaches to the quest for a minister usually end with the church concerned in a thorough muddle. Fortunately, it is becoming less and less frequent for churches so to act.

(2) Imperfectly educated ministers.—A minister will occasionally play off churches against one another and visit a church with a view to the pastorate, while carrying two invitations to other pastorates in his pocket. This situation also is becoming less and less common.

(3) Suggestions for the pastorate from a variety of sources.—Suggestions for ministerial settlement are sometimes made to churches, at their request or otherwise, by anniversary preachers, neighbouring ministers, ministers who want to help their friends to settle in a new pastorate, or by theological college Principals or Tutors. It should be understood more widely than it is, that if such suggestions are taken up they inevitably cut across the nominations which have been made by the General Superintendent. This causes disappointment and frustration to the ministers he has nominated, and makes them wonder why their names have not been followed up by an invitation to visit the church.

(4) A good many ministers are unwilling to consider a pastorate in the north. Sometimes the percentage is as high as one-third of the men on the *Confidential List*. It must be recognised that by so limiting the sphere of their movement ministers also limit the possibility of their speedy settlement. Where a minister has adequate reasons on health or other grounds for imposing a geographical limit on his movement, the General Superintendent naturally regard the matter sympathetically.

(5) Although the General Superintendents steadily press the claims of ministers of experience there is still a tendency for the churches to seek younger men. This is probably related to the fact that the churches mostly face an uphill task. They feel the need of the vigour and enthusiasm of young ministers.

(6) The shortage of ministers makes it more difficult to find ministers for the churches.

*V. Are there any improvements that could be effected in the working of the present Scheme ?*

(1) If a church is not proceeding further after a visit from a minister with a view to the pastorate, it should at once advise him. The General Superintendents are pressing the churches to do this, or to request them to do so.

(2) If a minister nominates a fellow minister for a vacancy the General Superintendent will appreciate being advised of the fact.

(3) In the October 1956 issue of *The Fraternal*, V. Greenwood suggested that a new settlement should begin not with a Sunday visit but with a frank discussion between a minister and the deacons about the work needing to be done in that particular church at that time. If there were attraction on both sides the Sunday visit might be the final act in the coming together of church and minister.

This would greatly lessen the importance of "preaching with a view". Some settlements have been made on this basis. It is a great help to proceeding in this way if church and minister already know one another. It may be added that churches do pay increasing regard to the work a minister has done previously.

For the rest, let it be remembered that General Superintendents were themselves once ministers in pastoral charge. Their desire is to serve their brethren. They are always ready to consider how they can best do so. It can be fairly claimed that the present system of ministerial settlement and removal is a great advance on what formerly obtained. But if we can devise a better system we ought to do so, that Christ may be served in His church in the best possible way.

JOHN O. BARRETT.

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## THE BAPTISTS OF SWEDEN

### I.

**T**HIS year we have reason to remember the first Baptist pioneer in Sweden, F. O. Nilsson. For it was just 150 years ago, on 28th July, that he was born.

Nilsson, a seaman, acted as a colporteur in the west of Sweden, and in the course of this work came across some Baptists. In 1847 he went to Hamburg, to be baptised by J. G. Oncken. On 21st September of the following year the first Baptist Church in Sweden was formed, consisting of six people; and on a subsequent visit to Hamburg, Nilsson was ordained as a teacher in "the Swedish Baptist Church". The little congregation suffered severe persecution, which culminated in Nilsson's banishment from the country in 1850. The sentence was strongly criticised in the liberal press, and Sweden became the object of some by no means complimentary attention abroad. The Swedish minister in London wrote: "The English cannot conceive a free social order in which the principal freedom or liberty of conscience is lacking to the extent that a person may be convicted for no greater an offence than having expressed a belief in a different form of Christianity from that prevailing in the land". In 1860 the sentence was reversed.

While Nilsson cannot, perhaps, be counted among the great leaders, he could suffer for his faith and through this he made a permanent contribution to the cause of the Baptist faith and liberty of conscience in our country.

The man who became God's instrument in building up the Baptist movement during this period of spiritual transition was Anders Wiberg, once a Lutheran clergyman, who was obliged by his conscience to relinquish his office. Immediately after his own



baptism he published the book *Who should be baptised and what is baptism?*—undoubtedly one of the outstanding theological works of the age, and one that attracted much attention. In the foreword to the book, Wiberg himself wrote: "I have no wish to be offensive and still less to be misjudged, ridiculed and condemned by God's people. But I cannot, in conflict with my conscience, distort the Scriptures to please folk or to preserve confidence and affection, even among Christians. I have lost this world, I do not wish to lose the next too."

Wiberg was the man behind the confession of the Baptist faith formed during the first years, he was minister of the growing Baptist Church in Stockholm, frequent journeys took him to all parts of Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries, and he was an extremely diligent journalist. During a momentous period he was the leader of the rapidly growing Baptist Churches in Sweden. Wiberg's importance is certainly greater than has been recognised, and it is to be hoped that his contribution to the religious development of our country will be revealed, in due course, in a complete biography.

Just as in the 1850's religious freedom was one of the subjects of debate, so was it also during the 1950's. On 1st January, 1952, a religious law was passed that was, remarkably enough, the first law relating to the freedom of religion in our country. It is true that in the Constitution of 1809 it is decreed that "The King shall not force anyone's conscience nor permit it to be forced", but it was 142 years before this principle was embodied in legislation.

Most Swedish citizens belong to the Lutheran State Church from birth, and up to 1952 the chances of leaving it were restricted. One of the most important prescriptions in the new law was that anyone might have the right to leave the Lutheran Church at will. The former limitation of the right to hold certain community offices to persons who were not members of the State Church, was abolished and ministers of the Free Church Union were accorded the right to officiate at marriages. The right, already exercised, to unite voluntarily in the formation of a church was established by law.

The debate following the passing of the law has been as lively as the earlier discussions of the Bill. As it turned out, only a few Swedish citizens, both non-Christians and Free Church members, availed themselves of the right to leave the State Church—certainly a surprising fact. For the majority, membership in the Lutheran State Church is not looked upon as a matter of religion; one is registered as a member of the Church as a matter of course, and it has no religious significance. It is interesting to note, however, that the younger Baptists are, to an increasing extent, appreciating the logical consequences of their faith and are leaving the State Church.

The 1952 law on religious freedom supplies one of the clearest pieces of evidence during the last decade of the esteem in which the

Free Church movement has come to be held in the Swedish community; and there are other manifestations of this confidence. For instance, the views of the Free Church Council are now usually sought in legislation and other affairs of the State; the Free Churches are represented in a current Government investigation of the disestablishment of the Church; and Government aid is being granted for the educational activities of Christian youth work and Christian adult schools, *i.e.*, "Folk-High-Schools". It might be remarked here that the question of Government subsidies for Free Church youth work has brought to the fore another of the more delicate questions relating to religious freedom, namely, whether or not we members of the Free Church denominations shall accept such aid as long as our right to determine the nature of this activity is not restricted.

## II.

As regards the relationship between the Baptist Union and other denominations, there has long been very close co-operation between the three oldest Free Churches: the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the Mission Covenant Church; and in 1918 these were formed into the Free Church Council. This collaboration was subsequently extended and the question of a Free Church Federation was brought up. Even though, in fact, this might hardly command more authority than the present Council, the proposal was met with strong objections, and it was rejected by the five denominations which most recently had joined the Council. It was particularly feared that the new organisation might subsequently interfere in the internal affairs of the individual Churches.

As in so many other parts of the world, the Baptists in Sweden have suffered a schism. One of the most serious crises was the split of the 1930's, when many Churches and groups of Churches broke away and established their centre at the Orebro Missionary Society. An important move towards co-operation was made when the two Churches agreed to issue a common hymn-book, a project that is expected to be completed in 1961.

The Baptist Union belongs to the Swedish Ecumenical Council, but, inconsistent as it may seem, not to the World Council of Churches. Ecumenical questions were of considerable importance during the difficult time at the beginning of the 1930's, but the proposal to seek association with the World Council of Churches would be met with strong objections from not a few Baptist Churches. The whole of this matter has been left open for the time being.

With regard both to difficulties and prospects the Baptists are in the same position as other Free Church denominations in our country. Generally speaking, the last few years have not been characterised by any essential spiritual progress. During this period youth work has assumed increasing importance and has yielded the major part of those who have been won to the Churches.

## III.

Something might be said here on the three principal questions: evangelisation, Christian education and theological training.

The touchstone of evangelisation is, of course, to be found in the numerous new centres of population, where we are passing through a form of development similar to that which is being witnessed practically everywhere else in the world. Some parts of the country are being rapidly depopulated, while extensive densely populated areas are growing up in the immediate vicinity of the large towns and industrial areas. It is in such places that we must strive to develop a common strategy of evangelisation. The so-called "open membership" has always been rejected by Swedish Baptists, while "associate membership" seems to be considered acceptable in a few places where individual Christians are living isolated from their own Churches, and where a common church is required if evangelistic progress is to be made in the new population centres.

One newly formed Baptist Church has worked out the guiding principles for associate membership in its statutes. A condition is imposed that the members of the other Churches should still belong to them. However, no limitation is made as regards the "religious association" with the Church of which one is an associate member. This membership applies only to the "first generation". The children will thus be brought up entirely in accordance with the basic principles of the Baptist Churches. At present the questions connected with associate membership are being studied in the Free Church Council.

Just now, in the Evangelisation Year of the World Baptists, much is being written about our responsibility as regards evangelism. Not that any new methods are being found; rather the stress is being laid on the personal winning of the soul and the possibilities of contact open to us through our own homes, Sunday School and Youth organisations. The whole purpose of the year of Evangelism is expressed in its motto *Safe with God*. During each year we are trying to find a collective motto, the last three being, respectively: *The Bible*, *The Prayer* and *The Confession*.

The second of the principal questions is that of Christian education, the importance of which is growing as religious knowledge among our people shows a tendency to evaporate. Some thirty years ago we find distinct contradictions between *revival* and *education*, and the theme was that people should be introduced into the Church through conversion and not through education. The contradiction has now been practically resolved, and during the latest Swedish Free Church Conference last year one of the main points was "evangelisation through education". Another aspect of training is the need for a more systematic Christian education even in the Church. Various ways of putting through a wider instruction programme are being practised, and one of them

that has been most debated is "Sunday School for the whole family". When industry is now obtaining a five-day working week, the programme of the Churches should of course take account of the increasing amount of leisure time.

From the above it is evident that the theological debate has become increasingly lively. The questions relating to associate membership and evangelisation through education are, of course, not only concerned with organisation. They bear on our Christian views and the Baptist message: the nature of the Christian Church; how the New Testament conceives evangelisation and education; what it is that is specifically Baptist, and so forth.

In addition to the questions that have assumed increasing importance by virtue of developments within the modern society there are others. Ever since the beginnings of Baptist life in Sweden the majority of the Swedish Baptist Churches have been close communion churches, but an increasing minority have open communion now and the question arises whether or not this is the right tendency.

Since 1907, when the Pentecostal Movement erupted as a powerful wave of religious awakening, there has been keen discussion throughout Scandinavia on the meaning of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostals form a considerable group within the Swedish Free Church Movement and the development there has not been without influence on the Baptist faith.

I have touched only on a few of the problems with which we are concerned just now. Space does not allow me to go further into the significance of the various streams; but it can, however, be said that "classical Baptist witness"—if such an expression might now be permitted—has displayed a remarkable vitality; and for many of us it seems to be not far short of a miracle that the Swedish Baptist Union, which in the 1930's was severely shaken by the schism, could recover so soon and meet the future filled with deep faith and continually increasing numbers of young people.

ERIK RUDEN

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### THEOLOGY AS TENSION

**I**N America and in this country much thought is being given just now to the nature of theological education and a fundamental question is emerging: *What is the relation of theology and modern society?* Many attitudes taken by Christians represent a divorce of theology from the realities of man's existence. And since divorce always implies tension, it is not surprising that tension is felt by those who are involved in the divorce of theology from man's social life today. Let me mention, first, three tensions which have a long history and are still with us.

(a) **PIETISM.** This identifies theology with a systematic account of God's dealings with the individual soul. Since these dealings are regarded as the all-important concern of man, the social forms of man's life are disregarded or rejected as evil. So the Christian turns his back on the world and becomes a monk or else conceives himself as the pilgrim travelling from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Yet, all too often, the monk finds the problems of society on which he turned his back appear before him with different dress and other names within the monastic community, while the pilgrim has to recognise that, although he is set upon a spiritual journey, he is still earning his daily bread in the City of Destruction.

(b) **LIBERALISM.** This is the outlook that virtually dispenses with theology and concentrates on the practical tasks of doing good. The Crusaders, who valiantly took to horse and rode off to deliver the Holy Land from the infidel, knew little of scholastic theology but had a sense of mission and felt they were doing mighty things for God. So with modern crusaders against manifold evils. Yet those who equate religion with doing good and fighting social ills do not escape the nemesis of thin one-sided attitudes. Crusaders are apt to lose the vision, quarrel among themselves, enjoy the fruits of conquest and to be obsessed with temporal and material objectives. But what is the purpose of doing good, unless good is an ultimate? Why seek to improve life for men, unless men are of supreme worth? In their eagerness to copy Him Who went about doing good, people must not forget that He is also the revealer of the mysteries of the Kingdom.

(c) **ECCLESIASTICISM.** What I have in mind is seen in Augustine's differentiation of the City of God from the temporal order of that Roman Empire which was crumbling before his eyes, and his identification of the City of God with an ecclesiastical structure. This meant making a church system the real concern of the Christian, a concern supported later by the mediaeval distinction between natural and revealed theology. It is true that within the realm of natural theology they could discuss the nature of the just war in which a Christian may participate, the evil of usury and the virtue of the fair price, the standards of craftsmanship a guild may demand, and so on; and in this way it would appear that theology and man's daily life were being integrated. But then we realise that this is natural theology, and above it in significance and authority are the truths of revealed theology, dealing with the mystery of the Trinity, the saving significance of the sacraments and the authority inherent in priest and church. So once again the primary concern of the Christian gets defined in terms of an ecclesiastical system. And this is not just ancient history!

The morning paper recently carried two big reports: one concerned the attitude of the Labour Party towards the use of atomic power for destruction, the other the reply of the Church of Scotland to the Church of England about the possibility of inter-communion.

One must not press the comparison too far, yet sometimes one does get the impression that, amid the significant changes, the appalling possibilities and the wonderful opportunities presented by modern society, many Christians are chiefly concerned about questions of baptism, orders, mutual recognition and the internal affairs of ecclesiastical structure. Are we aware with sufficient clarity of the dangers of ecclesiasticism?

The prevalence of these attitudes is an indication of the importance of attempting some integration of theology with the realities of man's existence. Not that it would bring an end to tension. But it would bring to an end the irritating and frustrating tensions deriving from these attitudes, while itself being accompanied by the kind of tension essential to realistic and creative thinking.

The prophets of Israel held a view of the Divine Sovereignty which compelled them to understand all forms of man's life and activity as being within the purpose of God. Consequently they could call the nation to "let judgment flow down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream"; they could direct the policies of rulers in regard to Egypt or Assyria; rebuke merchants for dishonest practice and sketch the pattern of church and society in the ultimate purpose of God. Here is an integration of theology and life! Yet not without tension. The book of Jeremiah is the record of the intellectual and spiritual tension endured by one who seeks to understand the word of the Lord in the life of his day.

So at the time of the Reformation is the life of Martin Luther, who could not identify Christian vocation with a calling to the priesthood or the taking of monastic vows; but must interpret vocation in terms of the merchant, the teacher and the farmer, with all the tensions involved in their witness. So, too, among the nineteenth century Evangelicals in Britain, men like Kingsley and the Clapham group found themselves compelled by the nature of their faith to be concerned about the state of Society. From among them came also Shaftesbury and Wilberforce, their evangelical religion necessitating their social activity. The problems revealed in society searched their theological assumptions; while their theology in its turn created a hope of results which the activity alone could not have achieved, with the inevitable tension.

We turn now to consider this task of integration which comes to us. Canon E. R. Wickham, in the *Ecumenical Review* for April, concludes: "There is an immense theological task to be done in communicating the Christian faith to modern men, imbued with the assumptions of typical modern men. It is no task merely of translation, but of re-interpretation, requiring an advance in theological thinking. Certainly we need to show the theological significance of science, technology and industry, and its relevance to the social revolution the world over."

What is involved in this task of interpretation? What are the lines of theological thinking along which we need to advance?

### 1. THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION.

This is not to be confused with an account of the origin of the universe. That it does make some assertion about this is, of course, true. But fundamentally the doctrine attempts to express the relationship of God, the Divine Person, with man, the human person, in the totality of man's being and activity. The biblical accounts of Creation are more concerned about the relationships which God establishes than about the mode of coming into being. Furthermore, within these relationships are set all aspects of man's life: sex and family, work and food, suffering and hope. Man in his relationships with nature and with man as understood in terms of his relationship with God.

K. Barth has given powerful expression to this. He understands the biblical reference to the seventh day when God rested as a way of affirming that He who could have gone on creating higher forms, chose to cease at this point; thereby confirming that all He had created (reaching its climax in man who was to hold dominion over the world of nature) was good and as He willed. This affirmation was the beginning of the creation's independent life. Now history commences. Now man begins to work out in faith or in sin his relationships with nature, with life and with his fellow-men that God had ordained within the relationship of man to Himself. This enables the Christian to place a positive valuation upon man's daily work, his attempts to use the forces of nature for his own ends, and his activities in relation with his fellows. Yet they are all estimated in terms of man's relationship with God. They are neither condemned as inherently worldly nor dismissed as irrelevant to Christian living. They have their place in the Christian understanding of life, that is in the context of those personal relationships that are the essence of Christianity.

Yet as soon as we make this assertion we realise that a great deal of man's daily activity is set within the context of the impersonal and the mechanical. Here at once is tension! And the more we grasp the personal nature of the relationships established by the creation and the more realistically we face the situations in which we work, the more deeply do we feel the tension. Tension is inevitable in the task to which we are thus committed. For it is the task of discerning positive ways in which the basic personal relationships may be expressed to give meaning and direction to man's activity.

### 2. THE DOCTRINE OF MAN.

Closely allied to the Christian concept of creation is the Christian understanding of the nature of man as a person whose life derives from the Divine person and finds its end in Him. This Christian evaluation of the person makes it necessary for us to judge between human activities according to their effects on persons.

How difficult it is to do this! The recent discussion about the amount of public money to be used for church schools illustrates

the difficulties. On the whole the discussion has ranged around the claims of the Roman authorities that their children should have schools provided for them, the desire of the Anglican church to maintain the schools which it possesses and the objection of the Free churches to the use of public money without public control. What does not seem to be mentioned at all in all the discussions is the child. The question which is not asked is: what is best for the child? Yet this is the really Christian question.

In another realm of education, increasing emphasis is being laid on the training of experts in different branches of science. We are told that Russia and America are producing so many technical experts that we must greatly increase our production. The economic and military situation in which we are involved demands the rapid expansion of our technical colleges, and the scientific and engineering faculties of our universities. What we do not ask is the all-important question: what kind of persons are we creating? The plain fact is that Christian theology tries to think in terms of spiritual beings, yet has to do it in a society that is geared to the production of material goods. Here again is tension!

The production of material goods is not wrong in itself. It has its proper place in the Christian understanding of man. But when it becomes an end in itself, it denies the fundamental nature of man as a person.

### 3. THE DOCTRINE OF THE END.

Eschatology is not always a popular doctrine, nor is it always felt to be relevant to industrial problems. Yet no reflection upon man's relationship with God and man's being as a person is complete without it—without some consideration of the end for which persons exist in these relationships. Certainly modern scholars have made it very clear that the Bible lays much emphasis on "the end", which is seen as belonging to the realm beyond time even if it occurs within time. But we are living in an age which has largely lost the dimension of eternity. Perhaps it is that the physical horizons of man's life have expanded so widely that there is no felt need for spiritual horizons. The Reith lectures, delivered recently by Professor Lovell, gave us some conception of the vast horizons of the modern physicist and astronomer: yet, in attempting to offer explanations of origin and end within the categories of the physical, they also revealed the way in which our spiritual horizons have contracted.

Here again is tension. Theology understands life in terms of its end, which it sees as a community of persons living in God. But this is not the end commonly accepted. If any thought is given to an end at all, it is much more likely to be understood in terms of more pay, less hours of work, more holidays; or of increased production and more profit. These limited aims are not inherently wrong. But the bounty of the earth is for the need of all; and the more the Christian appreciates this truth and develops a concern about the ways in



which this bounty is utilised, controlled and distributed, the more he will discover that this proximate end of man's activity must be set in the light of the distant end of God's activity for man, if it is to yield its richness.

These reflections serve to remind us not only of the direction in which Christian thinking must move, but also of the inevitable tensions which are felt as we seek to formulate our thinking with some clarity. There is no avoiding this tension. We cannot bring it to an end, either by giving up our theology and becoming absorbed in practical tasks, for they then have no significance; or by turning our backs on the practical problems in order to indulge in theological discussions, which then become irrelevant. Theology is tension when it is the endeavour to understand man's life in its eternal context of relationship with God. Such tension belongs to our taking up the Cross in following Christ. Yet in so doing we discover that we are on another level. For now our theology involves commitment.

L. G. CHAMPION.

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### CHRISTIAN BAPTISM III

"We have had a couple of college principals reviewing this book. Review it for us from the point of view of the minister in the pastorate."

**T**HIS is my commission and it confronts me with an initial question. Does the minister in the pastorate look at a book like this in a different way from the theological teacher? Perhaps he does. If a man is engaged in theological teaching he is more likely to look at a book in terms of its place within a theological discussion. He will be concerned about the trustworthiness of its authorities, the originality or otherwise of its conclusions. Moreover, he is more open to the temptation to be biased by a much more definitely defined theological outlook than the average man in the pastorate.

A book like "Christian Baptism" will perhaps be welcomed more by the man in the pastorate than by the theological teacher because he has not always had adequate teaching on the subject; and if he has enriched his thinking on Baptism at all it has been through books like those of Flemington and Marsh. We are a little tired of pamphlets which contribute to our denominational ego by telling us that scholars of other denominations agree with us. We are equally tired of the theological complacency of the denomination revealed in debates on schemes for reunion, which take place from time to time in B.U. and B.M.S. committees. Here we seem to have the theological counterpart of "I'm all right, Jack".

Things are not all right. The fact that we have lost so many men to other churches in these past years, shows that the doctrine of baptism is not so strong an issue with many men in the pastorate

as some might think, and the jibe that men deny conscience is unfair to them. Far too long we have talked as though our position needed no defence, but the inadequacy of our conceptions, both theologically and practically, have been catching up on us. Strange though it may seem to some, the closer cohesion in polity and the deeper respect for the ministry in other churches, have weighed heavily against a doctrine of baptism which has lost spiritual depth through theological neglect, and has become for many Baptists merely customary, individualistic and separate from the life of the Church.

Here then is a book which seeks to stimulate thought and to enrich the doctrine that gives us our name. For this reason we welcome it. As ministers and students we shall be concerned with its theological authority. But three things at least we shall demand from it in addition, things we demand from any book for which we have to pay 27/6. (Thank God for wives who work.)

#### I. DOES THIS BOOK ENRICH OUR MINDS AND OUR THINKING ?

One of the temptations in the pastorate is to spend too much time reading the trivial or at best the superficial. The pressure of time, the ever-increasing number of addresses, sermons, devotional talks that are demanded of us can so weigh a man down that he looks for the cheap paper-back that deals with theological subjects in a preachable way, but gives little stimulus to his thinking. This book does just that. Each section gives facts to meditate upon, conclusions that need to be thought through, and that indefinable something called sincerity, which makes us treat with respect those conclusions we may feel unhappy about.

There is, moreover, in this book a virtue which at least one college principal seems to have missed. It is clear that there are in the book differences of style and that, although the fruit of group study, it is obviously not a complete unity. I imagine that a number of the contributors were not entirely happy about the last chapter. But they had the courage to let it stand and by so doing, they invited us to continue the discussion with them. We are all now members of the group and if we are to enrich our conception of the doctrine it can only come through discussion. I am sure that John Smythe would approve of this book and exhort us, in the words of his friend, John Robinson, to remember that "the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his word".

#### II. DOES IT KEEP US " IN THE PICTURE " WITH PRESENT TRENDS IN THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION ?

Most of us left college full of good intentions. We were going to specialise in one subject and keep abreast in others. However, the longer one is in the pastorate the more difficult this becomes. Indeed it is possible to feel completely frustrated by the demands made not merely on one's time, but one's mind. We are often treated

as though we have minds like sponges, able to absorb ideas overnight and henceforth speak as experts. I bring to mind all the things I have been told I must be expert in if I am to be effective in the ministry, from psychiatry to Christian education, marriage guidance to industrial relations, and, above all, I am told I must so know my age that I can master the problem of communication. Rather a tall order when we are finished at 50!

Thus, if a book is to be of permanent value to the average minister, it must survey the wide ranges of its subject as well as give its own conclusions. Dr. Underwood used to begin each series of his lectures by saying: "Let us draw some tramlines through the subject, so that we can see where we are going". Now this book does that. It drives tramlines through the maze of conflicting biblical and theological thought on baptism, shows us where it thinks we should go and allows us to survey the streets on either side. It is good to have this, although at times conclusions seem to have preceded argument (*e.g.*, in the discussion on I Peter).

### III. INEVITABLY THE WORKING MINISTER WILL ASK:

IS IT PREACHABLE? IS IT PRACTICAL?

If the book has enriched the mind it has practical value. But there is much material here for sermons, also especially from the biblical section; although most of them will be the result of hard grind! We are, however, pastors as well as preachers, and it is here that the book may meet our criticism in the light of the Church *as we know it*.

Much attention has been centred on the controversial last chapter. Is this immediately the most explosive chapter? Chapter 2 has, rightly, been much praised. But it strikes a crushing blow at our present polity. We have it as part of our Constitution that "each church has liberty under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to interpret and to administer His Laws". You might put this to the test. At your next Church Meeting take the Trust Deeds from the safe, dust them, and read them to the members. Then ask them if these are the doctrines they want you to teach the young people you are preparing for baptism. They will soon tell you that they are not competent to decide, and that you had better consult someone better able to advise you. Put to the test, Winward is right: "we must learn to comprehend the truth with *all* the saints . . . to do this involves a positive and appreciative attitude to the tradition of the *whole* Church". If this is so, must we not take a further step? In doctrine authority is moved from the local Church. Is it not a logical conclusion that if it is not competent to decide on doctrine, neither is it competent to decide the competency of the man who shall preach the doctrine to it. Here, too, the experience of *all* the saints is needed. I am tempted to write further on this, for it is easy to see that we talk a lot of nonsense about the "competency of the local Church".