

The Fraternal.

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"HAVE FAITH IN GOD."

Address broadcasted from the London Station of the British Broadcasting Company.

MOST people, in our land at least, I imagine would readily admit that amongst all the great ones of the past Jesus is the greatest. His strict integrity, His high-mindedness, His courage and earnestness, His grace and tenderness, His devotion to the good of others and disregard of self, are ungrudgingly acknowledged by all sorts and conditions of men. He was the embodiment of goodness, so much so, that we rejoice to see in Him the highest holiest manhood, the perfect pattern of a human life, the mirror held up to our faults, and the abiding ideal which in all respects corresponds with our noblest dreams. Jesus was every inch a man.

But not always is it sufficiently realised perhaps that He was all this, because of His religion. It is not as a scientist we honour Him, or as an inventor, or writer, or artist, or politician. We think of Him always as religious, and we speak of Him sometimes as the supreme religious genius, meaning that His was the realm of worship and character and service; and of that realm we feel He, above all others, possessed the secret. It was His religion, you will remember, which He offered as the explanation of Himself. It was His religion especially He commended to His followers. Again it was His religion He looked upon as the one gift worth bestowing upon a needy world. He would want us to accept His religion before anything else. And as you know, the heart of it was a firm faith in God, with whom He lived in daily and nightly fellowship, who was His standard of reference in all

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matters, and of whom He could say, "I do always those things that please My Father." It was on that basis and no other Jesus wrought and achieved. His message to the world was that God is real, personal and loving, and according to His word the first Commandment is—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

Now it would seem scarcely possible to accept the greatness and goodness of Jesus as a fact and then write off the faith on which it rested as a mistake and superstition. If that were so, then we have the finest character based upon illusion and the highest manifestation of truth issuing from error. Jesus must have been right, at the centre, since He was perfect at the circumference. His character and religion hang together, as the fruit is connected with the root of the tree, or as the colour of the flower is born of the light. And it is for just that reason thousands believe in God to-day. They cannot see Him of course, nor prove Him, nor can they answer all the questions about Him which the mind of man can ask. But seeing the product of good which the faith wrought in Christ, the type of manhood to which it leads, and the spirit of sacrifice and service into which it blossoms, they say, not without reason, a faith having such result must be founded on reality and fact. To them the life of Jesus is the guarantee or the truth of His belief, and consequently they seek a like belief for themselves, convinced that it is the way of life for every man, and the one hope of salvation for the world. It is the fundamental question—Shall we believe in God or no?

The late Sir Henry Jones, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Glasgow, whose autobiography is being widely read at the present time, urges in his last book the reconsideration of this very question. It is, he maintains, the paramount issue for man, so vital that it ought easily to overcome all indifference; and the conclusion of Professor Jones himself is, that after every test the religious outlook best explains all the facts of life and is therefore the most reasonable and probable hypothesis. That is a far-reaching admission by one who was both free and able to form a judgment; a philosopher with trained mind, whose whole life was spent in the ways of study, yet after carefully examining the evidence, he comes out definitely on the side of God and faith.

I am sure I do not need to remind you that it is the mark

not of a little mind, but of a great mind to be willing to open an old question in face of a new situation. The scientist is doing that constantly. He gladly welcomes every new discovery, is most patient in going over the same ground again if need be, and is always ready to modify his attitude when that is called for. Such has been and is the way of progress. Then may not this be a time for us to reconsider our attitude towards God. May it not be a time for revising, if necessary, our judgment regarding the value of true religion both to ourselves, to our nation and the world? We have learnt many things, all of us, during the last few strenuous years. New phases and aspects of life have been brought vividly before us. We know now, better than we did, the possibilities of good which lie in every man—the latent heroism, the unselfishness and good humour, the capacity for hardship. We know also, better than we did, the requirements of a sane and safe national life, while we are considerably wiser than we were about international relationships. Our discernment of the real needs of the world is clearer, and consequently we are revising our opinions on many matters as, *e.g.*, war and unemployment. Shall we not then include in the survey also this question of faith? Can we achieve, either individually or socially, without a widespread sincere belief, without a new reference to the divine will, and a thoughtful acceptance of divine standards, We all dream great dreams in these days. We see visions of a good time which we would fain believe is coming to bless the children of men. May not the quickest way to it after all be a return by each of us to the one source of light and power? The world needs redemption. We can see that. Well, it was redemption Jesus promised through faith in the Father.

In the past, too much, we have tried to do without HIM. In family life to some extent, in business life to a large extent, in national and international policy God has been allowed little influence and little say. Religion has been divorced from the practical affairs of the world; and the result is that in all departments to-day there is confusion amounting almost to chaos, strife where peace is essential, and uncertainty instead of light. It reminds one of the words—If the blind lead the blind they shall both fall into the ditch. And yet there is mercy in our misery. Events are teaching us. Amid the ruins we catch sight of the beams and it is something of a revelation to us. We are, if I may put it so, like people who have bought a country

cottage—no doubt many would be glad of the chance just now. Having bought it they begin decorating, and when they have stripped off the wallpaper and broken plaster they find unexpectedly fine old timber. So the upheaval through which we have passed has knocked off the plaster and paper, the trimmings of our civilisation, and we, too, see the structure, the framework of society, and we find all its beams and stays stamped with the mark of brotherhood. Hence we begin to ask ourselves whether, in rebuilding, it would not be wise to follow out the original design, to carry through the plan of the Great Architect. We wonder if the kingdom of good which we seek is not after all that kingdom of God which has been promised to us and if so the way to it is by faith and obedience.

There goes up the plaintive cry of a stricken world—Who will show us any good? No one can be indifferent to that cry. And the answer that comes over the ages, an old answer yet none the less worthy of our keenest attention—Prepare ye in the wilderness, amid the wreckage, prepare ye the way of the Lord and make a plain path for His feet.

It is, of course, no conventional adherence to religious ceremonies that can help us. No lip-service to mummied phrases or frayed shibboleths. Rather what is required is a genuine regard and reverence for the divine deep down in the souls of men, true religion taken seriously in both heart and mind, giving tone to character and a high standard for conduct and switching all over from self-seeking to service. Goodwill is surely the only power which can achieve and establish good in the earth, but goodwill can be fed and sustained solely by a vital faith in the living God, whose name and nature is love.

A. DAKIN, Ph.D.



A PROMPTUARY FOR PREACHERS.

SOMEWHERE away in the shadowy Victorian years, there appeared a volume with the above imposing title. It was presumably bought and used; and a copy of it may even now be taking the place of a vanished chair castor in some representative manse. The writer has a dim recollection of seeing it: but none concerning its contents. Only its obvious purpose can be now recalled, with the fact that it was the

forerunner of a procession of such *works*. Occupants of chairs in Homiletics probably warned their classes against it, and all its kind. Men who were always six sermons at least in hand, professed never to have heard of it; some of the rest evidently bought and presumably used it. Let us at least pay tribute to the kindly well-meaning author compiler of the forgotten classic. Manifestly he had something in common with the author of "Gospel Granules" and the long line of devices to save men the trouble of thinking. But his book title alone was worth the money; one surely felt safe after reading it. Something at least would happen with such a book in the house.

With all its dangerous defects, the very existence of the pompous Promptuary indicated that, in some honest cases, it met or tried to meet a real need. Lazy men may have leaned on it, barren minds may have decked themselves as with bought blossoms supposed to be home-grown. But there were, and are still, honest men, who even with leisure rigidly devoted to sermon making, find themselves arid and their minds un-captured by any truly vital theme. Few of us have not known such times and sighed for a prompter even if not for the Promptuary. We do not ask for an outline, nor could we use it if we had it given us. We seek rather for something which will fire the mind and, by suggestion or by challenge, bid it proclaim some great and worthy thing. What serious and worthy resource have we now in such a case?

Taking for granted that we are not addicted to constant pontifical comments on current events, and that we have other opportunity, than Sunday, for expressing our convictions on the Ruhr and similar problems, where may we turn to find most certainly some challenging comment on the permanent claims of religion which will be most likely to fire us to answer and so proclaim our faith? Where is the fullest and most natural promptuary for preachers to-day, outside of Holy Scripture and yet saturated with it? Answering from our own experience we say without hesitation, *the writings of John Ruskin*. If a more effective promptuary than these can be found anywhere, we do not know it; and it is easier to speak firmly on this matter since we are not of the number of those who were early acquainted with his work, or even associated with those who formed a cult round his name and teaching. We can understand full well, why they did so; but our own knowledge of him has come in less

impressionable years, and, it may be added, in years when we had long grappled with the problems which he touches so tenderly and so daringly.

There are many and great reasons for hearing what he has to say and for following even the technical art discussions which he explores so fully. He had scholarship, ample if not eminent. His knowledge of the text of Scripture would put most of us to shame. He had a great heart and a restless mind, two supreme qualifications. Religion to him was not a tradition, or an inherited pose; it was the orientation of his own intense passionate heart towards the Divine. Even when we may think him perverse, we know him to be intellectually sincere, beyond all question; and even devout men are not always so. The things of the spirit are to him, all. There is nothing else that matters, except by its relationship to the spiritual. Also he is a layman, reading his bible for the very Bread of Life, and not under compulsion to say something about it professionally. Beyond all this, he is captive to the important conviction that all material life can, and should express the spiritual. Consequently, though his art criticism may not matter to us, and some of his economics may be out of date, he lives for ever in the heart of great universal questions, which religion and the religious must be constantly pondering so long as they are unsolved. These and other equally vital facts are his credentials; and if we add to them this—that he writes in matchlessly exquisite prose which cannot but charm and tincture our own with its beauty, we are prepared to ask more definitely for tokens of his power as a prompter of preaching. His critics, we may hasten to say, would have admitted with almost malignant readiness, the claim which we make. "Is he not always preaching"? they would ask. Let the question stand as an accusation, and let the defendant plead guilty; but it is glorious preaching and the themes are life's *universals*.

We take for granted then that there are times when contact with such a spirit would mean the liberation of our own from some spell of dullness; and such an expositor might first speak to us and through us to others. We need not fear for a moment that we might make illegitimate use of Ruskin's thinking. He is of course eminently quotable, but that is not to be his contribution to our necessities. That lies rather in his capacity to lift as it were the corner of a veil for a moment, and make us aware of

what tender truth and beauty lie within our reach if we will search with the searching that is really exposition. Such at least is the service which Ruskin has rendered to some of us. Now it is impossible to demonstrate such a claim as this by any means within the scope of this paper. Examples of its truth can only be gained by experiment and it may be that in some cases there will be total failure. But the material upon which we base the claim, lies scattered through all his writings. Scarcely anything he wrote can be set aside as an unlikely field. *Modern Painters*, written to champion the art supremacy of Turner—with perhaps irritating insistency—has many a paragraph in which the deepest things of religion find matchless expression: and, what is more for our purpose, expression which does not exhaust the theme but leaves it waiting for us to expand and develop more fully. Behind the pages of art criticism, and the daring handling of art canons, stands ever another Book, whose canons, expressed first in human experience and then recorded under Divine signature, challenge and judge everything else in life. Again and again in numberless instances, the Art student and Professor, standing in some great gallery of the painter's art, admiring or condemning travelling constantly from canvas and palette, to character and principle, suddenly rounds off all his technical judgment with an appeal to some great Spiritual incident, prophecy, or psalm, and enforcing the criticism gives to the later new meaning. Ruskin was a prophet of applied art, and in pursuing his vocation he became no mean prophet of applied scripture.

Sometimes, it may be pointed out, he embarks deliberately on a piece of exposition as though preparing for a week evening address or class. One such instance may be seen in the eighty fourth letter of "*Fors Clavigera*": not a common example, because so deliberate, but worthy of notice for one thing alone, that in more than one of the mere sentences there is the very soul of a sermon. Just as definite and pointed are the expositions which enrich the pages of "*On the Old Road*," though none of them is quite so systematic. But for the best which Ruskin can do for us, in firing with a flame from his own genius and temperament, our cold mental material, we may turn almost anywhere at random among his voluminous writings. Everywhere, within a few pages, some fine thought leaps to sight and expression, and often its flame-tongue which first touches us, is a phrase of exquisite English which is itself filled with suggestion of fine

spiritual things. It may perhaps set us thinking and feeling other and finer things; we may fall to fruitful contemplation perhaps of only some kindred theme; but he will seldom fail to create some movement of heart and mind, such as will waken the prophetic gift in us. Often indeed we shall find that he has worked that one fundamental work in us, which is the beginning of all high purpose and inspiration, *viz.*, in leaving us convicted of defect and sin, and humbled at the poverty of our own ideals. It will seldom happen that we find ourselves beyond him in moral and spiritual passion. When we do, we are not likely to want a promptuary for preachers.

F. GOLDSMITH FRENCH.

EVANGELISM AT THE WEMBLEY EXHIBITION.

April to October 1924.

THE columns of "The Fraternal" offer an opportunity for making known what we believe will be a much appreciated means of Fraternal fellowship. At the request of the United Committee under the auspices of the World's Evangelical Alliance I have undertaken the organisation of the Evangelical work for the Free Churches in connection with the great Empire Exhibition at Wembley.

A hut to hold 100 people is erected for our use. It will be a rendezvous for rest, conversation, fellowship, intercession services, and Personal Evangelism. For the Free Churches we have the charge of the Intercession services on every Tuesday during the Exhibition from 12 to 12.30 p.m. These services will be held daily, and arranged for on the other days by the other organisations uniting for the work.

I have suggested, and the suggestion has been accepted, that prior to the above service on the Tuesdays there shall be a general Fraternal from 11 a.m. to 12 noon, at which visiting Ministers from overseas may have the opportunity of meeting and being introduced to their brethren in the Home land. London Ministers and visiting brethren from the provinces are asked to kindly note this, and, if convenient, time their visit to the Exhibition to share in this Fellowship.

A full detailed programme of the united services in connection with the Hut, and in the Conference Halls in the Exhibition Halls, is being issued, a copy of which will be sent on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. All enquiries to be addressed to me thus—F. A. Rees, 4, Ludgate Circus Buildings, E.C. 4.

IMPRESSIONS OF CANADA.

OUR Editor has asked me for some impressions of religious life in Canada, based upon the four months visit I paid there last Summer. In complying with his request I wish to make clear at the beginning, what will probably be obvious before the end, that I do not claim to speak with any authority conferred either by wide experience or exceptional opportunity of study. I visited Canada with my wife for family reasons, spending some weeks in Ottawa and an equal time in Toronto, and preaching only at Bloor Street, Toronto, during July, in the absence of Mr. Cameron, at Stockholm. Our stay at Montreal was limited to a couple of nights and days when we enjoyed the delightful hospitality of Dr. and Mrs. Ritchie, and met a valued old friend in Dr. R. E. Welsh. Flying visits to Hamilton, Niagara and Buffalo, with a fortnight in the Muskoka district completed our limited itinerary, which did not include a journey West. The Congregational Union of Canada was meeting in Ottawa in June and I attended several of the Sessions. Such impressions as I gleaned were gathered from these limited fields.

Of the abounding hospitality of our Canadian friends I cannot speak too warmly. It was only limited to the extent to which we made ourselves known. The holiday season was in full swing in Toronto and of course many families were away. But those who remained in town made up for the absence of others. It would be impossible to find more sympathetic congregations than those at Bloor Street and the way in which old members of the home Churches it has been my privilege to serve and friends of other members, came up to shake hands after all the services was both pleasant and gratifying. Speaking generally of the Churches at which I worshipped I found on the whole a healthy condition of affairs. I found little evidence among our Baptist Churches at all events of the conditions recently described and condemned in the Hibbert Journal. Worship was reverent, though I missed the chants, and the hymns were sung more slowly than at home. Anthems were frequent and solos almost universal. Nearly all the choirs were robed and capped. Our Baptist Church Hymnal is in general use, with a short Canadian supplement scarcely worthy of its position. One defect in the usual order of service is not

confined to the dominion. I have noticed it with regret in my visits among our home Churches since my return, and, strangely enough, among those Churches where belief in verbal inspiration is considered the mark of a standing or a falling Church, I mean the reduction of the amount of Scripture read in a service to one lesson of a few verses and the consequent neglect of the Old Testament. I submit that this loss is by no means compensated for by a longer children's address or five minutes added to a sermon already long enough, and I enter a plea for two "lessons" at least at every service.

This suggests the vexed question of Fundamentalism. The proximity of Canada to the States has to some degree influenced the theological atmosphere, and some Churches have suffered from divisions. A friend said in my hearing recently that to-day, as people believed in the full inspiration of 1 Corinthians 13, he did not mind so much what their attitude to the rest of Scripture was. Certain it is that trouble has arisen in some Churches through defect in love rather than through excess of zeal. On the whole however, in spite of the influence of the States, I judge that the Canadian Churches are not allowing themselves to be stamped into obscurantism.

I have been asked my opinion as to the opportunities awaiting British ministers in Canada. I think the Canadian Churches are producing their own men to a far greater extent than formerly. The McMaster University is becoming better equipped every year, and there seems no dearth of ministerial students. The temptation to preach on bizarre topics, or rather to select bizarre titles for quite innocuous sermons is sometimes yielded to, and perhaps the standard of exposition and instruction is not quite so high as at home. That is a pity, for the people are hungry for instructed exposition of Scripture. The real preacher or pastor is welcome in Canada as everywhere. The average man will find it harder to obtain a footing than formerly. The sufferer need not think things will be easier for him out there than in the Old Country. One thing the Canadian will not stand either in the pulpit or in commerce and that is conceit. He is eager, almost abnormally eager, to know what you think of Canada, and will welcome sympathetic criticism. But the immigrant and the visitor must beware of condemning either church or business methods merely because they differ from those to which he has been accustomed at home. Besides, such

an attitude is not only conceited, it is ignorant. The conditions of life are so different, the climate, the vast distances, the sparse population, the modernness of everything, have evoked ways of life and conduct which are different, but not necessarily worse or better than our own. The Canadian Churches have their own problems. They appear to a visitor to be facing them with courage and resolve. One visitor at least has returned with feelings of admiration and of gratitude; perhaps also with a little tinge of regret that the opportunity of a visit did not come to him years ago. It is at least possible that he would not then have returned.

C. W. VICK.



ON FORGIVENESS—DIVINE AND HUMAN.

I.

ARE we in strict accord with the teaching of Jesus when we say that *forgiveness is dependent upon repentance*?

This is the present human way; we make forgiveness conditional, but is God's forgiveness conditional? Paul says: God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This great thought of God's unconditional pardon finds a place in the Old Testament. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." It was not for penitent men that Jesus prayed: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Should we not say that *God is always forgiveness*? Sin does not determine God's attitude toward men, but love. A good human parent does not allow his attitude toward his child to be determined by the child's wrong-doing, how much less the divine parent. This surely is the point of the parable of the Prodigal Son—the attitude of the Father's unchangable love; and it was this constancy of the Father's love that enabled the son to return to the father and accept his forgiveness.

Then should we not say that *repentance is created by true thought of God*? A sinner is not forgiven because he repents; he repents because he sees that God has not cast him off, however sinful he is. It is the recognition of this forgiving love in God that changes his mind and heart. It creates a sense of shame. He sees himself as he is before God, and a cry for

pardon breaks out from his heart. The cry is not needed to unlock the door of the divine forgiveness, it is with this cry that the sinner goes through the ever open door of divine mercy, and enters into the peace of pardon. A change has been effected, but not in God; it has been effected in sinful man.

Jesus ran alongside the appeal to repent, the right thought of God. And the moving message of the Cross is that there is no one outside the reach of the love of God. God does not say be sorry and I will forgive you. He looks upon men with such forgiving love that melts and changes the heart.

This manner of dealing with forgiveness is more ethical and radical than teaching that a man is forgiven because he repents, for under such teaching a man may sin and repent again and again and seek successive forgiveness for sins repeated. But when a man has seen his sin as crucifixion of God in Christ, his repentance is not a mere attitude to obtain pardon, but a radical revulsion from sin; it is not even a desire to save his own soul, it is a change of heart in which the power of sin is broken.

II.

The quality of divine forgiveness is required of men in their relations one with another. Human forgiveness is a test and pledge of the reality of repentance. It will disclose how much is known of God, and how near men are to his likeness. If a man does not forgive the wrongs done to himself, his repentance is unreal or incomplete. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," ever to reach toward the perfection of forgiving love as suggested by the Providence that causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good. The pagan world scorned forgiveness; Israel sanctioned vengeance; Jesus taught "do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." As God forgives so must men forgive.

Herein is the priestly power of "binding and loosing" committed by Christ to his disciples. We bind men in their sins by treating them as unforgivable. We loose them from their sins by conveying to them the quality of God's free pardon in our own forgiving love. The state of forgiveness in the offended must precede the possibility of the offender entering into the peace of pardon. It is a high demand, but Christian ethics demand it. The offender must be held in pardon, even though he shows no sign of repentance. The offence should be healthily

resented, but we must know how to rescue the offender from out of the midst of the wrong that he has done.

We say that we cannot forgive our enemy. It is nearer the truth to say that we are not near enough to God to forgive our enemy. Our own repentance toward God has been but partial, and we are not in the full tide of God's forgiving love. We bind cords of hardness more tightly about ourselves when we are unwilling to forgive others. "As we forgive them that trespass against us." It is not ours to ask for punishment as a condition of our forgiveness. Our forgiveness, according to Christ's standard, must be unqualified; punishment is in other hands. "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." So long as one person will not forgive another, so long will there be enmity amongst men. And so long as one nation will not forgive another, so long will there be war in the earth.

III.

Are we then to follow the divine way, and not always to stand in the attitude of forgiveness, whatever is done? Yes. But is it not weakness? Who can charge God with weakness? Is it practical? Well, the practice of the other attitude is not elevating. It is only doing what we profess to do every time that we say the Lord's Prayer. It is putting belief in God's power instead of in man's power. It is a different kind of armament, that is all. Men will have to make up their minds which they really believe in, and will act upon. A man who patiently and lovingly bears a wrong brings his enemy eventually to his feet. It does not mean that he ignores the wrong, nor does it mean that the wrongdoer gets off without punishment. It means that we walk in the way of the Cross, and ourselves bear the wrong until it is borne away. It means that punishment inward and spiritual falls upon the offender that makes him no longer able to bear himself. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.

In all lands there are many Christians living upon this high level of morality, and they are the salt of the earth. The breath of this spirit, breathed through the Church into the world, and made operative in the wider and more complicated relations of men as classes and nations, is most urgently needed. Commerce is crying out for release from the entanglements of the unforgiving spirit. Responsible bankers have told us that international

forgiveness would be the best business possible. Statesmen have tried all lower ways, and now in their confusions await the moral uplift that would enable them to do the acts of magnanimity. The clear teaching of the truth that Divine forgiveness is unconditional, and the impress of the forgiving spirit upon the hearts of men is the Church's greatest task for this generation.

W. H. HADEN.

WANTED! LEADERSHIP IN CHRISTIAN RESEARCH.

THE writer ventured to bring before the Agenda Committee of the Pastoral Session a scheme for the promotion of research into the meanings of Christ for modern life. One outcome of the discussion was a request to put the substance of the plea into an article for "The Fraternal." The chief peril besetting a suggestion of this character is that it will be dismissed at the outset, by busy pastors, as "academic," "idealist," and "impractical." Perhaps the best way of meeting this objection, and at the same time of revealing the "live" significance of the proposal is to make the exposition to a considerable degree autobiographic, and thus indicate how the writer's plea for research has arisen from the actualities of an average minister's work.

The writer began his ministry in a Yorkshire Church of over four hundred members: where he was expected to be a good pastor, a "father" to the community, and the nightly overseer of innumerable organisations from a Boy's Brigade upward. It was speedily evident that unless some time could be fenced about from good works and sermons, that the future was lost. Hence three mornings and one evening were entrenched and beset with wire entanglements—though the barbs which met the invader were nothing worse than the persuasive words of a gentle little woman.

But what to do within the time thus secured? The years at the University had quickened interest in many subjects. A beginning was made in a study of the problems raised by science for religion; and then a return to the problems of philosophy, only to discover that the initial equipment for any distinctive personal contribution was lacking. The same results followed from one or two other ventures. Valuable years were thus lost. And yet throughout this "seeking" period there was no leader,

or group of leaders to whom the writer could turn for counsel. It was urgently necessary to organise to make sure that he should spend five strenuous years in a study of the languages and controversies of the "past" as a preparation for the ministry, but that ministry begun amid the problems of this present world—of which scarcely a word ever reached the College class-room—it was enough to be turned loose to find one's own way. Well marked maps in one's head of the 8th and 5th centuries B.C., and of the 4th and 16th A.D., but as for a map of the present—but of course, one should not forget there remained Mr. H. G. Wells. It was the urgencies of this present in the immediate situation brought the writer from pleasant meanderings in unrelated and therefore largely profitless fragments of the past, and gave him a start towards what was to be his main life's work. The Church was situated in an industrial district. The population of the district was acutely divided; a portion of the people were full of fear and suspicion and a portion full of hate. There were grave contrasts of riches and poverty. Some had to work beyond their strength and others did no work at all. These contrasts and cleavages invaded the Church. The situation gave full scope to the eloquence and gibes of Mr. Victor Grayson, but embitterment and not salvation followed. Had this situation no significance for a minister of Christ? Was the community to be left to disruptive forces? Had Christ no redemption to mediate in respect of man's economic life, and the resultant estranged social relation? Thus the writer became a student of the Industrial Revolution; and in considerable detail the century and a half of its process was tracked out; its manifold evil issues particularised; and its problems named and set into relationship. With this data the writer turned again to Christ to learn what meanings He had for these immediate problems. The Gospels, in their various strata were worked, and an attempt made to collate the significant teaching in respect of The Struggle for Existence, Property, Private Gain, Competition, Dominion, Individualism, Luxury and the Idler, Social Classes, and the other stark realities which confronted one. Truth won is for witness, and certain sermons followed, with the result that he was written down in the superintendent's book "not safe." Further study, however, made clear that there was no hope of working towards any solution of the economic problem by considering it in isolation. This phase of life needed to be set

into living relationship with the other aspects of man's life in society for which it was a basis, and other better constructive and unifying end of living discovered for the redirection of the energies which without vision were "missing the mark." One saw that many who had been denounced as wrongdoers were living the best they knew. Hence again the actualities of a preacher's situation turned him to a detailed study of Society as a whole—The Community, the Family, Custom, Tradition, Law, Government, Population, Invention, Education, Morality, Religion. And again the writer turned to Christ to learn what meanings He had for Society, and for its parts from which He was in practice so largely divorced. These studies turned the writer with a new zest to Psychology, to a study of that Individual in whom were all the roots of unrest and achievement. But the quest had to be carried further. The Industrial Revolution had taken the writer into the wide world. Apparently no people on the face of the earth had escaped the influence of a few machines invented by obscure men. The Industrial Revolution had created a world problem. A new interdependence of its peoples had been brought about. Powerful forces were in contact and clash—Nationalism, Imperialism, Race, Cultures, Religious. These subjects constituted an appalling task. The details were only too often revolting—as in the relations of the strong nations of Europe with the weak peoples of the earth. The history of Africa through the 19th century is unspeakably dreadful. Here again were the realities of life in this present—poverty disease, oppression, war, death the daily lot of God's children. What meanings had Christ for these terrible happenings? In attempting to face up to these tormenting problems it was not long before the writer saw that he would have to go deeper. That in keeping his studies to the 18th and 19th centuries he was dealing with a harvest of earlier sowing. Then came The Great War—an Apocalypse of God, a light in the dark places of the heart and of the earth, intensifying and yet confirming the writer's longing to pass beyond the symptoms to the ultimate cause, and to their process in social history. How far was it necessary to go back? Various periods were tried until at length it became clear that there was nothing adequate save to begin at the beginning. And with a sinking heart the study of man in society in Paleolithic times was begun, which study in its later developments in the civilisations of Christ's era is still in process. And through all this the writer

turns again and again to Christ to learn of Him Ten years of travail, but as one issue the writer is feeling himself emerge into light; he knows himself at the centre of the process of living as never before the quest was begun. And if he knows a few things he knows too how little he knows; hence his plea for leadership for himself, and for others like him on the same road.

The supreme gain has been the rediscovery of Christ—one might with justice say the *discovery* of Christ: for it is as if one had not known Him before. The Magnificence of His Saviourhood: His unveiling of God in His unique Sonship: His authority for men in society in the whole range of his person and relationships; the exceeding grace and charm of his spiritual pilgrimage: the gospel of the Reign; the Cross as a spiritual experience and no more magical; the vision of the Divine Society in process; the new content to familiar words—Sin, Salvation, Repentance, Faith. . . . One concern glows within the writer "O that men knew The Christ as he really is! His plea for research does not envisage leisurely spectacled men in a remote cloister, but the individual and corporate activity of great lovers of Christ who long to mediate Him—The whole Christ for man and mankind, without reserves, and without divorces. How else shall Europe be saved, and our beloved Isle fulfil her divine vocation to the world? By all means let the organisation be perfected, but what if so doing our leaders fail of Christ's supreme concern with the Message? "These things ye ought to have done, but not to have left the other undone."

GEO. EVANS LEICESTER.

THE WITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY TO ITSELF.

MUCH of my subject is well known as Christian evidence. But the story of the Cross should never become dull reading because often told; neither should the recital of its victories lessen their freshness but should stimulate and urge us forward.

I claim that Christianity has borne an undying witness to itself. Instead of discussing her theology let us stand aside and see what she has accomplished. The march of the centuries has sounded on the pavement of time and the echo faded away.

“Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?” asks Byron. Only fallen thrones and vanquished empires, we reply. Yet *our* God goes marching on.

Consider first the victory of Christianity over external opposition. Here her chief foes were the Roman Empire and the common Pagan cults. The Empire stood for military force. She had crushed Carthage, Greece, Syria, Gaul, and Spain. Her leaders recognised no obstacles. They proceeded by way of proscriptions, murders and civil war. Sulla and Marius, Crassus and Pompey, Cæsar and Augustus taught Nero, Valerian, Decius and Diocletian the use of the sword. Incense was offered to these Emperors as gods. They thought they failed in their task unless they extirpated any opposing religions.

In contrast stood the scattered groups of Christians—chiefly nobodies. Omitting the New Testament there is scarcely a document belonging to these first early years. They possessed no synagogue. No legion supported them.

It was a fight to the death, and Christianity conquered. Prison doors, closed by the hand of man, were opened by the hand of God. The Council which had condemned Christ lamented that all Jerusalem was filled with His doctrine. Brilliant is the antithesis “Herod, arrayed in gorgeous apparel sat upon his throne and made an ovation: ‘He’ was eaten up of worms and gave up the ghost, but the Word of God grew and multiplied.” Nero burned Christians as torches to illumine his games. Polycarp, the martyr of 80 and 6 years; Perpetua, with the pleadings of her father and the cryings of her newly-born babe; Blandina, tortured so that her persecutors marvelled she lived, were typical of those who were faithful unto death. Bishops and leaders were killed, documents destroyed, worship forbidden, property confiscated, believers watched by mob and Jew alike. But the breath of persecution fanned into a mighty flame the spark it would have extinguished. The faith spread into the house of the Emperor, it entered the ranks of the army, it attracted the learned and gathered in the masses. For 300 years it was proclaimed the religion of the Empire. Rome drank of blood, she grew fat on war. Christ conquered her and she fell.

The other external force which was conquered by Christianity was the pagan culture. Her mythology was discredited by the first century, but it was a long time a dying. Religions from the

East were determined rivals of the Early Church. Cybele worship, Isis and Serapis claimed many adherents. To the onlooker it seemed for some years as if Mithraism would oust Christianity. The boldness of Mithra captured the minds of the host and legion, it followed the camps along the Danube and Rhine, into Asia and Gaul. His altars remain in our own island. Yet it failed. "Christianity," declares Professor Cairns, "uprooted the numerous religions around until it became a revolution greater than if to-day the idolatries of India, China and Japan were one and all to be swept away, for these are not the leading nations of the world whereas Paganism died in the very centre of the world's life and greatness."

With this onward sweeping movement we may compare that of Mahomet. But Christianity protests at the result. She points out that Mohamed conquered by force, herself by love. Islam clenches a sword, Christianity presents a Cross. Mohamed has no long list of martyrs suffering for his faith. He gives no moral uplift. No sense of sin and forgiveness are present. His picture of Paradise is sensual. It has no living Lord and Saviour who constantly reclaims. But when the Treaty of Milan was signed the voice of the Church was no uncertain sound. Slaves were to be branded no longer, accused persons were not to be imprisoned in dungeons without lights, neither were they to be chained too heavily. Children would no longer be exposed or abandoned, crucifixion was abolished as a punishment, gladiatorial shows were discouraged, women and marriage were recognised. Mohamed has no list to compare with this.

Though this power of expansion be illustrated from those early years it is true of the future ages. The rotten eggs and brick ends could not check the progress of the Salvation Army, neither could the Boxer Rising dam back the stream of Christian influence in China.

Now I would refer to the victories of Christianity over her internal opposition; that is her own deadness and her divisions. We are aware of the intermittent progress of the Church. Eighth century prophets are followed by times when there is no open vision. Like a pall descends the cloke of superstition upon the years following the early Church. But Christianity has the inherent power of the resurrection. It always re-awakens to re-create the world. Examine the revival of the 18th century.

Prosperity had returned under Walpole. The palace of the peer and country house of the squire were built on every hand. Statues, paintings, art, furniture and entertainments were their luxuries. The wilderness of the north became the hive of industry. But there was no message for the common people. The conversation of Walpole was often foul and indecent. A government earned for itself the title of "The Drunken Administration." The education of the masses was ignored. In the prisons men and women were herded together to learn crime and immorality until the law swept dozens away at a time. Profit from slavery helped to swell the treasury. Politically England was bankrupt. The literary circle tells the same story. With the coffee-house as its stage its actors were Goldsmith the spendthrift, Defoe the deceitful, Steele the dissolute. Pope now soared with Milton's wings, but neither rich fancy nor deep emotion softened his theme. Only of puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux could he think. His satire stings but I always turn gladly from this barren and artificial period. Hume and Bolingbroke attacked natural and revealed religion alike. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* sneered at the Church.

For all this the Church had no challenge. God to her was a material problem. Pluralities were common. One bishop boasted he had never seen his diocese. In the parish of Cheddar Hannah Moore could only find one Bible and that used to prop up a flower pot. The sermons have been classified as "dull, duller and dullest—chiefly the latter." Montesquieu returned to France and remarked that "Everyone in England in the higher circles laughs if you talk of religion." Such a church needs to be revived itself before it could speak of England. The rebirth came. God's breath swept over her. Poetry opened into spontaneous life. Cowper led on to M. Arnold and Wordsworth. Life was touched on every hand. The government made grants to education and churches. Pluralities and the fox-hunting passion disappeared. Now Raikes commenced the Sunday Schools, Roland Hill the Penny Post, Hannah Moore drew attention to the labouring classes. Venn started the Church of England Missionary Society. Elizabeth Fry and John Howard travelled England and Europe to reform the prison system. Wilberforce spent his life to uproot for ever the curse of the slave traffic. All these were leaders inspired by the message of Wesley and Whitfield. "Never had religion in England been at a lower ebb but the revival stirred the very

heart of England." Thus Christianity, when seemingly lifeless, is alive again, when it has lost every spark of vitality is again a consuming fire. It bears witness it is not herself but God within her.

The other internal hindrance which Christianity has overcome is her divisions. United we stand, divided we fall. But divided Christianity has conquered. War without the gates and dissension within—yet progress. It was there with Judas. It was present when Neo Platonism and Gnosticism attempted to capture the Church. It was witnessed in the spread of Montanism. But most acute was it in the Arian controversy, these intrigues seem beyond me. It is all discussion, argument, animosity and threatenings. The ranks of the Church are torn asunder, divided and sub-divided, arranged and re-arranged. The fierceness is saddening. The controversy had its value, but it is amazing that the Church emerged from the civil war to progress again. Ever since then innumerable creeds, churches and denominations have increased. Even from the division within Christianity we may gain some help. Men do not quarrel over what they consider minor matters. It's not worth while. If men differ in their interpretation of Christ it is because of the bigness of their belief, and God is so supreme that He overrules all their quarrels and outlasts all their cleavages. Amidst the criticism of to-day we may safely trust that finally the Church will come through glorified. The Church has gone on in spite of her differences. She will progress still.

Thus hope remains to us. The Christ in whom we believe overcame the forces of imperial Rome, He supplanted the religion of the Pagan world. He brought to light a new life, He has quickened His people when dead, He has led her even when bitterness has hindered her progress. Will there not be a day when the climax comes and the narrow path leads to the heights of God. If we fail it is because we do not put Him to the test.

The sneer comes to us as it came at the time of the reaction under Julian. "Where is the Carpenter's Son now." "Preparing a coffin" was the quiet reply. The God who has overcome will overcome, He is still working out His perfect love, He prepares a coffin for paganism and shapes a throne for His Church.

*Notes of Address given by Rev. D. G. Flemons, B.A.,
Norfolk Ministers' Fraternal.*

THE EDITOR WRITES.

IT is more than ever desirable that we should be able to give chief place in our magazine to articles dealing with the fresh and vital matters of our ministerial life. We remember that among our readers there are many to whom its problems are new and therefore difficult. There is no need to do in these pages what is better done elsewhere and within reach of all. We may therefore ask Secretaries of local Fraternals to obtain for us the use of any papers which may be read within their circles, and such as have been clearly and by common consent effective. We should be glad of a constant supply of these, and the less suitable they are for *general* reading the better.

It is good to know that the article on Superannuation in our Spring issue, has awakened wide interest and brought some comments which may be useful in the final discussions of the question. It is not too late even now to hear what local Fraternals have done in the matter, something fruitful ought to come from such quarters. It will be a great failure in constructive power if it is not so. The question should have a definite place in the agendas of such meetings, and not be left to casual table discussion.

From time to time we hear criticisms of our Hymnal, the book which most of us have to use for public worship. Has the time come for a revision or for a supplementary book? Unfortunately certain conditions of property in hymn books have made the production of a standard hymnal for the Free Churches nearly impossible. Yet we can still ask, must it be so for ever? Must our growing unity of action, and our real unity of worship ideals, find its last expression, rather than its earliest, in something akin to a defined and national Christian Psalmody as universal as some folk songs and lyrics are? Members of our Union have opportunity to express themselves perfectly freely, in these pages, on such a question.

PRAYER UNION NOTES.

OUR denominational leaders have given us "Evangelization" as our watch-word for 1924. Surely it is a timely signal.

The work of Douglas Brown and Lionel Fletcher proves beyond question that there is a widespread readiness to hear and to respond to the evangel. A feeling of expectancy throbs amongst our Churches. The flowing tide is with us, but if we are to take this tide at the flood, it is surely plain that we and our people must be moved to earnest prayer. We may well distrust in evangelism which does not spring from prayer. It is not likely to be wise in its methods, healthy in its spirit, or useful in its results.

Surely these considerations should make us more than ever earnest in our Sunday Morning Union of Prayer.

We are glad to be able to give the following message from our veteran President in whose improved health we all rejoice.

Christ Church, S.E.

24/2/24.

Dear Brethren, and especially you who belonged to our old Prayer Union,

I greet you with all my heart, and in fellowship with you, as you face the tremendous opportunities and demands of to-day.

* * *

From the gates, which open on Eternity, I have lately been able to appraise my life-work. It has seemed a very sorry thing in that Dawn-light, and one understands how John the Divine, in his long-drawn-out evening, felt the need of the Life-Blood of the Son of God.

* * *

One's regret is that so much time has been spent on objects which were good enough in themselves, but which others could have done as well, if not better.

And now, for the time that remains, one longs to concentrate on the Awakening of the Church to her transcendent opportunity as the organ of the Holy Spirit, and to urge her to assume her true position in separation from unseemly associations and in consecration to the service of her Lord.

Dear Brethren, the world is showing herself weary of a merely conventional religiousness, but recognises at once any contact with the world of reality that lies behind the shows and illusions of the time-sphere. But that world can only be unveiled by those who tread its floors in Meditation, Prayer and Obedience.

* * *

Let us also pray for each other, that we may have the Man of Nazareth to carry us over the last long mile.

Forgive me thus far.

Yours affectionately,

F. B. MEYER.

The Secretary of the Prayer Union, Rev. J. E. Martin, The Manse, Erith, is always glad to enrol brethren who wish to join the Prayer Union.

