

The Fraternal

JULY, 1946

No. 61

In place of the usual Editorial and in response to the request of the Huddersfield Fraternal we insert the following communication :

FELLOWSHIP IN FINANCE

From the Huddersfield Fraternal

FOR the past two years the Ministers and Deacons of the Huddersfield and District Baptist Churches have met to discuss the spiritual and general welfare of the churches.

A Commission was appointed to consider practical suggestions, resulting in special consideration being given to the needs of pastorless churches, ministers with low stipends, and the position of our retired ministers.

We believe most of our brethren share these concerns and would be willing to consider any practical plan. The following suggestions, therefore, are submitted with confidence that they will be given serious and sympathetic attention.

We are convinced that the needs of our aged brethren should come first. Our proposal is that all ministers receiving stipends of £350 and over, per annum, should contribute two and a half per cent. of their stipend to the New Home Work Fund for the next seven years, under the Covenant Scheme where applicable, and earmarked so that the present superannuation allowance be immediately increased.

With regard to the brethren in pastorates, we believe that the promotion of ministerial brotherhood, happiness, and efficiency would be served by a closer approximation to equality of status and stipends. The position as it now stands is contrary to the principle that the Christian ministry is a spiritual vocation and not a profession within a denomination. So long as stipends vary so widely within the same ministry, so long will the dawn of genuine fellowship be hindered. The securing of fees for extra services, tends to be to the advantage of those ministers who are already in receipt of a bigger stipend than their brethren.

If it is necessary to establish a minimum of £500 per annum for officials within the ministry of the Denomination, on what grounds is the minimum reduced to £250 because the minister is in the pastorate?

It seems to us that the new financial relationship between the Baptist Union and the Associations, is a step towards a new financial arrangement between the Baptist Union and the local churches which would lead to the abolishing of the unhappy distinction between aided and unaided churches and between ministers receiving lower and higher stipends. With this end in view, we may assume that an average weekly free will offering of 1s. 6d. per member paid into a Central Fund would provide sufficient for a minimum stipend of £350 for all our ministers. This is estimated on a basis of 300,000 members of church and congregation, allowing for a fair reduction through lapses and a reasonable increase through regular worshippers who are not members.

We believe that if we are ready to give a lead to help our aged brethren, the wider appeal to our layfolk would win their response.

We therefore ask all our ministers and Fraternalists to consider these proposals and send their findings to our Secretary, Rev. James Marshall, M.A., 116 Halifax Old Road, Huddersfield, not later than October 1st, 1946.

Signed on behalf of the Huddersfield Fraternal,

FREDERICK WILKINSON
 JAMES MARSHALL
 LESLIE J. MOON
 ABRAHAM CUTTS

THE PROGRESS OF RELIGION IN THE SOUL

IN a recent re-reading of Dr. Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, I was greatly interested in the proportion of the book. While thirteen chapters are devoted to the rise of religion in the soul, Dr. Doddridge feels it incumbent on him to devote not less than seventeen to its progress. When in leisurely 18th century fashion he has caught the sinner in the gospel net, he does not straightway leave him to his own devices. He outlines the Christian character: gives a rule for his daily work and recreations, and instructs him how to pray and how to read the Bible. He advises him about the Communion service, warns him about temptations, steers him carefully through periods of dryness, gives him comfort and strength for times of storm, and brings him at last to a Christian death-bed with all the glories of the Heavenly Jerusalem opening before him.

I wonder how our modern Baptist Church emerges judged by such a characteristic product of Free Church piety? We are un-

doubtedly greatly concerned about the Rise of Religion in the soul for Believers' Baptism has kept alive in our church the true evangelical note. But are we equally concerned about the progress of religion in the soul? Are we as concerned about a man's growth in grace as we are to get him to Christ? Are not our young people, for instance, sometimes in danger of thinking that we are very anxious to get them to the point of church membership but that then we lose interest in them? The result is that the young people themselves gain the impression that when they have been baptised that is the end of the matter, instead of realising that this is only the beginning of the Christian life. Is it any wonder, then, that we are appalled at the devotional poverty of our churches? It is seen in the reluctance of deacons to lead in prayer. It is seen in the leaders of our organisations leaning too heavily on books of prayers when leading the worship of their fellow Christians. It is seen in the poverty of individual prayer life and in the ignorance of the Bible which we all deplore. It is seen in casualness towards public worship and the Lord's Supper. I would therefore plead that we take at least one leaf out of Dr. Doddridge's book and give our congregations definite practical instruction in prayer, the meditative reading of the Bible, attendance at public worship, and the value of the Communion service. These after all are the four great means appointed by God and approved by experience for stimulating the progress of religion in the soul.

1 *Prayer*

With regard to prayer, I am convinced that in our preaching and teaching we need to be increasingly practical. I think that we should discuss with our people—and not only our young people—such elementary questions as when should I pray? For how long should I pray? Where should I pray? What is the correct posture in prayer? We ought to describe the different kinds of prayer—Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition, Intercession and Listening. We should discuss the correct order of these elements in prayer and provide our people with a "framework" for their prayers. It will be helpful to provide them with a few simple forms of prayer to fall back on in periods of dryness. Especially we should teach our people the great value of the hymn book as a rich devotional treasury; again and again the quiet reading, reciting or singing of a hymn will stimulate devotion and give natural expression to the deepest thoughts of the heart. I think that it is a pity that so often our young people turn to Roman Catholic manuals for help which inevitably presuppose Roman Catholic worship.

We should direct them to those manuals which have as background our own Protestant worship. I should very much like to see some of the older books like Dr. Watts's excellent *Guide to Prayer* abridged and re-printed in attractive modern format. But we need not wait for these seeing that we have such excellent modern manuals as Denis Lant's *First Steps in Prayer* and G. S. Stewart's *The Lower Levels of Prayer*. If it is necessary to provide our people with books of prayers in line with our Protestant traditions, we can recommend John Bailie's *A Diary of Private Prayer* and Nathaniel Micklem's *Prayers and Praises*.

2. *Meditative reading of the Bible*

With regard to the reading of the Bible we are in slightly better case for our people are accustomed to use such helps as the I.B.R.A., the Scripture Union and the Bible Reading Fellowship provide, but we must teach them not merely to read the passage set but to meditate. I am not arguing for any elaborate method of meditation although I should like to see every theological student taught during his college course the two great methods; namely, the Ignation and the Sulpician, for there may be those in our congregations who would be helped by these more formal methods. What I do desire is that we should recapture the quiet meditative reading of the Bible which was so characteristic of our fathers and which made such strong Christians. It was a landmark for me when, as a schoolboy, I discovered in that great spiritual biography, "The Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne," a letter to a young convert in which he tells him how to turn the Bible into prayer. "You read your Bible regularly, of course: but do try to understand it and still more to feel it . . . Turn the Bible into prayer. Thus, if you were reading the first psalm, spread the Bible on the chair before you and kneel and pray 'O Lord, give me the blessedness of the man,' etc. 'Let me not stand in the counsel of the ungodly,' etc. This is the best way of knowing the meaning of the Bible and of learning to pray."

3. *Public Worship*

I wonder how many of our members (I will not say "ministers!") could give a rationale of worship? Could they explain why we begin with a great praise hymn and not with a confession of sins? Could they justify the Sanctus at the beginning of the service? (I think that they could) or excuse the Vesper at the end (I think they could not). Do they know why we should have two scripture readings? Why we sing hymns? What is the correct

order of the prayers? Why we sing an anthem? How many of our people have a true appreciation of worship as that activity in which we come together to acknowledge the "worship" of God. Too often their concern is solely with what they can *get* from a service; we have to teach them that they have something of worth to offer God—their adoration and thanksgiving, their prayers and their gifts, and above all themselves! Our congregations need to re-discover the sermon as an act of worship; to see it (in Fairbairn's searching phrase) as "the answer of God to the prayers of the people." It was Fairbairn, too, who gave us that simple yet profound definition of worship as two-fold (i) Man's Speech to God; and (ii) God's Speech to man. We must teach our people how to speak to God in prayer and praise and how to listen for God's voice in the reading of the scripture, in the preaching of the word, and in the silences of the service.

4. *Holy Communion.*

The importance of the Lord's Supper has been stressed in the Free Churches from the beginning. Long before the Oxford Movement called the Church of England to regular and frequent celebrations of Holy Communion the Free Churches kept regular communion seasons. You could take regular monthly communion in the Nonconformist Chapel when you couldn't always be sure of receiving it even at the great Festivals in the Parish Church. To-day we still expect the regular attendance of our members at the Communion Service and we acknowledge it as one of the greatest of the means of grace. But have we always given our members the needed help to make the most of this wonderful monthly opportunity? Have we explained as fully as we can the meaning of the service? Have we taught them how to prepare for it by self-examination? Have we guided them in the use of the silences in which our simple service abounds? Have we suggested to them the proper subjects for meditation at such a service and taught them how to conserve the benefits derived from the service by a simple resolution at its close? For the kind of instruction I mean let me refer you to a great little book which comes to us from the Churches of Christ. It is called *A Companion to the Communion Service* and is written by Principal W. Robinson of Overdale College, Birmingham. The devotional life of our church would be greatly enriched if every minister and deacon would read it.

Here then are a few suggestions as to how we may promote the progress of religion in the souls of men. We cannot be too

concerned about its rise: we must be increasingly evangelical. But our evangelism will fail unless it is backed up by a richer devotional life among our members. Dr. Doddridge was right; the rise and progress of religion must be held together in our thinking and planning. We must have a concern not only for the conversion of men but for their growth and progress in the devout life.

EDGAR W. WRIGHT

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

THE problem of eschatology, viewed in its restricted sense as the doctrine of the after life, tends to focus itself on the conception of the Second Coming of Christ. It is clear that the apostles' teaching about resurrection, judgment and the consummation of the kingdom of God was inextricably bound up with the hope of a speedy manifestation of Christ from heaven. Their belief that the kingdom had truly come through the ministry of Christ intensified, rather than nullified, their expectation. "We are a colony of heaven . . . we wait for a Saviour" illustrates the attitude of the primitive church. Can we share it?

An increasing body of scholars say "No." Among the many reasons adduced for their decision, two stand out as important. The first is the contention that Jesus never taught the doctrine; the second admits that He did, but asserts that He merely reflected the popular thought of His age, which in its turn sprang from the roots of primitive pagan mythology, and therefore has to be separated as chaff from the true wheat of His revelation. If either view were true we would feel compelled to reject the apostolic teaching on the last things and reconstruct our doctrine as best we could by means of our general doctrine of God. The matter therefore, requires careful consideration.

Did Jesus teach that He would return in glory? The Gospels say "Yes." Our critical friends say "No, the evangelists misunderstood Him." On what grounds is this assertion made? Not on purely critical grounds, though the attempt is made to justify it by such means. Always there is some compelling principle in mind which precludes the possibility that Jesus taught such a doctrine. Of the many examples of this fact, we may cite Weisse, the forerunner of Dodd. He held that the key to the explanation of the Messianic consciousness of Jesus was the term "Son of Man." This was not a Messianic title but a mysterious designation fitted to con-

vey the higher conception of His nature and origin. It is assumed that because Jesus "spiritualised" (=ennobled) the Messianic idea, we must "spiritualise" (=evaporate) all that He said concerning the Messiah. Hence the parousia is really a symbol for the persistent influence of Jesus after His death; the disciples thought this could not be all He meant by this teaching and so interpreted it by means of Jewish apocalyptic. This procedure is based entirely on Weisse's view of the term Son of Man and what it must have involved for Jesus, despite all that the Gospels say to the contrary.

Schenkel carried these ideas a stage further. Believing that Jesus claimed only to be the Messiah in a spiritual sense, he regarded the teaching of our Lord as one long attempt to root out of the disciples' minds their theocratic notions and to transform their traditional Messianic ideas. Hence he lays down the following proposition; "That Jesus predicted a personal, bodily, Second Coming, in the brightness of His heavenly splendour and surrounded by the heavenly hosts, to establish an earthly kingdom, is not only not proved, *it is absolutely impossible.*" One needs not to imagine what happens to the Gospel text when it is attacked from that viewpoint.

The creator of the Little Apocalypse theory, Colani, travelled the same road to reach his conclusions. The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, in which organic development takes the place of apocalyptic catastrophe. Since it is clear that Jesus did not follow the lines of Jewish eschatology, therefore the eschatology must be cut out of the text.

It is important to grasp this fact well, since the latest scholar to tackle this problem has followed in the steps of these expositors.* The weakness of the position, as Schweitzer has well illustrated, is that since excisions from the Gospel text proceed from highly subjective principles, Jesus is made to teach precisely what one wants Him to teach. It should make us pause when we realise that every stratum of Gospel tradition contains teaching, purporting to have come from Christ, asserting the Second Coming. As to Mark, note that the care of the Eschatological Discourse (13.26) is paralleled by the confession to the High Priest (14.62). The apocalypse of Q (Lk. 17, 22-37) contains several allusions to the parousia. Luke's special source has such a question as "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (18.8). Matthew's special source has the parables of the Tares, Virgins, Sheep and Goats. John records such statements as 14.3 and 21.22.

* T. F. Glasson, "The Second Advent," Epworth Press, 1945.

Such clear testimony in every stream of tradition seems to demand that it originates at the fountain head, our Lord Himself.

The question as to Christ's dependence on the apocalyptic thought of His day is a debated question. In fact, it narrows itself down to our Lord's use of the Similitudes of Enoch, since this alone among the pre-Christian pseudepigraphs contains the conception of a glorious appearing of the Messiah. We have to remember the following points in this connection: both the Similitudes and Jesus drew their conception of the Son of Man from Daniel, and incidentally used it differently; the conception of the appearing is not the same in the two cases; it is possible that the Similitudes are mid-first century A.D. and so dependent on the apostolic preaching. More important is the consideration that whereas all the apocalypses were historically conditioned (by national crises and the like), there were no such outward circumstances to account for the eschatology of Jesus; *none, that is, apart from His own presence as the Christ of God in the midst of the people of God.* He had come to bring about the redemption of man, a deliverance truly eschatological in that it was to redeem the whole man and the whole cosmos. Nothing but apocalyptic acts could achieve it. Here is the source of the eschatology of our Lord; His consciousness of God, of Himself as the God-man, and of His vocation as redeemer of man. This is why He knew that after His death for man He must rise from death, not because Iranian ideas had infiltrated into Judaism and imparted a hope of resurrection from Sheol, but because His redemption was nothing if it was not the conquest of death, and *He was to do it.* Similarly He taught His glorious return, not because certain eclectic Jews had speculated on the sort of Messiah who would come, but because the kingdom of God, released through His death and resurrection, must triumph, and *He must secure it.* It was His own unique mind, working on the basis of the Old Testament revelation, and thereby fashioning a new one, which gave birth to these conceptions.

From this it will be apparent that the Second Coming of Christ must be viewed in the context of the redeeming activity of Christ. Too often it has been regarded as a tailpiece to Christian theology to be accepted or rejected at will without affecting the whole. Such a notion is radically mistaken. It is integral to the conception of the Kingdom of God.

What is the kingdom? It is not enough to define it as the reign of God; rather is it the sphere wherein that reign is acknowledged. Because that is so, it is also the sphere of the manifestation

of the grace of God (hence the "powers of the kingdom"). Theologians tend to stress the work of Jesus in relation to either of these aspects instead of both. If Paul be a true interpreter of Jesus, it was necessary not only to prepare a people in whom the kingdom was to be realised, but to do a work in relation to God that the kingdom may be released. Through His death and resurrection this result was achieved; God and man were reconciled, manhood itself in Christ was redeemed, that all in union with Him should share in the triumph of His resurrection. The New Age had fully dawned.

Who are the members of this kingdom? It is probable that modern exegesis is right in identifying them with the Son of Man. Jesus almost certainly drew the term from Daniel where it = the "people of the saints of the Most High," i.e., the community of the victorious kingdom. A similar term is found in Deutero-Isaiah, the "Servant of the Lord." Probably the latter in turn is used to designate Israel as a whole, the "Israel within Israel" (remnant), and an individual who should most perfectly fulfil the role of the Servant. Our Lord's use of the phrase "Son of Man" is most easily explained if He fused together the Conceptions found in Daniel and Isaiah and used this designation to represent the combined idea. Sometimes the Son of Man appears to be an individual, but sometimes a community. The clearest instances when the Son of Man is an individual are in the predictions that He must die and rise again (Mk. 8.31, 9.31, 10.33); here Isaiah 53 is in the background. H. H. Rowley suggests that the clearest instances when the Son of Man is a community are the predictions of the coming of the Son of Man (c.f. Mt. 16.28 with Mk. 9.1); here Dan. 7 would be in mind. This suggests the reason for the Second Coming; the kingdom, founded in the redeeming activity of the Christ, is destined to a glorious consummation when that same Redeemer is manifested with His own. There can be no victory without the parousia for *the fate of the kingdom is bound up inseparably with the activity of the Christ*. It made its appearance in His ministry; its gates were flung wide at His death; its triumph began at His resurrection; its onward sweep in history commenced when He, the Risen Lord, bestowed the Spirit (Acts 21.33). The closing verses of the spurious ending of Mark reflect the belief that the progress of the kingdom is due to the work of the Lord as He directs and co-operates with His servants. It is little wonder that the climax of this process is also attributed to the same active Lord. The resurrection, the session, the return of Christ are one indivisible progress, separable

only as we examine the links instead of the chain. Thus we find the Lord telling his judge, "From now on you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." The statement includes the exaltation of Jesus consequent on His resurrection, and His coming at the head of His kingdom in glory. The two thoughts are linked and pre-suppose each other. The resurrection anticipates the return. It is unnecessary to do violence to the Gospel texts and assert that these events are identical (as Dodd), who thinks Jesus predicted a resurrection, not parousia, or Cadoux, who holds Jesus predicted a parousia, not a resurrection). The two are connected logically. They are both apocalyptic manifestations from one sphere of being to another, our own. They are both redemptive. They are both according to promise. The one is the corner stone of our faith. It should be no stumbling block to learn that the other will consummate it.

G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY

REMINISCENCES AND REFLECTIONS

I YIELD to Editorial importunity in writing this article, much as I shrink from it. Certainly I have long experience, for on retiring last year I had completed fifty-four years' continuous service in the pastorate. I began young: Spurgeon invited me to college when I was seventeen, and I settled in my first church at twenty—though my deacons begged me to keep my age a secret. Probably that was the reason—my pitiful youth and inexperience moving their compassion—that explains the first wonder that strikes me as I look back. It is:

The encouragement and assistance I received in my earliest days from giants of the pulpit.

I was Spurgeon's last student, in that I was the latest to leave college before he died. One of my treasures is his last letter to his students, written to me as secretary. Dr. Joseph Parker preached for me at Bloomsbury, though my deacons were sure it was useless to invite him. But he came immediately, saying "Why did you not ask me before?" majestically waved aside the suggestion of a fee, and considerably embarrassed me by pointing to me during the sermon with the remark, "He must increase; I must decrease." Ossian Davies, the brilliant founder of Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, was a veritable father-in-God to me at my start in Southampton. Once when I was preaching for him and staying at his manse,

I found a note on the mantel-piece: "My dear boy. Keep your best foot forward to-morrow. Two of Chown's deacons are here, looking for a minister for his church in Bradford. They have come to hear Minifie, but I have advised them to hear *you*. J. O. D." Of course they disregarded the advice, heard Minifie, and got him to Bradford. But Principal Roberts, of R.P.C., was present that day and sent my name to Bloomsbury, with the result that I presently went there. *Archibald Brown* was a friend of my youth, and would come to preach for me at Southampton without fee or reward. *Hugh Price Hughes* showed me kindness in my early London days, and welcomed me to his platform at St. James's Hall. He told me he often passed Bloomsbury as the morning congregation was streaming out and was struck by the large proportion of men, "greater than in Methodism." *Dr. Clifford* also helped me with his strong encouragement. And there were others, greatest among them all *F. B. Meyer*. He used to come to my Bloomsbury anniversaries, and never failed to point out the pew in which he had sat as a boy, and when at length I settled in his old church at Leicester, visited us regularly every year. Crowds would welcome him, moving him every time to whisper to me, "I can't think why I ever left here!"—to which I as regularly replied, "I am glad you did, or I could never have come!"

How much the elder brethren can help the younger! How raw we all are when we start! Now that I am an elder myself, I urge the youngsters to avail themselves of the wisdom and experience of the old hands: a fund of wealth, fully and freely at their disposal. Let them not hesitate to use it!

Next, I am overwhelmed with "wonder, love and praise" as I recall:

The loyalty, tireless co-operation and sacrificial service of multitudes of Church officers,

deacons, elders and committees. I record with humble gratitude that I have never had a cantankerous deacon, a stormy officers' meeting, or an unruly church meeting. I have heard of such phenomena, but they have never come within the field of my personal experience. Why not? It is preposterous to suppose that I am endowed with a superior measure of grace, nor is it that my experience has been limited: I have had literally hundreds of church officers and thousands of church members, and they have been of all types of temperament, culture and social standing. Why have I enjoyed the unspeakable blessing of unbroken peace? I cannot re-

sist the conclusion, as I hear sad tales of contrary experiences, that it is not the church which is always to blame. There are some ministers, alas! who would fain be "lords over God's heritage." I think of one, upon whom this verdict was pronounced by a deacon as we stood together in the empty church: "When he is in that pulpit, he ought never to come down." What a magnificent compliment! I thought; but it was immediately followed by this terrific condemnation, the worst I ever heard—"and when he is out of that pulpit, he ought never to go up." The deacon, I may say, was my personal friend, speaking in utter confidence; also he was loyal to his minister to the last, but at sore cost. I knew the minister and I understood the verdict and sympathised with it. More ministers, I am persuaded, fail from lack of humility than from lack of ability. The besetting sin of our profession is Moab's—arrogancy.

Not all will follow me when I say that our doctrine of the priesthood of all believers condemns everything that would set the minister in a class apart from his people—clerical dignity, clerical tones, yes, and clerical attire. To me the "dog collar" is anathema. "I can never understand why a minister needs a uniform to preach the Gospel," an intelligent layman said to me in my earliest days, and I have never forgotten the observation.

I remain an unrepentant Baptist of the Old School

I do not envy my Methodist or Presbyterian brothers their ecclesiastical machinery. I believe in the autonomy of the local church, irrespective of its size. I began my ministry in a church of a hundred and twenty members and ended it in one of more than ten times that number, yet I hold that East Street, Southampton, was as competent as Melbourne Hall, Leicester, to fulfil all the functions proper to a Christian church, that it was equally near the invisible sources of wisdom and power, and equally capable of drawing upon them. Jesus Christ was "in the midst" of both, and "where Christ is, there is the Church." The sum total of such churches is a denomination, not a church: the present tendency to speak of Baptist Churches collectively as "our Baptist Church" I find confusing. Nor am I enamoured of the conception "One town, one church." The local community of Christian believers is a church, and the whole company of such believers on earth and in heaven is a church, "the Church universal," and beyond these two conceptions I find no other.

Yet in insisting upon the freedom of the local church, I am no advocate of isolation. I believe that the strong should help the

weak—and that the weak can help the strong—by brotherly conference, united prayer, mutual advice, and financial assistance. This is the true purpose of our associations and unions, I would have them greatly strengthened—but not endowed with legislative authority. I abhor totalitarianism in the church no less than in the state.

Whether our distinctive doctrine of baptism is a sufficient ground for our separate existence has, I confess, become doubtful to me. My thirty years at Melbourne Hall has converted me to the ideal of the Evangelical Free Church. We maintain believer's baptism, but leave compliance to the individual conscience; it has no relation to church membership or the Lord's Table. And on that basis we have Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans, as well as Baptists, living in a happy fellowship of worship and service, on the sole foundation of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the ideal I cherish for the future: Evangelical Free Churches side by side with the Church of England; all-inclusiveness (*pace* the Archbishop) being impossible while the two barriers of State control and Episcopacy connoting apostolical succession remain.

I am an advocate of the long pastorate

My first lasted more than five years, my second more than six, my third exceeded twelve, and the one I have just relinquished nearly reached thirty. And the last was in every way the most fruitful. Influence is cumulative; the mere lapse of time adds immensely to the minister's prestige and power—assuming, of course, that he is happily settled. After my last service in Melbourne Hall, a lady told me, "You have ministered to four generations of my family." It was true, and hers was not the only instance. I have dedicated infants, baptised and received them into church fellowship later, married them, and then dedicated their babies in turn. I call most of the people by their Christian names—grave and reverend seniors as well as boys and girls—and they would not have it otherwise. One becomes the "guide, philosopher and friend" of his folk, as well as their religious instructor and leader—knows their innermost lives, and hears their most sacred secrets. It is a priceless asset.

Knowing its value, I counsel my younger brethren: Don't be in a hurry to move! Whatever you may gain, you will lose much. If you escape some difficulties you will assuredly meet others—and they may be worse! Take an old hand's advice, and face your pro-

blems with courage, prayer to your Master and faith in Him and His people. If you win through—as on that recipe you surely will—you will have a great reward, in increased respect, deeper attachment, and more faithful and trustful co-operation.

But, of course, the Master may move His men. The trouble is when we are too impatient to bide His time and try to move ourselves—or get the superintendents to move us. In the midst of writing this article I noticed these words on a Wayside Pulpit board: “God’s Hand rests on all gates, and He opens the right one at the right time.” I believe it; I have proved it. When I was due to leave college, the deacons of a suburban church approached me with a most tempting offer; they assured me of a call if I would consent to consider it. I willingly consented—and the call never came. But one from Southampton did. Two months later a soiled envelope reached me from the Dead Letter Office, containing the belated call. But I never regretted the contretemps, for I was now happily settled in Southampton. How I moved five years after to London I have already related. A couple of breakdowns there six years later was again the signal to move—so Meyer told me—and I was just then approached by Moffat Logan’s Church in Bristol, and presently settled there. “What made you think of inviting me?” I asked the deacon’s secretary. “Because,” he answered with a laugh, “when you preached for us (I had done so on a holiday Sunday) your text was Go near, and join thyself to this chariot—and some of us said ‘By the grace of God he shall’.” Curiously, the same sort of thing happened twelve years later at Melbourne Hall. “Why do you offer this pastorate to me?” I asked the deputation that came to interview me. “You asked for it!” was the staggering reply. “Yes,” the officer continued with a twinkle in his eye, “you preached to us some time ago from the text *Give me this mountain!*” I need hardly say that no such application was in my mind—though Melbourne Hall is certainly a mountainous structure and the scene of a mountainous work. I mention these humorous details in illustration of my contention, that the Master opens the gate at the right time—often “in a mysterious way.”

In conclusion

I am overwhelmed with gratitude to our Lord

“who hath enabled me . . . putting me into the ministry” and sustaining me therein by His all-sufficient grace for more than half a century. It has been a strenuous life but most happy. If I had

my time over again, I would still choose to be a Baptist minister—though I would fain be a far better one. I have now retired from the pastorate, but not from the ministry. I am still preaching, and hope to continue to do so.

“Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His name;
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,
‘Behold, behold the Lamb’!”

BENJAMIN J. GIBBON

BUILDING BRIDGEHEADS

AS Christian ministers we claim the whole of life, in every context, and in all its relationships, for Jesus Christ. We desire to see the will of God in operation in individual lives, and in every sphere in which life has to be lived. If that is our aim then we are involved in a twofold Christian offensive. First, the redemption of men and women. That can never be superseded; but also to redeem the civil order in which men and women live.

We are alive to the first of these objectives. On every hand there is evidence of renewed interest in Evangelism. It is no longer the few who have kept “the passion for souls” glowing within them. It is in the forefront of every Church’s deliberation as they face the problems of the post-war world. Can we say that we are just as alive to the second of our objectives; so to permeate every sphere of life with the Christian influence that much of that life will be dominated by the Spirit of Christ? Should there be doubt in anyone’s mind as to whether this second objective is a vital part of our purpose let him read again the second great commandment, “Love to one’s neighbour,” and take time to work out its implications. It means more than a mood of general benevolence. Dr. Anderson Scott sums it up thus—recognition; consideration; care. Recognising one’s neighbour is there, not passing by on the other side; taking time to consider his needs, particularly as they affect our conduct; having a genuine concern that means ultimately an identification of interests which includes equally the possibilities of joy and pain. It is clear, therefore, that a true love for others can only find adequate expression in an endeavour to achieve conditions in which life to the full can be attained. Full life is Christ’s purpose for every man, and in His own day His love led Him, on the one

hand, to denounce the heavy hand of Pharisaic pedantry, and on the other to wage war against the demon of ill-health. Both alike were barriers in the way to life at its best. We cannot but follow in His steps.

If we see our responsibility aright we shall recognise that we are committed to applying Christian principles to life in all its aspects; to marriage and home life, to education, to social and industrial life, to national and international affairs. Thus we are faced with a big problem which is the theme of this article. How best to bring the Christian message and its power to bear upon human affairs? How best can we build bridgeheads which will bring an increasing weight of Christian influence upon every aspect of life so that at last the whole will be leavened?

Let us remind ourselves at once that the first and finest bridgehead is already established. The Church must be our base of operations and we remember that our church members are in contact every day with those spheres of life we would win for Christ. But it is not enough that the bridgehead be already established: we must ensure we have the right equipment and the right deployment of our forces.

The finest equipment is a life transformed by the power of Christ; is daily sensitive to His leading, is always eager for His will, and recognises that it is part of Christ's purpose to make contact with others through a surrendered life. As Henry Drummond reminded his own generation "The finest contribution any man can make to his own community is to be a good man." To bring our people to that high level is part of our task in the Christian ministry. But we must go further. Quietism can all too easily go hand in hand with the deepest devotion. To equip our people to play an effective part in the bridgehead of their daily contacts we shall require to awaken concern for the ordering of civil life in accordance with the mind of Christ. After awakening, we may require to give them an insight into the relation between Christianity and everyday life. This may best be done as we deal in our preaching with the eternal themes of the Gospel; the purpose and love of God; the nature and destiny of man. All that we are seeking through the Social Service of our churches receives its sanction and its inspiration from the abiding facts of our faith. After awakening and education, comes action. Whatever we can do to encourage the members of our churches to form "cells" within

the spheres of their daily activities, cells for the discussion of their problems and the planning of action along Christian lines, will be of inestimable service. Occasions do arise, too, where a minister can, in these circumstances, be as the voice of God speaking in the locality; or where the need is for a church to lift up its voice in protest or even denunciation of some evil or injustice. It is part of our function to act as conscience for others who seem unaware of the peril of some course upon which they may be embarking within the life of the community or nation. Our protest or denunciation can, in these circumstances, be as the voice of God speaking in terms of judgment and righteousness, and there are many in whose hands have been placed power to govern, who need reminding of the reality and the purpose of God. It is not God's purpose that we should stand aloof from the making of history in our own day and we shall be doing good service if we can persuade men and women of proved Christian character and ability to take an active part in the public life of community or nation.

As working ministers whose first duty under God is to our own churches, what we can do through these churches may well prove the finest contribution we can make toward the building of bridgeheads. There are other ways.

We may have the gift and opportunity to undertake an industrial or a school chaplaincy. We may wonder at times if the worth of such an appointment is commensurate with the time and energy spent upon it. No opportunity of bringing the Christian message to bear on any sphere should be missed. We are labourers together with God and even although they may be but fleeting opportunities presented to us, they may give God His chance with someone who otherwise would not hear of His purpose.

And what of the spirit with which we tackle this important task of building bridgeheads? It must be a spirit of utter sincerity, having the right to speak because our own hands and the hands of our church are clean. It must be with a spirit of restrained optimism. Advocates of a Social Gospel in a by-gone day were foolishly over optimistic almost forgetting that at the centre of their faith was a Cross which ever speaks of the blindness, the stubbornness and the evil in the hearts of men. But we are labourers together with God and the kingdom we seek to establish will one day have supremacy over all other kingdoms. Finally, it must be with a

spirit of sacrifice we undertake the building of bridgeheads. They will not always be won easily; their establishment may prove costly. He who calls us to this work never promised it would be less than that, but promised that he who walks in the pathway of sacrifice will have Christ as his Friend and Guide.

W. W. WILSON.

A THEOLOGICAL HOBBY

HOBBIES are favourite occupations that recreate the spirit. B.M.F. men will have theological hobbies, some great study that has so enriched the soul that life can never be the same again; themes that provide such a background of God's dealings with men that the trivial is for ever swallowed up in the sublime and the heart delivered from vain enchantments that allure only to disappoint. Thucydides, Augustine, Pascal have proved such; they stand out like remembered hikes on hill and dale, moor and sea, the memory of which gives a sunny setting to prosaic scenes. It is of Augustine I would speak.

Have you ever allowed the picture in Revelation 18 to grip your mind? Great Babylon is fallen: the world, built on sand, is crumbling beneath the feet. Men are stunned as they contemplate the loss of its merchandise. They who had "waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies" are now reduced to penury, for no man will buy their merchandise any more. And who that has been nurtured beside the sea can escape the thrilling sadness in the picture of the mariners, "the shipmaster and as many as trade by sea," viewing their loss from afar? And the losses are no mere ornaments of life: they are human matters. Domestic joys are menaced, "the light of a candle shall shine no more in thee." The bells of marriage are no longer heard, "the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride" is stilled. This is a digest of Augustine's world and it is our world too. The closing word of that chapter, "in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints" is a reminder that it is because God has His witnessing sufferers, doing their job of work, as vision and grace are given them, that God's greater Babylon, the Jerusalem which is from above, is inhabited by believing souls.

Augustine was born for his hour. His confessions had been written ten years when, as a result of the Sack of Rome, in 410, he began his greatest work, "The City of God," as a reply to Pagans who attributed the catastrophe to the anger of the old gods against

Christianity. Augustine accepted the challenge with patient courage, and so well did he do his work that we can follow C. C. Martindale and say that "he, single-handed, shifted the intellectual centre of gravity of our world from East to West" and has prevented men ever since from thinking they can have joys in this world without roots in another. Or we may say with another, "he, more than any emperor or war-lord, a maker of history and the builder of the bridge which was to lead from the old world to the new."

Some quotations will be the best guide to an estimate. "I tasted thee and still I hunger and thirst for more. Thou didst but touch me and I do burn with a desire to enjoy Thee." When he is speaking of those in whom the charity of Christ is not perfected he says, "by their worrying they disturb the others, just as a restive horse in a team, not only does not draw, but breaks with his hoofs that to which he is harnessed." After quoting "we are saved by hope," he adds, "when we suffer any tribulation, but yet keep on our way, and are supported by the word, the wind may be rough, but it is favourable" and he bids the godly who will suffer persecution be sure to prepare himself for the pressings and not to be dry "lest from the pressings nothing come forth." What experience is in the words: "he who is not deceived by the prosperity of this world is not broken by its adversity." Augustine has weighed Paul's words, "all things are yours, for ye are Christ's" since he says, "the rational soul can make a good use of material felicity, if it does not give itself over to the creature, to the neglect of the Creator, but rather applies this felicity to the service of the Creator, of whose abounding liberality it has been bestowed." Likewise has he drunk deep from all scripture and knows "we are not Christians, except on account of a future life," but he sees the future in a religious perspective: "the coming of the Lord is not loved by him who declares that it is at hand or that it is far off, but rather by him who, whether it be far off or near, looks for it with sincere faith, firm hope and ardent charity." Such passages abound and help us to appreciate the testimony of one who said grandly of our author, "he knew his heart to be his worst possession and the living God to be his highest good."

Augustine was thirteen years in writing his massive work "The City of God:" he was deep in the classics and was particularly influenced by Plato. As Luke thought of Theophilus, so Augustine had Volusianus, a philosophical pagan engaged in the study of Christian evidences, in mind, and endeavoured to present a

working philosophy of history with a view to meeting a practical need. Augustine sets out to answer pagan murmurings and to present Christ as the satisfaction of the mind's best thought. The book is a sustained plea for the Paramountcy of Christ and may be said to unfold Paul's conviction that in our Lord "all things consist," that is, hang together. "Peace," he will say, is the Diapason of the universe, the symphony of all the chords: whether in the heart or in the State, "peace" is connected with an order that proceeds from God and pervades creation.

Again, some quotations will show the drift and the glow of this work. "There is one commonwealth of all Christian men:" "That Heavenly City which has Truth for its King, Love for its Law and Eternity for its measure:" "set justice aside and what are kingdoms but fair thievish purchases:" "He that is good is free, though he be a slave, and he that is evil, a slave, though he be king." Boldly does Augustine advance to meet the Greek doctrine of circuitry. When Plato says that he and his scholars would meet again, all in the same place and doing the same thing, Augustine has his comment: "the following fit them best: the wicked walk in a circuit, not because their life is to run circularly, but because their false doctrine runs round in a circular maze:" "let us follow Christ, our right way and leave this circular maze of the impious, for if the soul be freed, it being never freed before, there is an act new begun, namely, the soul's possession of eternal bliss." Barker has a reference to the chapter in which Augustine discusses the classical cardinal virtues and where "Fortitude" is mentioned and at its peak suicide, glorified as the last and greatest fling of the brave heart. How could a theory which ends in that be a theory of the supreme good? This, says Barker, is a shrewd criticism of the moral theory of the ancient world: the gaunt figure of suicide standing on its summit is the index of its inherent inconsistency.

As no one should start on Augustine by reading "The City of God" first, a hint on books will be of value. Barker's Introduction is in Dent's edition of "The City of God," an excellent guide: the introduction itself makes the book priceless. Other books are: "A Monument to Augustine," and "An Augustine Synthesis," both published by Sheed and Ward; "Amor Dei" by John Burnaby; "St. Augustine's Episcopate," Sparrow Simpson; the article in the E.R.E. and that great book, "Christianity and Classical Culture," by C. N. Cochrane. Such books will enable any average minister to cut some figure as an umpire over the two or more Augustines

about whom men have quarrelled from the days of Pelagius to the present-day writer who says: "it is indeed difficult to understand Augustine's theology if we approach it from the standpoint of the Reformation. But if we ignore modern developments and study Augustine's doctrine of grace and the church from a purely Augustinian standpoint, its unity and consistency are manifest," C. Dawson. Evangelical faith will have something to say on this. Will you say that had Augustine lived longer he would have found that his doctrine of grace was too big for the ecclesiastical jacket in which it was straightened? In any case you will be driven to consider your doctrine of the church and to determine whether you have one in line with the liberating gospel you enjoy, for grace and order are two parts of one whole. What excellent things hobbies are! Happy is he who finds the hammer that will ring his bell.

A. J. WESTLAKE

SCOTTISH NOTES

After a lapse of several years, what had come to be regarded as an annual event in our Scottish Union, the Retreat for ministers, was resumed this year. From 19th to 22nd March over 60 men met at Kirn, on lovely Clydeside. They came "frae a' the airts," from Burra Isle to the Borders.

It was a happy coincidence that we met in the house that at one time accommodated the Dunoon Baptist College. Happily, we were not troubled by theological spectres from the past! "Dhalling Mhor" is now an excellent Methodist Guest House.

The general subject was "The Church in the Post-War Age," and the sessions were presided over by Dr. W. Holms Coats, to whom and Rev. J. D. Jamieson, the Retreat owed much of its success. The chairman's introductory talk reminded us of the need for a deepening sense of unity within the church, and called for ruthless self-examination. Repentance, said Dr. Coats, must be the way to recovery. We thought of our endless resources in Christ, and that, while statistics might indicate that the church was slumping badly, there were gleams of light in the present darkness.

"The Changeless Gospel in a Changing Age" was dealt with admirably by Revs. Charles Hardiman and Alexander Clark. The former gave an able account of the changing world of to-day, and

recalled the fact that in the past God had raised up His prophets to minister in times of critical change. In emphasising what must be our great theme as preachers, he warned us against being

“Nice in minutia, careless of immensity,
 Connoisseur in instant and stranger in eternity,
 Accurate in hairsbreadth, incurious of infinity,
 Initiate of Wells and witless of the Trinity.”

Revs. John McKendrick and James McLeman handled the sub-division of the subject “The Church—The Body of Christ;” a theme which gave rise to considerable discussion. Mr. McKendrick dealt with the Pauline conception of the church as the body of Christ, the points emphasised being that the church is the creation of the Spirit, is, ideally at least, a unity, and should be Christ-controlled. Mr. McLeman spoke of the church as the means of establishing relationships between Christ and the world, reminding us that, though it is imperfect, it has been entrusted with the word of God, the changeless gospel. His appeal to make preaching real and vital was felt to be timely.

Two of our chaplains, Revs. Hugh Mitchell and Douglas Robb, spoke on the subject of “Christianity and the Service Men and Women.” They told us out of their own experience something of the reactions of service personnel to Christianity and the Church, and made suggestions as to how the church might attract those who were returning to “Civvie Street.” The services have tended to change all those who have been in them, and that many were critical of all religion. We were called on to “humanise the divinity of the Church.” The church must provide for the effectual worship of God, must offer true fellowship, and give the opportunity for the expression of the will to serve others.

The wider aspect of the subject—“The World Outlook”—was treated by two missionaries, Profs. J. C. Scott and R. A. Barclay. The former gave us a background talk on China’s culture and religion. Prof. Barclay spoke of India to-day and to-morrow, telling of what was being done to educate Indians and to prepare evangelists who would carry the Christian message to the many villages of that great and vexed land.

In course of the conference a statement was made by Rev. Alexander Clark regarding the 30,000 Guineas Fund, which Scottish Baptists are endeavouring to raise over a three year period in order to increase the minimum salaries paid in our denomination.

Over £18,000 has so far been raised, and Mr. Clark, the chief commissioner for the fund, called for a special effort during the coming months so that the final target might be reached by the end of January, 1947. He paid a high tribute to the ministers of the Scottish churches, who had shown a magnificent example of generous giving.

A wonderful sense of cameraderie pervaded the Retreat. Whatever our shades of theological thought, we all felt one in our essential loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ, and in our obligation as commissioned leaders of His church to present the timeless truth of the gospel to an age characterised by change and unrest. So greatly did those present value the Retreat that a proposal to hold the conference biennially, for financial reasons, instead of annually, was unanimously turned down. As we sailed from Kirn on the Friday morning we felt that the shade of Oliver Twist was hovering near. So many of us were wanting more!

J. M. TOSH