

The Fraternal

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INTRODUCTORY

TO THE MEN IN THE FRONT LINE

THE Editors say I am to write for this number of the *Fraternal* an opening word of greeting and good cheer for my brother-ministers not only in Britain but in the Dominions of the British Commonwealth which the magazine now reaches. Life would be pleasanter if all the tasks that fall to me were as welcome and congenial.

Not only for myself personally, but for the Baptist Union which I may claim to represent, I send to all our Baptist ministers an expression of our earnest and prayerful wishes for a glad and prosperous New Year, bright with the sense of God's presence and blessing. In the brotherhood of our common service, however widely we may be separated, let us remember and help one another so that the work of Christ committed to us may be well and worthily done.

To us all the Master has given chances and duties. For no two of us are these exactly alike. We must learn to understand and sympathise and be slow to judge the other man whose problem is never quite the same as our own. But the variety of our work and experience means that all of us have something to bring, if we will, to the rich common stock which is our inheritance from generations of faithful ministers of the Church of God. St. Paul has reminded us of the differences in sphere and functions. None of us is able to say to another, "I have no need of thee." We are members one of another.

This issue deals with the work of the minister in the local church. It is for those who man the front line, those who for both defence and attack really matter most of all. Denominational leaders and officials are as necessary as staff officers and headquarters and operational bases are to the effectiveness of a modern army. For big battles we must have them. Even in small-scale operations unity means strength. The guerrillas and "chindits" work as bands. Perhaps they correspond in an army to the "independents" in the Church, giving the utmost freedom and initiative

to the individual. But freedom and independence are not the same thing as isolation or anarchy, and we are learning that organisation well conceived may give on balance more freedom than it takes away.

While we rightly are on guard against the perils of over-organisation and officialdom, it is hard to see how we could do without them, and most of our ministers have cause to be grateful for them. Yet it is true that battles are not won at headquarters or by staff officers. They can only be won where the enemy is. The local churches and their ministers are our nearest points to the foe. They are the front line. According as they move forward or retreat we win or fail. If they go down we are beaten.

In memorable words Wesley declared "The world is my parish." That showed how he conceived the ministry. In extent it reached from pole to pole. In essence it grappled at close range with man's sin and need, for that is what a parish ministry means. Men cannot be saved at a distance. The Church's task of evangelising can only be done where the churches are. Headquarters can help; special messengers from outside can stimulate; even itinerant evangelists can sometimes do good by emphasising the forgotten side of the work of many a church, though the sad tale of spiritual casualties they so often leave in their wake is a reminder that, if the local minister and the local church do not take their duty of evangelism seriously, no amount of exciting "revivalism" (often a sign of panic, fear and faithlessness) will get us far.

To some of us the glorious task of ploughing, sowing and tending our own fields is denied. The other work of planning and supporting has to be done. We can only throw out a handful of seed here and there as we go about and trust that others may reap a harvest, and we thank God for so much. But, apart from this small indirect share in the real work, we believe that we can do something to bring help and encouragement to the men who have to hold on in hard places or push forward against great odds. To the men in the front line may I say that, while upon them falls the brunt of the battle as they try to make ground in their local churches and neighbourhoods, we at denominational headquarters cherish our privilege, which is to make them feel they are not fighting alone, but that forces behind them are mobilised and active for their support.

More and more we must try to make every local church, however small and remote, and every minister conscious that the sympathy, prayers and resources of the denomination are behind them in their fight for the souls of men. We must bear one another's burdens in the love of Christ. Something has been done; more to be done remains.

Baptist ministers are coming to think of themselves as ministers of the denomination or of the universal Church rather than of the

local churches. We ought not to forget that we are both. On the one hand we are conscious of the dignity of our calling and office as "ministers of Christ's word and sacraments," the King's ambassadors bearing to men in His name the promise of life, ministers of the Church of the living God, the most august institution in history (let men think and speak of it as they may), mediators by and of His grace. We lift up our heads proudly and speak in God's name. But we are also ministers in definite spheres. Sometimes we feel irked and fettered. We long for the wide, open spaces and the wind on the heath. But God has set us where we are to compel men by our lives to think of us, not as pieces of "traditional Church furniture . . . fashioned after some lost-in-the-mists-of-antiquity model" (to snatch a phrase from an American writer) but as God thinks of us, as vital personalities making Him and His love real to the men around us.

Perhaps preaching is, for the moment, out of fashion. It seems so in England. Churches inform me they want good pastors and youth leaders in their ministers more than fine preachers, and I hear of a growing number of people who come to Church to meet and worship God rather than to listen to a sermon. Possibly at this stage we should not regret but welcome the implied criticism. Great preaching will never be out of date, but the pastoral heart is worth more than the ready tongue. You will not misunderstand me if I say that all history shows that men need both the prophet and the priest. We have a great High Priest Who shows us the way.

It would be pleasant to be able to promise a revival soon, but it is not yet in sight. One day it will come—in an hour when we think not the Son of Man comes. That has always been true and the next day of light may be nearer than we think. "Watch therefore," as men who wait for the morning. With the dawn will come new victory.

M. E. AUBREY.

JUST A REMINDER!

All Subscriptions are due January 1st. Please pay to your Fraternal B.M.F. correspondent. If you do not attend a Fraternal send direct to the Treasurer.

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Articles arranged by L. G. CHAMPION

THE MINISTRY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

THE articles which appear in the following pages deal with the life and work of the minister of a Baptist Church. That is a very familiar theme. Why, then, is this issue of *The Fraternal* devoted to it? Let it be stated most emphatically that the intention is not to give an account of what the ideal minister ought to do. The purpose rather is to invite all our ministers to consider afresh the scope and significance of our work. All the articles are about the work of the ministry and together they face us with the question: is the work of being a Baptist minister a really worthwhile job in the modern world? Is it a job to which a man can give everything that is in him and for which we can claim the best gifts of the most gifted personalities? Does it give ample opportunity for the exercise of all a man's powers? Is it a really significant job? It is with such questions in mind that the articles must be read, for they indicate some of the opportunities which our work offers to us all, irrespective of the size of church membership or the locality in which we serve. Can we realise afresh and with deeper gratitude to God the opportunities given to the minister to use all his gifts, to enrich his mind and spirit, to enter into significant relationships with other people, to help them in critical hours of life, to create a living community, to influence a district, to strengthen good causes, and in these and many other ways to serve Christ?

Much is heard in these days about the need for new methods and techniques in Christian work. Where this springs from a lively evangelistic concern it is good. There is a glorious freedom in the work of Jesus. He was never stereotyped. His Church must keep that freedom. We must be ready to experiment, to find new forms of service and ministry by which personal contacts can be made and the Christian message communicated. In stressing the work of the local church we do not forget the value of all forms of Christian experiment; we remember that Christians must always strive to be responsive to the leading of the Spirit, Who is not confined to our thoughts and our ways. Yet on the other hand our eagerness to experiment must not make us forget that the building up of the local Christian community is the basis of all enduring Christian work.

Christian community is inherent in the Christian faith. The gathered community of Christian believers is not a side-line of

Christian witness; nor is it a phenomenon of any one age or race. It belongs to the whole structure of Christianity. It is an essential part of our Christian witness. The community of the local church with the pastor at its centre is indeed a unique contribution of Christianity. There is no parallel to this in any other religion. The figure of the pastor is essentially a Christian figure. The work of the pastor is essentially a Christian work. When Jesus chose twelve to be with Him, patiently taught them His message, cared for them with sacrificial friendship and spoke to them of the Good Shepherd Who gives His life for the sheep, the reality of Christian community was created. Such community is at the heart of the Gospel. The extension of Christ's work through the churches established in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Galatia, in Ephesus, in Rome and in a multitude of towns and villages in the Roman Empire was no accident. This was the pattern which expressed the mind of Christ. The appearance of the community was as necessary to Christian witness as the presence of the Christian disciple.

The building up of the local church is not a matter of the most efficient mode of organisation. Paul was not really concerned about organisation although his letters reflect so frequently the problems of the churches to which he wrote. He was concerned about preaching Christ and Him crucified, but that concern involved also his care of all the churches. For the reality of the new life in Christ was proved as it met the test of personal relationships. The new life was meaningless if it left untouched the old society and the old relationships. Jesus had said to His disciples "Love one another" as well as "Follow Me." The Gospel is communal as well as individual. It offers a pattern for the life of society as well as for personal living. The creating of the new community is as much a work of Christ as the changing of individual lives. Therefore the life and witness of the local church is an essential part of the Christian faith. Members of the church may develop different methods for the propagation of the message, but just as the purpose of them all where they are truly Christian will be that of bringing the individual to a personal trust in God the Father through Jesus Christ and obedience to His way, so the result of achieving that purpose, again if it is truly Christian, must be the association of such individuals in a community of Christian worship, love and service.

The point I have made is the familiar one that the gathered community of believers is an essential part of Christian witness. We are committed to it by Jesus. But this implies the significance and value of the pastoral work; and this is an emphasis which needs to be made. Have we lost our sense of the outstanding value of the local Christian community, and consequently of the supreme importance of the work of the ministry? Are we drifting towards the position in which other forms of Christian service will appear

more attractive, more worthwhile, more practical than the work of the minister of the local church? Is the fact that many of our churches are half empty and that other forms of Christian service appear to be more popular constituting a temptation? Are the economic factors taking too large a place? Have we ministers to renew our vision of our work, to see more fully its scope and significance, to feel more urgently the call to all our powers of body, mind and spirit, to be aware more sensitively of the vital nature of personal relationships and of their far-reaching importance, to be more obedient to the mind of Christ, and more ready to accept fully His pattern for His church?

May I give a personal word here? During my fourteen years in the ministry I have faced the question, what is my vocation? Opportunities of doing Christian work other than that of the work of the ministry have presented themselves. Sometimes when the work has been difficult, or too much consideration has been given to financial matters, or the spiritual life has grown barren, the temptation to seek other forms of service has been felt. In these matters each man must pray, think and judge for himself. But to me there has come a deepening conviction of the value of the work of the ministry and of the local church, a growing vision of the opportunities which that work presents. Just because the work of the ministry is so intensely personal it is so significant. Our work has amazing variety and opportunities of astonishing richness. But its chief value is that it is so personal. It touches human lives. It can make all the difference to people; and people matter; they matter supremely. To be the means of bringing to some a joyous trust in God, of guiding young people into the way of Christ, of helping others through dark hours into the light of God's purpose, of inspiring in lives and homes and groups the loving spirit of Christ—what work is so significant or satisfying as this? What work is meeting so fully the fundamental problems of the world in which we live? Let me quote a few lines from R. C. Walton's excellent book, "The Gathered Community." "The importance of the common man and the sacredness of personality; the value to society of men and women who have made the response of personal faith to God's redeeming work in Christ; the potency for good which resides in small, free, diverse and responsible communities, the tradition of public service—all these are contributions of the highest moment to the reconstruction of the life of the world. But the denomination cannot offer them to secular society, or to the treasury of the whole Church, until it has recaptured them for itself and found them to live again in its own experience." In these words is reflected much of the work of the minister, and it is said to be a contribution of the highest moment to the reconstruction of the life of the world.

My plea is that we shall read these articles which reflect the judgments and experience of the individual writers, and by this

means consider again our work as ministers, our work of preaching, visiting, organising, serving, studying; all of it so familiar to us. Here is no picture of the ideal church or the ideal minister. Here are just some of the opportunities into which every minister can enter. Here are some of the doors open to us, some of the treasures which can be ours. God has called us to a great work; a work which is worthy of all our powers and a lifetime's devotion.

L. G. CHAMPION.

THE PULPIT MINISTRY OF THE PASTOR

THE public preaching of the Word is not by any means the whole of the pastor's ministry, but we shall certainly not err if we say that it is a most important part. Other parts of his ministry will be strong if his preaching is strong. Comfort to the sorrowing, counsel for the baffled and tempted, fellowship in social intercourse and in prayer will all be more weighty when they are offered by a man mighty in the Scriptures and sincere and powerful in bringing home their message to the conscience and the heart. And on the other hand if the pulpit ministry is uncertain in its message, hesitant in its tone, and feeble in its moral stresses, other parts of the pastor's ministry will be the weaker in consequence.

The pulpit ministry of the pastor is important for many reasons, the chief of which is, perhaps, the fact that by means of it *the religious ideas and ideals of the congregation* are mainly formed. This point cannot be too heavily stressed. My conviction, formed from over fifty years as an observer, is that a sustained ministry produces in a congregation a common mind on religious doctrines and common moral attitudes. Theological agreement and spiritual unity are created and sustained more by the pulpit ministry of a strong man than by any other agency. Provided that the pastor is not blown about by every wind of doctrine, boxing the whole compass in a short time, and so minimising the confidence of the people, he will find his teaching moulding the views of the congregation and grounding them in the faith of the Gospel. As he is so will they be. "Like priest, like people" is still the normal thing.

It behoves every pastor to weigh well the importance of the fact that his people are going to form their ideas of God and man, of sin and forgiveness, of church and Bible, of ordinances and ministry, of morals and holiness more from what he says than from any other source. This should be reason enough to give him caution against doing his speculating and guessing in his pulpit, with the probability that he will guess and speculate differently before a year has passed over his head. He should have more regard for his bewildered people and for his own intellectual rectitude than to indulge in such hurtful folly.

The pastor's *attitude to the Bible*, and the way he uses it for doctrine and devotion, will have a measurable effect upon his people. Happily, some of the storms which have beaten upon our Book have died down. There is now a great opportunity to be positive and constructive in regard to it. Nothing is more to be desired to-day than the recovery of the personal and domestic recognition and use of the Bible. Prominent in the home, well used and pondered in the quiet hour as the main channel through which truth and grace can come, the Bible needs to be restored to the high place of authority it once held.

Let the pastor's use of the Bible as his source for doctrine and guide in devotion ever suggest to his people the importance of reading and meditating in the Scriptures. Let the pastor's ministry bring out of that Divine treasury things new and old. His people will come to be a Bible-loving people, with all the evangelising zeal and passion for holiness that are found in those who delight in God's word. Let the pastor look again at the sermons of Robertson, of Brighton. Why are they strong and living to-day though nigh upon a hundred years old? They are deep studies of Bible themes, pondered by a powerful intellect, warmed into life by a profound moral nature, and brought to bear upon the life of the preacher's day. Robertson's hearers would be likely to go home and reach down their Bibles to study for themselves the oracles of God. Let Baptists be still, as they have ever been, a people of the Book, and let their pastors encourage them by example and precept.

The pastor's pulpit ministry will tend to form *the conception of God* held by his congregation. This stands in close connection with the place given to the Bible. For the Christian view of God is the Hebrew, not the Greek, conception. It is derived from the Scriptures, not from philosophy. It is intensely personal, not metaphysical. The Fatherhood of God is a noble doctrine, but it has not always been stated in a way that harmonises with the Scriptures. The onliness and righteousness of God, which the Old Testament prophets dwelt upon, is the foundation of the New Testament doctrine which rises upon it. "Holy Father," "Righteous Father," these are terms, used by our Lord, which need to be inculcated in the present day.

For many it is true to-day that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." Hence the weakening of moral convictions, the blurring of the line between right and wrong, the darkening of judgment concerning good and evil. The pulpit needs to be morally energised. It must show the people their transgressions and sins in the light of the Divine Law and the character of the Lawgiver and Judge. For without the Law there is no conviction of sin, and without conviction of sin there is no repentance, and without repentance there is no forgiveness, and without forgiveness there is no release and renewal.

The pastor's pulpit ministry is the main line of approach to the vital question of *the conversion of souls*, and the encouragement of the converted in seeking others. Not that the pulpit is the sole agency in this field, for there are classes and other organisations in the church which should be used to this end. But it remains true that without a clear witness and an urgent appeal from the pulpit no lead will be given, and no training afforded, in soul-winning. There never was, and there never will be, a soul-winning church without a soul-winning leader.

The pastor must be in the way of declaring, often and clearly, urgently and affectionately, the way of salvation through faith in Christ. He must not wrap it up in a cloud of words. He must be as plain and clear about it as Peter, Paul or John. In the ordinary way he is not talking to metaphysicians. The bulk of his hearers are just plain people to whom the Bible is God's message to man. Sermonic literature of current publication suggests that there is a famine of preaching on the great Gospel texts which formed the staple of the pulpit years ago.

Too many pastors seem to think they must show their originality by dispensing with texts altogether. It would be good if pastors would compel themselves to preach upon the great texts which hold the Gospel in concentration. If they must aim at originality let it be the originality of "beseeching men to be reconciled to God." In some pulpits this would be originality indeed! Only a pulpit tuned to this note will make an evangelistic church, and a Baptist church which is not evangelistic will not be a church at all for very long, except as it may perpetuate itself by the unworthy method of sheep-stealing.

For his pulpit ministry the pastor must be always in a *state of preparedness*. The bane of any pulpit ministry is the idea that it can be conducted in spasms. That is to say, that it can be picked up for an hour or two and then dropped till necessity compels further attention to it because another Sunday is at hand. This is like a poor housekeeper with never a thing in the larder, and every prospective meal sends her scuttling to the corner shop.

The pastor must be not merely a dedicated soul in point of character but a dedicated mind which never seeks relief from its proper subject. If this devotion to Divine studies be thought difficult of accomplishment, it can be made easier by putting the Bible in its proper place. Bunyan says, "I was never out of the Bible," and every true pastor should be able to say the same. The pastor must be like the man of the first psalm: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night." This is the man whose "leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

John Wesley, himself an example of what is meant above, was quick to discern in his preachers and helpers any mental slackness, and wrote to one, "Your talent does not increase. It is just the

same as it was seven years ago. It is lively but not deep . . . Reading alone can supply this, with daily meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this. You can never be a deeper preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian."

May God give to all of us who preach that love of Himself and of His truth which will make us both deeper preachers and more thorough Christians.

GILBERT LAWS.

THE MINISTER AS PASTOR

PASTORAL work is only one of the many aspects of our ministry, but it is certainly one of the most important. In dealing with the many claims, and sometimes they are conflicting claims, upon our time and strength, this is something which is entitled to rank as a very high priority. Perhaps such a statement would not meet with universal approval. There are apparently those who view pastoral activity as a field in which only second-rate or third-rate men can afford to dissipate their energies. If one be deficient in scholarship, if he lack pulpit or platform gifts, if he be denied a place in the counsels of the denomination, and if he can find few opportunities for social leadership—then he may not unwisely and not altogether unprofitably exercise the function of a pastor! That may be an over-statement. Perhaps it is. None the less, there would seem to be some such feeling lurking at the back of many minds. It is the purpose of this article to vindicate the claims of the pastoral office upon the time and strength of all our ministers to whom there has been committed the care of a local Church and Congregation.

Pastoral work, performed largely by systematic visitation of our people (and of those who are not our people but are known to be in need of our help, or who seem at all likely to respond to a friendly approach), is one of the most rewarding and worthwhile aspects of our ministry. Such *apparently* prosaic activity brings us into intimate contact with the life of our people *on their level*. We have come down from the comparative elevation of the pulpit. We are no longer on a pedestal. Here we are permitted to enter into the experience of the prophet who declared, "I sat where they sat." Pastoral work brings us into touch with the interests and the problems of our people, and is incidentally of more practical assistance in sermon preparation than the reading of many commentaries. Of course, it is a case of "this ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." In the words of Halford Luccock, "In such an imaginative sharing of the experience of people, the sin that doth so easily beset a preacher—the ambition to preach an impressive sermon—drops out, and speaking becomes more like taking a towel and girding oneself and stooping down to needed human service."

Of course, it is assumed that visitation is undertaken with a purpose. This is no mere polite social call. While avoiding any suggestion of an official approach, we must ever be on the alert to discover the special need or the hidden problem in the lives of those whose homes it is our privilege to enter. All sorts of opportunities present themselves if we are unobtrusively eager to be of service, ready to offer our friendship and concerned to be about our Master's business.

In this connection if it be permissible to refer to one's own experience, then let it go on record that in humble homes assistance has been offered (and gladly accepted!) with sums or Latin translation. Boys and girls have been invited to Sunday School or Brownies or Cubs or Scouts or Guides, and the minister has promised to call for them and take them along to introduce the new recruits to the teacher or the leader. Many a housewife has been told that the way to get to know the women-folk of the congregation is to come as regularly as possible to the Women's Meeting. Advice or guidance has been sought on matters of doctrine or of conduct. Adolescents have been invited to attend a preparation class. Older folks have been asked why they were not church members; and when there has been apparent difficulty in answering the question, the minister has explained the meaning of Christian discipleship and has set forth the joy of fellowship in the Christian Church. Sometimes there has been an eager response, and in due course there have been those "added to the Church." In other homes prayer has been offered for the recovery of the sick, or the dying have been fortified for the last great venture of faith. Young people have asked advice (and occasionally even assistance) in connection with their courting problems. Older folk have enlisted help to straighten out their matrimonial tangles. On occasion the minister has been the recipient of heartbroken confessions of moral failure, and the interview has ended with the penitent and his pastor together on their knees imploring the forgiveness of God, and seeking His strength for the future in the battle against temptation. And over and over again there has been just the making of friendly calls on friendly folk, with the minister happy in the assurance that his presence was welcomed in the home; and, year in, year out, there has been the drinking of countless gallons of tea out of cups of all qualities of china or more common clay.

Most of it has not been wasted time. Yet there is something even more significant in it all than that. Pastoral activity is in a sense the opposite of preaching activity, and its necessary—its very necessary—complement. When preaching we have usually in mind the whole congregation. It may be a large congregation. Probably most of us would say the larger the better. We are encouraged when the congregation is large, and we are apt to be disappointed when it is small. Obviously we are here dealing with the corporate aspect of church life. Public worship is the coming

together of the whole Church—at least, that is its ideal aspect—in order to wait upon God, and in order to receive His Word from the lips of His servant. Of course, we would not dream of denying or even of minimising the place of the individual in such a religious and spiritual exercise. None the less, the emphasis is here upon the corporate life rather than upon the individual. There are even times when the individual worshipper may be overcome by a feeling of isolation and loneliness amid a large company of worshipping people. In a word, preaching and public worship emphasise the corporate aspect of church life. On the other hand, the pastoral ministry recognises and declares the importance and the significance of the individual member of the Church. Here the chief officer of a Christian congregation is dealing with his people, with Christ's people, not in the mass but one by one. This would scarcely be the place to enter upon a discussion of the relative importance of the individual and the community. Suffice it to say that there are aspects of our industrial, commercial and national life which demand some compensating influence to safeguard the rights and legitimate claims of the individual member of the community. Thus, it is not without significance that, whereas the preacher deals with the community as a whole, the pastor inevitably redresses the balance and concerns himself with the individual. The whole trend of the world's life to-day is such as to call for the kind of ministry which will recognise the intrinsic value of the individual life. The true pastor must know the modern world—its politics, its literature, its amusements, and the like. He must be able to discuss such themes intelligently, and should be qualified to offer a moral and spiritual valuation of the trends and the tendencies of the times.

Pastoral activity deepens social sympathy. If the writer of these notes holds strong views regarding slums and on the housing question in general, that is doubtless due in no small measure to experience of housing conditions gained during pastoral visitation in the city of Glasgow. There are vivid memories of the room that housed four families, or of a room with no daylight (not sufficient for reading or sewing even in midsummer), approached by stairs of stygian darkness (a torch was necessary), and possessing a floor to be negotiated only with the greatest care, as it contained holes sufficiently large to trap an unwary foot. Such experiences impart to a man's outlook and preaching something which he is not likely to find in his study.

Especially in a fairly large congregation, pastoral work ought not to be confined to the minister. Others should be encouraged to share in the task. The reference is not merely, or even chiefly, to the Lady of the Manse, though she can be of great assistance, if she be the right kind of a lady. But that is another story! Deacons and Sunday School teachers should visit regularly. The membership of the church should be divided into districts, with a visitor responsible for each. No Women's Meeting is complete without a

visiting committee. In such ways can the pastoral work of the ministry be supplemented. Needless to say, all such visitors should have the assurance that their work is appreciated by the church, and that whenever they strike a snag or come across anything of special interest the minister is ready and eager to advise or to co-operate.

If further proof be required of the value and importance of a pastoral ministry, let it be given on the evidence of Dr. Latourette, who contends that it is only in Christianity, among all the religions of the world, that there has appeared the figure of the pastor. Other religions have produced prophets and priests, but pastors and shepherds of souls are characteristic only of the Christian religion. Surely we cannot afford to disparage or neglect that which is historically distinctive of the faith we hold and of the Master Whom it is our privilege to serve. D. GORDON WYLIE.

CREATING CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

AND the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." This phrase from our most familiar benediction usually marks the end of a Protestant service of worship. It is possible that most worshippers and many ministers would interpret the words as being a prayer for the indwelling of the Spirit in each individual life. But it is clear that more than this was in Paul's mind when he used the phrase, and that his meaning is adequately expressed in Canon Streeter's paraphrase—"May the fellowship which is created by the Holy Spirit be your fellowship." The "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" was a definite apostolic concept. The apostles spoke not only of "fellowship," but of "*the* fellowship," the "*koinonia*," and they were referring not to an organisation but to a corporate experience which came to the Christians at Pentecost, and which was the distinctive feature of the early Church.

It is the purpose of God that each local church should reproduce and demonstrate the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit." One of the deepest satisfactions of the Christian minister arises from the assurance that within his own church this distinctively Christian fellowship is being created. It must be admitted that evidence of the "*koinonia*" is not always obvious. "Name what parish you please, is Christian fellowship there? Rather, are not the bulk of the parishioners a mere rope of sand? What Christian connection is there between them? What intercourse in spiritual things? What watching over each other's souls?" John Wesley's words are relevant to our present condition, and they suggest the following observations.

1. Since the members of any local church are found, at any given moment, standing on different levels of Christian development

and spiritual experience, we inevitably find different levels of fellowship within the one church. It is legitimate, for instance, that there should be associations of a purely recreational order. And the common argument that a church bazaar has value because it tends to "get the people together" must not be rejected as altogether invalid. It is, however, important that we should emphasise that such "getting together" has no specifically Christian significance or quality. It does not exemplify the essential nature of the Church.

2. As the Christian experience of individuals within the Church becomes deeper, as they apprehend Christ more clearly and make a fuller personal response to His claims, they will desire fellowship with one another on a deeper level. Those church organisations which merely facilitate their "getting together" will fail to satisfy them. They will seek a less formal and stereotyped meeting with others where, on the basis of a common surrender to Christ and a confidence in one another as fellow disciples, they can share their spiritual experiences and "edify one another . . . in the Lord." This is the normal process of developing Christian life. A closer walk with God always involves a closer walk with God's people. "When we are drowned in the overwhelming seas of the love of God," says T. R. Kelly in his "Testament of Devotion," "we find ourselves in a new and particular relation to a few of our fellows."

3. "To a few of our fellows." It is obvious that "koinonia" can be realised only in a small group. The small group makes possible that intimate give-and-take which is of the very essence of Christian fellowship. The more we consider the New Testament fellowship the more clearly we have to recognise the difficulties involved in the numerical size of our local churches. How is it possible, in a large church, for all the worshippers even to know one another's names? If "koinonia" is to be realised in our present circumstances, it can be realised only on the basis of a number of "cells" within the Church. This, in itself, is a test of the fellowship of the Church, for we know how the unbelieving mind obstinately insists on regarding all small groups as "cliques."

4. The deepest fellowship in the Church is to be found, I believe, in a small group of Church members who meet with the common purpose of equipping themselves for effective Christian witness and service. Ideally, such gatherings as the deacons' meeting, the teachers' preparation class, and the lay preachers' class would be centres of fellowship. If, in fact, they are not centres of fellowship the explanation is to be sought in the quality of the Christian experience of the individuals concerned. In practice, we find the nearest approximation to New Testament fellowship in those groups that meet for Bible study or theological discussion, so long as the purpose which animates the group is that of helping one another to become increasingly "meet for the Master's use."

5. This leads me to say that fellowship within the local church is not to be, and indeed cannot be, cultivated as an end in itself. It is the means to the accomplishment of the Church's purpose, which is to create fellowship among men and women by leading them into a saving and obedient relationship with Jesus Christ. If the Church, in its local manifestation, is to be regarded as the Body of Christ, the embodiment and expression of His mind and spirit, the "extension of the incarnation," then it must always be remembered that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. The love of Jesus, the "Friend of publicans and sinners," was always going out into other lives, making new friendships, building new bridges, creating new relationships. This is what we mean by "personal evangelism," and it is the final duty and highest privilege of every Church member. Christian leadership, for instance, must always be understood and interpreted in these terms, and not in terms of executive ability or official position.

6. There remains the challenge, which becomes very penetrating and urgent when we consider the misery and futility of so much of modern life, that the Church should exhibit and demonstrate to the world the kind of fellowship which, in the early days, evoked the wondering exclamation, "See how these Christians love one another!" Generous and practical interest in the welfare of members serving in the Forces, the "adoption" of a church in stricken Germany to which clothing and food parcels are sent, the provision of a common home for aged members, financial assistance to the needy, material support for any member who, losing his job on account of some conscientious objection to questionable practices, is unable for the time being to support an aged relative—such are some of the ways in which the expression of Christian fellowship can be a powerful and compelling act of witness. The ingenuity of love will discover many others. And all these practical demonstrations of fellowship are supplementary to the preaching of the Word when they are undertaken in the name of Him Who prayed for His disciples "that they may be one . . . that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me."

F. R. SCHOFIELD.

THE MINISTER'S PUBLIC INFLUENCE

I AM among you as He that serveth," said our Lord; and His Church is sure that it is in harmony with its Master when it is serving men. The special point of this article is to remind us that most of the men we exist to serve are outside the church walls. The Church and the minister have a responsibility to the town or village in which they are found; and this responsibility can be met only by a deliberate attempt to influence the whole life of that locality.

In what follows, I am seeking to point out a few of the ways in which we may begin to do this; drawing upon the experience of others as well as my own, and even venturing out once or twice beyond what has been, or is, to what may be. For convenience, I have divided the subject into three sections, but the exact boundary between II and III has not been demarcated.

I. *Negative or Restrictive*

All of us have known times when we have found it necessary to oppose the general trend of the times or of our district, to say about something which has happened or is projected, "No! This is wrong." This is a part of our task that must be faced; a Church which is truly Christ's must oppose whatever denies or contradicts Christ's standards of life, and the minister should take the lead in this as in the rest of the life of the Church. The Annual Brewster Sessions, the Sunday opening of cinemas, the suggestion to start a dog-racing track—these are some of the more common occasions that may call for action. Opinions may differ about the right thing to be done in any particular situation; but I am certain that times will arise when we must make a definite stand for right against wrong, and when this time comes, we must not hold back from fear of what others may think about us. Some of these circumstances arise in such a way that we must act "now or never." If your local authority is applying for a licence to sell intoxicants in its Civic Restaurants it is no good objecting after the licence has been granted.

This means that you must decide your attitude on the general question beforehand, and then make the particular decision and take the appropriate action at the right time.

II. *Co-operative*

Fortunately, negative actions such as these are the least of the ways in which we may seek to influence the life of the general community. They are necessary, but we cannot find the pleasure in them that other opportunities give us. Much happier is the time when we are able to co-operate in something that is going on in our town or village. Let us remember that by such positive co-operation we may win the confidence of our fellows: if it is known that we are out to do what we can for the good of the district it will go a long way to disarm prejudice.

As a member of the local community, be it city, town or village, the minister has the right to take his share in public affairs. The actual ways in which this will work out in practice will vary very much. He may be invited to serve on the Education Committee or the Youth Committee, or on a Council of Social Service, and by taking his place on any such body he will act not simply as an

individual but as a representative of the Christian community. In the Rotary Club he may meet on an equal footing some of the business and professional men of the town; and while he may not use the Club as a platform for his denominational views, he will be encouraged to put before his fellow members the mind of Christ concerning the urgent social and international matters of the day.

In addition to what the minister can do himself, he can encourage others to look out for such ways of Christian service. There are spheres more readily open to the Christian layman than to the minister: the Town or Parish Council, the local trade union branch. Where a youth club belongs to a local community as a whole (and not to a particular body), some members of the church may accept responsibility for it as a form of Christian service.

A Church made up of people who are serving the community like this would surely find that its own life would be enriched. Dare we say plainly that this is Church work as much as what goes on inside the church buildings? Why should we not commission some of our members to go out and do such tasks? Imagine the church meeting at which these people would tell of their problems and opportunities, and ask for the prayers of the Church.

III. *Pioneering*

The Church has blazed many a trail in the past—schools and hospitals are outstanding among them. Such opportunities still come. I know a town where a home for old people sponsored by the Free Church Council owes its existence chiefly to the Baptist church and its minister. In a village there is an Old Age Pensioners' Club with its rest room and weekly meeting on Friday. The founder of this is a Baptist deacon.

There is a field for experiment here, and we must not be afraid of failures or mistakes.

“'Tis better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all.”

During the war, many ministers and churches made such experiments to meet the needs of men and women in the Forces. We need to-day the same spirit at work, leavening and transforming the whole life of the neighbourhood.

Here, then, are some of the ways in which the Church and the minister may widen their sphere of influence. In all this, what matters even more than the actual things done is the spirit in which we do them. I began with some words of our Lord; let me end with those of His apostle, “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”

C. E. BAYLIS.

THE MINISTER'S OPPORTUNITIES FOR
WIDER CONTACTS

THE Isolationist Policy, whether in politics or religion, is dead. Even the Americans, usually so slow in the realm of ideas, have at last caught up on that one. In religion it can be stated categorically that no Christian can be an Isolationist. That would be a contradiction in terms. It is the nature of the Gospel that it is for the whole world. "God so loved the *world . . .*" "Go ye into all the *world . . .*" That is the Gospel. That is our commission. Every Christian minister can say, therefore, with Wesley, "The world is my parish."

During this summer most of us, no doubt, have spoken to and prayed with our congregations about Amsterdam—the meeting of the World Council of Churches. From pulpit, press, and radio our people have heard about "this most significant event in our time." Yet here and there, it must be confessed, some ministers have missed the bus. They have proved themselves less able to discern the "signs of the times" than Fleet Street or the B.B.C. It came as a shock to me to hear a deacon say, "We have not heard anything about Amsterdam from our minister." Poor fellow! What a chance he missed! What a dull, confined and parochial mind he must have! Most of our people have been able to share, however, in thought, prayer and concern with the fortunate delegates who attended at Amsterdam. Strictly speaking, of course, the only people entitled to rejoice in this event are those who through the years have maintained their zeal for the missionary cause and who have always looked towards the distant places praying that the light would dawn there. For them this is a day of rejoicing. They see what Carey, Morrison, Judson, John Oncken, John Williams and others saw only in faith afar off, not having received the promise. We have seen literally how "they have come from the north and the south and the east and the west and have sat down in the Kingdom of God." To those who have not maintained their Gospel zeal for the world, this must be a day of rebuke and challenge.

The Baptist minister stands in a position of privilege and responsibility in these things. It has become a platitude to say that the minister is the key to the missionary interest of the Church. But even a platitude may be true. The fact is, ministers are prophets and teachers in the things of God. Like the Old Testament prophets they should always discern how God is at work among the nations and that the earth is His footstool. It is through the minister that the average Church members are kept aware of what God is doing and are refreshed and inspired by the continuation of the Acts of the Apostles. The local congregation of Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh may be kept alive to what is happening in China, India, Africa, Europe and even behind the Iron Curtain. Indeed,

these humble folk are sometimes aware of things that escape the notice of Whitehall and Fleet Street, but which prove, in the long run, as did Carey's venture, to be things which will turn the world upside down. As a shepherd to his flock so the minister can lead his people to the wider, greener pastures instead of leaving them to nibble the short grass in the stamping ground of his, or their own, local interests. Besides the fellowship of the local Church they can be led into the wider fellowship of the neighbouring Baptist Churches, the Free Churches, the Bible Society Auxiliary, the County Association or Union, the Baptist Union and the B.M.S., the British Council of Churches, the Baptist World Alliance, and the World Council of Churches.

The practical part which a minister and his congregation will be able to play in each or all of these may vary. But there are opportunities enough and literature enough to keep every minister and church from stagnation. Besides the more obvious papers and magazines like *The Baptist Times*, *The Missionary Herald* and *The Fraternal* and other religious papers, regular use of the B.M.S. Annual Report, The Bible Society Annual Report, *The Christian News-Letter* and that informative little Bulletin of the British Council of Churches, *The Church in the World* (to say nothing of larger and more pretentious periodicals) will keep a minister up to date and quickened in his interests. For a very small outlay of time and money the World Church can be set in our minds and our prayers, both to our own and our people's profit.

The rewards of sharing in God's universal Gospel are many. A minister's own soul is refreshed and his "bowels of sympathy are enlarged." His private prayer and thinking are delivered from dullness and self-centredness. His public prayer and preaching are kept from the monotonous circle of his own limited ideas and experience. Personal contacts grow within one's own and other denominations with other ministers, missionaries, Christian workers of many kinds and with people overseas. Precious friendships are formed and with them the discovery that God fulfils Himself in many ways and many lands. Although sometimes it may seem to a man that he is always giving in thought, effort, time and money to keep his contacts and knowledge in repair, he receives more than he gives and his congregation share in the feast.

Of course, it does take some time and some money; but not a lot. Committees and meetings tend to multiply. It becomes more difficult to make a judicious selection between the things to attend and the things to let go. Evenings at home with the B.B.C., or the latest book, or even with one's wife! (who fortunately will not read this), may be forfeited. Sometimes a deacon whose mind is gross with material things, or narrow in outlook, may try to press a minister into the confined space in which he lives and moves and has his being. "Why do you want to bother so much about China or the B.M.S. or the Baptist World Alliance? We pay you to

be *our* minister." To which the reply is simple. "This is my job. This is what I am called and paid to do: to lead others into the fullness of the Kingdom and persuade them to be fellow-workers with God in the redemption of the world."

There are many helps for the minister and Church who really desire to keep alive their wider interests. I have already mentioned some of the abundant literature available. But we could do a better job in getting our members to read this literature. All kinds of papers, periodicals and magazines can be found in the homes of our congregations. There is little of it, however, that belongs to the World Church. There are still too few of our young people who see *The Quest* or who know that in the world of religious journalism it is regarded as one of the most successful magazines for youth. Young people can be persuaded to spend their holidays at Summer Schools and Camps, or on Fellowship Tours with Baptists in Europe. Those who go generally return quite different young people, with a new zest and loyalty to the Church, and a vision of its call and challenge. Every minister does not yet seem to know that each youth organisation (Scouts, Guides, Brigades, Fellowships, C.E. Societies and Clubs) can affiliate with the B.U. and B.M.S. Youth Depts. free of, or for a very small charge, and receive in return regular information, literature and suggestions for projects that will stimulate their enthusiasm for the work of the universal Church. The minister can suggest that the programmes for all organisations, such as women's meetings and men's clubs, include speakers and subjects of missionary interest, Christian Social Work, United Nations Association, Bible Society, and so on. The minister himself, when asked to speak to outside organisations such as Rotary or Community or Youth Clubs, will never lack a subject or fail to get an eager hearing if he speaks on "The World Church," "What the Church is Doing," "Amsterdam, 1948," "Who Claims the World?" or some such theme.

Most of our people live rather drab lives. But there is no reason why a minister should live a drab life or let his congregation miss the encouragements and joys that lie all around. In such a world as this it is a blessed work to let people see the mighty acts of God and help them to believe that the whole world, despite its evil face, lies in the Everlasting Arms in which they personally trust.

W. W. BOTTOMS.

THE INNER LIFE

"THE battle for religion is a battle for prayer." There is enough truth in Schlatter's generalisation to make it at least significant.

For however busily engaged we may be in carrying out the injunctions and suggestions of the foregoing articles, if our activity is not calculated to bring men to the place where they hold communion with God, it has surely lost its way somewhere. For

"Behold, he prayeth" is still one of the infallible signs—perhaps, in the end of the day, the only infallible sign—that God is dealing with a man.

How, then, are we to help men and women cultivate the devotional life? We can assume that for the most part we are dealing with people who believe, in theory at least, that a life of communion with God in Jesus Christ is an integral part of any profession of the Christian Faith. The trouble is that this principle is not taken seriously. I remember on one occasion having a most interesting and illuminating discussion with a young fellow-traveller on the relative merits of books of prayers, and asking him how far he found them useful in his own devotions. To which he gave the (in this case) extraordinary reply that he never prayed except when he went to church. Our characteristic insistence on the priesthood of all believers is quite useless unless our people exercise it. A Jacob's ladder without angels is a mockery. We have to bring home the truth that men must believe enough in prayer to pray.

But even then, except there be diligent and tender cultivation the life of devotion can become a tiresome thing and a burden. Except new wealth be constantly poured in, it becomes poor and suitably neglected. What can the average minister do to help his people in this direction? For is he not a specialist who knows of resources of which those who have not received his training are for the most part unaware?

The first duty we owe to our people is to keep our own lives fresh and full of the sense of wonder. And this is one of our chief snares. No man is so apt to lose this sense of wonder as the man who every day of his life is handling holy things. Addressing our Bristol students a while ago, Dr. A. J. Gossip, in his inimitable way, pictured the scene outside the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. He reminded the congregation that this was the one occasion in the year when mortal man was allowed to draw aside the curtain and enter the holy place. And as he described the scene one almost felt the heightened spiritual tension of the occasion itself. "But," he went on, "somewhere in that crowd was a little priest whose job it was every day to dust behind that curtain. I wonder how *he* felt?"

That is our problem. And the only answer to it is a rigorous discipline in our own prayer life and a steeping of ourselves in the classics of prayer and devotion. For every new avenue of devotion opened up to us and every new line on a traditional Christian doctrine is a means of grace to deliver the life of the servant of God from staleness.

But how are the people of our care to be delivered, too? "When are you going to preach a series of sermons on prayer?" asked a member whose prayer-life I knew to be among the most virile. "But I am still an early-stage learner myself," I protested,

“and the whole matter has been put so clearly in so many good books.” “But people don’t read those books!” was the all too true and pointed rejoinder. There are glorious exceptions, but the fact remains that even assiduous readers fight shy of “religious” books. How, then, is this wealth we have found to be brought to the notice of the fellowship?

Obviously, our largest public is to be found in church on Sunday. And in the course of sermons we almost inevitably refer to some of these “finds.” It sometimes happens that a whole section of a sermon is given to the exposition of such a find. It may even happen that an enquiry follows for the full title of the book and the name of the publishers! But very often pulpit reference has to be followed up, and where a monthly church leaflet exists, this can be used to remind readers of a good intention on their part that might otherwise run to waste.

Then the careful preparation of the prayer exercises in worship can be a means of bringing some of these riches into the devotional life of the fellowship. We are free from the bondage of a fixed liturgy. This need not mean that we are robbed of the wealth of such a liturgy. Our freedom should never mean that the congregation is at the mercy of our moods or that the richness of its devotion is limited by the poverty of our own spiritual experience. Our freedom means that in gathering up the spirit of prayer which is present in the gathered company, we have the legacies of Thomas à Kempis, Brother Lawrence and all the rest of them who are at our disposal to enable us the more effectively to give voice to the praise and the yearnings in the hearts of men and women.

But in those fellowships where there is some kind of Christian Forum or Study Circle—and there are few without nowadays—this task of sharing the wealth of devotional and theological literature can be tackled more systematically. This is particularly true of apologetic writing. Old heresies in new garb appear far less formidable when our people realise that men of learning and repute (even in the blessed realm of science) are on our side. And where one or two find exceptional difficulty, there are probably available on the minister’s own shelves books which he knows to have been of help to him when confronted with a similar difficulty. Lending books can be a precarious business, but who will withhold when it’s a case of helping a man to make up his mind in the right way? Besides, even in these hard-boiled days, a relevant book is sometimes read more sympathetically because it has come from the hand of a friendly minister. Or so they would have us believe. And our folk don’t lie the whole of the time, even to the parson.

Then Christian Endeavour Societies are often on the look-out for a new feature for their session’s programme. Could they not, under the direction of the minister, devote one night a month to the exposition of some great book? If one of their number gave the talk in each of these meetings, it would mean at least that twelve

young people in the Church read a Christian classic every year which, alas, is not the case now!

Some enterprising and gifted ministers (for so they must be to attempt such a thing) have devoted a series of Sunday or mid-week services to dealing with "books that have helped." There seems to be no objection in principle to this provided the "kerygma" is not dropped and the message reduced to the level of a *Spectator* review.

For most of us, perhaps, the allusive method is best. Rather than try to carry the gold mine to the potential seeker, better is it constantly to handle in his presence small nuggets and thereby lure him to the place where he can find untold wealth for himself. But let us so handle and even set off the pieces that they glitter. To get away from the metaphor, when reference is made to a book and members of the congregation are invited to read it, let the book be displayed on the monthly missionary bookstall with a sizable card drawing attention to it. Any youngster in the church with a flare for hand-printing (and their number is growing nowadays) would be only too thrilled to be asked to do it. The problem is to get men and women from the thought "that sounds a good book" to the place where they say "I'll get that book and read it." And in view of this, even experiments in salesmanship are justified.

In an old Welsh hymn, Robert ab Gwilym Ddu suggests that the saints will spend eternity watching some new miracle of grace proceeding every day from His wondrous death. That is what keeps eternity from growing stale! It takes something of the kind to keep the life of the spirit virile in this world of time. Any new line of devotion, any new light on the grand old truths, anything which in an old familiar place stabs the spirit broad awake, anything which keeps alive our sense of wonder . . . all these things are of the Holy Ghost. For when the preacher and his people cease to wonder, they are doomed.

J. ITHEL JONES.

OUR ABIDING MINISTRY

ON reaching his fiftieth birthday an illustrious preacher confided to his diary that he wished he could have his life over again that he might make it better. If that is how Phillips Brooks felt about his ministry, which is one of the glories of the Christian Church, it is not to be wondered at that we ordinary men, as the years that remain to us diminish, often wish we could begin again, confident that we should make our ministry less unworthy.

But it is not given unto men to begin again. All that a man may do is to tell those who are coming after him the best way to take. His counsel may be heeded by some and their ministry may be less wayward than otherwise it would have been.

I

One of the duties of a minister in every generation is to interpret the Bible and to translate its classic speech into the language of the street and of the market-place. It is necessary then that he should know the Book. He should study it with a fierce intensity and with a passionate concentration. It is one of the most powerful temptations of a minister who loves reading to indulge his delight in literature and to seek a wide culture at the cost of only a superficial and general knowledge of the Bible.

The masters of our craft have been great students of the Word. Robertson of Brighton knew the New Testament off by heart in English and in Greek. Maclaren read the Bible in its original tongues in his study, but he also kept a room apart for his devotions where, day by day, he fed his soul upon the English version. John Henry Jowett, throughout his ministry, used to study a book of the Old Testament and a book of the New Testament as though he were preparing for an examination in them. Campbell Morgan was in the habit of reading a book of the Bible thirty times aloud before preparing any exposition of it.

May it not be that preaching does not count in the life of the people as once it did because preachers themselves are not as alive to the glory of the Word as preachers of bygone days have been?

This is not altogether the fault of ministers. Congregations have clamoured for other ministries than the exposition of the Word. They have desired the administrator and the good mixer rather than the scholar and the preacher. If the expositor has disappeared from the pulpit it is because the student of the Word has disappeared from the pew.

Sir Henry Jones, who once held the chair of philosophy in the University of Glasgow, was the son of a shoe-maker in a little village in North Wales. He says of his father that he knew only one book—the Bible, but he did know that. It was impossible, he says, to quote a text from the whole range of Scripture which he could not at once locate. He could tell the page where it occurred in his copy, whether it was on the left-hand page or on the right-hand page, at the top or at the bottom of the page.

What preacher would dare neglect the study of the Word if he had to confront, Sunday by Sunday, such students of it?

II

A minister is called to be a shepherd, too. He must not only break the bread of life for his people, but also love the people for whom the bread is broken. It is not easy for the natural man to love all men, to care with a great passion for the souls of men; but there is no surer evidence that a man is born of Christ's spirit and called into His service. Dr. Dale was sure that Moody was called of God because he could not speak of a lost soul without tears coursing down his cheeks.

It is easy to become interested in ideas and enthusiastic about causes, but the need of the Church is for preachers with a concern for men. In his biography of William Temple, Iremonger refutes the criticism that that illustrious man was more concerned about problems than persons; but the criticism was made, and it shows how easy it is to lose sight of the individual, while caring for his needs. Professor Payne tells us that Wheeler Robinson was troubled because he did not love men more. His self-criticism may be unjustified—I think it was—but it goes to emphasise the need of love. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." The shepherd heart is the shepherd's great need.

I remember when I was a student at Rawdon College hearing Dr. Blomfield tell the following incident. He had been to hear a great preacher, and had been deeply moved by the sermon. He left the church in the company of the preacher. In the vestibule was a woman sobbing bitterly. The great preacher glared at her; said not a word and went his way. At the dinner table he wanted to know, "Who was that disconsolate female?" The preacher drew a crowd, but it is said that he never built a Church. Only love can do that.

In Boston, in the days when Phillips Brooks exercised his transforming ministry there, a mother asked her daughter who had returned from a service at Trinity Church, "How did Dr. Brooks preach this morning?" "I have heard him preach greater sermons many times, but I never realised before how much he loves us," she replied. Someone told of the incident to Phillips Brooks. The great preacher's eyes filled with tears as he said, "I would rather have that said of me than anything else." The day came when he was suddenly called to his rest and his reward, and as the news spread through the city, the citizens gathered in little groups to lament the loss their community had sustained. Years later an American minister who had been in Boston at that time, said he joined group after group, and that not at one of them did he hear a word said of the wonderful sermons Phillips Brooks had preached, but in every group there was someone who bore testimony to some kindness he had done. They were cast down, not because the voice of the great orator was silent, but because the heart of the great shepherd was still.

III

The most exacting duty a minister has to perform is to lead his people in worship. It is the crowning glory of human personality that it is open God-ward. In God alone does man find his completeness. Yet it is often very difficult to realise the presence of God. To believe in God is one thing, to realise that He is the Ever-near is another. To go to the temple and lay one's gift upon its altar is a religious duty, but to behold the Lord, high and lifted up,

and His glory filling the temple, is a transforming religious experience. It led Isaiah to give himself; and the giving of oneself to God in adoration, wonder and selfless love is worship.

Worship is dependent upon the realisation of God's presence and the realisation of His presence is dependent upon the atmosphere of the sanctuary. There is a story told of Westcott that on one occasion he lingered in the chapel of his palace at Auckland long after the rest of his household had returned to their duties. At last his daughter came to look for him. She found him pacing the chapel in the gathering gloom. She went up to him and said, "Father, come away: the chapel is empty." "Empty? Empty? my daughter. It is full of the glory of God," was his reply.

The atmosphere of a place of worship is not dependent entirely upon the minister. It is created by the devotional life of the Church. The believing prayers of a people create an atmosphere in which men and women become alive to the reality of the Unseen and sensitive to God's presence.

But the personality of the preacher counts for much. I remember years ago being present at a church that was overcrowded. The congregation was restless, and its impatience dissipated the atmosphere of worship. Before the time of the service the preacher entered the pulpit. I can still remember his brief invocatory prayer, and still feel something of the sublime peace that fell upon us. The preacher was John Henry Jowett.

There is only one way in which a preacher may carry with him the atmosphere of the holy of holies—he must live there. It is said that at the close of a service when Alexander Whyte had preached with even greater power than usual, that one of his elders went up to him and said with awe in his voice, "Doctor, it was as though you had come from the very Presence." "Perhaps I did," was the answer.

T. RHYS RICHARDS.

SO THIS IS CANADA

PERHAPS the most useful thing I can do, and one which my fellow-Baptist ministers in England would be most interested to read, is to attempt to set down my impressions of Canada. I cannot call this effort "First Impressions of an Immigrant," since the first impressions are already being overlaid with the second, and many things which no doubt impressed me twelve months ago as strange I now take for granted. I am almost ashamed to admit that the abundance of food and the material plenty of this amazing country have now come to seem almost "normal," and its needs a real effort of imagination to realise what is happening in the rest of the world, and in Europe in particular. It is not easy for us, and how difficult it must be for the many here who have no first-hand knowledge of the devastation caused by the war. Yet it is deeply moving to find how generous Canada's people have been and are being now. In addition to the official relief efforts, as I move about in different classes of society it is not long before they rather timidly reveal that they are sending parcels to someone somewhere in the Old Country. Our own Baptist folk here have done much, and only this week all the churches had their appeals for "Clothing for Europe." It should be a source of encouragement and hope to know that this fund of genuine goodwill exists over here. The going is hard, but England is not alone in this dangerous and difficult post-war world!

The first impression one gets is derived from the countryside itself. Ontario is beautifully wooded, and particularly in the north is studded with lakes which are a constant joy. The whole of the British Isles would go comfortably into Ontario, and how small a portion this province is of the whole of Canada! The use of so much wood in the construction of houses strikes the English visitor at once, whilst to land in Montreal is as strange to the

English traveller as the first landing in France. On the whole, I think the Canadian is more accessible than we are, and does not have to wait until the end of a train journey before entering into conversation!

However, I think I had better resist the temptation to talk about everything in general and tell you something about McMaster University, and the kind of work it is trying to do. It is safe to say, I'm sure, that the average British Baptist has no conception of the scale of the work of the university since its removal from Toronto to Hamilton in 1929. It is not to be thought of as simply a theological seminary. It is now what we mean by a university, and there is every sign of future growth. Indeed, the limits are only set by what present financial resources permit. Last year there were over 1,200 students on the campus, and although the number is slightly less this year due to the decline in the number of veterans or ex-Service men seeking college training, the number is still over 1,150. A good proportion of these are taking courses in either arts or science. It is in this context that it is necessary to envisage the work of the Divinity School, which is the oldest part of the McMaster foundation. Senator McMaster himself evidently had in mind a Christian university, and it was his ideal to found a place of liberal education at the heart of which were Christian convictions and ideals. In 1947-48 there were forty-four students in the Divinity School proper, plus men taking the arts degree preparatory to taking their B.D. A unique experiment which began a year or two back is the Women's Leadership training school, to which young women come for training for missionary service, Christian educational work and different types of Christian service among the home churches. The new director of this school has taken up her duties this term, so that our Divinity Faculty is now complete. The Faculty of the Divinity School now numbers eight, and the fellowship we enjoy together is very real and heart-warming. I have been here long enough now to know of the very real sense of unity and Christian devotion which binds together the members of the Faculty. The total Faculty of the University must be somewhere between 50 and 60, which gives some idea of the scope of our work. Perhaps it will be a surprise to some to know that McMaster is the centre of some of the most important work now being done in Canada in nuclear physics, with all that that involves for the development of atomic energy. It is clear, therefore, that we have a unique opportunity in this setting to make our Christian witness before the rising generation. There are some who fear that all these large developments may push the Christian work of McMaster into the background, but I can sincerely say that there is no sign of that as far as I can see. Every morning at 10.20 there is a short chapel service lasting for twenty minutes, during which period all students are free of lectures and are encouraged to attend. These services are taken by the

members of the Faculty in general, not simply the theologians, and sometimes students conduct our worship. From time to time we have the opportunity of having distinguished visitors conduct morning service. Only this week it was taken by Mr. Hugh Lyon, the lately retired headmaster of Rugby School, and some time back we were privileged to hear a most moving address by Dr. Orhn, the new secretary of the Baptist World Alliance. The good student attendance at these services and their simplicity and sincerity convince me that the founder's intention to make the Christian faith the heart of the educational effort is being fulfilled. That this is so, must, of course, be attributed in large measure to the Christian sincerity, statesmanship and enlightened policy of the Chancellor. We are fortunate and privileged to have someone of Dr. Gilmour's mental and spiritual calibre to lead us at such a time and in such a place. There is so much I would like to say about the University, but my space is rapidly being consumed. Perhaps I may be allowed later to repair the omissions of this article.

You will, I am sure, want to hear something about the life of our Baptist churches over here. Let me say first of all how warmly I have been welcomed into the churches of the Convention and how freely the various pulpits have been opened to me. This has given me a unique opportunity both to become acquainted with the Baptist constituency and to get to know Ontario. I must have travelled many thousands of miles from Montreal in the north to Windsor in the south-west. This summer I had the privilege of taking the services for four Sundays in the First Church, Ottawa, and seeing something of that beautiful and impressive city, including paying my tribute to Parliamentary government and political freedom by visiting the chamber and standing near the Speaker's chair. It was comforting to feel that in this vast American continent there are men who speak the same language, and understand the same ideals. It has also been a joy to visit the smaller rural churches and find there, too, the same generous hospitality and welcome. Some features of the normal Baptist service strike the visitor at once. The choir, for example, is always gowned, and that is true for even the small church. On the whole, the number of hymns sung by the congregation is less than with us, never being more than three except on very exceptional occasions. One new feature which impressed me, and which I like, is the responsive reading. This is usually a psalm, the minister and the congregation reading alternate verses. Most baptismal services seem to be at the beginning of the usual service rather than at the end as in England, and many of the churches have a painting of some appropriate natural scene behind the baptistery. Otherwise the service is very much like ours and the Baptist visitor is soon at home. As far as I am able to judge, there is a very friendly relationship between Baptists and other Christian

bodies, despite the fact that our people did not enter the United Church.

With my family last June I had the privilege of staying with Dr. and Mrs. Brien at Windsor during the Baptist Convention held in that city. Dr. Brien is President of the Convention this year, and the gracious hospitality of his home was a unique meeting-place where we had special opportunities of meeting leading Baptists of this continent, including Dr. Oscar Johnson, the new dynamic President of the Baptist World Alliance. I was especially interested in the Convention meetings and to compare them with our own. One thing that caught my attention was the amount of discussion from the floor and the high level that was maintained. The official reports are not passed through in such a formal way as some are at our Union meetings. The gatherings are somewhat smaller, since the total Baptist constituency is about 140,000 members; this no doubt makes more intimate discussion of various questions possible in the Convention meetings. Our Baptist folk here are very keen, forward-looking, and confident in the faith. I can think of nothing better than increasing contact and fellowship between British and Canadian Baptists in the coming years for a mutual strengthening and building up in the things we most surely believe. The year 1950, of course, will see the next Baptist World Alliance at Cleveland, Ohio, less than 300 miles from Hamilton. My wife and I both hope that dollar difficulties and other problems will be sufficiently eased to allow a good delegation to come from Britain, and give us the joy of meeting friends from the Old Country. Meanwhile, our prayers are continually with our kinsfolk in the faith in the land of our birth, confident that much blessing will attend faithful work even in these difficult and troubled days. R. F. ALDWINKLE.

A VISIT TO GERMAN BAPTISTS

AT Mr. Aubrey's request I made recently a three weeks' tour of Germany to see something of the conditions under which our churches are living, and to bring greetings and encouragement from British Baptists. In so short a stay it was impossible to do more than gather very general impressions of the situation, and there remained on my return many questions unanswered.

My itinerary began in the Hamburg district, continued to Hanover, where I made an excursion to the border of the Russian Zone, thence to Frankfurt in the American Zone with a visit to Worms in the French Zone, finishing up with several days in Cologne and Essen, with varied opportunities of contacts with churches and ministers in the towns of the Ruhr. Berlin had been included in the original plan, but this did not materialise.

The first, and perhaps the deepest, impression made upon a visitor to the German cities is of the terrible destruction from which

almost all of them have suffered. We who endured the weight of the Luftwaffe attacks on British cities have no idea of the punishment inflicted on the Germans, and they still live with the ruins for gruesome company, whereas most of our bomb damage has been cleared away and the streets tidied up. In each big city thousands are still living in cellars and air-raid shelters, while the overcrowded populations are constantly being swelled in Western Germany by further thousands of refugees who have poured in from those parts occupied by the Russians.

In buildings and personnel the German Baptists have suffered heavy losses. West of the rivers Oder and Neisse fifty-four chapels are completely destroyed, seventy-two severely damaged and fifty-nine rented rooms lost. Forty-three ministers have been killed. Thirty-two had not returned to their homes by the end of 1947. The Seminary at Hamburg was burned out but is in process of re-building. The fine printing and bookbinding works at Cassel is in ruins. The Baptist Headquarters in Berlin is destroyed and other buildings have suffered similarly.

On such a background of devastation and loss the German Baptists are continuing their witness and gathering fresh converts. The 7,000 baptisms reported for last year look like being equalled or surpassed this year. The congregations are in most places crowded, with standing room only at 9.30 a.m., when morning worship commences. The note of thanksgiving that the Lord has not forsaken them rings through their prayers. Their singing has a quality for which it is difficult to find a word. "Hearty" does not describe it. The preaching is direct, earnest, evangelical. Their piety and faith find many forms of practical expression in social and youth service, and much could be written about it. The need is everywhere apparent, and the wherewithal for such service is largely provided by gifts from American, Canadian, Swedish and British Baptists.

It may be news to some of my readers that when we talk of the German Baptists to-day we really mean an amalgamation of Baptists and Plymouth Brethren, under the general title "Union of Evangelical Free Church Congregations in Germany." This was due, I understand, to certain difficulties created by the Nazis for the Plymouth Brethren, who thereupon came to our people and asked for union, but not under the name "Baptist," although they are all in fact Baptist in practice. Whether the fusion brought about under such circumstances will prove permanent remains to be seen. The present strength of the combined forces is about 100,000. In a conversation with Paul Schmidt, Director of the Union, I discovered, among other things, that the Union has a graduated scale of stipends for its ministers, varying according to length of service and the character of the district in which they serve. The division of British churches into "district classes" might not be easy to work out, but there may be something to be said for a

man getting 50 per cent. more than a beginner after ten years' service and 100 per cent. more after twenty. I understand the French Baptist Union has a similar arrangement. Perhaps Mr. Grey Griffith may care to discuss this! Holidays are also graded according to service, a fortnight for the first three years, three weeks from the fourth to the sixth year, and afterwards one month! Marriage, children's allowances and deductions for manses are in some respects similar to our own Home Work Fund scheme.

There are, perhaps, other things also in which we might take a leaf out of the German Baptist book. At the Wiedenest Bible School I found that English and singing are part of the curriculum, as is also the case, I believe, at the Hamburg Seminary. I was given an excellent illustration of the latter by the forty-two students who gave a selection from their repertoire under a skilled conductor, one of themselves, while almost every student spoke a little English. My own limited knowledge of German makes me very conscious of the language barrier, and I wish all our men knew one European language besides their own. I was also impressed—as on earlier visits to Germany—by the free use made by our brethren of the symbols of our faith. The German Baptist preacher stands in the pulpit with a plain Cross on the wall behind him, and I think it must influence his preaching. Two other things of this kind I must mention. German Baptist Youth camps, which are widespread and well organised, aim at winning non-Christian young people to Christ by limiting the attendance at each camp to about 25 per cent. Christian, the rest being friends and acquaintances. It has proved a fruitful source of evangelism, and the subjects discussed are almost entirely Biblical. It is an interesting sidelight on this practice that each German Baptist Church has a secondary roll composed of relations and friends of Church members, who join what we might call "the circle of friends."

In meeting a group of ministers in a certain town in the Ruhr I detected some suspicion as to my visit, as only a little while before Dr. Champion had been there. (This was no reflection on him!) "Why have you come?" they asked. When this was satisfactorily explained other questions began to flow. "Is the preaching of Baptists in England positive or liberal?" "Do the English Baptists believe in the Second Coming?" "Are they evangelistic, and if so what methods do they use in spreading the Gospel?" "Why does the *Baptist Times* say nothing about the Russian treatment of our prisoners of war, and the people in their Zone?" In a meeting of ministers, Church and youth leaders I was asked, "Do the English hate us?" Privately I was questioned about the cutting down for export of so many trees out of the German forests by the Military Governments, and about the difference in policy between the Americans and the British regarding the dismantling of German factories.

The questions I wanted answered had to do with the attitude of our German Baptists to the Nazis, their knowledge of what went

on in the concentration camps, and of the real desire of the German people for fellowship with other nations. As to the first, it appears that less than a dozen Baptist Church members altogether actually forsook their faith and wholeheartedly entered the Party. A few, very few, of the Baptist leaders formed some sort of connection with the Party in order to secure their work from interference. I heard several instances of German Baptists who had risked their lives in order to save English airmen or members of the Dutch "Resistance Movement" from the Gestapo. One German pastor who had to appear three times before the Gestapo chief in his town on one suspicion or another said that the sinister thing about the headquarters was that a man never came back through the door by which he entered, so that, if he did not come home again, no one knew what had become of him. Very modest about his own courage, he told me of a Baptist deaconess who made a wonderful witness for Christ during an imprisonment of a fortnight in a cellar, and greatly impressed the Gestapo leader. As to the concentration camps, I gathered from a long conversation with a German woman who had been in England for ten years and had attended Bloomsbury during that time that those who had seen anything of that kind or who had themselves been imprisoned in a camp kept a very still tongue about their experiences on their release. As to my third question I found that the German Baptists were so absorbed in their own sufferings and in those of their fellow-countrymen that they gave little thought to the question of their own responsibility for the war or of the need for cultivating a real fellowship with other nations.

I close this hurried account of a brief visit with two further impressions. The first was of sitting on several occasions at a meal with a German family, while from the wall the photo of a son killed in the war gazed silently down at us. The other was of singing a hymn to the tune "Dennis" with a company of German Baptists in a hut erected on the site of a ruined Church on the night before I returned to England. I had not their hymn book so did not know what they were singing, but my lips framed "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love." There is no other bond strong enough to retain in fellowship ex-enemies who still are of the same faith and order.

A. J. KLAIBER.

SUBSCRIPTIONS, PLEASE!

In October last we had to send out 450 reminders concerning overdue subscriptions. In December a further application to 185 members was necessary. We do appeal to all our brethren to save us this labour and expense and to remit the subscription—3s. 6d.—for 1949 which is now due. Hand it to the local Correspondent or post to W. Charles Johnson, 17, Bethell Avenue, Ilford. Thank you!

COLLEGE NOTES

Cardiff

Cyfarchion a dymuniadau gorau o Goleg Caerdydd i bawb a berthyn i'r Gymdeithas hon !

Gwerthfawrogwn yr ychydig ofod a ganiateir i ddweud gair yn iaith annwyl Cymru Wen—iaith sydd cyn bured ag erioed yn ein Coleg er mai Saeson yw'r mwyafrif o'r myfyrwyr !

Da yw gennym gael y fraint o fod yn perthyn i'r Gymdeithas, a diolchgar ydym am y bendithion a ddaw trwy gyfrwng erthyglai cynhwysfawr y Cylchgrawn.

Dymunwn yn dda i'r gwaith a'r gweithwyr !

RAYMOND WILLIAMS.

Greetings from Cardiff ! Above is a sample of the " language of heaven " ; oh no ! it is not forgotten.

We are forty-five students and still out preaching the Gospel to the people every Sunday, besides weeknight Campaigns. We even have some Anniversary Preachers ! History has been made—a lady student at Cardiff ! After a year's practical training at Doncaster, our student, Miss Margaret Phillips, is now preparing for the Mission Field at Carey Hall. Another distinction is the award of a B.U. scholarship to Mervyn Himbury, B.A., B.D., whom we have now sent to enhance the reputation of Regent's.

We enjoy fellowship by correspondence with Baptist Theologues at Weidenest, Germany, and at Melbourne. At the University the S.C.M. flourishes, with one of our men as Secretary ; and the I.V.F. is graced with a President from our ranks. A Theological branch of the I.V.F. has also been formed.

We are pleased to enjoy such close fellowship ; this is helped, no doubt, by the " elevenses " which we now have at the College. Bristol have paid us a visit, and we have definitely decided that " market gardening should not be a ministerial side-line." We thought we could play football, until they came.

Special greetings to Cardiff men. Things are not what they were at Cardiff—but we say—they are better !

THOS. J. BUDGE.

Manchester

Our autumn session promises to be very happy and successful. Four new men have commenced their studies, and one man has returned to College after illness. We are very glad to have him back with us. This brings the number of our Fellowship up to twenty-three. Of those men who will be leaving next year one has, so far, accepted an invitation to a pastorate.

Preaching supplies have again kept most of our men busy during the last term. It is a privilege and an inspiration to lead many of our churches over a large area in their worship.

During November the B.M.S. held their exhibition at Moss Side, and many of our students were glad to help as workers. November also saw us paying a social visit to Rawdon. We enjoyed the time of fellowship and only regret that the result of the football match was in their favour!

Our hearty greetings to all members of the B.M.F., and especially to the Manchester men.

MARTIN R. JUPE.

Spurgeon's

Greetings to all members of the B.M.F., especially to all Spurgeon's men.

At the end of the summer term seven men left for the full-time ministry. One has gone to Mansfield College for further theological training and another to Paris before going to the Congo for service with the B.M.S.

Seven men are serving churches as student-pastors, others are kept busy with week-end preaching and special campaigns.

At the beginning of term we received eight men into the fellowship of the College, including one from South Africa. We were to have welcomed a man from Hungary, but he has not been allowed to leave the country.

Spurgeon's students are still winning their laurels in the examination room. This summer two men gained honours in final B.D., one first, the other second, class, while ten men were successful at Inter.B.D.

We hope to win more victories on the football field this term. We were to have met St. John's but the game had to be cancelled. A good game with the London Bible College resulted in a draw, 2-2.

Most of our men are now Associate Members of the B.M.F. and we are glad to have this opportunity and privilege. Best wishes to all members.

H. JOHN WILLIAMS.

Mr. W. H. BALL

After serving the Baptist Union with unrivalled devotion for fifty-six years Mr. Ball laid down his office at the close of the year. As some recognition of the affection in which he is held, he is nominated to the Honorary Membership of the Union—an honour rarely bestowed. At our own Annual Meeting opportunity will be taken to give expression to our own appreciation. Meanwhile, we assure him that our ministers as a whole, to whom he has proved a real friend, are grateful for all his willing help and wish him many years of happy retirement and of continued usefulness.

BOOK REVIEWS

Baptists and Christian Unity. By R. L. Child. (Carey Kingsgate Press, Ltd.; 6d. net.)

The reprint of the Presidential Address by Principal Child to the Oxford and East Gloucester Association deserves this wider circulation. The writer deals frankly with the difficulties felt by Baptists towards schemes of union and suggests the ways in which closer fellowship may be achieved. This booklet would, if laid before a deacons' meeting for consideration and study, be far more valuable than most items which find their way on to the agenda.

The Dawn Breaks. By W. D. Grenfell. (Carey Kingsgate Press, Ltd.; 124 pp.; 5s. net.) Illustrated.

Excellent done. Mr. Grenfell describes the coming of the light of Christianity to Congo as seen through the eyes of an African, telling also of tribal life and customs in a vivid manner. The book gives, in an unusual way, an account of the work of the mission at San Salvador. The author has chosen a difficult medium for expressing what he has to say, but he has succeeded in his attempt.

Infant Baptism To-day. By Percy W. Evans, Henry Townsend, William Robinson. (Carey Kingsgate Press, Ltd., and The Berean Press; 44 pp.; 6d. net)

Something of this kind was needed and we can be grateful to the three learned Doctors who have prepared this clear statement at the request of the joint committee of the Baptist Churches and the Churches of Christ. For too long there has been a misguided idea that, as Baptists, we must keep quiet about Baptism of Believers, and must "soft-pedal" our distinctive witness; for to do otherwise would be un-ecumenical. Now, by a somewhat ironical turn of things, the discussion of Baptism has been provoked from the other side. In the last few years uneasiness among Paedo-Baptists has been growing. In the first part of this booklet Dr. William Robinson gives quotations from the works of a number of Paedo-Baptists who either declare openly that Christian Baptism of the New Testament and the Early Church was Baptism of Believers, or go further still and severely criticise the whole Paedo-Baptist position. Further, evidence is given of the uneasiness existing in many Paedo-Baptist quarters about the indiscriminate baptism of infants.

Dr. Evans and Dr. Townsend deal respectively with the doctrinal and ethical issues. Dr. Evans writes with lucidity, taking the doctrinal points and exposing the shifts and turns to which Paedo-Baptist defenders are driven in trying to give a coherent and logical doctrinal basis for their position.

One sentence from Dr. Townsend's contribution deserves special attention. "Infant baptism has grave responsibility for bad religion and the impotence of modern Christianity." Had

the Reformers carried the Reformation to its logical conclusion by linking together again what God had joined but what man had put asunder, namely, justification by faith together with believers' baptism, then the whole history of Europe, as indeed of the world, would have been different.

This booklet will be useful. It would have been improved by the addition of a bibliography; and if there is any hope that books of this kind are going to be read by people of other denominations and find a place on their bookstalls, then we must learn to give them more attractive covers.

W. W. BOTTOMS.
