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A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php



incorporating the Transactions of the
BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
EDITORIAL

THE first task of a new editor is to pay tribute to his predecessor. This we do gladly. Mr. Hughes has served the Historical Society as Secretary for ten years and has been connected with the editorial side of this journal for the same period, first as a member of the editorial board and then, latterly, as sole editor. He has rendered this service to the Society from the midst of a busy pastoral life and we owe him a considerable debt of gratitude for his work during the past decade in building up and consolidating the Society after the disruptive war years. It is good to know that he is willing to maintain his connection with this journal in an advisory capacity.

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On April 30th, 1908, the Baptist Historical Society was formed, and next April, during the Baptist Union Assembly week, we shall celebrate the Society's Jubilee. The final details of the meetings are not yet settled but all members will be notified at the earliest opportunity. It is, however, certain that the Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, April 28th, at 4.30 p.m., probably at the Central Hall, Westminster. At this meeting there will be opportunity to discuss fully the affairs of the Society. Of the tasks that lie before us in the immediate future, we shall write in the editorial next quarter. It seems probable the Annual Meeting will also hear an address by Dr. Thomas Richards. It is hoped that every member will try to make it possible to attend this important meeting. Our celebration will not, however, be limited to this Annual Meeting.

The Programme Committee of the Baptist Union Assembly has agreed that one session of the full Assembly shall be devoted to a public recognition of the Historical Society Jubilee. This session, probably the closing one on the morning of Tuesday, April 29th, will be addressed by Professor E. G. Rupp of the University of Manchester.

* * * *

In this present issue we publish an extended review of the Report on Ordination presented to the Baptist Union Council under the title of *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists*. It is the Report of a Commission set up by the Baptist Union Council, but the Council, at its meeting in March, 1957, after considerable discussion, found itself unable to accept the Report as it then stood and referred it back to the Commission. At the November Council the Commission presented the Report again with a brief memorandum attached. These notes are necessarily being written prior to the November Council. Therefore, when they are read, the future of the Ordination Report will have been settled. It will either have been consigned to gather dust on the shelf or sent out for discussion to the churches. But whether published or not, it has raised issues of great importance to all Baptists.

Our reviewer has dealt at length with the Report itself, but we would like to comment on the brief memorandum attached to it. The memorandum makes quite clear that, in spite of the debate in the Council in March, when the Report came under heavy fire, the Commission does not feel able to alter its main conclusions and has accepted only a number of minor suggestions. (It is to be hoped, incidentally, that the somewhat surprising format of presentation to the March Council with the Report already set up in page proof has had no bearing upon the Commission's decision to make little alteration!) The memorandum, however, does make a point of considerable importance in explaining the Commission's refusal to make drastic alterations. It is, in short, that many of the points raised by Council members in debate lead to wider issues beyond the scope of the Report. The Report and the subsequent debate have, in fact, pinpointed once again the need for further clear and fearless thinking among Baptists on the Nature of the Church and Ministry in the light of biblical and historical evidence. We use the word 'fearless' intentionally for, as our reviewer has pointed out, the New Testament section of the Report is well done indeed, but the subsequent interpretation of the New Testament evidence in the light of Baptist practice shows evident signs of compromise.

Involved in all this, however, is a complicating issue which has probably never been sufficiently faced, namely, whether the Baptist Union has any theological rôle to play in relation to the Baptist Ministry or whether the Union's function is purely

organizational. This issue is raised quite specifically in the memorandum when it speaks of such questions as "the relation between ordination and ministerial probation; the connection between ordination and accreditation, and the respective responsibility of the local church and the Baptist Union in regard to ordination." To take a specific example, are the Ministerial Lists in the Baptist Union handbook to be thought of in terms of a Baptist doctrine of the Ministry or only of Baptist Union organization? Is there any theological difference, from the viewpoint of the doctrine of the Baptist Ministry, between an accredited minister of a Baptist church and a non-accredited minister who may follow him in the same pastorate? This and other related problems need to be faced.

The memorandum suggests that the Baptist Union Council should give urgent attention to the production and publication of studies on the Baptist concept of the Church and Ministry. It is to be hoped that this suggestion will be accepted. It is also to be hoped that the Council will discuss in detail how this may best be done. So far the tendency has been for the Council to set up *ad hoc* Commissions to report on various theological questions as they arise. We would suggest that the time has now come for the Council to consider seriously again the setting up of a standing Faith and Order Group within the denomination. Such a group, although not limited to Council members, would be ultimately responsible to the Council, and would be free to examine in scholarly detail such theological issues as are now raised and others which arise out of them. The setting up of such a group now would be particularly opportune, not only to enable it to discuss the issues raised by the Ordination Report, but also in view of the real likelihood of the Free Church Federal Council bringing before the various Free Churches very soon the issue of Free Church union. Whether any such action is taken by the Council or not, we shall be publishing in this journal a series of articles on the issues we have been discussing in this editorial. This series will begin in our next issue with an article introducing the problems involved and the field to be covered. We hope in this way to help in fulfilling the desire expressed in the memorandum that thought should be stimulated in the denomination in these vital issues.

* * * *

A notable addition has been made to the ever-growing number of books on Baptist beginnings, by the publication of the story of Canadian Baptist origins. This book, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada before 1820*, is the joint work of Stuart Ivison and Fred Rosser. It is published in Canada by the Toronto University Press and is obtainable in England through the Oxford University Press. This book traces the story of American Baptist missionary activity amongst the settlers in Upper and Lower Canada during

the first decade of the nineteenth century, with the resultant formation of many small isolated churches. The war of 1812, however, inevitably disrupted this missionary activity and the newly-formed churches drew closer to each other in fellowship with the development of Conferences and Associations. By 1820 not only was the grouping of churches almost complete but the travelling missionaries from the United States had also almost ceased to visit them and the young churches themselves had begun to produce their own Ministry. The authors tell their story well and we are given accounts not only of events but also vivid descriptions of the missionaries, ministers and churches involved. All libraries interested in Free Church history will want this book, but it is a pity that its very high price in England (40/-) will undoubtedly limit its circulation.

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As we go to press we learn that yet another book on local Baptist history is soon to be published by the Carey Kingsgate Press. This time it is a book written by one of our own members, namely, C. B. Jewson, and he has called it *The Baptist in Norfolk*. A review of this interesting publication will appear next quarter.

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The Meaning and Practice of Ordination

“RECEIVE the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his Holy Sacraments; In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. . . . Take thou Authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the Holy Sacraments in the Congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto.” These age-old words ring in the ears of the Anglican priest at his Ordination; they leave him in no doubt of the solemnity of his calling, and wherein it consists; they promise and they declare, unhesitatingly and without qualification.

And we are Baptists, and we have our own certainties; or so we would claim. But what of our theological students as they set out upon their ministry? I am back at my own Ordination, re-living the painful groping for mental clarity and spiritual assurance, knowing that I was being caught up into something of crucial importance which must constitute an anchor upon which, in future years, I would have again and again to lay hold, yet desperately conscious that there was lacking an understanding of it which was my rightful heritage. Many words were spoken; too many of them devoted to informing me of what Ordination did *not* mean. No Church can live upon denials. It was time for a sustained enquiry.

The Committee set up by the Baptist Union Council to explore this problem has finished its labours. Its report is now before us. No one would claim that it has answered all the questions. In the nature of the case that was impossible. But within its terms of reference it has gathered information, laid down lines of thinking, and made recommendations. It must now be discussed and judged.

Little space need be devoted to certain sections of the Report. The section and appendices given over to an outline of past and present Baptist doctrine and practice are competent, and as adequate as might fairly be expected. If there is more of practice than of doctrine we need not be surprised. If there are clear signs of the pervasive influence down the years of non-theological factors we

need not be outraged. If we are left with an impression of inconclusiveness it was only to be expected. This is the measure of our problem and the index of our situation. Thus it is that our attention must be focused upon the pages dealing with the biblical material and with the contemporary restatement of the meaning and practice of the rite. Here is the heart of the Report. By this it stands or falls.

Let it be said at once that the discussion of Ordination in the New Testament almost does its job magnificently. It is the most encouraging feature of the whole Report. The author sets the rite firmly and securely in the context of the biblical doctrine of Church and Ministry and provides an exposition of noteworthy sanity and balance. The Church is a living organism and a divine creation—the body, the family, the vine. Yet it is composed of free, responsible persons—members, disciples, friends. It faces constantly in two directions, towards God and towards the world; for if, on the one hand, it exists to be the people of God, to glorify Him in worship and fellowship, on the other hand, it exists to bear witness to the great acts of God, through preaching, baptism and humble service. These are priestly and prophetic functions; and they belong to the whole Church. It is only within and on behalf of that Church that the Ministry finds its place, as a gift of God imparting form to the christian organism.

On the basis of this ecclesiological exposition, the Report goes on to speak boldly of the New Testament doctrine of the Ministry. Those who will exercise forms of ministry in the Church are appointed by God, equipped by the Risen Lord through his Holy Spirit; and this carries with it two important corollaries. Ministers are not simply the representatives of the Church, bearing its commission, armed with its delegated authority. They act in the name of Christ, bearing the authority of his appointment, speaking to the Church in his name. Further, they are ministers of the whole Church, not simply of some local community. Just as the local church is a manifestation of the One Body of Christ, so the ministry exercised in that local church is a ministry of the one divinely-created Fellowship.

If we ask how the true Ministry may be distinguished from the false, we are not left without biblical guidance. The man whose ministry is truly valid will in the deepest sense belong to the people of God, will manifest the fruits of holiness, will possess the necessary gifts which are the endowment of the Spirit. But the assurance of the call of God must never stand alone, and individual conviction must be tested and confirmed by the community. The conclusion must be that, if we are to be true to the New Testament teaching, we must assert that the Ministry originates in the operation of the Spirit, is sanctioned by the Christian Church, and is exercised for the edification of the Body. These are the guiding lines to which we

must hold fast. Of such convictions, New Testament practice in Ordination (so far as we can trace it) provides the outworking and the expression.

It is just at this point that the exposition falters, leaving its earlier promise unfulfilled. The New Testament section limps to its conclusion on a few generalised and unsatisfactory paragraphs designed to draw out the implications of what has been established. Its argument is never again really taken up and developed. We are left with a short statement of the meaning of Ordination which begs more questions than it faces. It is not surprising that the practical suggestions and recommendations amount to little more than a summary of what is increasingly present practice.

Why does the Report fail after so encouraging a beginning? It is essential that this question be asked and answered, for with it is bound up the clue to so much of our denominational confusion. Must it not be frankly admitted that what is missing from this document, as from so many others, is a sustained attempt to think theologically in a systematic way? The Report lacks one crucial section, an attempt to build theologically on the New Testament foundation laid. Because of that it lacks coherence, progression, unity, and a worthy attainment of its goal.

Probably the most important sentence in the Report is this: "Conceptions of the ministry do not stand by themselves; they belong to an understanding of the nature and function of the Church." This is wisely said. And the Committee goes on to urge that the Council give "early and urgent attention to the production and publication of studies, based on a detailed consideration of biblical and historical evidence, of the Baptist concept of (a) the nature of the Church, and (b) the Ministry." But this is not enough. The problems cannot thus simply be shelved. The fact is that the Report contains an examination of New Testament teaching relative to the doctrines of both Church and Ministry, and moves on to make considered statements about the meaning of Ordination. Once such issues were raised and an attempt made to deal with them, the group was surely committed to ruthless and relentless theological thinking, however provisional might be its conclusions. It is to be regretted that the Report should be issued to the churches before this task was discharged.

The careful reader will not fail to notice the shifts of emphasis that are revealed when we move from the New Testament exposition to the section on the Meaning of Ordination. The critic might even suspect that the shift is from individual insight to group compromise. Certainly the two make strange bed-fellows. Perhaps both must share the blame, though in differing proportions. We have suggested that the summary of the New Testament teaching just fails to realise its full potentialities. It lacks its rightful begin-

ning and its necessary conclusion. The progression is from Church to Ministry to Ordination; and though the stories are in right order the building lacks its foundation. Behind ecclesiology is christology, always and for ever. Christ is the beginning, theologically as in all other ways. The ministry of the Church is grounded upon the one unchanging Ministry of its Lord. We look at the outset for some clear recognition of the pivotal significance of the earthly Ministry of Christ, and we look in vain.

So it is that the end of this section is not a conclusion but a terminus. We are left with a few comments on the relationship between continuity and adaptability, between life and form. The New Testament, we are told, "does not suggest that the Lord imposed a rigid pattern of ministry upon His Church." But what if there is a christological pattern that is normative and what if there is a form, imposed by a christological criterion, that is binding? We are told that "the Spirit is free." But what if the Spirit is always and only the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what if pneumatology must be grounded in christology, what if life and form are tied together more closely than we have supposed? These are the important questions. This is the place for intensive theological assertion. Does the section peter out in a cul-de-sac because at the very beginning the christological signposts were never erected?

If it be objected that theological restatement properly belongs to a later part of the Report, to the section on the Meaning of Ordination, we shall not cavil at such a defence. Indeed, it is just here that the most serious criticism must be entered. The Report never really builds upon the New Testament foundation. The theological superstructure is never erected. We turn away from the Scriptures, chase through the kaleidoscopic confusion of the centuries, and suddenly emerge with guidance for future theory and practice which, while it has clear links with the New Testament, is related a little too simply and obviously to what we are accustomed to do and to teach. The essentially stern theological discipline is lacking.

Let us begin at the beginning. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for the many" (*Matt.* 20:28). His calling was to be the Suffering Servant of the Lord, to reinterpret messiahship in terms of obedient suffering, and thus to redeem. He was prophet, priest and king—of each and all the fulfilment. In Him the Kingdom of God moved finally and redemptively into our human situation, and royalty was found to be service. His whole regal life was, at the truest and deepest level, precisely his *Ministry*. He washes his disciples' feet and thus betrays his kingship. As True Prophet, Himself the incarnate Word of God, He speaks the word of reconciliation. As True Priest, Himself the slain and offered Lamb, He makes atone-

ment. And in that unity of word and deed the Servant-King accomplishes his Ministry.

This Ministry remains his own, though He has now ascended to the heavenly places. He is for ever the One who is highly exalted yet marked with the scars of his humility, the eternal Intercessor, the living Word who ever and anew moves forth to men through the power of his Spirit. He retains his Ministry within his own hands. Yet between the two Advents, in the "time" of the Church between Pentecost and Parousia, the Body of Christ is caught up into the Ministry of her Head, as the Twelve participate in the drama of redemption and disciples become apostles. "As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you" (*John* 20 : 21). "Receive ye the Holy Ghost : whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (*John* 20 : 22f.). "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (*John* 17 : 18). "Whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (*Matt.* 21 : 26f.). Upon the apostolic mission and commission the Church is built, and within it the Ministry of the Ascended Lord reaches down to history and out through history towards the Parousia.

So it is that the whole Body of Christ shares in the Ministry of her Head. She is the place where the saving events of the Gospel are made powerful in history; she is the sphere within which the first and second Advents are drawn together, where, by the working of the Holy Spirit, what has been and what will be are made present in power. Through her the reconciling Ministry of Christ moves onward to its fruition. She is the prophetic, priestly and kingly Body, in so far as she participates obediently and responsively in the continuing Ministry of her Lord, and in the might of his Spirit proclaims the Word and offers the Sacraments and carries the Cross. The ministry of the Church is first and foremost a corporate ministry.

Nevertheless, within that corporate priesthood there is diversity of function and operation. Of "ministries" there may and will be many; but the institutional priesthood constitutes a special and constant gift of the Ascended Lord to his Church. The ministry, in this narrow sense, is properly described by reference to the Word and the Sacraments, and that for no arbitrary reason. For between Pentecost and Parousia the Body of Christ seeks for renewal and strains towards fulfilment, and it by means of the Word and Sacraments that the living Lord provides renewal and brings fulfilment near. On Word and baptism the corporate priesthood of the whole Body is grounded. By reference to Word and eucharist the nature of the institutional ministry must be explicated.

This ministry of Word and Sacrament is ordained for the building up of the Body of Christ. By it and through it the Church,

the kingdom of priests, is again and again subjected in obedience to the great High Priest who alone governs and empowers. By it and through it the living Word ever and anew reaches forth to its sacramental fulfilment in the eucharistic fellowship as the Church is broken and remade. From first to last the christological pattern is determinative. Ministry of the Church and ministry in the Church is conformed to the Ministry of the Lord and is subservient to it. As the Word made flesh, crucified and risen, He is true Prophet and true Priest in the kingliness of his Servant-Ministry. In its own fashion, and on the ground of baptismal incorporation into his death and resurrection, his Body the Church shares in the eternal Ministry of her Head, preaching the Word, offering the Sacraments, carrying the Cross. And within that corporate priesthood, ministry in the Church and to the Church arises, itself kingly, priestly, and prophetic. It is the ministry of Word and Sacrament and pastoral service. It is for the building up of the Body. It is the instrument through which the Word moves forth to its inevitable sacramental concretion in the eucharistic drama of redemption. The cruciform pattern remains. Because all ministry is a sharing and reflection of the One Ministry, it must be conformed to the marks of the Suffering Servant of God.

In some such terms as these, it may be suggested, the necessary theological foundation for any fruitful discussion of the meaning and practice of Ordination must be laid. In this light we may again take up our examination of the Report; and at once we have to take issue with the definition of Ordination. This rite—so runs the Report—“is an act of the Church, wherein the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, publicly recognises and confirms that a Christian believer has been gifted, called and set apart by God for the work of the ministry and in the name of Christ commissions him for this work.” We may deprecate such an attempt at definition, especially before it has been firmly established what is the nature of this ministry and wherein it consists. But it is more important to notice the characteristic separation of Christ from the Church, the laying down of “before” and “after,” the failure to allow to Ordination very much more than a recognition of something which is essentially true and accomplished already. We may readily allow the priority of the call of God, just as we shall assert that a man may be in believing relationship to Christ prior to his baptism. But just as to be a Christian means to be baptized, so to be a minister means to be ordained. Head and members belong inseparably together; the *Totus Christus* cannot be divided. These temporal divisions are artificial, unbiblical, and therefore disastrously misleading. If definition is to be made it must basically be this: “Ordination is an act of Christ in his Church whereby a Christian believer is made a minister of the Church of God.”

The New Testament section is profoundly right when it emphasizes that the ministry is a gift of God *to* the Church, and that it is the ministry of the *whole* Church. Would that these notes were allowed to be adequately normative in the subsequent exposition. The Report confesses that "the local church is not an isolated unit." Yet the admission seems a grudging one and, in respect to Ordination, the weight still falls on the local church setting. If Ordination is to the ministry of the One Church, then its conventional relationship to Induction should seriously be called in question. Similarly, if ministry is a gift of Christ *to* his Church, the Report must be challenged in so far as it seems to lay weight upon the idea of the minister as speaking to the world from within the fellowship and in the Church's name. Surely there is dangerous half-truth here, resulting from the lack of clear theological premises. The ministry is turned towards the Church and towards the world; but the source of its turning is twofold, and the differentiation must be observed. The minister is turned towards the world as one among many, on the ground of his baptismal insertion into the corporate priesthood of the Body. He is turned towards the Church as one to the many, on the ground of his ordination to the institutional ministry.

In the end, the theological lacuna proves disastrous for the attempt at detailed discussion of the ordination rite. Ordination is the act by which "the Church recognizes, confirms and commissions." It is a public "acknowledgement and authorisation." It is a "spiritual process." It is "an occasion of blessing." There is more of ambiguity here than may safely be attributed to the necessary mysteries of Christian faith. What seems lacking is the clear and unqualified recognition that the nature of the ordination rite is correlative to the nature of the ministry to which a man is ordained. That ministry is the ministry of the Word made flesh, of Word and Sacrament, of Word proceeding to its eucharistic completion. Ordination is not a sacrament; but it looks towards the Sacrament, is indissolubly bound to it, and finds in it its necessary consummation. The confirmation of the call of God by his Spirit and through his Church, the commissioning of his servant, the invocation of the Holy Spirit—all this the rite must fitly express and affirm. But its completion is not Induction but Holy Communion. The rite has its own independent significance. Yet it is maimed until it finds its consummation at the point where a man is caught up into the Ministry of the Head to the Body, faces a congregation in a figure as *alter Christus*, and *for the first time* breaks the bread and pours the wine for the renewal and wholeness of the Church of God. As baptism is inseparably joined to the corporate priesthood of the Church, so Holy Communion is tied to the institutional priesthood of the ordained ministry. The link

between Ordination and Eucharist is closer than the Report allows.

From this vantage point the suggested Order of Service must be judged. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that here an opportunity has been missed. There was room for an attempt at creative experiment. What we are given is avowedly based "upon the common practice." But if what we have suggested corresponds at all to the realities of the theological situation, it must surely be admitted that Ordination belongs to the Service of Word and Sacrament, the heart and centre of corporate worship. Such a Service will rightly include Questions addressed to the ordinand, a Charge to him, and a confession of faith from him; and the act of Ordination itself will find its focus in the prayer of invocation and the Laying on of Hands. But precisely because it is concerned with ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments the Service will move towards two pivotal actions. The one is the presentation to the ordinand of the Scriptures, the abiding deposit of apostolic witness and the ground of prophetic ministry. The other is the placing of the bread and wine by the Area Superintendent at the very beginning of Communion into the ordinand's hands, that so receiving the tokens of his priestly ministry as from his Lord he may turn at once to minister in the holy things of God to the gathered church. Thus will Ordination find its true and necessary sacramental fulfilment.

This means that any confusion of Induction and Ordination must be carefully avoided. We can but deplore the attempt at integration. That the call to and acceptance of the pastorate of a local church or some congruous sphere of service is a necessary prelude to Ordination we must affirm. That some representative of the calling body should be involved in the Ordination Service we must agree. But that the actual Induction of a minister belongs to the sum and substance of his Ordination we must deny. A Service of Induction can be a solemn occasion where a Charge to the church is fitly given. It can also include all the informality of a family welcome. But the once for all Service of Ordination, whereby a man becomes a minister of the whole Church of God, moves to its completion at the Lord's Table not at the tea-table.

Where the rite of Ordination is performed may be adjudged a matter of minor importance. The natural place is at the church to which a man has been called; and the Committee advances cogent reasons in support of this practice. Nevertheless, until the prevailing confusion has been removed from the minds of our people and the two acts of Ordination and Induction are seen in their proper and separable places and filled with their true and distinct meanings, the weighty practical arguments in favour of the home church remain. In any event, it is what is done rather than where it is done that is significant.

All attempts to formulate a satisfactory theology and practice of Ordination have to reckon with the tragedy of disunion. While the Body of Christ is rent asunder anomalies will remain. We can but move as far as our partial insights will carry us and hard practical realities will allow. This Report should stimulate our thinking and encourage us to advance. It contains so much valuable material and so many paragraphs of wise counsel that the lack of a unifying theological factor is doubly disappointing. It is to be hoped that it will arouse argument and discussion. It is also to be hoped that it will not be regarded as having said the last word.

N. CLARK

Note: The Report referred to in this article is to be published, and copies will be obtainable from the Carey Kingsgate Press, 6, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1, price 2s. 6d., postage 4d. extra.

STOP PRESS

Final details of the Annual Meeting of the Historical Society have now been fixed. It will be held at 4.30 p.m. on Monday, 28th April, at the WESTMINSTER CHAPEL, Buckingham Gate. In addition to the business of the Society, an address will be given by Dr. Thomas Richards on "Some Disregarded Sources of Baptist History." Tea will be provided.

The Office of "Messenger" amongst British Baptists in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

INTRODUCTION

IT is perhaps appropriate that as we celebrate the centenary of the birth of J. H. Shakespeare, the founder of the modern system of Area Superintendents amongst British Baptists, some consideration should be given to the origin and nature of "messengers," the spiritual forefathers of Area Superintendents. Moreover, at a time when the appointment of a Baptist Union evangelist is a subject for discussion, and when the best use of the ministerial manpower available is a question raised both in the Presidential Address of 1957 and frequently in correspondence in *The Baptist Times*, it may be of some help to trace how this office, which originated in the zeal for evangelism, in the course of a century become little more than a nominal authority, which sought in vain to stem the decline in the spiritual life of the original General Baptists.

ORIGIN OF THE OFFICE BEFORE 1660

It is interesting to compare the accounts given by later Baptist historians of the origin of the office of "messenger." Adam Taylor in *The History of the English General Baptists* (1818) stresses the precedent of scripture :

ever attentive however to the precedent of scripture, it was not long before they supposed that they had discovered in the primitive churches an officer superior to an elder. They remarked that Barnabas, Luke, Timothy, Titus and several others were fellow labourers with the apostles in the preaching of the gospel and the planting and regulating of churches; and that in various passages they are called apostles, or in English, messengers of the churches. They thought it probable that the angels or messengers of the seven churches in Asia to whom the author of the Revelation addressed his epistles were also of the same order. They introduced an officer into their systems whom they styled a messenger. He was generally chosen by an association of the representatives of the churches in a certain district,

and ordained by those of his own order with great solemnity, the various churches keeping seasons of prayer and fasting. Sometimes a particular church chose a messenger; but in that case his business appears to have been confined to preaching the gospel where it was not known, and regulating such churches as he might be made instrumental in planting. It is indeed probable that at the first this was the chief object of their appointment.¹

W. T. Whitley in *A History of British Baptists* (1923) emphasizes this last point of Taylor's :

The first distinctive feature was the recognition of the duty of evangelization, and telling off special men for itinerant work. Seeing that the early churches commissioned men for special journeys, as with Judas, Silas, Barnabas, Tychicus, they formally commissioned men, and gave them the same title, messengers. As first there was a special commission for each journey; soon they selected men who had particular aptitude for evangelization, told them off for it as their main work, and undertook to support them and their families. Thus the title messenger came to have a technical meaning, and since the cost of support was often more than a single church could sustain constantly, each messenger was linked with a group of churches. While evangelization was the main purpose, there followed from it the duty of organising new communities, and counselling them in their early days. Men who had the double gift were of use also in the older churches which maintained and commissioned them, and thus came to be invoked whenever internal troubles arose.²

There are three main sources of evidence for the origin of the office: the confessions of faith and minutes of assemblies of Baptist churches, the writings of individual Baptists, and the records of individual churches.

The Confession of thirty Midland Churches of 1651 does not mention such an office. Article 58 merely says "that it is the good pleasure of God that some of the gifted men should be appointed or set apart to attend upon the preaching of the word for the further edifying of the churches."³ Articles 65 and 70 provide for churches to call upon neighbouring churches for assistance in cases of poverty and controversy respectively. In 1654, however, a manifesto on their approval of civil government and disavowal of Fifth Monarchy ideas appeared on behalf of "many of the Messengers, Elders and Brethren belonging to severall of the Baptized Churches in this nation,"⁴ and was signed by thirteen messengers and eleven elders, the messengers representing churches in Lincs., Kent and Bucks. The minutes of the General Agreement of 1656 are signed by ten messengers, and include two references to the office: "messengers may not without the common consent of ye churches chuse messengers," and "messengers and elders being both apt to teach is ye presbittery of the church and no other." Later on, however, it is laid down in a case of poverty if a church is "not able to communicate to his need, that they then shall send a suffi-

cient testimony thereof to ye next congregation, that is to say a messenger appointed for that purpose."⁵ Thus the term is used both of an official order and of local representatives. In the same year at a meeting held at Stamford it was decided to send two messengers into the west for the work of the ministry, to appoint John Fairbrother and Will. Reignolds for this, and to appeal to all the churches to defray the charge of the messengers and their families. The church at Fenstanton, however, refused to help, because it was not sure about the method of collecting, and because it objected to one of the messengers as a former Ranter.⁶

The first reference to the office in a published work seems also to be in 1654 in Tho. Lover's *The True Gospel Faith*. Article 22 of this says: "That they have power to chuse Messengers, Pastors, and Teachers from among themselves," and it quotes *Acts* 1. 26.⁷ Although in 1655 Thomas Collier was ordained "General Superintendent and Messenger to all the Associated Churches" by the Particular Baptists in the west country, in a book published in 1654 and entitled *The Right Constitution and True Subjects of the Visible Church of Christ*, he says:

this sort of ministry have several titles given to it, not to distinguish, as some think, the ministry into so many offices, but rather to discover the fullness of the work, the pastor to feed, elder to rule, bishop to oversee, teacher to instruct, which may be done by one, if the gift be in him, but in short, it is especially summed up in two particulars, viz. Elders and Deacons.⁸

William Rider in his *Laying on of hands asserted*, published in 1656, disagrees with Collier, saying: "in the word 'elder' is comprehended all officers in the Church, and so elders are distinguished into several offices such as bishops and deacons."⁹ Later on he says: "the office of an apostle is the first office in the Church of Christ, and that is to lay the foundation,"¹⁰ and he maintains that this office still exists. Will. Jeffery, one of the messengers from Kent, who had signed the 1654 declaration, published in 1659 *The whole faith of man*. In this he claims that apostles, that is messengers, are to be in the church till Christ comes, "so the church are to choose messengers still for the gathering of the church, and establishing of the same, so that they are to go forth to preach the gospel."¹¹ Moreover "it is good and safe for a particular church in times of high concernment to call for, or desire help from sister churches, and so messengers, who are to take care of all churches in an especial manner, are to go in such cases."¹²

In 1654 at Canterbury, John Foxwell, Messenger, protested against Fifth Monarchy views, and in the following year a Quaker won over the Baptist Messenger Samuel Fisher.¹³ The Tunbridge Wells Minute Book records an association meeting at Chatham in 1657, which urged:

that there be all possible care in propagating the Gospel by employing ye messengers in ye work of ye Lord Jesus, sending with each of them one young disciple of good report that himself shall approve of, and that ye deacons of ye respective congregations be desired to take especial care not only of ye messengers to supply them with all things necessary for their journeyings but also that their families be well provided for in their absence."¹⁴

In other parts of the country however the office is not as clearly defined. The records of the church at Fenstanton show that the term is used both of a local temporary commission and of a more permanent and more universal mission. In 1652 various members of the church had been appointed to visit backsliders, and a later minute refers to these as messengers.¹⁵ In the following year a letter was read to the church from Westby in Lincolnshire, inquiring into the conduct of two messengers, John Lupton and Joseph Wright, who had been sent into the county of Huntingdon.¹⁶ The original commission given to these had read: "We give them power and authority to call in question all persons, and to judge and determine all matters," but when exception was taken to this at Caxton, it was crossed out.¹⁷ In the same year after Henry Denne had spoken of the need to preach the gospel where it was not known, he was "chosen and ordained by the laying on of hands a messenger to divulge the gospel of Jesus Christ."¹⁸ In 1654 it was stated that no one should preach publicly to the world or go from place to place unless they had been so commissioned by the church.¹⁹ When Henry Denne received an invitation to settle at Canterbury, he would not accept until he had received not merely the permission, but the express commission to do so from his home church.²⁰ In 1655 a member of the church at Wisbeach, John Milles, wrote to Fenstanton, saying: "I beseech you not to be negligent in the work of the Lord, but send unto us faithful messengers to do his work, and administer his ordinances to those amongst us whose hearts are free" (a controversy had arisen there over the laying on of hands).²¹ Edmond Mayle and John Denne were appointed to go, and when they reported back, they said that they had been invited to come again, but couldn't agree to return until they had had permission from their home church. They received a further commission, but Denne was recalled before reaching Wisbeach, and Mayle soon found himself in controversy there with Lupton and Wright of Lincolnshire, so did not stay long.²² Mention has already been made of the refusal by the church at Fenstanton to support messengers in the Midlands, so that the overall picture from these records is of the authority of the local church, controlling its own messengers and tending to be suspicious of those from other churches.

The earliest mention at all of the term "messenger" occurs in the records of the church at Hexham in Northumberland. A

lectureship had been established at Hexham in 1628 by the Mercers' Company, and in 1651 Thomas Tillam had been appointed to this with the backing of the commissioners appointed by Parliament to propagate the Gospel in the four northern counties.²³ He was a member of Hanserd Knolly's Particular Baptist Church in Coleman Street, London, and at the beginning of the Minute Book he records that on the 21st day of the 5th month 1652: "Thomas Tillam, minister, and a messenger of one of the seven churches in London, did administer the holy ordinance of baptism to . . ." ²⁴ Here the word messenger seems to mean missionary, and this is so in a further entry five months later when "the church with prayer, fasting, and imposition of the hands of the minister, ordained brother Hickhorngill a minister, and their messenger into Scotland."²⁵ This same minute book contains a record of letters which passed between the church at Hexham and other churches, especially Coleman Street, and in much of this correspondence the term messenger seems to be used of a representative. For instance in a letter dated 1653 the elders and pastors of several churches in the west, as well as of Coleman Street:

signify to you our longing to have with you, and all the baptized churches that hold the faith purely, such communion as that we may by letters, or messengers, in some meeting or meetings communicate to each other our knowledge for the rectifying of each other, and retaining of consent of doctrine among the churches.²⁶

Moreover, the church at Coleman Street in a covering note to this circular, writes:

much refreshing hath our gracious God afforded to our spirits lately at the return of a messenger and teacher of ours and of another . . . who were sent to visit the churches nearer us than you in the counties of Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk, and to understand their way and order, and to further love, amongst all that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity, and communion with them.²⁷

Much of this correspondence dealt with controversy which had arisen between Tillam and the church at Newcastle, and an entry in 1656 records how representatives from Hexham and Derwent met with the messengers at Newcastle, "and each party declaring the sense of their miscarriage to the other, we were by the messengers declared to be one body in the Lord."²⁸ In all this evidence, however, from Particular Baptist Churches, the term messenger does not seem to denote a separate order, but merely a representative of one church engaged in missionary work or in consultation with representatives of other churches.

Thus it appears that throughout the decade 1650 to 1660 the term messenger was used by both General and Particular Baptists to denote anyone who was commissioned by one church to preach the Gospel and form new churches, or who was sent by one church

to another to settle a dispute or discuss matters of common concern. Amongst the General Baptists, however, in the Midlands and in Kent the word by 1654 was used also of a specific office separate from that of elders. They claimed in this respect to be acting in accordance with scripture, but unfortunately there seems to be no further evidence for the years 1651 to 1654 to ascertain the exact origin of the office.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE OFFICE 1660 TO 1700

During the reigns of Charles II and James II one of the leading General Baptists was Thomas Grantham, and his life and writings provide the main source for evidence concerning the messenger's office in this period.

Adam Taylor has summarised his life in these words :

During these two reigns he was ten times thrown into prison, and was often confined for many successive months. In this interval we shall find him preaching the gospel, founding churches, nursing them up to maturity, and setting in order the things that were wanting in London, at Norwich, at Lynn Regis, at Warboys, at Warwick, and various other distant places; but it is with the baptized churches in Lincolnshire that he was most closely connected.²⁹

He was baptized at Boston in 1653, in 1656 became the elder of the church at Halton Holegate, and in 1660 at the age of 26 went with the messenger Joseph Wright to present a petition to Charles II from the Baptists of Lincolnshire. In 1666 he was ordained a messenger, and Adam Taylor quotes his own words from his *Dispute with Connould* (1691) :

I was elected by the consent of many congregations, and ordained to the office of a messenger by those who were in the same office before me. The place where I was ordaind was in my own mansion or dwelling house, the place where the church usually met. . . . I was chosen by the consent of many churches to take a larger trust: and ordained messenger to oversee the churches in divers places that had need of help.³⁰

It is in the writings of Grantham that the messenger's office is most fully justified and expounded. He first dealt with it in an appendix to *A Sigh for Peace* (a defence of laying on of hands) published in 1671 entitled *A defence of the office of apostles; and of the continuance thereof in the church till the end*. This was reprinted in 1674 as *The successors of the apostles, or A discourse of the office of messengers, or apostles of Christ and his Church, and how they are to succeed the chief apostles in those things only, which were ordinary and fixed in that ministry, shewing therewithal, That it is impious presumption for any to pretend to succeed the Great Apostles in any part of their office which was extraordinary*. The same treatise was included in his *Christianismus Primitivus* of

1678 in Book 4 as Treatise 5 with the title *A Defence of the office of Subordinate Apostles of Christ, or Messengers of his churches, and the perpetuity of his ministry by divine institution for the more orderly promulgation of the gospel, and the better settlement of the churches to the end of the world.*

He points out first of all in what respect there are now no apostles, in the sense that the first apostles received their mission from Christ Himself by infallible revelation to lay an infallible foundation, for which mission they were endowed with gifts of tongues, miracles, signs or mighty deeds. He then lists three respects in which there are now apostles :

1. In respect of lawful power or authority to preach the gospel in all places, at all times, to all persons, as occasion and opportunity by God's providence shall be given them.
2. Unwearied diligence in teaching and strengthening both pastors and churches (chiefly those which are but newly settled in the faith) in all the council of God; and by labouring to perfect that which is lacking concerning the faith of any churches.
3. In being set for a defence of the gospel, or doctrine once delivered, against false apostles, or such as would introduce false doctrine; and also to strengthen the hands of particular pastors against usurpers, or such as despise the ministry of Christ.³¹

He defends these claims by referring to the perpetuity of the Divine Commission of *Matt. 28*, the duration of the spiritual gifts mentioned by Paul, the practice of the Early Church, and even of those churches today which deny the office, and finally the state of the world. He then deals with certain objections to the office, the main one being the danger lest such an office should "lead to setting up of Archbishops or some other anti-Christian usurpation."³² He answers this by pointing out that every church has the right to send forth such ministers, who remain members of that church subject to its discipline, and that their pre-eminence is only a degree of honour not of power.

In 1679 *An Orthodox Creed* was issued by 55 messengers, elders, and brethren of churches in Bucks., Herts., Bedford and Oxford. Its aim was "to unite and confirm all true Protestants in the fundamental articles of the Christian religion against the errors of Rome," and this perhaps accounts for the fact that article 31 "of officers in the Church of Christ" outlines three definite offices, and describes messengers throughout as bishops. They are to be :

chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the Church, and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of hands by the bishops of the same function, ordinarily, and those bishops so ordained have the government of those churches, that had suffrage in their election, and no other ordinarily; as also to preach the word or gospel to the world or unbelievers.³³

Bishops are to ordain elders. It is interesting to note that here already "the government of the churches" is mentioned before the task of preaching the Gospel.

Article 39 of the same creed dealt with the authority of general assemblies to preserve unity and prevent heresy.³⁴ It is from the records of the General Assembly meeting in London that further information can be found about messengers in this period. The 1689 meeting dealt with objections to the ordaining of elders as messengers, and decreed that "three distinct officers must have their distinct ordinations."³⁵ In 1691 the assembly agreed to send a messenger from Kent to assist Grantham in Norwich, and it gave its approval for the ordination of two new messengers³⁶—there is no mention before of this having been necessary. In the following year it sent a circular letter to the churches appealing to them to give a yearly contribution towards the charge of the messengers sent to preach the Gospel.³⁷

In a sermon preached at the funeral of William Reeve, who had been messenger of the churches in Nottinghamshire, Francis Stanley, another messenger, in 1696 described him as "a man subject to like infirmities and imperfections as other men," "one of Christ's messengers, a great traveller about his Lord and Master's business, for he had his Lord's commission and his Master's blessed pattern," "a painful labourer in travelling, preaching, instructing, contending, defending," "a useful and profitable preacher," "a skilful defender of the truth and faith."³⁸

The evidence for Particular Baptists in this period shows that they continued to use the term messenger to denote the representative of a church, but they explicitly denied that there was any third order in the ministry, although they recognized the need for evangelists at large. Thus Vavassor Powell, one of the leading Welsh Baptists, in *A Confession of Faith*, published in 1671, wrote :

as Christ hath given extraordinary and ordinary officers, as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of his body, so, for the feeding, teaching, ruling and ministering to the poor and sick of the church, the Lord hath appointed elders (or bishops) and deacons with other helps, who are to be chosen by the churches themselves, and ordained, as formerly they were, either by apostles, or some appointed by them as evangelists, or by some teachers in those particular churches.³⁹

Thomas Collier in *The Body of Divinity* (1674) lists the officers of the church as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, but from *Ephesians* iv. describes prophets as a gift to the church rather than a distinctly ordained office. In talking of apostles, after saying that there are now none in the original sense of the word, he continues : "though according to the commonsense of the word 'apostle,' so we have, or might have, or should have, apostles in the

church, it signifying a messenger."⁴⁰ He calls evangelists ordinary apostles, and says they are to be chosen out of the prophets, as also are pastors and teachers, elders and bishops. Fourthly, he lists deacons. Both of these writers seem to hold much in common with such a General Baptist as Grantham on the need for modern apostles, but they stop short of regarding them as a separate office.

In 1689 there was held in London "the General Assembly of Divers Pastors, Messengers, and ministering brethren of the Baptized Churches." The sense in which the term messenger is used here can be seen from the circular letter sent to the churches beforehand: "We do therefore humbly intreat you that you would be pleased to appoint two of your brethren, one of the ministry and one principal brother of the congregation with him as your messengers."⁴¹ The minutes of this and later association meetings of Particular Baptists are signed by the elder and then the messenger of each church, showing that the term is used of the non ministerial representative. In Article 26 "of the Church" in the confession of faith issued by this assembly, it is said that "the officers appointed by Christ are Bishops or Elders and Deacons." Later on in cases of difficulties or differences it is provided that :

churches holding communion together do by their messengers meet to consider, and give their advice in, or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the churches concerned; howbeit these messengers assembled are not entrusted with any church power properly so called, or with any jurisdiction over the churches themselves to exercise any censures either over any churches or persons; or to impose their determination on the churches or officers.⁴²

In 1695 the Yorks. and Lancs. Association repudiated the claim of an evangelist to some superiority on the ground that he had been ordained a minister at large by the Bromsgrove Church.⁴³ In 1697 Benjamin Keach in *The glory of a true church* writes: "a church thus constituted ought forthwith to choose them a Pastor, Elder or Elders, and Deacons (we read of no other officers or offices abiding in the church)."⁴⁴ Later on he says that there are no ruling elders besides the pastor, although there may have been in the Primitive Church.⁴⁵

By the end of the seventeenth century therefore the office of messenger was an essential part of the organisation of the General Baptists—in the words of Whitley: "From this time (1679) forward there is no indication that any doubt was felt as to the scripturalness of the office, its permanence, and its necessity."⁴⁶ Evangelism was still the chief object of the office. Amongst Particular Baptists, however, such an office had been definitely repudiated, and the term messenger amongst them henceforward signified merely the representative of a local church. This was largely due to a different conception of the Church. Particular Baptists held rigidly to the

independency of the local church, whilst General Baptists, in theory though not always in practice, gave considerable powers to the Assembly

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE OFFICE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The main developments in the office of messenger after 1700 can be grouped under two headings—appointment and duties.

In Adam Taylor's account of the appointment of Joseph Hooke, there can be seen what was probably the normal procedure at the end of the seventeenth century :

At the first meeting (of the Lincs. Association in 1695) it was proposed to call Mr. Joseph Hooke to the office of messenger; and the proposal being approved, both by this association and the general assembly in London (he is mentioned in the minutes of the Assembly meeting of June, 1696), and Mr. Hooke and his church having also acceded to it, he was very solemnly ordained to that office, Sept. 2nd, 1696 by Mr. Francis Stanley, messenger of the baptized churches in Northants.⁴⁷

The initiative lies with the local association, but their nomination must be passed by the Assembly and by the local church, the whole procedure culminating in a solemn ordination service by another messenger. No man could take the office upon himself—in 1697 John Cox had appealed to the Assembly to send a minister into Yorkshire,⁴⁸ but in 1700 the Assembly said it could not set him apart as a messenger until he had been recommended by his Association,⁴⁹ and in 1702 we find the Association warning the churches of his Judaism.⁵⁰ It was not always easy to persuade a local church to release one of its elders for the office of messenger. In 1711 the Western Association nominated Benjamin Miller, and the Assembly sent a letter to his church at Downton asking them to release him,⁵¹ but in the minutes of 1714 we read : "a letter was drawn up to be sent to Downton in Wiltshire to excite the church there to admit Bror. Benj. Miller to the office of a messenger."⁵² The man himself was not always willing—at the 1724 Assembly four brethren were appointed to "discourse Bro. Field about the affair of a messenger,"⁵³ and they were evidently successful as the following year a letter was sent to the church at Burnham asking them to release him.⁵⁴ The reasons why a local church refused to give up one of its elders as a messenger varied. Adam Taylor recounts how John Hursthouse, pastor of Monksthorpe and Burgh, was repeatedly chosen by the Lincs. Association for the office of messenger, but his church refused permission, and he continues "these zealous endeavours of the ministers seem to have been but feebly seconded by the body at large and therefore to have produced very little effect."⁵⁵ On the other hand the minute book at Canterbury records that in March, 1712 :

it was decided that Bro. Hobbs should give the mind of the church to the friends that should come from the association concerning Bro. Jarman and Bro. Ongly their being chosen messengers which is as followeth, that Bro. Ongly being in his old age we are loath to have such a burden laid upon him and that Bro. Jarman shall be left to God and his own liberty.

In the following month, however, this was amended, and Bro. Ongly also was "left to God and his own liberty," and in May it was agreed that Bro. Jarman should go to Horsham to be ordained, "and that we should endeavour to persuade Bro. Ongly to go also."⁵⁶ It was not essential to have a messenger ordaining a messenger—Adam Taylor records that in 1708 the Association authorised six elders to ordain Mr. T. Ulliyott as no messenger could be obtained.⁵⁷ Nor was every name brought before the Assembly at London—the 1711 Assembly told the Kentish Association to hasten the ordination of Miller and Norden and of any others elected by them, or if they wished they could commend them to the Assembly first.⁵⁸ It appears from the minute book of the Bucks. Association that during the period of the two rival General Assemblies it was the practice for associations to propose names to the Midland Assembly for ordination as messengers.⁵⁹

As the century proceeded however the initiative in appointing messengers passed from local associations to the Assembly, and this is one of many evidences of spiritual decline amongst General Baptists in the eighteenth century. The minutes of the Assembly show two signs of this. In the first place year after year appeals are made for more messengers. The first such plea comes in 1709;⁶⁰ the next in the following year resulted in a letter being sent to the churches, which read :

Brethren, there having been very great and moving complaint made to us from divers parts of this kingdom of the great want and real necessitie there is of more messengers to be chosen and sent forth for the preaching of the gospell and the more effectual taking care of those in distressed churches that are ready to languish and perish as to religious things without a speedy supply. . . .⁶¹

Further appeals are made in 1714, 1728, 1732, 1734, 1737, 1743, 1744, 1763, 1766, 1767.⁶² The other sign is the repeated appeals for financial support for the messengers. The 1710 letter to the churches continued :

We believe that there may be some persons found if a competent supply can be raised for them . . . the method we propose for raising a competency is as follows :

- (1) that you'll deput an active lively man to collect all such sums
- (2) that all who are willing and capable should pay weekly a farthing or halfpenny
- (3) that the monies so raised be sent yearly to the Association so thence remitted to the Generall Assembly
- (4) or any better method.⁶³

A further appeal was made in 1714 especially for two messengers who had been sent to Virginia.⁶⁴ There was a central fund endowed—Adam Taylor mentions that a Mr. Pierce Johns left £15 yearly to the support of the travelling ministers or messengers from the London General Assembly.⁶⁵ Local churches sometimes were generous to their own messenger—the East Kent minute book records decisions to make a “liberal collection” for Searles Jarman before Christmas in each of the years 1725-7.⁶⁶ In 1769 in answer to a query from Chatham the Assembly decided that “all those churches who have or shall send for a messenger to do them service ought to pay their expence and to satisfy them for their trouble and absence from their family,”⁶⁷ but in 1771 the Kent Association sent a resolution to the Assembly asking for some better method for defraying the expenses of messengers,⁶⁸ and in that year the Assembly decided that a general collection should be held in every church, and remitted each year to the treasurer of the Assembly, Mr. Jemmet.⁶⁹

Another change that can be observed is in the qualification necessary for election to the office of messenger. In 1712 two of the six messengers ordained by the Kent Association were not elders,⁷⁰ and one of them, James Richardson, who was probably the most outstanding messenger of this period, was later refused permission to join the Fraternal at the British Coffee House because he was not an elder, and as a result he used to attend the Baptist Board of the Particular Baptists.⁷¹ In 1734 the Assembly decreed that it was not necessary for a messenger to have been an elder,⁷² but in 1768 this was said to be most proper and orderly,⁷³ and in 1780 the rule was definitely made that no person could be ordained a messenger who had not been an elder.⁷⁴

In several ways the life of James Richardson shows the changing nature of the messenger's office. He was the last to have a real zeal for evangelism and planting new churches. Throughout his life he was the foremost supporter of the mission to Virginia, but he himself did not do pioneering work. For many years he was the minute secretary of both the General Assembly and the Kent Association, and he toured the country and Ireland, ordaining officers and setting the churches in order. Whitley describes his life as “a sign that the messenger was becoming more of a superintendent of existing churches than a founder of new.”⁷⁵

This development in the duties of a messenger can be seen from the minutes of the General Assembly, of Associations, of individual churches, and from writings on the office of messenger.

The minutes of the Assembly only mentions messengers planting new churches in reference to the mission to Virginia and Carolina.⁷⁶ In 1704 two were sent to Ely to help the church there to settle a personal dispute. In 1714 and 1715 messengers are

appointed to ordain other messengers and elders,⁷⁷ and in the latter year four are sent "to inquire amongst churches around Norwich."⁷⁸ In 1721 two are sent to Ireland "to take upon them as much as in them lies to settle the affairs of such church or churches as to them shall seem most to the honour and glory of God."⁷⁹ For fifty years there is no direct reference to the duties of messengers, but then in 1774 it is agreed :

that the messengers be requested in their several districts to visit the churches of the general Baptist denomination, admonishing such who have omitted sending representatives to the Assembly to renew their connection; and that those who send representatives be intreated to continue to do so that by the united efforts and zeal of the churches in general, religion may be revived more and more amongst us.⁸⁰

From the following year the messengers seem to have submitted a general report to the Assembly on the state of the churches arising from their visitation.⁸¹

The records of Associations and individual churches show the same thing. In East Kent the messengers lived in their home town, presided at meetings of the Association, composed differences in churches in their area, ordained elders and deacons, and represented the churches at the annual assembly in London.⁸² The same kind of work was done by such messengers as John Brittain in Bucks. The records of the Church at Ford show him visiting them to ordain deacons and elders, and presiding at the breaking of bread frequently during a period when they were short of elders.⁸³ The Amersham records reveal an interesting point in the years following 1723. Baptism was administered by any Church member, but the laying on of hands was performed only by a messenger. Thus an entry for 1724 reads: "Henry Saxton was baptized by Bro. Jonathan Widmore, Administrator, and came under hands in order to communion Mr. Jn. Brittain, messenger to ye Baptized Churches, Administrator."⁸⁴ In 1736 a couple were baptized by Bro. Beck, and came under hands of the messenger, Bro. Hobbs, ten days later.⁸⁵ This Bro. Beck was ordained an elder in 1740,⁸⁶ and by 1747 was the administrator for the laying on of hands,⁸⁷ and from then on elders often did it, but for twenty years this Church seems to reflect Church of England practice in confirmation. Adam Taylor mentions the ordination as messenger for Lincs. in 1731 of William Johnson, and says of him: "He was punctual in attending meetings, and annually visited most of the societies under his superintendence."⁸⁸ This annual visit of a messenger seems to have become the most important part of their office by the second half of the century. In 1783 the Kent Association asked their messengers to give notice to the churches of their annual visit!⁸⁹ Adam Taylor records a minute of the Lincs. Association meeting at Coningsby

in 1775 which shows the great authority given to messengers in this respect :

The messenger, who is chosen by the unanimous consent and approbation of the churches which stand in a close connection together, hath full liberty and authority, according to the gospel, to freely inquire into the state of the churches respecting both the pastor and people, to see that the pastors do their duty in their places, and the people theirs: he is to exhort, admonish, and reprove both the one and the other as the occasion calls for. In virtue of his office he is to watch over the several flocks committed to his care and charge. To see that good order and government be carefully and constantly kept up and maintained in the churches he is called and appointed to look after and watch over; to labour to keep out innovations in doctrine, worship and discipline, and to stand up in defence of the gospel.⁹⁰

Joseph Hooke in *A necessary apology for the baptized believers*. (1701) follows Grantham quite closely in claiming scriptural justification for a third order of ordained ministers.⁹¹ He then shows: "that our Lord Christ hath some work to do which no other officers but messengers are obliged to do by office," and he mentions preaching the Gospel in remote places, planting churches, ordaining officers, setting things in order, defending the Gospel, and says that elders of churches, being fixed ministers, cannot do such work.⁹² He says that the original name apostle was changed to bishop, "and it concerns Christians to beware that they do not call the successors of the apostles, Bishops or Elders, so long till it be forgotten they are itinerant ministers, and what work their office obliges them to do."⁹³ John Tasker in 1729 still makes this the main duty of messengers in: *Plain reasons for a Religious, Conscientious and Peacable Separation from the Communion of the Church of England, wherein is shown, 1. the good order and constitution of the Baptist Churches*. He points out that "our church constitution is according to the primitive pattern . . . we have three sorts of ordained officers amongst us," and he continues: "the business of messengers was to preach the Gospel in remote places, plant churches, ordain elders, and set in order things that were wanting in all churches."⁹⁴ A new emphasis is however evident in a sermon preached at the funeral of the messenger Richard Drinkwater at Chichester in 1743 by Matthew Randall: "He spared neither time, expence, nor pains in visiting the members of Christ in any part of the nation; either where gifts were wanting, differences were unreconciled, or disorders appeared, needing a proper remedy."⁹⁵ Grantham Killingworth, a descendant of the messenger Grantham, in 1757 wrote, *A full and particular answer to the Rev. Mr. Whiston's friendly address to the Baptists, the whole giving a more certain and distinct account of the principles and practices of the General Baptists than any other piece heretofore published*. He does not mention the duties of messengers, only their existence as equivalent to bishops, "the

baptists seem to me to be the only body of christian people, who rightly constitute their three orders of ecclesiastical governors, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, I mean, as chosen by the christians themselves, over whom they are to preside."⁹⁶ The changed conception of the function of a messenger is fully seen in the appendix to William Evershed's sermon on *The Messenger's Mission*, preached at the ordination of messengers at Canterbury in 1783. He writes: "Hence it appears that the apostles planted churches, and those messengers could do it also, yet it was not their peculiar work and business, for persons planted churches who were neither apostles nor messengers, e.g. Philip." He then lists the duties of messengers as three: 1. To set in order things that are wanting. They are to do this by visiting the churches even when they are not sent for, and the churches are not to resent this. 2. To remedy abuses in a spirit of gentleness and patience. 3. To ordain elders. Only once in the New Testament is this not done by an apostle or messenger.⁹⁷

Thus by the second half of the eighteenth century the messenger was no longer primarily an evangelist, but more like a bishop in the Church of England, ordaining, visiting, remedying abuses, and presiding at associations and assemblies. This major change does not seem to have met with much opposition within the denomination, only outside it. There are isolated examples of protests about messengers usurping authority. In 1712 in Lincolnshire Joseph Hooke disclaimed all opinions contrary to the independency of the churches, after disputes had arisen from his attempts to put into practice the Expedient suggested in *The Unity of the Churches*.⁹⁸ In 1714 at the Bucks. Association "the following question was left on consideration till next association, whether the continuance of the Messenger's office can be defended and maintained by clear scriptural evidence," but there is no later minute on this point.⁹⁹ The Kent Association minutes have this entry for 1770: "Whereas a charge by Mr. Stanger and others have been brought against Bro. Dan. Dobell for sowing discord among people at Bessells Green and in his office being overbearing as a messenger, it is opinion of Association that charge is not supported."¹⁰⁰

Particular Baptists continued to oppose such an office. Daniel Turner in *A compendium of social religion, or the nature and constitution of Christian Churches with the respective qualifications and duties of their officers and members* (1758) wrote: "And as to an episcopal order or jurisdiction, superior to that of elders, I cannot find anything like it in the scripture account of the matter."¹⁰¹ Charles Whitfield in *The form and order of a Church of Christ*, written in 1775 to the Church at Hamsterly in Durham, describes apostles, prophets, and evangelists as extraordinary officers, who are succeeded by ordinary officers, elders and deacons: "therefore we are not to look for nor expect any more in their office, but

to reject them with disdain, who impiously assume any such characters."¹⁰² The New Connection of General Baptists took the same view. The Assembly minutes reveal repeated attempts, especially by Gilbert Boyce, messenger in Lincs., to arrange a union between the two bodies of General Baptists. Negotiations in 1777 and in 1784-5 fell through owing to the old Assembly insisting on the divine institution of the messenger's office, and the laying on of hands, whilst the New Connection was prepared to tolerate a difference of opinion on both these subjects.¹⁰³ Adam Taylor, writing as a member of the New Connection in 1818 on the resolution of the Lincs. Association in 1775 (quoted above), says "such an inquisitor general is totally incompatible with the independency of the churches, professed by these Christians."¹⁰⁴

The old General Baptists declined further in the nineteenth century, and Whitley, writing in 1909, said: "Today although the Assembly is no longer aggressively evangelistic, the Messengers are regarded as peculiarly its officers, and three of them uphold the continuity of the order."¹⁰⁵

CONCLUSIONS

From this study of the office of messenger amongst General Baptists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, certain conclusions can be drawn, which may be of some relevance to the contemporary situation.

The messenger's office originated in the passion of the early General Baptists for preaching the Gospel where it was not known in its purity, and for planting as a result new fellowships of baptized believers. It is a sad commentary on the weakness of human organisation that when this passion was lost, this same office became one of the chief stumbling blocks to union between the old General Baptists and the New Connection, who a century later reflected the fervour for evangelism of the original messengers. The address of Henry Denne to the Church at Fenstanton in 1653 which led to his ordination as their messenger is a good illustration of this missionary concern:

I desire that we may seriously consider the former words, Go, teach all nations, baptizing them, whether we are not as much bound to observe them as any. And if it appeareth that we are, then I pray consider whether we are not in a great fault, in being so negligent in sending forth persons to divulge the gospel, in those many places that are ignorant thereof.¹⁰⁶

The extent of its concern for those outside is a good test of the spiritual vitality of any church or group of churches.

The local church proved to be all-important in the success or failure of such a mission, for the General Baptist throughout believed

that the final authority lay with the local church. Some freely gave up their gifted ministers for a wider mission, others jealously kept them and resented outside interference. Such an attitude would seem to have been present around 1690 in the Church at Ford, which refused to allow other churches to invite Bro. Hunt (later a messenger) to preach without the permission of three of their own elders.¹⁰⁷ To day the progress of extension work and the future of small causes depend upon the willingness of larger churches to sacrifice both in money and in manpower.

The initiative in appointing messengers lay chiefly with associations, and largely through the enterprise of James Richardson, the Kent Association was most active in the first two decades of the eighteenth century in sending forth messengers both at home and abroad.¹⁰⁸ Later, however, Association life declined, and the Assembly minutes reveal repeated appeals on the national level for money and for men, which seem quite familiar to modern ears used to appeals for the Home Work Fund. This suggests that the key to the problem lies not at the national assembly level, but with the local county association.

The decline in the spiritual vitality of the General Baptists resulted in an organisation, which in relation to messengers, reflected the practice of the Church of England in several ways. Whether this was deliberate or not cannot properly be ascertained. Comparison with the Particular Baptists shows that although they had at first very similar people, they never allowed them to become a separate office, and they had a more flexible and less centralised organisation. This may be of some relevance to ecumenical discussions today. To take episcopacy into our system merely in order to have three orders like the Church of England would be to follow the example of the General Baptists with probably the same result, a decline in spiritual vitality. The history, however, of the role of messenger amongst both General and Particular Baptists shows the value of some form of bishop (neither group was afraid of the word), whose prime duty would be evangelism, and whose other duties such as visitation, administration and ordination would be subsidiary to that.

Thomas Grantham in his writings quoted 1 *Corinthians* xii. in his defence of the messenger's office,¹⁰⁹ and it is perhaps this passage with its stress on the work of the Holy Spirit before and above and through human organisation that provides the best closing comment on the history of the office of messenger: "All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1. *Cor.* xii, v. 11, R.S.V.).

NOTES

- ¹ Adam Taylor: *History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 1, p. 413f.
- ² W. T. Whitley: *A History of British Baptists*, p. 87f. (See further his introduction to the *Minutes of the General Assembly*, pp. xxviii, xxx, and on pp. xxxiii, xxxv: "An incomplete list of Messengers known, with the dates when they emerge and disappear," where he lists 75 names between 1653 and 1804).
- ³ W. J. McGlothlin: *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, p. 105.
- ⁴ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptists* (ed. W. T. Whitley), Vol. 1, p. 1, list of signatories p. 5.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6f.
- ⁶ *Records of the Churches of Christ gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys, and Hexham* (ed. E. B. Underhill), p. 196-8.
- ⁷ Tho. Lover: *The True Gospel Faith*, p. 9.
- ⁸ Thomas Collier: *The Right Constitution and True Subjects of the Visible Church of Christ*, p. 19f.
- ⁹ William Rider: *Laying on of hands asserted*, p. 16.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- ¹¹ Will Jeffery: *The Whole Faith of Man*, p. 96.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- ¹³ Mentioned in the article *Baptists in East Kent from 1643*, in *The Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 2, p. 91f.
- ¹⁴ Quoted in *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. 3, p. 247, in the article "Two Association Meetings in Kent 1657."
- ¹⁵ *Fenstanton Records*, p. 40.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60ff. For further details of Lupton see Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 205.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68f.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72. For a summary of the life of Henry Denne see Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 147.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105-13.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128f.
- ²² *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 142, 156.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 304 and footnote on same page.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 289.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 291.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 343.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 346f.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 296.
- ²⁹ Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 211f.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- ³¹ Thomas Grantham: *Christianismus Primitivus*, p. 154.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- ³³ McGlothlin, *op. cit.*, p. 146f.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- ³⁵ *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Vol. 1, p. 27.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- ³⁸ Francis Stanley: *A sermon preached at the funeral of Mr. William Reeve, a minister of Christ and servant to the Church*, p. 25. For Stanley see Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 233, 321, and for Reeve, *ibid.*, p. 236.
- ³⁹ Vavassor Powell: *A Confession of Faith*, p. 37.
- ⁴⁰ Thomas Collier: *The Body of Divinity*, p. 476.
- ⁴¹ From the letter to the Church at Luppitt in Devon quoted in Ivimey *History of the Baptists*, Vol. 1, p. 479.

- 42 McGlothlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-8.
- 43 Mentioned in the article, *Association Life until 1815*, in *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. 5, p. 26.
- 44 Benjamin Keach, *The glory of a true church*, p. 7.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 46 *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Intro., p. xxix.
- 47 Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 319.
- 48 *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Vol. 1, p. 51.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- 50 *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- 55 Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 106.
- 56 From the Minute Book of the Church at Canterbury 1711-21, to be seen on microfilm in Dr. Williams's Library.
- 57 Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 100.
- 58 *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Vol. 1, p. 114.
- 59 See the article on *The General Baptist Association in Bucks.* in *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. 4, pp. 84-7.
- 60 *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Vol. 1, p. 103.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- 62 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 124, 148, Vol. 2, pp. 8, 26, 42, 67, 71, 125, 131, 134.
- 63 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 110.
- 64 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 124.
- 65 Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 336.
- 66 From the Minute Book of "the Churches in and about East Kent," 1717-34, to be seen on microfilm in Dr. Williams's Library.
- 67 *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Vol. 2, p. 138.
- 68 From the Minute Book of the Kent and Sussex Association, 1768-1819, to be seen on microfilm in Dr. Williams's Library.
- 69 *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Vol. 2, p. 143.
- 70 See Whitley's remarks on Richardson in his Introduction to the *Minutes of the General Assembly*, p. xxixf., and the article on Henry Miller in *The Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 4, p. 300.
- 71 See the article on *The Baptist Board* in *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. 5, p. 107, and the note on Richardson on p. 114.
- 72 *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Vol. 2, p. 26.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 168f.
- 75 Whitley: *History of British Baptists*, p. 172. For further details of Richardson see Whitley's Introduction to the *Minutes of the General Assembly*, pp. xxixf. and lxx-lxxv.
- 76 *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Vol. 1, pp. 124, 146, Vol. 2, p. 54. For further details see the article on *Kentish Missionaries in Virginia* in *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. 4, pp. 55-7.
- 77 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 124, 128.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- 79 *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- 80 *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 152.
- 81 *Ibid.*, pp. 154, 157, 162, 165, 169.
- 82 See the article on *Baptists in East Kent from 1643*, in *The Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 2, p. 140.
- 83 *The Church Books of Ford or Cuddington and Amersham in the County of Bucks.* (ed. W. T. Whitley, 1912), pp. 155-7, 159, 161, 165.

- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 245.
⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 247.
⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 248.
⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
⁸⁸ Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 109.
⁸⁹ See note 68.
⁹⁰ Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, note on p. 415.
⁹¹ Joseph Hooke: *A necessary apology for the baptized believers*, p. 77.
⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 80.
⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 83. For further details of Joseph Hooke see Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 99-106, note 98 below, and note 47 above.
⁹⁴ John Tasker: *Plain Reasons*, p. 11.
⁹⁵ *The exalted hopes of the righteous, at, and after death, considered in a sermon occasioned by the death of that faithful servant of Christ, Mr. Richard Drinkwater, preached at Chichester, April 24, 1743, by Matthew Randall*, p. 22f.
⁹⁶ Grantham Killingworth: *A full and particular answer*, p. 3.
⁹⁷ William Evershed: *The Messenger's Mission*, pp. 25-30.
⁹⁸ Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 99ff.
⁹⁹ Quoted in *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. 4, p. 214.
¹⁰⁰ See note 68.
¹⁰¹ Daniel Turner: *A compendium of social religion*, p. 40.
¹⁰² Charles Whitfield: *The form and order of a Church of Christ*, p. 33.
¹⁰³ *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Vol. 2, p. 183, and Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 214, 324.
¹⁰⁴ Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 415.
¹⁰⁵ Intro. to the *Minutes of the General Assembly*, p. xxx.
¹⁰⁶ *Fenstanton Records*, p. 71.
¹⁰⁷ *Ford Church Book*, p. 11.
¹⁰⁸ See note 76.
¹⁰⁹ Grantham, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

J. F. V. NICHOLSON

Talking about God

TALK about God consists of theological sentences. It is the function of a theological sentence to express a theological proposition. It is the function of a theological proposition to convey information about God. Problems of two sorts arise: (i) there are those concerned with the nature of theological propositions—these may be described as problems of *meaning*; and (ii) there are those concerned with the effectiveness of theological sentences—these may be described as problems of *communication*. The first kind of problem is theoretical; the second kind (at any rate for those whose job it is to talk about God) is, to some extent, practical. In what follows we shall consider two questions: (i) When we talk about God, are we talking about anything? (ii) When we talk about God, do those to whom we talk understand what it is that we are talking about? Reflection upon these two questions leads to some interesting and important conclusions.

MEANING

Consider first the problem of meaning. "When I talk about God, am I talking about anything?" may appear, at first sight, to be a silly question, to which the answer is, "Of course. If I am talking about God, then of necessity I must be talking about something." It is not, however, quite as simple as that. Of course, if one means by "When I talk about God, I am talking about something" only that sentences about God have subjects, then of course this is true. Sentences about God are cast in the same grammatical form as sentences about oneself or one's neighbour—"God is alive," "I am alive," "You are alive." The first of these has a subject and a predicate as do the second and third. But it does not follow that if the second and third can be said to be "about something," in some sense other than the purely syntactical, then thus must necessarily be true of the first as well.

It is the great achievement of that movement in modern philosophy, associated in this country with the names of Moore, Russell and Wittgenstein, to have shown that mistakes often arise from assuming that, because propositions are expressed in sentences which have the same grammatical structure, these propositions must have the same logic. This is a false assumption. We may illustrate its falsity by considering the two sentences: (i) This road goes to

Liverpool, and (ii) This line goes to infinity. These sentences have the same grammatical structure and we might assume, if we were very naive, that the logic of the former is identical with that of the latter. But a moment's reflection shows quite clearly that this is not the case. It makes good sense to ask, in reply to the former statement, How far is it to Liverpool? But it makes no sense at all to ask, how far is it to infinity? The one question is meaningful, the other meaningless. It appears, then, that the expression 'goes to' means something quite different, when it links subjects concerning lines with predicates concerning infinity, from what it means when it links subjects about roads with predicates about places. We talk of infinity as though it were a place, but, of course, it is not and its logic is not the logic of places.

Or again, consider the two sentences: (i) Mail vans are red, and (ii) Kind acts are right. It may appear, from the grammatical structure of these sentences, as though rightness were a simple quality, of a similar kind to redness, which we perceive in objects. But the two cases are not at all analogous. The former proposition (Mail vans are red) is tested by empirical observation—we can go and look at mail vans and see that they are red and, which is more important, we can take other people, who may doubt it, and show them the redness of mail vans. The latter proposition (Kind acts are right) cannot be tested in anything like the same way—there is no quality, rightness, which can be observed as redness is observed. We know what we mean, when we ask of statements about mail vans being red, "Are they true or false?" because we know how to answer it—how to get at the facts. But if we ask of statements about the rightness of actions, "Are they true or false?" there is no similar way of answering it—we cannot go and look at (or touch, weigh, measure, etc., etc.) kind actions to see if they have some observable quality called "rightness." The fact, if it be a fact, that kind acts are right is a fact of an entirely different kind from the fact that mail vans are red. The two propositions look as though they were both factual, in some identical sense of "factual," but this cannot be the case. However statements about rightness are related to facts, it is (as even philosophers, who want to regard them as factual in some metaphysical sense, agree), in a way that is logically quite different from that in which statements such as "Mail vans are red" are related to facts.

We must now turn to our prime concern here, i.e. theological propositions, such as "God is good" or "God created the world," and consider what sort of meaning they have. We shall find that we are confronted by problems of a similar kind to those which we encountered in considering moral statements. Theological statements look like statements of fact, but we shall find that, whatever their logic is, it is not the same as that of other statements of fact.

We shall see this, if we reflect, first, on the subject of these theological propositions, i.e. God. Now, the subjects of statements of fact are known to us either by acquaintance or description. We may say, for instance, "Smith is good," or "The man in the red coat is good." If we are acquainted with the individual, Smith, then we know what that subject refers to by direct acquaintance; if we know what a man in a red coat would be like, then we know what that refers to by description. We are not, however, acquainted with God in any way which is similar to that in which we are acquainted with Smith. We speak figuratively of being acquainted with God, of course, but whatever that means, it is something different from acquaintance with Smith. If anyone said, "Who is Smith?" we could take him and point and say, "That is Smith"; but if anyone asked, "Who is God?" we could only answer by saying things about Him, e.g. "He made us," "He watches over us," etc. In the case of every other proper name, if we know to whom (or what) it refers, we know by acquaintance, and we can convey its meaning to another by bringing him into a situation where, if he is normal, he will share this acquaintance. But this is not so in the case of God.

Suppose now that we describe God and say, "The omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient Being is good"; though this looks like, it is not really at all like, the statement "The man in the red coat is good." We know what it would be like for an object to fulfil the latter description and so it has meaning for us. But we cannot conceive what a being would be like who fulfilled the former description. It is difficult to see how an expression can be said to have meaning for us, if we cannot conceive what that to which it refers would be like.

These considerations may be swept aside by the impatient reader as very naive and as proving no more than that God is not Smith, much less a man in a red coat. But this will not do. It is surely sound theology to say that God is a Being whose nature is beyond man's comprehension. We have no knowledge of Him which is at all like the knowledge which we have of the subjects of other factual statements. We cannot see, touch, hear (etc.) Him as we can Smith; on the other hand we cannot conceive what a Being would be like who possessed the qualities of omnipresence, etc., which are attributed to God. But how can we be said to know things about such a subject?

Even more difficult problems arise, when we reflect on the predicates of statements about God. They are not testable by reference to the facts in anything like the way that other factual statements are. For instance, the statement, "There have been four ages of advance and three of recession in the history of the Church" is one which can be verified or falsified in ways which are admitted

by all reasonable men. There are facts which support this statement. We could imagine facts which would falsify it: if, for instance, evidence came to light that all the documents on which it is based are fabrications. The point is that there are facts which count *for* this theory of Latourette's; and facts—conceivable, if not actual—which would count *against* it. We know what it means to say that this is true—it means there are facts to support it; we know what it would mean to say that it is false—there would have to be facts which did not support it.

But now consider the proposition: God created the world. Is this, in anything like the same sense, testable? We may point to evidence which seems to us to confirm it, e.g. the beauty and order of the world. But that is not enough; nor would any amount of positive evidence of this kind be enough. We must ask ourselves, If this evidence disappeared—if, for instance, the world became ugly and disorderly—would that lead us to retract our assertion that God made it? The answer of a man of faith to this would be "No." If the worst happened, as a man of faith, he would still assert that God made the world and that there must be some good purpose behind what was happening. This is what is required of him when things go wrong in his own personal circumstances, and it is, presumably, would be required of him, if things went wrong in the world as a whole. It may be objected that there are conceivable facts which would make him retract his belief in Divine creation, e.g. if it were shown that there is pointless and unnecessary suffering anywhere in the world. This, no doubt, is true; but the whole point is that a man of faith would refuse to believe that any suffering was pointless or unnecessary, however strongly the circumstances seemed to suggest this. The theological proposition, "God created the world," is not a theory, like Latourette's about Church history, which stands or falls with the facts. It shares with other theological propositions an immunity from facts. This is its virtue, considered as an expression of faith; but its defect, considered as a factual statement. It is a very odd sort of factual statement which can be—and indeed must be—affirmed whatever the facts may be.

As philosophers point out, when we assert that some state of affairs is a fact, we must at the same time implicitly deny that some other conceivable state of affairs is the case, or our assertion has no meaning. For instance, suppose I go to the window, look out, and say, "It is sazzling." The word is new to you, but you look out of the window and see that rain is falling. You therefore conclude that my odd word 'sazzling' refers to a state of affairs where rain is falling. But suppose I go again to the window on the following day, look out, and say, "It is sazzling," although now the sun is shining. From this you will conclude that my word 'sazzling' must

cover both rain and sunshine. Now, suppose that I repeat the performance every day for a year, and, whatever the state of the weather (sun, rain, hail, snow, wind, etc.), I say every day, "It is sazzling." At the end of the year, you will say to me, "Look here, what does this word of yours, 'sazzling,' mean? It seems to refer to every possible state of the weather." "Precisely," I reply, "that is the great virtue of my word. Whatever the weather, 'sazzling' covers it." "But," you rightly object, "in that case it means nothing. If it does not indicate one state of affairs, which is the case, as distinct from some other, which is not, it tells us nothing. We know what 'raining' is because we know what 'not raining' is. But we can't know what 'sazzling' is because there is nothing conceivable which can be called 'not sazzling.' Your proposition 'It is sazzling' covers everything and therefore indicates nothing."

Now, the trouble with theological propositions—when they are regarded as statements of fact comparable to scientific or historical statements of fact—is precisely this: they seem to be compatible with any state of affairs whatever, and so it is difficult to see what they can possibly mean. When the man of faith asserts that in all things there is a good purpose, the philosopher asks, "What conceivable state of affairs would lead you to retract this faith?" When the believer answers "None," he goes on, "Then, if there is nothing conceivable which is incompatible with it, what do you tell me when you say this?" By this criterion, propositions such as, "God is good," "God created the world," etc., appear to be as meaningless as "It is sazzling" in the above illustration.

To summarize our reflections so far: there is something very odd about theological statements, since, (a) their subject is not knowable in any of the ways in which the subjects of other factual statements are knowable, and (b) their predicates attribute qualities to, and make assertions about, this subject, which are not testable by reference to the facts of experience and observation and are apparently compatible with any conceivable state of things whatsoever.

Theological statements, though they purport to be statements of fact have a logic that is different from that of all other kinds of factual statement. From this, however, we need not conclude that they are meaningless. It was the mistake of the early logical positivists to do that; a mistake since rectified to some extent. To be meaningful, it is only required that a statement should fit into a logical system, the rules of which are known. What has become clear in the foregoing discussion is that theological and factual statements belong to different systems. Religion is not science. We have always professed to know this, but, whereas we have always been quite clear that science is not religion, we have sometimes tried to pretend that religion, or at least theology, is science—only more so. We have described theology as the queen of the sciences, and,

in gracing it with that poetic description have tended to overlook the fact that, if she is queen, she is an alien queen, who does not speak the language nor obey the laws of her subjects. The casualty in all this is most definitely not theology, as such, much less religion. It is natural theology, the enterprise which attempts to establish theological conclusions on factual premises, drawn from science or history.

Logical analysis has dealt body-blows at natural theology from which it will not recover. This disturbs me, for, looking back, I see that I came to faith, as I suppose many who read this will have done, across the bridge of natural theology. In my youth, when the Christianity on which I had been brought up seemed to be melting in the 'acids' of the Sixth Form, I found books which presented the argument from design in forms which seemed to me intellectually respectable, and by these I was much helped. It is rather alarming to look back and see that the bridge across which one came to faith isn't really there, and that this natural theology, by which one was so greatly helped is, if anything, somewhat less respectable logically than the fundamentalism which one rejected. I do not deny of course that natural theology may still have some apologetic value in allaying the doubts of the Sixth Form. For instance, to the inquirer who is troubled by the problem of evil, one may point out that much evil is the consequence of human freedom and that personality implies freedom; and that many have found in these two considerations a solution of the problem. How can there be evil in a world made by a good God? I do not think that this is really a solution of the problem of evil, but I do not think it would be dishonest to put it to a young person, who was thinking about the Faith, as a point to be considered. It may help him at one stage of his development, as it has helped many.

Lest any tremble for the ark of God before this attack on natural theology, I would remind them that the loudest "No" to natural theology which the modern world has heard, was uttered not by a philosopher, but a theologian; not by the Vienna Circle, but by Barth.

Christian theology, from a logical point of view, is the explication of a myth; it is drawing the morals of a fable. The myth or fable is the Gospel story. Christianity rests upon the dogmatic assertion that in this story the transcendent God is revealed. Here we are in the presence of what Paul calls the "mystery"—i.e. the thing which is, at one and the same time, (a) utterly incomprehensible, and (b) so clear that the simplest may observe it. There is no evidence for the assertion that the Gospel story is the revelation of God. If we make it all, we do so by faith alone. Theology must start (i.e. start logically, whatever the start psychologically for any particular believer may be) from this assertion for which there are

no reasons, the truth or falsity of which it is impossible to test. There is no theology "Christo remoto." We start from what we are told in the Story. Theology's concern is not with the question: Is this story the revelation of God? That is unanswerable to reason. Theology's concern is with the question, Assuming that this is the revelation of God, what, in the light of it, may we say about God, man, the world, life? Theological propositions have meaning as answers to this question, but in no other sense.

COMMUNICATION

The problem of communication, i.e. of making our theological sentences effective, is, we said above, the second problem which exercises us, when we reflect on talk about God. There are two aspects of this problem: they concern the means and the matter respectively. Or, to put the same point differently, "effective" in this context means two things, viz. (i) making our talk such that people will listen to it, and (ii) such that people will understand it.

We are often told that the former of these objectives can be achieved, if only we put the Gospel into contemporary terms and proclaim it through contemporary media. To this end modern translations and paraphrases of the Bible are produced in abundance. To this end preachers take pains to use the language of their day. (I recently met a preacher who said that he thought it would be a good idea to learn the language of Rock 'n' Roll so that he could put the Gospel in these terms to his youth club. He would not find it all that difficult; this jargon is surprisingly evangelical—one "gets the message," one "is sent." . . .) To the same end of being contemporary in approach, we find modern publicity methods impressed into service. Mr. Billy Graham justified the posters, etc. of his campaign on the grounds that modern publicity works on the 'star' system; it demands a name, a face. Another contemporary means of communication is films. It is doubtful whether cinematic productions about the adventures of early Christian blondes, dressed in diaphanous nylon, do much for the Kingdom, but they are not all on this level. All this kind of thing is said to be valuable on the not unreasonable ground that, if only you talk about God in terms which are familiar and tones which are loud, people will listen to you.

The problem, however, is not only to get them to listen, but also to understand. By "understand" here something more is implied than understanding in an intellectual sense. The phrase "justification by faith" is perhaps understood intellectually, when one has explained (a) that the word "justification" was used by Greek writers to mean "acquittal" and in the Hebrew Bible to thought he talks of it in judicial terms, and (b) that the word

mean "deliverance," and that Paul's basic idea is deliverance, "faith" in Paul means the passive acceptance of what God has done for one. But there is a deeper sort of understanding, which we may call "existential." Talk about God, when it comes from preachers at any rate, aims to communicate this deeper kind of understanding. It aims to make one realize one's own need for deliverance and to cause one to accept for oneself what God has done. The hard core of the problem of communication is: How do you make those to whom you talk about God understand what you are talking about *in that sense*? How do we communicate the fact that the 'mystery' of grace has something vitally to do with their existence?

Part of the answer to this is demythologising. Every generation thinks of that which concerns it existentially in terms of some mythology. The New Testament was written in terms of a first century mythology, and if the significance of its message is to come through to modern men, there is need, as Bultmann says, to demythologise it; or rather, since to do that absolutely is impossible, to translate it into twentieth-century mythology. It is, for instance, an aid to understanding for modern men when the phrase "in Christ" is interpreted in terms of the contemporary psychological notion of a Christ-sentiment.

There are, however, aspects of the Gospel which it is difficult, if not impossible, to re-mythologise because there is little, or nothing, in the thought-forms and spirit of the age to fit them. Consider, for example, the latter of the two ways in which grace may be regarded: as power and as pardon. If you preach grace as the pardon of God to sinful men, this is good news of the first moment to men who firmly believe that, unforgiven, something terrible will happen to them. It has something vitally to do with their existence. The response which the preaching of the Gospel as forgiveness aroused a generation or two ago had much to do with the fact that the mythology of those days included a firm and definite idea of Hell. Now we have largely abandoned the belief in Hell, and it is interesting to see that with it we have largely abandoned the preaching of the Gospel as pardon. We now preach the Gospel as power. This fits in so much better with the dynamic myths of our time. Ours is an age of activism; an age of moving things. And grace is preached as a moving thing—a thing which can make men better, which can deliver them from the things inside which make them bad or frightened or weak, a thing which can put the world right. Grace, we say, is power. And, if it occurs to us that it is also pardon, we find it necessary to give an activist justification to forgiveness by explaining that the forgiveness of God is a good thing because, when they realize that they are forgiven, men are constrained by the love of Christ and this makes them

better. Grace is preached as the power which lifts one above self, the moral dynamic, the spiritual moving thing.

But this is not the whole Gospel. Speaking personally, the more I reflect upon what I know of the New Testament, and even more on what I know of my own heart and what I see in the world, the more impressed I am by the other side of grace—pardon. By the tremendous and fascinating mystery that God forgives us for being what we are. This fact seems to me astonishing. It requires no psychologising to make it impressive. This is how the early Church seemed to feel about it. They were not primarily a community which rejoiced in the fact that God had placed in their hands a new moving thing; but a community which stood amazed before the objective fact, now revealed, but incredible almost, that God forgave them for being what they were. Their religion was a response of gratitude. But it seems to me that much modern Christianity is subtly different from this. It is not so much a response of gratitude as an, in some ways, dangerous urge to make use of grace and get things done.

It is not necessary, nor indeed possible, of course, to separate pardon and power within the experience of Divine grace. But I find my own response to the Gospel becoming more and more a response to the objective fact that God forgives men for being what they are. But I have difficulty in finding the terms in which to preach this. When I talk to my people of the power that is available from God, they look (or some of them) interested; but when I talk of sin and forgiveness, like the negro preacher, "Ah notices a kinda coolness come ober ma congregation." How do you convey to a man, in terms that he will understand 'existentially,' the fact that he has been let off, if he does not consider himself a criminal and is sure that there is no gaol? Or, more accurately, how do you convey a fact which is essentially objective to a generation whose mythology is predominantly psychological?

Talk about God cannot be separated from the context of worship. Outside that context it has little meaning, and certainly little effectiveness. There is a theology as well as a psychology of mass evangelism. It is only as part of the worshipping community, which is making the response of gratitude, that a person has fellowship in the mystery. There is a sense in which we cannot know the truth about God unless we do it. And so far as the strategy of evangelism goes, the important thing would appear to be, not finding some new way of talking about God, but (i) using such means as we can of drawing men into the worshipping congregation, and (ii) making sure that in the worship those themes of confession, thanksgiving, adoration—which are the human side of pardon—are clearly expressed and in ways which require the active participation of the worshippers.

W. D. HUDSON

Reviews

On Selfhood and Godhood, by C. A. Campbell. (George Allen & Unwin, 35s.).

Professor Campbell, who holds the Chair of Logic and Rhetoric at Glasgow, delivered the Gifford Lectures in 1953-54 and 1954-1955. They have been revised and enlarged for publication. Professor Campbell tells us that he has "assumed throughout that the clientele whom Lord Gifford had in mind neither needs nor desires philosophy of the 'processed' variety; and I have made no attempt to 'write down'." He has, however, succeeded in writing in a clear and readable style and, though the matters which he discusses are often difficult, the attentive reader will not have difficulty in grasping his meaning.

The author's thought is out of the main stream of contemporary philosophy. He refers to empiricism and linguisticism as "twin gods" to which he has found it impossible to bow down, and he thinks that they "seldom if ever can take us to the heart of the matter." This, in the preface, will strongly prejudice some readers against him before they start upon the main part of the book, and will, no doubt, prejudice others equally strongly in his favour.

The work is in two parts, corresponding to the two subjects in the title. In the first, Professor Campbell discusses the rôle of reason vis à vis revelation, the essence of cognition, self-consciousness, self-activity, free will and moral experience. In the second, he deals with religion and theism, theism and the problems of sin and suffering, whether rational theism is self-contradictory, supra-rational theism, and the objective validity of religion.

He starts from what he takes to be the main business of natural theology: "How much of certain or probable knowledge is obtainable, on grounds which approve themselves to reason, concerning the existence of God; and, in the event of an affirmative answer to the question of God's existence, concerning His nature, and His relationship to the world and to the human soul." His conclusions are that "objective philosophical thinking" leads to belief in an infinite and eternal being, the creator of the temporal world, and the source of the moral law. He does not think that it can either

sustain or refute the general principle of specific Divine manifestations in human lives, and can only assess roughly the probabilities one way or the other in the case of individual claims.

If one were to say that this book, for all its references to contemporary studies, seems to belong to a previous philosophical generation, the author would apparently regard this as a commendation rather than a criticism. He declares himself to be "totally unpersuaded of the virtues of the 'new look' in philosophy." Professor Campbell hopes that he will be read by some of a different persuasion. If they regard religion as a matter to be taken seriously, they will not read his book without profit.

W. D. HUDSON

History and Eschatology, by D. Rudolph Bultmann. (Edinburgh University Press, 15s.).

In his Gifford Lectures Bultmann has set out to clarify his thoughts on the nature and meaning of history, and on this account alone they are to be welcomed. He presents his views against the background of a critical survey of the leading thinkers and relates them to his eschatological doctrine. His final position is in line with his now familiar existentialist interpretation of the Christian faith.

English readers will be interested to note that he find himself in close sympathy with the position of R. G. Collingwood as developed in his notable posthumous volume *The Idea of History*. Many will concur in the view that this book contains "the best that is said about the problems of history." Bultmann's position, it may be said, is basically Collingwood's transposed into his own philosophical key. According to Collingwood, the knowledge of history is "the self-knowledge of the historian's own mind as the present revival and re-living of past experiences. . . . By understanding it (the past) historically we incorporate it into our present thought, and enable ourselves by developing and criticising it to use that heritage for our own advancement. . . . The historian's thought must spring from the organic unity of his total experience, and be a function of his entire personality with its practical as well as its theoretical interests." This Bultmann translates into his own idiom by saying that "historical knowledge is 'existential' knowledge." Furthermore, according to Collingwood, "history is for human self-knowledge . . . it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is. . . . Man is essentially mind." But since Collingwood means by mind will as well as reason, Bultmann is able to say "that Collingwood conceives thought not as a mere act of thinking, but as an act of man in his entire existence, as an act of decision." This means, in other words, "living in responsibility over against the future and therefore in decision."

Bultmann is now able to make the transition to his own brand of eschatology. "For Collingwood," he says, "every present moment is an eschatological moment . . . history and eschatology are identified." The field is now set for bringing out the significance of the Christian faith. "*The meaning in history lies always in the present*, and when the present is conceived as the eschatological present by Christian faith the meaning in history is realised." "Jesus Christ is the eschatological event not as an established fact of past time but as repeatedly present, as addressing you and me here and now in preaching." Preaching calls for decision, and decision means "a new understanding of myself as free from myself by the grace of God and as endowed with my new self." "The believer lives from the future; first, because his faith and his freedom can never be in possession; . . . secondly, because the believer remains within history." This is, Bultmann maintains, the essential content of New Testament thought after the fading of the early expectation of the Parousia. We find it in the later Paul, although he never abandoned the apocalyptic picture of the future: "The reign of God," he says, "is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." It is still more radically developed in Johannine thought. "The resurrection of the dead and the last judgement are present in the coming of Jesus" (cf. *John* 11: 25f.; 9: 39), so that eternal life, although its perfecting lies elsewhere, may be already a present possession.

For the individual, Bultmann's existentialist interpretation of the significance of history carries an important message. There is profound truth in the dictum: "Every instant has the possibility of being an eschatological instant and in the Christian faith this possibility is realized." But we are left wondering what is the significance of history as a whole. The clue to its meaning and ultimate goal lies in what the Incarnate Son of God enacted on the plane of history. But Bultmann cannot give us this clue because he has taken Jesus Christ out of history by making of Him little more than an existentialist symbol. Both the first and the second Advent belong much more deeply to history than Bultmann supposes, as the New Testament itself bears witness.

W. E. HOUGH

Exploring the Library: an Introduction to the Literature of the Bible, by Norman Goodall. (Independent Press, 2s. 6d.).

Dr. Goodall's book is a quite elementary and popular survey of the literature of the Bible. His scheme is somewhat unusual, for he deals first with the New Testament and then passes to "The Library Jesus used." The treatment is fresh and interesting, and the little book could be of service in Bible classes for young folk.

W. S. DAVIES

Mission Fields Today—A Brief World Survey. Ed. A. J. Dain. (Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 4s.).

This is an interesting and very useful handbook to Christian Missions. Most of us, however, well versed in the details of our own B.M.S., have a very limited acquaintance with other Missions and other fields. Mr. Dain has given us a good guide, not only to Christian work achieved and projected, but to the particular problems and difficulties facing the Christian missionaries in various parts of the world. Interspersed in the text are tables of statistics for every country which help one to a broad picture of the Christian situation and at the same time emphasize the challenge facing the Christian Church. This is a book to be commended to the missionary enthusiast.

The Call and the Work, by Leslie J. Tizard. (Independent Press, 1s. 6d.).

This pamphlet, well written and attractively produced, deals with the problem of the vocation of the Christian ministry. It avoids the sentimentality which so often attaches to this theme, and offers much valuable and commonsense advice to would-be ministers. The nature of the "call," the special gifts expected in a minister, and different aspects of ministerial work in the Church and in the wider community—these are the main points of Mr. Tizard's treatment. Apart from the chapter which deals with "Ways and Means"—intended for entrants to the Congregational ministry—the pamphlet could not fail to be of value in any of the Free Churches.

W. S. DAVIES

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature. Translated and edited by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. (Cambridge University Press, £5 5s.).

Here is an occasion when a reviewer can only write in terms of superlatives, with enthusiasm and gratitude for what must become a great boon to students of the New Testament. This is a magnificent piece of work which is likely to be for long the outstanding lexicon for early Christian literature.

Lexicons and dictionaries, however valuable their contents, are not always inviting in appearance. Here, however, we have a book which is a joy to look at and to handle, a beautiful production in a type clear and easy upon the eyes.

Its publication has been made possible by the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church. From a Centenary Thank-Offering Fund a sum was set aside as a fund for scholarly research, of which this

lexicon is the fruit. Its antecedents are of the first water, for it is in large part a translation of the fourth edition of Walter Bauer's famous Greek-German Lexicon, with a number of additions and adaptations, and with references brought up to date. It includes Walter Bauer's fine "Introduction to the Lexicon of the Greek New Testament," from the second edition of the original work.

This is not merely a lexicon; it is a theological word-book of the highest value, with the history of major New Testament words arranged in lucid and stimulating form. Half an hour with a New Testament and this lexicon is sufficient to establish its worth, not only for the experienced student of the New Testament, but also for the beginner, even to the extent of guiding him in the matter of irregular verb forms. Not the least part of its value is the great range of its references, not only, as one can expect, to earlier sources, but also to books and articles almost to the year of its publication.

At first sight the price of the book may look formidable, but never will five guineas be better spent by the student, who would be well advised to refrain from further expenditure on books until this sum has been set aside. For this is a simply invaluable companion to the New Testament.

W. S. DAVIES

Selected Speeches, 1948-1955. H.R.H. The Prince Philip. (Oxford University Press, 12s. 6d.).

The contents of this book consist for the most part of short speeches made by Prince Philip on a variety of public occasions, though several extended addresses and lectures are also included. They form a striking collection. Few speakers could hope to deal from personal knowledge with all the topics represented in this book. For example, within less than a month, the Prince re-named a new schooner for the Outward Bound School, addressed the Convocation of the Royal College of Art, opened the new Mycological Institute of the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux, visited the Gordon Boys' School at Woking, and addressed a Conference of European University Heads. Yet whatever briefing may have been supplied to Prince Philip, his speeches show that he was never a slave to it, but succeeded in imparting to each utterance something of his own personal quality. The resultant picture is of a modest and attractive personality with high standards, an observant eye for facts, and a shrewd and independent judgement, agreeably combined with practical good sense and quiet humour. That Queen Elizabeth's Consort is a man of this calibre is something for which the nation has every reason to be profoundly thankful.

R. L. CHILD

The Religious Philosophy of Dean Mansel, by W. R. Matthews. (Oxford University Press, 3s. 6d.). (Friends of Dr. Williams's Library, 10th Lecture).

Dr. Matthews, in this lecture, has rendered a valuable service in recalling attention to the thought of his predecessor. Mansel's Bampton Lectures on "The Limits of Religious Thought Examined" were delivered in 1858, but, as Dr. Matthews points out, the epistemological problem which he has considered is that which logical empiricism has thrust anew upon philosophical theologians in our own day: what meaning do religious statements have and how can they be verified? Mansel's answer is surprisingly up to date. He rejected both dogmatism (forcing reason to conform to revelation) and rationalism (forcing revelation into agreement with reason). To have any conception of God, the Infinite and Unconditioned, we should have to distinguish Him from something else and that, by the terms, is excluded. Mansel went so far as to say that the impossibility of conceiving space or time as finite compels us to regard the infinite as real (a dubious point), but saw that reason cannot make any other assertion about it. Our only guide is revelation. In this connection, Dr. Matthews calls our attention to interesting features of Mansel's thought, e.g. "regulative ideas" and "moral miracles." And he raises the pertinent question: What place can be found in this kind of religious thought for a revelational fact?

Sir Robert Walpole, Samuel Holden, and the Dissenting Deputies, by N. C. Hunt. (Oxford University Press, 4s.). (Friends of Dr. Williams's Library, 11th Lecture).

In this lecture, Dr. Hunt discusses an interesting piece of Non-conformist history: the activities of the Dissenting Deputies' committee, formed to promote the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, between 1732 and 1736. Holden, its chairman, was a director of the Bank of England, and in close touch with Walpole. The latter would have been gravely embarrassed by any vigorous pressure from Dissenters at that time, and Dr. Hunt considers the suggestion that Holden and other wealthy members of his committee deliberately betrayed Dissent under instructions from the wily Walpole. He gives convincing reasons for rejecting this suggestion. His lecture is well-documented and has every mark of competence. It is not, however, a dry piece of specialism, but makes fascinating reading for anyone interested in eighteenth-century Non-conformity.

W. D. HUDSON