

The Fraternal.

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IN MEMORIAM: DR. E. W. GIBBONS.

THE passing of Ernest Walter Gibbons leaves a great gap alike in our London Baptist ranks, and in those of the Ministers' Fraternal Union. He was a man greatly beloved, of whom it might truly be said that he "walked with God."

Gibbons' religious life was rooted in his devotion to Christ. Having put his trust in the Saviour at an early age, he never lost the sense of joy and gratitude experienced at the Cross, and it inspired in him a deep desire to win others to his Lord. He remained an evangelist through life.

Another characteristic was his deep reverence. He seemed always conscious of the presence of God, and this caused his services to be intensely worshipful. Only the best, he felt, was worthy of the Highest.

He sought to make the great things of our faith real to his people. Year by year during Lent he would hold weekly services, culminating in a daily service during Holy Week, and in these he sought to follow the steps of our Lord along the path to Calvary, and on to the triumph of Easter Day.

In successive pastorates he showed himself "a good minister of Jesus Christ," first at Woodbridge in Suffolk, and then in a series of London churches—Belle Isle; Cann Hall Road, Leytonstone; Abbey Road, St. John's Wood, and Wealdstone. In all these he did faithful work, both as pastor and preacher. His activities, however, spread far beyond the bounds

of his own churches. He became a leader in London Temperance circles, and was the helper of many churches, especially in the Western Group. Of this Group he was President in 1927. For years he served on the L.B.A. Council, and only a few weeks ago was elected to the Vice-Presidency of the Association, carrying with it, as we hoped, the Presidency next year. He was for some time Treasurer of the Fraternal Union.

Dr. Gibbons was a man of keen, eager spirit, and of a forward outlook. His interest in Church extension led to the formation within recent weeks of two new Baptist causes—at Stanmore and Hatch End. His was an inspiring personality, sympathetic, kindly and touched with a happy vein of humour; and when he spoke his voice would ring out in appeal often impassioned.

During recent years his health has given signs of failing, though he has worked bravely on. The Sunday before his death he preached three times at Cardiff, and on the Tuesday the home-call came. The next Saturday morning a very large and representative congregation assembled in his chapel for the funeral service, while at the Parish Church hard by the flag flew at half-mast.

Deep sympathy is felt with Mrs. Gibbons and her two daughters and son. May they be comforted by the realised presence of the Saviour, and by the possession of a precious memory and an inspiring hope!

J. W. EWING.

THE DISCIPLESHIP CAMPAIGN—RECONSIDERED.

I. IN THE LIGHT OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS.

IT has to be confessed with serious misgiving that we have by no means reached our objective "every church member a soul-winner." Very few have definitely felt the call to personal evangelism. Perhaps that is the truest intimation received as yet of the real need of such a campaign. For years now, with notable exceptions, the churches have left this aspect of evangelism out of their perspective. Disciple-making was delegated to the minister where it was visualised at all. That was his specialised duty. Now it takes time to swing the common

mind round to another angle, and since it involves a good deal of mental disturbance and spiritual nobility we have not succeeded to any great extent up to the present. That does not mean that the project is ill-conceived, what it really indicates is that the task is only just assuming its true proportions and reminding us at every stage of our Lord's words, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Thomas Huxley once said a striking thing. Given the return of a tropical climate millions of seeds now sterile in the soil of this country would germinate and spring up into all kinds of luxuriant life, I doubt whether all botanists to-day would endorse his statement, but it serves to show the place of heat in any propagation of life and the dependence of earth upon heaven. Our best plans will remain sterile without increased prayerfulness. Recently, I had the privilege of addressing a young people's gathering in which a number of young men stood up one by one and declared their determination to go out and seek new disciples. Afterwards, I learnt that much prayer had prepared for that meeting, which proves that signs follow where the atmosphere is congenial to the quickening Spirit of God.

Then we may claim many indirect fruits of the Campaign. Churches and ministers have been stimulated to make many kinds of contact with the outsider, such as visitation of the home, open-air witness, etc., all of which make glad the heart of man and God. So we refuse to be discouraged.

II. IN THE LIGHT OF OUR DISCOVERIES.

The effort to organise personal evangelism has revealed a widespread spiritual poverty. These symptoms call for earnest attention.

(a) *Lack of moral earnestness.*

Our people share the temper of the age. There appears to be more eagerness for the sensational than the serious. One hears of church members who have a greater keenness for social entertainment than soul-seeking and others who would not miss their regular visit to the pictures though they regularly miss the Prayer Meeting. This modern form of capitulation to the animal instinct of self-indulgence and the refusal to rise to the more heroic level of service is disheartening until we remember that leaders as far apart as Bunyan and Spurgeon indicted the

shallowness of their time and our Lord upbraided His generation because they merely played at life.

(b) *Lack of conviction.*

The average church member has lost the capacity for self-affirmation. We have swung from dogmatic to nebulous thinking. First-hand experience of Christ capable of interpretation in vivid terms of the Unseen and Eternal is becoming rare. One suspects a growing neglect of definite culture of the soul with consequent under-development of the contemplative side of religion. Hence the tendency to parasitism, a sort of haphazard living on one another, snatches of hymns learnt in childhood and chance phrases from occasional sermons. On the active side there is much bus-y-ness. Efforts are organised to make ends meet but vision is arrested at the point of financial success. Interest is focussed on a balanced budget rather than a group of new disciples. In addition to these eminently practical members one finds in some churches a smaller class, chiefly young people, who lean towards religious agnosticism, and in order to be patient with such intellectual misgivings it is well to recall the revolution that has taken place in almost all our mental categories in recent years.

(c) *Lack of articulation.*

From the point of view of disciple-making this is the most serious defect of all and when we think of early Christianity it can only be viewed as definite loss of spiritual endowment. J. Brierley says that one of the greatest triumphs of evolution is the "fitting of thought to sound." It is also the most natural and impressive method of revealing soul to soul and a glance into history shows with what consummate skill the followers of Christ have used it in the spread of the Faith. You cannot read the story of the first Christians or the literature created by great revivals without feeling that the followers of Christ have revelled in spiritual conversation. Much of the quickening breath of the Spirit flew from soul to soul on the wings of fervent speech. Disciples have been won in all ages by oral testimony, by men under a great compulsion who confessed, "we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard."

This gift which once one converts has fallen into decay and a modern apostle could hardly write of the Church what

Paul wrote of the Corinthians, "that he thanked God that they were enriched in everything by Jesus, receiving full power to speak of their faith."

One would like more space to emphasise this aspect of our spiritual poverty for without doubt it lies at the root of much of our impotence in personal evangelism, but with relief I turn to the reconsideration of our Campaign.

III. IN THE LIGHT OF OUR RESOURCES.

Prof. Max Muller, the famous philologist, held the opinion that animals are dumb because they have nothing to say. Such can never be the explanation of a mute Church. The New Testament confronts us with a difficulty of an opposite kind. The transformed soul is conscious of a wealth of experience that demands a more elastic vocabulary because there is so much to say. You come upon Paul struggling with language as he tries to tell of that wondrous grace that defies complete analysis. He speaks of a love that passes knowledge, a peace that passes understanding, a power that exceeds greatness, a hope that sublimates all life, a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

The same is true of our Christian poets, their souls roam in rapture amid the inexhaustible and unsearchable riches of Christ. Chas. Wesley feels the inadequacy of the instrument of expression when he thinks of Christ and exclaims, "O, for a thousand tongues. . . ."

In similar vein is John Newton's reply to friends who urged him to retire when 80 years of age. "I cannot stop," and then with passion, "What, shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?"

Brethren, if our Campaign halts, it is not because we have no resources, not because we are limited in Christ, but because He is limited in us. As in the economic sphere so here we are faced by the strange paradox of poverty amid plenty because the instrument of distribution has broken down.

Lastly—

IV. IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD'S URGENT NEED.

Sometimes I think the fact of living in such a wonderfully fascinating age with its many inventions, scientific advances and

cultured civilisation partly blinds us to the realities of human nature and we need to be reminded by some penetrating and balanced mind like Dr. Moffat that "the alterations of civilisation leave the heart of religion unchanged as nothing else." Mental frameworks have their changing fashions, but not the deep, abiding need of man. He ever remains subject to temptation, fear, struggle, aspiration, victory and failure, swayed now by noble, now by ignoble impulse, longing for the stars, yet cleaving to the mire. If anything his need of religious foothold is greater than ever. As a business man said to me recently, "we live in a time of disillusionment, restlessness and even sorrow." All of us feel it in a measure. The peoples of the earth are losing their moral initiative and sense of a certain goal. Two-thirds of so-called Christian Europe has surrendered its right to think and plan its own destiny. Even youth has a tinge of sadness and one sees faces long like a ladder—a ladder upon which no angels of God ascend and descend. Products of a post-war age and our modern education, which is largely agnostic and stops short at morality, they sorely need guidance. Art and literature has failed them and the popular educators, cinema and Press, suffer badly from distorted views of life. Hence the urgent need of the Church with her vision and message of regeneration of life at all stages. But for her witness Mankind will sink back to a genial paganism, faithless, hopeless and ultimately suicidal. And if what Dr. Streeter and Miss Evelyn Underhill insist is true, that movements of new spiritual life depend for their inspiration and maintenance on creative personality, then the minister is the strategic centre of our Campaign. The call is for consecrated, daring, inventive leadership, for men radiant with the spirit of the all-sufficient Christ who shall enthuse others with their own faith, hope and love and bring them to that place of vision and power where they will say with Masefield's great character Saul Kane,

"I knew that Christ had given me birth
To brother all the souls on earth;
And every bird and every beast
May share the crumbs dropped at the feast,"

because redeemed man is the crown of the Universe and the key to the Kingdom of God.

L. P. COOK.

AN EXPEDIENT THAT IS NOT LAWFUL.

AS Baptists we pride ourselves on our historic stand against privilege, especially in religion. We have held, and still hold, that heredity, wealth and social prestige, of themselves confer no right or precedence in a spiritual Society. This is fundamental in doctrine and polity. We claim equal rights with all other churches, whatever their antiquity or numerical strength. The Anglican claim to privilege in the State is one of the great barriers to reunion. While the Establishment remains Dissent must continue, and if we are to retain the respect of our opponents we must be consistent in not permitting within our borders what we condemn outside.

It is because of this concern for the integrity of our witness that I invite "Fraternal" discussion of a matter in which I hold we have surrendered to expediency, and sacrificed a principle which is fundamental to our Union. I refer to Personal Membership.

Why raise questions on a matter which was agreed years ago and incorporated in the Constitution? For several reasons. At Plymouth the Assembly agreed to extend personal membership to wives of ministers and missionaries, deaconesses and others, at the reduced rate of 5s. per annum. The full effects of this are yet to be seen. With a list already numbering over 2,000, this addition is likely to become embarrassing in many ways. I hold that personal membership (1) differentiates, solely on a money basis, between churches of similar numerical strength. (2) It unfairly influences the election of Vice-President and Council. (3) It has destroyed the character of the Assembly as a deliberative body responsible to the churches, and it has for long aroused criticism and complaint among materially poorer churches and made them hesitant to follow any lead which comes from the Church House. We have sacrificed principle to expediency.

PRINCIPLE.

1. Fundamentally the Union is a Union of Churches and Associations of Churches, and *not of individuals*.
2. The Union acts by its Assembly, through its Officers and Council.

3. The Assembly is the Parliament of the Union of Churches in which and by which the churches confer and legislate in order to carry out the objects of the Union.

4. The Assembly is constituted by accredited delegates of the Churches and Associations.

5. Action by the Assembly is only in accord with fundamental principle when approved by a majority of the accredited delegates. This is admitted by by-law 3, 3, re a demand by 100 delegate members.

6. Every member of an affiliated Baptist Church is, *ipso facto*, a personal member of the Union, but he has no personal and independent right of action in the Assembly except as an accredited delegate.

EXPEDIENCY.

1. Whatever the original intention may have been, personal membership has become avowedly and obviously an expedient for raising income for Union funds. However great or small a person's interest in the Union may be, he cannot become a personal member unless he can afford £1 per annum, or 5s. in the case of a minister, etc. The £1 subscriber receives the Handbook, which is 5s. 6d. post free. His nett subscription to the funds is 14s. 6d. per annum.

2. For 14s. 6d. the Union sells and the subscriber buys the rights and privileges of an accredited delegate, which fundamentally are only in the power of the local church to confer. They are:—

- (a) Entrance to all meetings of the Assembly.
- (b) Right of voting at all meetings.
- (c) Personal postal vote for Vice-President.
- (d) Votes for election of Council.
- (e) Special facilities for such occasions as Albert Hall meetings, etc.

These purchased privileges include two which are denied to the accredited delegate, namely, a personal vote for the Vice-President (the delegates' votes being merged in the church which votes and is credited with the number *pro rata* to its strength), and special facilities for public meetings.

The only remaining right reserved to the church's accredited representative is that of challenging a division in the Assembly *provided that 100 others rise with him.* By-law 3, 3.

PRACTICAL RESULTS.

It infringes the right of churches which on purely accidental grounds do not include those who can afford £1 per annum, and confers on others of like numerical strength rights and privileges solely by virtue of purchase. For example, a church of which I was minister was entitled to two delegates, but with fifteen personal members it had seventeen votes in the Assembly. A neighbouring church of similar size, but with no personal members, had to be content, or discontented, with two. This, which can be multiplied all over the country, is a fruitful cause of resentment and criticism of the Union.

Both personally and in the aggregate this unfairly influences the voting for the Vice-President and the Council. The delegates' votes for Vice-President are cast and signed by the church, and credited to the church *pro rata*. Delegates have no personal vote or choice. On the other hand, about 2,200 votes are cast by personal members without reference to the mind of the churches. In the case cited above the fifteen personal members can, and do, cancel out the two votes of the church by their personal choice. In the election of the Council it is well known that a canvass of personal members' votes is frequent.

The large number of personal members has had a marked effect on the character and work of the Assembly. The attendances have become so large as to cause embarrassment and hesitation on the part of Provincial towns to receive the Union. The sessions have become unwieldy and largely ineffective for relevant business and discussion. In theory it is a responsible parliament of the constituent churches who, through their accredited representatives, solemnly deliberate and declare their will. In practice it is little more than a series of public meetings. Among the factors which have contributed to the lamentable change in its essential character is the number who are now admitted on equal footing with delegates who, were it expected or encouraged, would hesitate to express themselves in discussion under such crowded and public conditions as we now have.

The delegates are placed at a serious and often irritating disadvantage. Personal members are mainly those who can spare time and money; they go for their own pleasure. Delegates are often those who at personal inconvenience consent to attend so that their church shall be represented. They are commissioned to attend and report, but they have constant difficulty of even gaining admission to some sessions, their places being occupied by those who represent nobody but themselves, and who have no responsibility to report back.

With special meetings the delegates are worse off still. Their chances of securing seats at such as the Spurgeon Centenary, or the more recent Forward Movement meeting at Albert Hall, is dependent upon the punctuality or dilatoriness of the church secretary, whereas the privileged personal member has first call, is addressed direct, and is dependent upon no third party.

These are not mere accidentals. They are officially recognised and encouraged. The official mind is quite explicit. Invitations are given in the "Baptist Times" to submit names for these privileges. On one occasion it was stated that it is desired to interest the *best people* in our churches in the work of the Union. The *best* being those who can afford £1 per annum. If that is the headquarters' criterion of interest we know many who are better than the best, who are not less concerned for the work because they cannot afford more than their prayers.

The London Baptist Association, noting this very successful expedient for raising money, has altered its Constitution and says out of hand that personal members "have equal rights with ministers and delegates." *Equal rights!* The largest item of revenue in the Baptist Union current account is the subscriptions from personal members. Last year it amounted to £2,635. Why not be frank? This is simply a device for securing income. The rights and privileges which fundamentally are only in the power of the local church to bestow are sold by the Union for 14s. 6d. per annum.

The official mind is also under no illusion as to the value of these purchased votes. A certain distinguished visitor to a District Meeting was asked why they were unable to secure a Vice-President from that area. He replied naïvely, "The

remedy is in your own hands; *increase your personal members.*" As he was speaking with inside knowledge are we to conclude that the Vice-President is elected virtually by this *bloc* of individuals instead of by the churches? If so, this business of conferring privilege for a consideration is, as I have said, more than a regrettable capitulation to expediency, it is a surrender of principle by which we have disarmed ourselves of our historic witness. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth."

Detailed figures of voting are of course only in possession of the Church House. If my calculations are materially inaccurate, and if there are convincing answers to the points raised, none will be gladder than I that the implications are not, as I think, fundamentally serious, but are only conclusions to be drawn from the face value of statistics and overcrowded Assemblies.

Two things are undeniably true, that the rights of delegates can be purchased, and that there is considerable criticism and uneasiness.

G. W. HARTE,

(Beckenham, Kent).

THE PLACE AND MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

OUR view as to the place and meaning of the Lord's Supper obviously depends upon our view as to the place and meaning of the Church. Does the Church and her worship matter, and, if so, how much? What is the function of the Church? John Calvin expressed it for Protestants in memorable words:—

"The Church exists for the faithful preaching of the Word, for the administration of the seals, and for the exercise of godly discipline."

It is concerning the second of these, "The administration of the seals," that I have to speak.

High Churchmanship means, in part, an emphasis on the value of worship. Therefore the Lord's Supper ought to have a central place in our Church life. Our people need above all else to see the vision of God, and, to me, the Lord's Supper is *the* service where Free Churchmen may worship in reality.

Worship is the inter-action of God and man, each as it were answering the other. It is God saying to Man, "Thou

art My son"; it is Man saying to God, "Thou art my Father." We would testify that it is in the Communion Service that we can with absolute reality hear and answer thus. The Lord's Supper is the inner shrine and Holy of Holies of the soul's fellowship with God.

What is the Meaning of this Sacrament for Protestants and Free Churchmen? Fundamentally it is a way of finding and then maintaining vital contact with God in Christ. It is a Communion Service.

There are many ways of attaining and then preserving fellowship with God. I mention three which are relevant to this discussion. We can by our own act remember God—though it might be truer to say that God causes us to remember. But over and above this act of remembrance, God takes the initiative, through the Sacrament, making it an act of His Grace, and then using it to mediate to men His Constant Presence. The Lord's Supper is, then, first of all man's Act of Remembrance. At this service we try by an act of memory and faith to enter with Jesus and the apostles into the Upper Room.

We remember the historic facts; that moving scene where Christ shared a meal with His friends and at the close used bread and wine as symbols of His broken body and shed blood. And, as we remember, His voice travels across the centuries saying to us, even to us, "This is my body broken for you"; "This is my blood which was shed for you."

But we remember more. We remember His incomparable life lived for us, and for all men. We remember that "Being in the form of God . . . He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death." We realise afresh "The Grace of the Lord Jesus, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich." We see again the Meaning of His death, that "Christ suffered the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," and we remember that "We who were sometime in darkness, have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son."

His death and our life; His obedience and our waywardness; His suffering and our salvation are all symbolised in the Bread and the Wine.

The Lord's Supper is thus an acted sermon—a dramatic representation of the drama of Christ's passion, and since it is unstudied, unconscious acting, it is all the more effective. Its value lies in the fact that it expresses what words can never say, and where words are forgotten the dramatic representation and its meaning is remembered.

The Lord's Supper is also a means of Grace. As a Sacrament it does not merely suggest and symbolise spiritual realities, it is also a positive channel of God's goodness and blessing.

It is not merely a picture of reality, it provides an experience of reality. It is not simply an acted parable, but a means of Grace, and its importance lies not only in its meaning but also in its effects.

We do not hold, of course, that God's Grace is mediated through the bread and wine. It is mediated in the special quality of the fellowship; the intensity of the memory which is produced by this service and its symbolic elements. The bread and wine are "outward and visible signs of an inward invisible Grace."

There is something unique in taking the Lord's Supper, which, for me, comes from three things.

First, through a vivid realisation of Christ's death, God mediates His Grace to me. May I share with you my method of using the quiet moments of the Communion Service? When I shut my eyes I can see a picture of a Cross set on a hill. It is a symbolic hill and a symbolic Cross. Then, with that picture in my mind's eye, I repeat to myself a hymn which I have previously chosen as my meditation:—

“O Sacred Head now wounded
With grief and shame bowed down.”

“Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly.”

In this way I am able to realise the suffering of our Saviour's death, and something at least of what it means to me, and that is a channel of blessing, a means of Grace.

Then, too, there is a channel of Grace in the fact that, in this way, from the first century, our fathers in the faith have found God. Here we are linked with all Christians, to what-

ever section of the Church they may belong. This is an experience which Luther shared with Augustine, and Bunyan with Bernard of Clairvaux. The glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs, all took of this Bread and drank of this Cup.

That, to me, is a most impressive thing, and here in the Sacrament I find transcending all differences of interpretation a communion of saints. When, as I take the elements, I realise that my Christian heroes did what I am now doing, I am not merely thrilled, but truly blessed, and God uses my hero-worship as a means of grace.

Thirdly, it is in the Communion Service that I realise, as nowhere else, the fellowship of my own people among whom I work and live. I think I realised this best one afternoon as we closed the Lord's Supper with a hymn. I looked round the congregation, and saw all those people; a woman in trouble with whom I had prayed that week; young people with whom I had played tennis the day before, and, as it happened, I could see every one of the dozen or so boys and girls that had been baptised during my ministry. We had shared the bread and the wine; we were all one in singing "Rock of Ages"—and, in that experience which is often repeated, God has mediated His Grace to me.

Of course, many other things may also be used by God as channels of His Grace. Probably many of our people are most truly blest in this service when they remember their conversion, Baptism and first communion. It is worth while to remind them of it sometimes.

I have no desire to rationalise all this; to put it into a neat formula. If there is no magic in the sacrament, there is certainly miracle. God uses these various channels that He may work in us the miracle of Grace. The blessing we receive through the Sacrament is the work of the Holy Spirit.

You may object that all this could happen at any other service. I agree, and yet I hold that there is a special quality, a uniqueness about the experience we receive at the Lord's Supper.

This leads me to discuss the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament. Free Churchmen are shy of the term, because of one theory concerning the Real Presence—namely, the dogma of Transubstantiation.

Yet if there be no Real Presence when we meet for this service, we simply remember an absentee Christ.

We may say at once that the Real Presence is not bodily, but spiritual; it is not in the elements, whether consecrated or not, but in the heart of the believing worshipper.

But is it a special Presence, or just a special apprehension of it on our part? I believe there is something unique in the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

There is a sense in which, for the Believer, every meal is sacramental, and every act of ordinary life a manifestation of Christ's Presence. "We are to make an altar of our workshop, and a Eucharist of our daily bread," said Dean Inge. All outward things partly hide and partly reveal the secret life of the Universe. Christ is with us in all our work, and His Presence is real in all we do.

Nevertheless, there is a special quality about the Real Presence offered to us in the Communion Service. Special occasions have the power of imparting a new element to our experience, and, in the Sacrament, the veil which hides that other world from ours is withdrawn farther than at other times.

In conclusion may I make one or two practical suggestions? In the majority of our Baptist Churches the Communion Service is no more than a postscript to the evening service, held when we are weary, unable to concentrate and longing to sing, "Now the day is over." It is the very worst time that could be chosen. I think the best time is at 6 o'clock on Sunday evening, in place of the ordinary preaching service. Failing this, the custom of old-fashioned churches like my own is best. We meet on Sunday afternoon, once a month, for an hour set apart for the service.

May I plead for a fixed and stereotyped order of service? I do not mean one published by the Baptist Union. I mean that each minister should work out from various sources an order which meets the devotional needs of his people, and adhere to it strictly except in very special circumstances. The service should "flow over" the worshipper, and he should know what is coming next. Any novelty or violent change, especially any intrusion of the Minister's personality, tends to hinder rather than to help devotion. The effort to adjust the mind to something unfamiliar, is apt to disturb the concentration of the worshipper.

May I plead also for a more general use of a portable Communion Set? I find mine invaluable in pastoral work. There are bedridden members who find renewed hope and comfort as they take the Sacrament, month by month, in their own room.

Every minister, I suppose, feels that one of the greatest privileges he has is to preside at the Communion Service in his own church. The symbols of bread and wine which he distributes mean so much to the weary and fainting souls who receive them. It is unnecessary for me to say more than that we should make the fullest preparation of mind and spirit before we take the service. Only those who have had an audience with the King can lead others to the Throne.

I never go to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper without remembering the words of Bishop Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man in the 18th century:—

“May I never offer the prayers of the faithful with polluted lips, nor distribute the bread of life with unclean hands.”

R. C. WALTON.

THE MINISTER'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK

The Sunday School is the most promising part of the Church Organisation, and Ministers as well as Teachers and Officers should do everything possible to make their work for the children effective.

One of the best ways of doing this is to read "The New Chronicle of Christian Education," the only weekly journal devoted to Sunday School work. It is indispensable to the progressive worker. Send a list of the names and addresses of your staff to the Editor at 57 & 59, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4, and free specimen copies will be sent to each of them.

THE NEW CHRONICLE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Edited by SYDNEY C. LUCKER

CHRIST'S SAVING MESSAGE.
OBSTACLES TO ITS ACCEPTANCE.

WE meet here convinced beyond any shadow of doubt that Christ is the only hope for the individual and society. That is the only valid reason for our ministry. Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. He is the answer to our deepest problems, and their solution is discoverable in the light of His Cross, where His saving message comes to the clearest focus.

Yet while we are convinced of the uniqueness, supremacy and finality of Christ, we are confronted to-day by an appalling indifference of men to Him, and a widespread lack of response to His saving message. The churches are all convinced of the need for evangelism; but all our efforts, however well intentioned, are certain to miss the mark and fail of our hopes and expectations unless we are able to understand the obstacles to the acceptance of Christ's saving truth. Why is it that men do not respond to that in which alone their salvation lies, and for lack of which they are doomed to walk in perpetual darkness? It is to provide at least some answer to this question that I have undertaken to read this paper.

I have divided the paper into two parts, the first dealing with the obstacles to the acceptance of Christ's saving truth that arise from a desire to relate it to other aspects of scientific truth, that is, with intellectual obstacles, and the second part dealing with those obstacles that arise from conscious or unconscious insincerities, or moral obstacles.

My object is merely to open the subject for discussion, not to attempt to exhaust it, which in any case would be beyond my power.

(I) INTELLECTUAL OBSTACLES. The first obstacles then with which we shall deal are the intellectual obstacles. There is in every one of us an urge to seek unity in experience; we cannot be content with contradictions; and if any part of our experience contradicts another, one of two things will happen; we shall shut off in a water-tight compartment one part of our experience from that part which contradicts it, so that we shall not be disturbed by the intermingling of aspects that are irreconcilable; or we shall seek to remove the contradictions to create that unity that we seek, e.g. a man may in his religious life tolerate all kinds of intellectual dishonesty and yet in his everyday life be scrupulously honest. How can we account for that contradic-

tion? Only by saying that in the religious sphere he refuses to allow his intellect to operate; but if he comes to see that such a position is radically insincere, he will seek intellectual honesty in both spheres so that he may reach unity. When that occurs, there is a danger of obstacles arising to prevent the saving message of Christ from reaching him because in the chaos introduced into his intellectual life, he is in danger of throwing over the good with the bad, and rooting out the wheat with the tares.

Yet intellectual honesty must enter the whole of life: no part can be excluded if there is to be unity; but those of us who have tried to be perfectly honest in the religious sphere in the light of modern criticism of traditional religion, have been profoundly disturbed as we have wrestled with the problems that that criticism has forced us to face. Yet disturbing as that criticism is, we must face it and seek to lay the spectres it creates in our minds, or we must continue with the haunting fear—none the less but all the more haunting because we repress it—that our faith is unreliable if it faces the full light of intellectual truth: we must seek to give a reason for the faith that is in us, or our faith will be insecure.

Perhaps no criticism has been more disturbing than that which has been directed towards the Bible and the traditional attitude to it. There is a long cry from Gladstone's "Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture" to say Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible," or "A New Commentary on the Bible," edited by Charles Gore and others, or even to the syllabus of religious education issued by the Herts C.C. for use in the schools of our own county. Whether we like it or not, gone for ever among thoughtful people are the days of belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures, or in the Bible as the Infallible Word of God.

The Infallibility of the Bible, which in Protestantism replaced the Infallibility of the Church in Roman Catholicism, has broken down, and it has brought many into intellectual chaos in regard to their attitude to the Bible. Men yearn for authority, and they have not only a perfect right to do so, but an inner necessity; and the road from relying on an external authority to resting on an internal one is long and painful. Yet it must be made, and we must accept that the day is past when thoughtful people will be content to be told "This is true because the Bible says it." Amid the things that are being shaken, and they are many, there are being revealed those things that cannot be shaken. Surely that is the purpose of

God in allowing the upheaval; and one thing that is being more and more clearly seen amid the many things that are dim, is that truth to grip the minds and hearts of men must shine in its own light, and needs no external authority to support it.

The intellectual problems of the Bible, concerning the authorship of the Books, their composite character or otherwise, their historical accuracy, cannot be settled except by intellectual methods such as reverent scholarship uses; and while it is true that scholarship is open to mistakes, yet the earnest search for truth will more and more eliminate these, and mistakes in the search for truth are far better than no search at all.

Men who are troubled by intellectual difficulties regarding the Bible need to be treated with understanding. Any difficulties they bring forward, however revolutionary they may appear to be, must be sympathetically considered. If they are not, that will be an end of our influence as far as they are concerned; and if we merely take the attitude that such intellectual difficulties are the marks of perversity or moral obliquity, Christ's saving truth will never reach them through us, and until these difficulties are met it is not likely to reach them at all. This also we must say, that if we ourselves lack the necessary intellectual equipment to meet the difficulties that are brought to us, we must be honest enough to admit it, and either seek to equip ourselves the better to deal with them, or send our enquirers to someone better qualified to help them.

One cannot too strongly emphasise that our mental attitudes have the power of inhibiting Christ's saving truth, and preventing a man from receiving it. Just as a man may suffer from blindness, deafness, or paralysis, not because he is incapable of seeing, hearing or movement, but because he thinks so, so we create a barrier to the receiving of Christ's saving truth by false attitudes of mind.

The intellectual difficulties regarding the Bible, however, must not allow us to let those disturbed by them overlook the fact that the essential value of the Bible is untouched by them. The saving truth of Christ does not wait for intellectual problems to be solved, and while intellectual obstacles may prevent it from reaching men's hearts, when these are rightly understood they need not be a barrier. The Bible speaks to man's heart and conscience and its saving truth can be discerned and experienced amid all the intellectual difficulties that we have to face regarding it.

The most serious intellectual difficulties in regard to the Bible arise from the presuppositions of men of science, and chief among these difficulties are those resulting from the presuppositions that in an ordered world such as we know this world to be, prayer is futile, miracle impossible, and religious experience an illusion.

Prayer has been made a difficulty for some because of the vastness of the universe that astronomical science has revealed. They feel that man can have no significance in it, and that in such a vast universe there is no place for God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has a special interest in every individual life. Yet this is largely a question of being frightened by bulk: the measure of man is to be judged in part at least by his ability to comprehend something of this vast universe in which he is placed. Man as far we know is the highest product of the universe, and it is not foolish to think that the highest creation should have the special interest of the Creator.

(To be continued).

THE MINISTER'S BOOKSHELF.

EVERY student of the philosophy of religion is deeply indebted to Dr. John Oman, who has recently retired from the Principalship of Westminster Presbyterian College, Cambridge; and those of us who have tried to work through *Vision and Authority* and *The Natural and Supernatural* know very well that it is no good trying to come to terms with such a hard and distinguished thinker at the end of a tiring day's work. Dr. Oman's latest work (not his last, we hope) is in much lighter vein. It is called *Concerning the Ministry* (Student Christian Movement Press, 7s. 6d.) and consists of talks given to his students towards the end of the week, when both teacher and taught had had sufficient of serious lecturing. Dr. Oman knows the work of the ministry through and through. He has helped to shape and mould several generations of ministers in his own denomination, and happy are they who have been privileged to sit at his feet. In this book he distributes his bounty to a much wider circle. His is a shrewd mind and he has a most original—and frequently provoking—way of saying things. Moreover, it is a mind richly endowed with wisdom as well as loaded with knowledge, for to him the old saying does not apply "Knowledge comes but wisdom lingers"; and

to listen to him as, in the pages of this most helpful book, he speaks to us concerning the intimate things of the ministerial life is a high privilege and an enriching experience.

Another outstanding volume recently issued by the Student Christian Movement Press is very different from that referred to above. It is called *Is Christianity Unique?* (price 6s.), from the pen of that outstanding authority on Oriental religions, Dr. Nicol MacNicol. The missionary tone, temper and outlook, of the Christian Church have undergone a revolutionary transformation since William Carey published in 1792 his epoch-making (but then badly-received) little book *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. Nowadays we have to face the issue: Is Christianity merely one competing religion amidst several others, or is it the one religion that men need and without which they cannot be saved? Has the Christian Church a living message for the non-Christian faiths of the Orient, or should the missionary go out to India, China and Japan, as much a learner as a teacher? This is one of the living issues of the day (amongst intelligent Christians as amongst those of other faiths) and to help settle the issue is the object of Dr. MacNicol's weighty, yet very readable, volume. He deals with such far-reaching topics as the fundamental differences between the various religions, the menace of nationalism, the limits of syncretism, the influence of East upon West and vice versa, and other important topics. The various chapters of the book have been delivered in Oxford, Columbia (New York), the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Kentucky), and elsewhere, and it is a real service to Christian missionary enterprise that Dr. MacNicol and the S.C.M. have given these lectures to a wider public.

Another book of outstanding merit is Prof. J. Huizinga's *In the Shadow of To-morrow* (Heinemann, 7s. 6d.), which the author offers as "a diagnosis of the spiritual distemper of our time." Prof. Huizinga is a Dutchman who has already made an international reputation by his earlier works, especially his much translated book *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. His latest volume will enhance his already considerable reputation, for already 25,000 copies have been sold in Holland, while translations have or are about to appear in Spain, France, Sweden

and Switzerland. "We live in a demented world. And we know it"—that is the author's challenge. He analyses the trends and tendencies of the times and investigates a wide range of crises, symptoms in science, art, ethics, politics and philosophy. As we read we are reminded of Spengler's *Decline of the West*, but with one very important qualification. Spengler is pessimistic to the core; Huizinga sees in the midst of the chaos and confusion of the modern situation grounds for hope and encouragement, though he refuses to speak with absolute confidence. But he believes in youth. Unlike Ibsen's "Master Builder" he is not afraid of the young. Rather he believes that, despite the disquieting features of the present situation the coming generation can save the world. *In the Shadow of To-morrow* is not a book about religion, but it is a religious book—religious in tone and temper. And we who wish to understand present trends and tendencies cannot afford to neglect it.

A book by Canon B. H. Streeter is always an event to those of us who have read, and appreciated, his *Reality*—one of the greatest books written this century. Dr. Streeter has just issued a volume of lectures (given in Lincoln's Inn Chapel) under the title *The God Who Speaks*. The thesis of the book is the familiar one: God exists and has a purpose for the universe of which the individual can make himself the conscious instrument; this purpose is not shrouded in impenetrable mystery, since God speaks to man in Scripture and in Conscience and proffers him daily guidance. Yes, the theme is familiar, but Dr. Streeter's treatment of it is as fresh as the morn. In six brilliant chapters he covers a field and deals with matters that are of more than academic interest (there is also a useful supplementary chapter on "Christianity and Other Religions"). Dr. Streeter is nothing, if not honest; he never shirks a difficulty, and never pretends to more than he thinks can be maintained. But he never writes without imparting something of his own vigorous faith (and his faith *is* vigorous) to his readers. *The God Who speaks* is a spiritual tonic, and may be unreservedly commended to every minister, indeed, to every Christian believer.

Of smaller books the following may be commended. *The Way of the Witnesses*, by Edward Shillito (Edinburgh House

Press, 2s.), is to be classed with "missionary literature" for it is "a New Testament study in missionary motive." Mr. Shillito is concerned to show that Christianity is essentially a missionary faith, and for the proof of this contention he goes to the earliest Christian literature. "The New Testament does not contain a section given up to missions; it is a missionary book." To Mr. Shillito this is a congenial theme, and he develops it with his accustomed grace and vigour.

Those of us who heard Dr. Henry Townsend's Presidential Address are glad that it has been published in extended form by our own Kingsgate Press, at 1s. It is entitled *Religion, Revolution and Democracy*, and is one of the wisest and weightiest, as well as most relevant, utterances from the Chair of the Baptist Union for many years. Especially are we grateful for Dr. Townsend's uncompromising Protestantism—we could do with more of it in these days. The Roman Church is not asleep, and it behoves Baptists to keep their Protestant witness in the foreground.

The Grey Veil (Kingsgate Press, 1s.) is the story of the work of the Baptist Deaconesses. It is a well written account of a noble piece of work, and should do much to stimulate interest. Mr. Hugh Redwood contributes a foreword.

Two of our members have written small books which we may ourselves find useful, and which we can certainly commend to our own people. One is entitled *The Lamp of Truth*, by H. J. Dale (T. and T. Clark, 1s. 6d.). It consists of five excellent chapters on the Bible and aims to make the Book of Books of greater value to young people. Mr. Dale has not aimed at producing a book for scholars. His concern is with the young people of our churches, who may neglect the Bible because of difficulties and misunderstandings. He seeks to remove those difficulties and misunderstandings and to awaken a deeper love for God's Word.

The other is called *The Upward Calling*, by F. C. White, B.D. (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1s.). It is a series of devotional studies of "God's Fourfold Way," the purpose of which is "to survey briefly some aspects of the calling of God's people and of the provision made by God for the salvation and spiritual

enrichment of individual men and women in Christ." We suspect that the twenty chapters were originally addresses; certainly some ministers may find them suggestive of a series of week-evening talks to the devout. Their tone is devotional and Scriptural, making them very acceptable, especially to Christians "of the old school" (as the saying is).

In a previous issue we reviewed Mr. Henry J. Cowell's interesting and enheartening little brochure *The Story of the Huguenots* (Lutterworth Press, 3d.). A third edition has been called for, and this contains a bibliography of English works dealing with this tragic, yet glorious, chapter in the history of Protestantism. Mr. Cowell is known to us all as the Acting Sub-Editor of "The Baptist Times." He is also a Fellow of the Huguenot Society and an Officier de l'instruction publique de France. A Fellow of the Huguenot Society has made it possible for an autographed copy of the new edition to be sent free to any reader of "The Fraternal" who applies by letter to "Huguenot," c/o Kingsgate Press, 4, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1.

JOHN PITTS.