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EDITORIAL

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND BAPTISM

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feels that he is the least of all. Above all, "though unrevealed to mortal sense, the spirit feels Him near—" Who is the true Head and Glory of the Church, her Risen and Ascended Lord.

Somewhat Sentimental? Be it so, but, my soul, be ever-sensitive to these spiritual realities and, taking other aspects of Church life in thy stride, join with Isaac Watts to sing of His people and their spiritual home :

"My tongue repeats her vows :
Peace to this sacred House!
For there my friends and kindred dwell;
And, since my glorious God,
Makes thee His blest abode,
My soul shall ever love Thee well."

REV. P. F. LANYON

As the notes for this issue of the *Fraternal* were being written news came in of the death of P. F. Lanyon of New Zealand—news not unexpected, because of his long period of impaired health, nevertheless news which came as a great shock. Our greatly esteemed brother was a loyal member of our B.M.F. and, as is seen elsewhere, our current N.Z. items were supplied by him, in an affectionate letter written only a few weeks ago. After efficient pastoral service he was appointed, fifteen years ago, Secretary of the B.U. and the B.M.S. of N.Z. and during that long period proved a wise counsellor and leader. At the recent Assembly of the Union he occupied the Presidential Chair and all are glad that he lived long enough to receive this signal honour. His loss will be felt throughout New Zealand and Australia and here, across the seas. The mantle of this Elijah has fallen upon L. A. North, bearer of an honoured name and inheritor of a great tradition. We send respectful sympathy to Mrs. Lanyon and pray all blessing upon his successor as he enters upon his high office.

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND BAPTISM

THE existence of a Commission of the Church of Scotland on Baptism will be known to British Baptists, if for no other reason than Dr. Payne's article on it in the *Baptist Times*. Every Presbytery of the Scottish Church has been asked to send its comments on the Commission's Interim Report by the end of 1955. Professor Torrance, the Commission's convener, has asked for a review of the Report in *The Fraternal*, that he and his colleagues might learn what Baptists have to say about it. This is a generous gesture. I respond to it with no little diffidence, for so careful a piece of work requires a corresponding assiduity that cannot be given at immediate notice. What I offer here is a purely personal and spontaneous reaction to the document in question and I hope it will be received as such.

It will be expected that this Report, coming from the home of solid theological learning, should manifest solid theological thinking. The expectation is fulfilled. It is the most impressive concise statement of the case for infant baptism that I have read. My brief enumeration of its arguments can do no more than indicate the positions reached. They are as follows :

(1) The Commission of the Risen Lord to baptise is rooted in His entire work as Incarnate Son. His baptism at the hands of John, which witnessed his baptism by the Spirit, led straight to the baptism of blood on the Cross, with its consequent gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. This *total* salvation event is what Paul means by the "one baptism" in Ephesians iv, 5—the baptism which Christ fulfilled for all men, giving validity to every subsequent baptism.

(2) John's baptism, culminating in the baptism of Jesus, was the inauguration of the Messianic era and therefore was integrated within the great salvation events wrought by the Christ. It was the fulfilment of the Isaianic prophecy of the New Exodus, when God should recreate His people, bringing them through Red Sea waters again, as it were, into a new realm.

(3) Christian baptism brings a man into such radical relation with the redemption and kingdom of Christ that his whole being becomes subject to the creative operation of the Spirit. Baptism, accordingly, is the sacrament of the new creation by which we enter on the regenerate life. This affords a parallel with the old creation: God did not consult man when He created him in His image; neither does He when He recreates him in redemptive grace. "Infants . . . are no more responsible for their being baptised than for their being created. But as they were created into responsibility, so in their recreation they are baptised into responsibility. They are baptised into Christ, summoned to confess His name."

(4) The promises of the New Covenant are distinctly declared to be "to you and your children" (Acts ii, 38). The objective fact behind baptism is God's calling, which is answered by our calling

on the name of the Lord. Not faith nor repentance, but God's adoption and the promise of the Spirit are prior. Baptism is the sacrament not of faith nor of repentance, but of the Gospel of grace. "In the New Covenant infants who are baptised learn to call on the name of God because they have been baptised into the name of the Lord and belong to Him."

(5) Abundant evidence from the New Testament shows that children as well as adults were normal recipients of baptism. Note in particular such cardinal sayings as Matt. xi, 25 f.; Matt. xviii, 2-5; Matt. xix, 13 ff.

(6) The idea of believers' baptism is entirely modern. It is bound up with the Renaissance idea of human individualism and autonomy and represents a radical divergence from the biblical teaching about man.

On these propositions I make the following comments:

(1) It is confusing to speak of the whole redemptive activity of Christ as His "baptism". The term *baptisma* in the New Testament is said to be a unique Christian word to describe God's great redemptive act. I doubt it very much. Every one of the six instances of its employment in Acts relates to *John's* baptism. In the Gospels the same applies to all but two passages. How can a term preponderately used to describe John's baptism be regarded as coined specifically to denote Christ's redemption? The two passages referred to are Mark x, 38-39, and Luke xii, 50, wherein the sufferings of Jesus are likened to a baptism. The precedents for this are surely the Old Testament comparisons of sufferings to the billows of the sea that threaten to overwhelm a man. In the Marcan saying the baptism is precisely paralleled by the cup, and the disciples are to share both; the former term is no more determinative for Jesus than the latter, and neither is fitted to express the completeness of His redemption. The "one baptism" of Ephesians iv, 5, is as exclusively the sign of the Church as the one faith along which it is set; I can find no evidence that by *hen baptisma* Paul meant the saving acts of Christ.

(2) It unduly magnifies John's baptism to call it the inauguration of the Messianic era. It heralds it, yes, but does not open it. John is the last of the old order, standing on the threshold of the new. He belongs to prophets and law (Matt. xi, 13). Though he was the greatest born of women, he stands *outside* the Kingdom and is therefore less than the least in it (Matt. xi, 11). At most John announced the plagues: Jesus was responsible for the Exodus (Luke ix, 31). To Paul John's baptism was purely anticipatory, and he that submitted to it required Christian baptism (Acts xix, 4); a baptism which requires rebaptism belongs to an order which has passed away.

(3)-(4) can be dealt with together, for the relation between the redemptive event, the covenant, baptism and faith is crucial. This

report declares: "Baptism, which takes place in a covenant relation between God and His people and requires faith and obedience, declares that it is not by our believing that we are saved, but by God alone. We cannot be saved apart from faith, if we grow up into responsible life, but faith relies entirely upon the faithfulness of Christ." With this we may agree. But with whom does God establish the New Covenant but those who, hearing the word, cast themselves on His mercy, surrender to the Christ who saves (for faith does nothing, Christ does all), are baptised into His death and resurrection and henceforth live in the Spirit? We set no age limit to the members of the New Race of priestly kings, as it is alleged of us, but we do declare that such are born not of the flesh but of the Spirit, and that no word of the New Testament encourages us to believe that a man can be crucified with Christ, risen with Him and born of the Spirit apart from his own responsive faith.

Adolf Schlatter declared that Paul can "express the Gospel not in half measure, but completely, without mentioning the sacraments at all. But if they come into view he connects with them the entire riches of the grace of Christ, because he sees in them the will of Jesus not partially but fully stamped and effective." I assent to that statement. But if the Gospel can be completely expressed in terms of faith, it is clear that all statements about the sacraments presuppose an active faith that *accompanies* them, not one merely expected or hoped for. This Scottish report speaks of Baptism as a dying with Christ, a rising with Him, a union with Him, a recreation in Him, a subjection to His total Lordship over body and soul: such language is acceptable on one condition only—that baptism and conversion be viewed as an indivisible unity of experience. In the view of most of us, to apply it to an infant is not one whit less superstitious than the miracle of the mass.

(5) The serious grappling with the theological problems of baptism in this report commands my profound respect. Candour compels me to say that its attempt to extort infant baptism from the Gospels fills me with astonishment. We are asked to believe that the "infants" to whom God has exclusively revealed the mystery of Christ (Matt. xi, 25 f.) are literally young children, and that the "little children" to whom John writes (1 John ii, 12) were actually infants. I would be intrigued to visit any creche whose inmates could take to themselves 1 John ii, 28; iii, 7; iii, 18; iv, 4; v, 21, and would willingly baptise the lot on the spot. Our Scottish friends, with their binocular spectacles on the wrong way round, find difficulty in explaining how Jesus could have spoken of "little ones who believe on me" (Matt. xviii, 6). They offer two explanations: (i) since these children are presumably baptised, to "believe into" is synonymous with "baptised into"; (ii) more probably faith is literally meant—"a staggering thing to say of 'little ones'." If infants are in mind, staggering is the right word. If children are in mind, why is it staggering?

But more: if in Matt. xviii, 6, to "believe into" equals to be "baptised into", then, urge our friends, to put a stumbling block in the way of children = to prevent their being baptised, which in the Lord's view, is "a terrible crime". Now let us be clear about this. Who are these terrible criminals? Baptists above all, for while a majority of pagans in western civilisation conform to custom and have their children baptised, we resist it. We therefore deserve to have millstones around our necks and be sunk in the Pacific! Far from belonging to the New Israel, we are like the Egyptians whom God destroyed in Israel's sight (the linguistic parallel is explicitly drawn in the report). Since Mark sets the saying in a context warning of the judgment of hell, without doubt we are doomed (Mark ix, 42 ff.). I can only presume that Dr. Torrance sent this report to me as a warning to flee from the wrath to come! Need one say more? Is this not a *reductio ad absurdum* of such views?

(6) Baptists are believed to have abandoned the Biblical doctrine of man and to be the product of Renaissance individualism. Why should that be said? It has always seemed to me a curious phenomenon that Old Testament scholars enthusiastically demonstrate the emergence in Israel of a strongly individual consciousness of God, such as we see in Jeremiah, but their New Testament opposites manifest an undue anxiety to talk down the consummation of this process, such as we see in Paul and supremely in our Lord. With all their faults, Baptists have always taken the doctrine of the Church seriously, and if it be true that the Biblical stress on corporate personality enshrines an imperishable truth, we may be pardoned for recalling that it was a Baptist who did more than anyone else for making that clear to Biblical theologians. We have never sought to diminish the reality of social solidarity, whether it be "in Adam" or "in Christ". Our great sin has apparently been the insistence that the transition from the one solidarity to the other can take place only as a man answers the call of Christ and receives His grace. But a personal relationship with Christ is the hall-mark of New Testament Christianity and must be maintained at all costs. We follow in the steps not of Erasmus but of the prophets and apostles, and evidently feel considerably more at home with their writings than our Pædo-Baptist friends appear to do.

Our denomination has much to learn of the theology of Baptism from our Scottish brethren. It is our shame that they have so little to learn from us. Yet that little is crucial: *To die and rise with Christ, and therefore to be baptised, is the prerogative of him who confesses, "Jesus is Lord"—of him and of no other; for the Baptism wherein God acts is the Baptism wherein man confesses.* This is the one Baptism of the Apostolic Church. The New Testament knows no other. The Gospel allows no other. Any theology claiming the sanction of the New Testament must come to terms with the significance of this primitive Baptismal utterance. It is our earnest hope that our friends north of the border will yet do so.

G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY.

THE CHURCH MEETING

FOR practical purposes a Baptist church meeting may be defined as a meeting of the members of a Baptist church duly convened for the transaction of business. Obviously, church members meet for many other purposes than to transact business, and such gatherings may doubtless be also described as, in a sense, meetings of the church. But a "church meeting" is a business meeting, and while that does not of itself make it any less or any more important than a prayer meeting or a social gathering, it does make it different. And if we grasp that difference we shall be better able to say what a church meeting should be and do.

Not only is the church meeting a business meeting. It is a business meeting of a very special kind. For the business which it transacts is "the Lord's business", first and foremost. The Church does not belong to man but to God. Jesus Christ is its Head, and His Spirit must guide and govern its affairs. The activities of a church, when rightly considered, represent so many different ways in which Christian people try to translate into the stuff of everyday human affairs the sovereign will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a principle which has very important implications. It means in the first place that a church meeting must be conducted in a serious and devout temper. I do not mean merely that the meeting must be opened with prayer. A church meeting is not necessarily conducted in a Christian spirit because that happens. Nor do I mean that there is no room in a church meeting for the saving graces of friendliness and good humour. On the contrary, the meeting will not get far without them. I mean that a church meeting is worthy of its name only if those taking part—minister, officers and members alike—are conscious that it is the work of Christ which they are met to consider, and if this truth exercises a steadying and guiding influence upon what is said and done. It should be the chief purpose of the opening devotions to invoke the gift of the Holy Spirit to that end.

Further, the special nature of a church meeting imposes upon all concerned the duty of efficiency. Inefficient business meetings of any kind are a weariness to the flesh. But what less can we say of inefficient church meetings than that they are an offence not only in the sight of man but also in the sight of God? For, as St. Paul said: "God is not a God of confusion but of peace". Those who would serve Him must bring to the business of His Church the offering of their best. Punctual timing, good chairmanship, proper minutes, a well-planned agenda, and loyal obedience to the rules of order and debate—these seemingly humdrum factors are not insignificant extras, the absence of which can be lightly glossed over. They are vital to a properly conducted church meeting, and however little bearing upon religion they may appear to have, experience shows that it is out of such materials that wise and fruitful decisions

emerge. Without them even the best plans are apt to fall to the ground in ruin, and a church meeting which began hopefully may end in confusion and bitterness.

So much then for the context of the meeting. But what of its content? It is easy enough to say that the meeting is called to transact church business. But that aim may be frustrated by a lack of adequate thought and imagination beforehand. Take, for example, the familiar problem of the relationship of the work of the diaconate to the church meeting. We have all heard it said that members are reluctant to come to the church meeting because they argue that the business has all been "cut and dried" beforehand, and they will not meet merely to "rubber-stamp" decisions of the deacons. On the other hand, we also know of those who stay away for precisely the opposite reason, and who ask why they should be expected to waste their time discussing the expenditure of a few shillings on a coat of paint for the vestry, or a new broom for the caretaker. The fact is, both sets of critics are right in what they resent but wrong in the way they resent it. Church members are entitled to be given a responsible share in discharging the business of their church, no matter how efficient its officers may be. That is their right. But plainly the business which they are asked to discuss should not consist of trivialities, but should be worthy of serious deliberation and decision. In short, a church meeting can be only what the church as a whole resolves to make it. If it is not fulfilling its proper functions the responsibility rests with the members. Simply to stay away is not only a breach of loyalty; it is the surest method not of mending the church meeting, but of ending it.

How can the church meeting be improved? This is a question of peculiar importance for Baptists, for we and our friends the Congregationalists are on trial in this matter. Our two denominations, alone of all the major Christian denominations, pin their faith to what is commonly described as the "congregational" form of church government. That is, we alone attach so much importance to the church meeting as to make it the distinctive organ through which the church under Christ governs itself without the intervention of any outside body. This meeting is, in fact, the lynch-pin of Baptist church order, in contrast to the Bishop, the Presbytery, or the Circuit meeting in other denominations; and, if the church meeting fails, the result is either anarchy in the church or else the rule of the strongest, and of these twin evils it is difficult to say which is the worse.

Granted, however, that this is our Baptist theory, I am afraid we must acknowledge that it is an ideal which is very difficult to live up to. In not a few Baptist churches the church meeting is far from being well-attended, and even if the attendance is good, the proceedings may be a source of friction and weakness rather than of harmony and progress. What should be our glory becomes our shame. Yet, thank God, this is by no means universally true. If

we have our failures, we have also our successes; and there are many Baptist churches in which the church meeting is a real forum where matters great and small are discussed in a spirit worthy of their setting. The problem is, how to increase the number of such. It is not an easy one to solve, but I will venture to offer two or three practical suggestions.

First, I think each church needs to consider on its merits the question how often the church meeting should be held. The prevailing tradition is once a month, and certainly it is a good thing to have a regular rule. But let it be a sensible rule. For my part, I see no point in having a church meeting every month unless there is sufficient business to call for it. A large church will usually require a business meeting once a month. But smaller churches often do not, and in such cases there may be a temptation to fill in time by needlessly discussing trifles, or else using prayer as a stop-gap—than which few proceedings can be more soul-destroying. Would it not be better either to enlarge the scope of the meeting in a way which I shall suggest in a few moments, or else decide to hold the church meeting (say) once a quarter, and thus give opportunity for a full agenda? Arrangements would still have to be made for urgent business; but that need not necessarily interfere with the regular arrangements.

Secondly, every church should make sure that its members appreciate the function and importance of the church meeting by educating them on this point, and by keeping a particular evening free for church business. It should go without saying that no other meeting should be allowed to be held on church premises at the same time as the church meeting. But even that rule is perhaps hardly enough. For when other meetings are regularly announced to be held before or after the church meeting, there is a danger that people will think such meetings have an equal claim with the church meeting upon their loyalty. Whereas the church meeting should stand first. This is particularly important with young people, who need to be trained to appreciate its significance. Let them understand that to attend church meetings is something which is rightfully to be expected of all members who can possibly manage it.

Finally, the core of the problem is reached when we grapple seriously with the question: What is the business which a church meeting should transact? When people are invited to a missionary meeting they know what to expect. What do they expect when they attend the church meeting? Would it be too much to say that in most Baptist churches they would find the accent falling almost exclusively upon matters connected with the membership or the organization or the premises of the local church? Only rarely would they see how these are related to the large concerns of the Kingdom of God, which are what the church really exists to promote. I do not deny that the affairs of the local church are of importance, and need to be carefully considered. But are they enough? Would

not our Master sometimes have to say of us that we "tithed mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith"?

The point to remember is that the proper business of the church cannot be confined simply within its own borders, but reaches out to the needs and problems of the world in which the church is placed; and I suggest that it is the absence of these large concerns from many of our church meetings which makes them so often unattractive and ineffective. For the revivifying of the church meeting, I think we must seek a fresh vision of Christ and His purpose for men—a vision so compelling that it will make it impossible for a church to remain contentedly within its own four walls, and will arouse a new and deeper interest in the men and women who pass the doors of our churches, but do not come in.

In this connection I think the Ecumenical Movement has something to teach us, for it has encouraged many of our churches to invite representatives of other denominations to visit them and talk about their distinctive modes of worship, etc.—not infrequently with excellent results, in the quickening of mutual interest and sympathy. Could not this kind of experiment be extended? It suggests that a church thrives best when its interests are geared into the great undertakings of God which are being quickened by the energies of His Spirit at work in the world. The Ecumenical Movement represents one way in which this may happen. But it is not the only way; and there is much to be said for seeking to explore others. John Wesley claimed the world as his parish, and he was right. The proper business of a church meeting includes the preaching of the gospel at home and abroad, the translation and circulation of the Scriptures, the planting of churches, and the vigorous pursuit of social righteousness in all its many forms. And the very fact that we cannot possibly do any one of these things adequately alone should lead us to be more and more interested in co-operating with others who are also doing them. Nor need we go far from our own doorstep to find them. In any community of average size, all kinds of activities are being carried on which bear directly or indirectly upon the progress of the Kingdom of God. Some of them are concerned with the care of the sick and the aged, others with the handicapped in mind or body, others with the victims of evil habits and passions, others with those who have fallen into crime. Many of these activities are pursued by organizations which stand in constant need of voluntary gifts and workers, and which look to the churches for help. Nor do they look in vain. But how good it would be for a church meeting to invite from time to time a representative from one of these organizations, who could speak about its work and give an account of its problems and needs and achievements as part of the age-long battle of Christ against the devil. None of the parables of Jesus is more searching than that in which he reminded his hearers that in the Judgment-day

they would not be cross-examined upon their attendance at church, but upon their practical interest in the hungry, the sick, the homeless and the prisoner. The church which placed such concerns on the agenda of its church meeting would be fulfilling a double purpose. On the one hand, it would be actively strengthening the forces of righteousness, and giving practical expression to the gospel of Christ; and on the other hand, it would be helping its own members to grow in Christian character and citizenship, so that the inner life of the Church would be correspondingly enriched and strengthened.

My space is exhausted, so I will end by saying that I hope no one will be deterred from trying out some of these suggestions by supposing that they are too ambitious. They are not intended as a programme to be rigidly applied, but as a stimulus to thought. If better ways can be suggested of making our church meetings more truly effective, let us be told of them. The one thing we cannot afford to do is to stay as we are.

R. L. CHILD.

THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

THE MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

IT is quite clear from a reading of the New Testament that from the beginning there were those in all the churches who had the duty laid upon them to take the lead in giving pastoral oversight, in preaching the Gospel, in exercising discipline and in preserving sound doctrine. Their particular responsibilities and functions were of different kinds. But nowhere in the New Testament do we find anything like that division between "laity" and "clergy" which later became only too evident with its stress on clericalism and its confusion of "the Church" with a specific hierarchy of Church leaders and officials. Referring to the New Testament, Dr. R. Newton Flew writes: "All the ministries are based on the principle of the universal ministry of all believers" (*Jesus and His Church*, page 204). The New Testament makes clear that the Church is the *Laos*, the people of God. It is only against the background of this belief that we can understand the work of the ministry both within the New Testament and within the Christian Church today.

The various "ministries" which arose in the Church were "nothing more than a specialisation of the ministry which was the common privilege and the common duty of all". (E. F. Scott, *The Fellowship of the Spirit*, page 173.) This "specialisation" is to be seen in terms of differentiation of function rather than in appointment to office. Indeed, right through the whole of the New Testament the important ideas in this connection are not those of "office" and "form" but those of "gift" and "function". The various "ministries" were differentiated by reason of the different functions which the members had to perform and the different

gifts which they possessed. Moreover, although they may have been commissioned by an Apostle or set apart by a local church, the fundamental factor would be the working and calling of the Holy Spirit within them to this work or that.

Insofar as these several "ministries" can be called "offices" within the Church, they arose in every case out of the demand of new tasks to be accomplished in feeding the faithful and in evangelising the people. This can be seen particularly in the election of the Seven (Acts vi), in the appointment of Presbyters or Elders in Jerusalem (Acts xi) and in such missionary tasks as those of Prophets, Evangelists and Teachers (Ephesians iv, etc.). In each case the "office" grew out of the "gift" and not the "gift" out of the "office". Each ministry was a specialisation of function in which mere precedence of rank was of no account. Their authority, within their own ranks and within the ranks of the entire *Laos*, was moral and spiritual and never magisterial.

For the very reason that the various "ministries" grew out of the performance of new functions we cannot hope to find in the New Testament final confirmation concerning any particular form of ministry today, be it Episcopal, Presbyterian or Congregational, as if that were the pattern of all future Church ministries. What is important is that the form of this ministry should express the function of the Church in such a way that the structure of the Church and the ministry becomes the vehicle of the Spirit of God.

THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Among the many forms of ministry found in the New Testament are two in particular which are recognisable in the Churches of our own faith and order during a considerable period of our history. These are the ministries of Elder (or Presbyter or Bishop) and Deacon. For the purposes of this article we shall confine ourselves almost entirely to the ministry of the Deacon.

"The word 'deacon' means literally an assistant and was used in the first instance to describe the man who helped the fully accredited missionaries." (*The Pastoral Epistles*, page 34.) Of such a kind was Mark, whom Paul and Barnabas took with them on their missionary journeyings (Acts xiii, 5). It seems likely that the office of Presbyter, when it first emerged in the Church in Jerusalem, was on the model of the "elder" in the Jewish synagogue, and it is possible that the two offices of Presbyter and Deacon have some real connection with the ἀρχισυναγωγος and the ἰπηρετής (Goetz, *Zeitschrift N.T. Wissenschaft*, 1931, page 91, quoted by Dr. R. Newton Flew, page 196, footnote 3). Whatever the exact origin of the office of Deacon, the important thing is not the particular form of this ministry, but rather the spiritual function which the Deacon had to perform.

Two New Testament passages in particular are often quoted in this connection. These are Acts vi and 1 Timothy iii, verses 8 ff., of

which the latter is much more significant for our purpose. Concerning Acts vi, which describes the appointment of the Seven, Dr. A. W. F. Blunt writes: "This is not . . . the institution of a regular diaconate, but it is the starting point for the division of function in the Church which later became stereotyped in a regular system of Ministry" (The Acts of the Apostles, Clarendon Bible, page 160). We are not to look to this account for the origin or pattern of the diaconate as we know it. The evidence seems to point to the fact that the work of the Seven (who are not actually called "deacons") as "servers of tables" was unique and they were shortly to be scattered abroad following the death of Stephen.

Of greater significance is the passage 1 Timothy iii, verses 8-13, which lays down certain rules concerning the choice of deacons. It is of significance to observe that these rules have much in common with those for the appointment of Bishops or Elders detailed in verses 1-7. In each case they are to be men of unimpeachable character. One difference of emphasis is that, in the case of Deacons, stress is laid not only on their moral and religious standing, but on their business abilities as well. At first the work of the Deacon was to tend to the needs of missionaries and to help them in the establishing of new churches. In course of time, but still at an early date, "it was found convenient to provide the 'Elders' or governing body in each community with a group of subordinates who relieved them of duties which belonged to the practical more than the spiritual side of their work" (E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles*, page 34).

There is no indication in New Testament times that the various ministries were of the nature of grades of orders in which a man passed through the office of Deacon to that of Elder, and finally (as in *post* New Testament times) to that of sole Bishop in the local congregation. Indeed, all the evidence is to the contrary. But it seems natural to assume that the Deacons of any particular church fellowship would be among those most seriously considered to become Elders.

The New Testament evidence points to the fact that there were women Deacons in the Church as well as men Deacons. In Romans xvi, 1, we read of Phoebe, "a deaconess of the church at Cenchræa". It is possible that Tryphena and Tryphosa and Persis (Romans xvi, 12) and Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians iv, 3) performed this same function. Concerning 1 Timothy iii, 11, E. F. Scott writes: "The directions . . . repeat what has been said about deacons and seem to refer to women who were engaged in the same kind of work. Elsewhere in the Epistle we hear of female assistants (1 Timothy v, 9 f.), and apparently they are contemplated here. In the time of Paul there were already 'deaconesses' in the church" (*ibid.*, page 36).

The duties of men and women Deacons would be, then, chiefly to tend to the physical and material needs of the fellowship, and in particular the needs of the aged, the poor and the sick; the "Deaconesses" having as their special care the women members of the Church.

THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON AMONG BAPTISTS

The Baptist conception of the ministry is governed by the fact that it is essentially a ministry of the Church. It is the responsibility of the Church, and not simply of one class or caste within the Church, to perform the work of the ministry, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments. But from the very beginning Baptists have had an exalted conception of the office of the Christian minister and have regarded it as a true ordinance of Christ in the sense that it is an expression of the will of Christ for His Church. Some have denied that the ministry "is essential to the existence of a true Christian Church", whilst accepting that it "is necessary for its highest effectiveness" (Report of B.U. Council, 1930, pages 38-39). Others, like Hercules Collins, writing in 1702, could say: "There are necessary ordinances to be administered in the Church of Christ till the end of the world; therefore ministers are necessary. The Word of reconciliation is committed to them, the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper."

But this term "minister" among Baptists was not confined to the one function of ministry with which we tend to associate it today. In the so-called "Orthodox Creed" of 1678, representing the General Baptist convictions, it is stated that the ministry of the Church is of three kinds—Bishop or Messenger, Elder or Pastor, and Deacon or Overseer of the poor, each of whom is ordained to office (*vide* E. A. Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers*, page 36). The Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century, on the other hand, had a two-fold order of ministry, Elders or Pastors and Deacons. Once again appointment to both offices was "with imposition of hands of the Eldership of the Church, if there be any before constituted therein" (*1689 Confession*, McGlothlin, page 266, quoted by E. A. Payne, *ibid.*, page 38). This extract from the Particular Baptist Confession of 1677 is of interest: "A particular Church gathered, and completely organised, according to the mind of Christ, consists of Officers and Members: and the Officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the Church . . . are Bishops or Elders and Deacons".

Of particular interest is John Smyth's last confession, which not only includes Deacons as well as Pastors, Teachers and Elders within the ministry, but also admits women to the diaconate (McGlothlin, page 80).

An inevitable question which arises out of information of this kind is: Is the office of Deacon being given its true place among Baptists today as a truly spiritual ministry, and is the function of the diaconate being rightly understood, particularly where it functions alongside the pastoral ministry?

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEACON

It is not without significance that in 1 Timothy iii the qualities required of a Deacon have much in common with the qualities required in an Elder. In each case the calling is of God and in each

case the work is spiritual. Space permits only brief mention of the Deacon's responsibilities within the local fellowship of believers.

Firstly, he will be a man of unimpeachable character; he must be "serious, temperate, trustworthy" (1 Timothy iii, 11). He is to be an example to the flock in belief and in conduct, rightly governing his own life and home, and in good standing with his neighbours.

Secondly, he will have as his aim the unity and the spiritual good of the Church. His responsibility is much wider than that of "serving tables". He will assist the minister in trying to weld the Church and its organisations into a unity by periodically taking it upon himself to visit the various activities of the fellowship, not just as a casual visitor but in fulfilment of his duty as a responsible officer of the Church.

Thirdly, he will have a special concern for the material side of the Church's life; it is his responsibility to transact capably and in a Christian manner the business of the Church. In this he can ably assist the minister in his task by taking off his shoulders many administrative duties which are nevertheless necessary for the true ordering of the fellowship. In this connection he will attend faithfully the Deacons' Meeting and fulfil his duties there with concern for the well-being of the Church as a whole.

Fourthly, he will take a special interest in the physical and material well-being of his fellow-members. Many ministers have found it of great help to have certain of their Deacons take part with them in the visitation of their area. Whether they do this themselves or delegate it to others, they must feel themselves responsible for the proper fulfilment of this need within the Christian community.

Fifthly, he will be responsible for assisting the minister in administering the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. A great spiritual service can be rendered by the Deacon in the matter of interviewing candidates with a view to Baptism and Church membership. In many churches this practice is far too slipshod and often most inadequately performed; it is not a task that can be handed out to anyone. Indeed, the Deacon himself may not be the right person for this task in every case, but it is his responsibility, together with the minister, to see that such matters are carried through in a fitting manner.

The practice of the Deacon offering prayer at the Communion Table is dying out in many churches, chiefly because the Deacon (or the minister) feels that the minister "can do it much better". This is very unfortunate. The Deacon has a great task to perform in this connection and, if made fully aware of his responsibility and if given a certain amount of guidance and help by his minister, can prove of real help in the carrying out of that service.

The ministry of the Church may take many forms, but in whatever form it may appear it must express *diakonia*. The functions of the ministry may vary, as indeed they must, for the gifts of Christ to His Church are many; but together they must enrich the life of the Church and exalt the name of Christ.

D. S. RUSSELL.

MINISTERIAL AUTHORITY

THE first of the *Tracts for the Times* issued by the Oxford Movement invited the clergy of the Church of England to ask themselves by what authority they exercised their ministerial functions. Though the answer at which Baptist ministers arrive is different from that reached by ministers with a "Catholic" outlook, the question is no less important for us. In the pulpit, in the pastoral office, in his dealings with his church officers and members, the minister needs to know what his authority is and how it should be exercised.

His consciousness of authority was an outstanding characteristic of the ministry of Jesus Christ our Lord. "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father." (Matthew xi, 27; cf. the parable of the rock and the sand, Matthew vii, 24-29.) His authority was recognised and accepted, both by His disciples (Matthew xvi, 16) and more generally. (Mark i, 22.) But in what spirit was the authority exercised? Mark thus records the Master's mind: "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister . . ." (x, 45). In the acted parable of the washing of the disciples' feet (John xiii, 4-17) the Master sought to drive home the lesson of His words. Again, how was His authority exercised in the ministry of preaching and teaching? Although He possessed the consciousness of supreme authority His use of persuasion was a striking feature of His public ministry. He addressed Himself to the mind, the conscience, and the experience of His hearers. (Luke xi, 13, and xii, 57.) His use of parables seems to have been in part in order to make His hearers think for themselves. We must add that although Jesus was a King who exercised His kingship on earth in the role of a servant, there were times when He felt that His authority needed to be expressed clearly and powerfully, sometimes in word, as in Matthew xxiii, sometimes in action, as in His cleansing of the Temple. (Mark xi, 15.) It is a poor type of Baptist minister who is unable, through weakness of character, or lack of courage or conviction, to speak with authority in a situation which calls for rebuke and judgment.

We may go on to enquire more fully into the matter. The New Testament unquestionably bears witness to the fact of ministerial authority. "Respect those who . . . are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." (1 Thess. v, 12; cf. Hebrews xiii, 17.) In what spirit is this ministerial authority to be exercised? Here both the teaching and example of the Lord are clear. "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger: and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." (Luke xxii, 24-27.) What of ministerial authority in the pulpit and in the teaching office? We may note, in addition to the use of persuasion by Christ, the outlook of the Apostle Paul. Though he could and did on occasion speak with severity (1 Cor. iv, 21, and 2 Thess. iii, 14), and as we have indicated, passages of this kind should

be given their full significance in thinking of the work of the Baptist minister today, Paul "never prays that a spirit of submission may be granted to his converts, but that they themselves should abound in knowledge and practical wisdom". (J. Oman, *Vision and Authority*, page 154.) So he does not talk down to them, but on the contrary credits them with what are to us astonishing powers of spiritual capacity and discernment. What he has in mind for them is not a passive reception of his authority, but their increasing entrance upon the glorious liberty of the children of God.

But wherein lies the authority of the minister to engage in the ministerial office? The Roman Church has its answer. The Church commissions the priest with authority to exercise priestly functions in the Mass, in the hearing of confessions and in the pronouncing of absolution. Anglican ministers find their authority, generally speaking, in their part in the Apostolic Succession. For us ministerial authority begins with the Call of Christ into the work of the ministry. To the man who knows himself for what he is, there are times when it requires a considerable act of faith to believe that Christ has really called him to such exalted office. The fact that the Church has confirmed his Call adds great weight to his conviction, and Baptists have rightly emphasised the importance of such confirmation. "By the *Ministry* we mean an office within the Church of Christ (not a sacerdotal order) conferred through the call of the Holy Spirit and attested by a particular or local church." (*Baptist Handbook*, 1955 edition, page 49.) In English Baptist life there is usually more than one link in this attestation. It begins with the Church of which a man is a member, it includes the local Association, a College Committee or the Ministerial Recognition Committee of the Baptist Union, and finally there is the confirmation given by the Church which invites the man to become its minister. The Baptist minister who has passed through these tests of his Call to the ministry may well feel that his ministerial authority is firmly based, resting as it does on the Call of Christ attested and re-attested by the judgment of the Church.

With us ministerial authority and character are bound up together, as they are in the New Testament. (Hebrews xiii, 7; 1 Peter v, 3.) It would obviously be wrong to say that the Roman Church is indifferent to character in her priests. Nevertheless the relation between ministerial authority and character is not viewed in that Church as we view it. "The efficacy of her priesthood rests on the certainty of office and not on the uncertainty of character." (J. Oman, *Vision and Authority*, page 72.) The grace of God is mediated through the imperfect characters of Baptist ministers, but with us the minister is only accorded that measure of authority by his congregation which his character as a Christian man commands, and rightly so. The moral and spiritual demands on our ministers are exacting indeed, but not more exacting than the New Testament demands.

In his address to the elders of the Church at Ephesus the Apostle Paul (Acts xx, 28) spoke of the two ministerial functions as oversight and the feeding of the flock. The ministry of oversight, of leadership, is a prime necessity of the Church's life, especially in days like these, in which in Britain at any rate a minister may be called to exercise his office among a comparatively small congregation in a building originally intended for a much larger one. His responsibility is so to lead and teach his people that they will indeed be a company of the people of God, glorifying Him in their worship and becoming in His hand an increasingly effective evangelistic instrument in the community. But it must be emphasised again that the kind of leadership a Baptist minister is called to exercise is that which aims at building up in the Church a company of intelligent and responsible believers, growing in spiritual insight, in understanding of their faith and its implications for daily life, and in effective witness and service.

Such leadership calls for the best training a man can secure, especially in days in which educational opportunity has increased so greatly. Whereas it was an exceptional thing forty years ago for a young man or woman to go to college or university from an average Baptist Church in Britain, it is now becoming a commonplace. Devotion to Christ and zeal for souls are indispensable parts of the minister's equipment, but to these must be joined adequate training, as John Fawcett and others like him discerned long ago.

The feeding of the flock involves at times the exercise of discipline. As the one who has been called to pastoral oversight it will be the minister's duty not to let a situation which calls for disciplinary action on the part of the Church drift, but to take the initiative in seeing that appropriate action is taken. Let him remember, however, that though he will generally exercise ministerial initiative it is the action of the Church which is called for. The Church *as a whole* has been "sent" to make known to men God's gracious dealings with mankind in His Son and also to exercise spiritual discipline. (John xx, 21-23.) The minister will therefore be careful to consult and to act in concert with those who share with him special responsibility for the spiritual oversight of the Church.

It occasionally happens that despite a Church's Call to him the minister finds that he is not given the honour due to his office. But this is exceptional. Generally speaking, where the minister is, despite his human frailties, a man who is obviously dedicated to the service of Christ and in a true sense a man of God, the people to whom he ministers will accord to him the ministerial authority which is rightly his.

JOHN O. BARRETT.

WORSHIP IN A BAPTIST BETHEL

THE last issue of our *Fraternal* features a provocative article from the pen of Denis Lant, in which he baldly says that "The Lord's Supper is the central act of Christian worship". He then goes on to give what guidance he can to get the best out of what is left to us in our Baptist form of worship, since we have been so foolish as to relegate the Lord's Supper from its central place.

In the *Fraternal*, No. 84, issued in April, 1952, Frank Buffard had an article on "The Worshipper and Public Worship". Buffard was writing from the vantage point of the "receiving end". He had been out of the pulpit for two years by then, and during that time had been regularly in the pew. He had many salutary things to say about the different "elements in worship". Curiously enough, he did not even mention the Lord's Supper. Or was it curious?

We had a minister's United Fraternal in Watford. Anglicans and Non-conformists were in it. On one occasion we were discussing Church union, and one of our ministers, by which I mean one of the non-conformist persuasion, who now preaches in an outstanding pulpit in England, was urging the need for one Church and a uniform worship. A young Anglo-Catholic clergyman took him to task. His argument was that if it were possible to have one Church tomorrow it would still be necessary for that one Church to have as many different types of service as we have now; for those who find that one type of worship suits them are at sea in another.

Now this Anglo-Catholic brother was surely right. There are those for whom the type of worship which Denis Lant advocates is essential. Some of my friends are among the number. Their sensitive and æsthetic nature needs this medium through which to worship God. I know them far too well ever to doubt their sincerity or to scorn their choice. But let it be clearly appreciated that there are others for whom that kind of thing means nothing. Let us take two extreme cases, in which preference is woven into organised procedure. I refer to the Quakers and the Salvation Army. These two are poles apart in department, and yet they have this in common that they have no Lord's Supper in their worship. Is their worship not real worship because of this?

What is Christian worship? Definitions are many, but they all indicate adoration of God. Wheeler Robinson, in his contribution to the Mansfield College book on Christian Worship, said that "worship is essentially, as well as etymologically, the recognition of God's worth. It has no direct reference to the edification of the worshippers. It is an offering to God, acceptable to Him and incumbent on man. All other aspects of worship are subordinate to this primary emphasis." For Calvin, the primary thing in Christianity is to adore God rightly. "*Le premier point de la christienté est d'adorer Dieu droitement.*" As Dr. John Whale says:

“ Fundamental to and constitutive of worship is an adoring sense of the honour and obedience due to God ”. Now, if a man, or a congregation, succeeds in doing this, does it really matter if it is not done in the way that Denis Lant would have it?

That this adoration of God may be worthy, it is necessary that the worshipper should have an adequate appreciation of the nature of God, and of what He wills to do for us. It was to this end that the sermon was given such a large place in the worship of the reformed churches. “ The Reformers therefore removed the Sacraments from the central position, explaining that God’s promises in His word and the believing trust of men were alone essential.” This prominence of the sermon in evangelical worship is frowned upon by many a lover of liturgical and sacramental forms of worship. It is not sufficient in such judgments to condemn poor preaching, though this is invariably the case. Many of our modern topical homilies do not do much to extol the majesty of our Maker. But, on the other hand, I have knelt in a church of liturgical worship when the clergyman has so gabbled the prayers that it destroyed all sense of worship for me. In other places it has been done with such feeling and reverence that my soul has been carried on wings of devotion. In the same way a poor exponent of the art of preaching provides no real condemnation of the purpose and place of the sermon in reformed public worship.

When Mr. Luckhurst, of Wodrow’s *Analecta*, returned from Scotland, he told his friends that he had gone to St. Andrews, where he heard Mr. Blair, who showed him the majesty of God. “ He exhibited the divine sovereignty and glory in a way that I had never beheld before. In the afternoon of that same day I heard a little fair man, Rutherford by name, and he moved and melted my whole heart by showing me the loveliness of Christ.” Can anyone doubt that Luckhurst’s worship was greatly helped by preaching like that?

When it comes to the channels through which our adoration is to be expressed, Denis Lant is worried that there is so little opportunity in our Baptist services for people to respond. He regrets the lack of printed liturgies and responses. That our people are often guilty of not responding is only too true; but the fault is surely in dull and obdurate hearts, and not necessarily in the form of worship. I have been in services where the “ Amens ” and the “ Praise the Lords ” have been so spontaneous and repeated during extempore prayer as to make the responses of liturgical worship pale shadows of reality.

But surely the greatest opportunity that can be given to any congregation to “ set forth God’s most worthy praise ” is in the praise. It is just not true that the only chance our people get to express themselves is in the Lord’s Prayer—the “ only prayer in which our people can join ”, when the worshippers in a simple

**A MESSAGE FROM MR. SEYMOUR J. PRICE TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE BAPTIST MINISTERS' FELLOWSHIP**

My dear Friends,

In the early years of his ministry, Spurgeon's text for his New Year's sermon was sent to him by "an esteemed and venerable vicar of a Surrey parish" and accompanying the text was a parcel containing "a generous testimony of his love". Sometimes the text seemed hardly appropriate for the first Sunday in January, as in 1868 when the text was Romans viii, 22, 23, which, said Spurgeon, "is very far from easy to handle". Nevertheless, the resulting sermon entitled "Creation's Groans and the Saints' Sighs" was appropriate, although when I read the sentence beginning "Climbing the lofty Alps . . . we have felt that this world was built to be a temple of God", I wondered how much Spurgeon knew by personal experience of "climbing the lofty Alps".

On two occasions at least the venerable friend sent texts on which Spurgeon had recently preached, and, said Spurgeon: "We need not be at all afraid of preaching from the same text twice; the word is inexhaustible, it may be trodden in the winepress many times, and yet run with generous wine. We ought not to hesitate to preach a second time from a passage, any more than anyone going to the village well would be ashamed to put down the same bucket twice, or feel at all aggrieved at sailing twice down the same river; there is always a freshness about gospel truth" . . .

Relying on Spurgeon's exegesis, I want to repeat what I have previously written concerning two insurances.

1. It is most important that premises and contents should be adequately insured against fire. In 1955 we had notice of damage to some church property. The next day the officers instructed us to double the insurance on the remaining buildings and contents, as they were considerably under-insured. About the same time we had a claim from a private resident all of whose furniture had been destroyed. We paid out the full amount for which the furniture was insured but our assessor reported that the furniture was probably worth much more than double.

2. In the New Year's letter seven years ago I urged that Public Liability policies should have an indemnity of not less than £2,500. Damages awarded by Juries have continued to rise, in some instances to fantastic amounts. Our recommendation now is that the indemnity should be not less than £25,000. The additional premium is quite small.

May all joy and blessing be with you, your home and your church, from the beginning of this New Year to its end.

Yours heartily,

SEYMOUR J. PRICE.

Baptist Bethel unite to sing, as those in some great cathedral often can't or won't, great hymns of praise like:

"The God of Abraham praise,
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love . . ."

Will anyone suggest that they are not having an opportunity to "give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name"?

I note that Frank Buffard says that he "had long thought that we used too many hymns in our service. I find I was wrong. . . . I find the hymns one of the most helpful elements in worship."

So let it be. I have no fault to find with liturgical and sacramental forms of worship for those who find in them the vehicle through which to worship God. But let it not be said that our services are characteristically weak in opportunity for adoration as against the others. Many of us find in them a vehicle for the worship of our Maker which we do not find when a printed order of service is put into our hands.

W. J. GRANT.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

THE Lord Jesus gave to the Apostles and to all His disciples the direction and authority to exercise discipline over all the members of His Church. In claiming this power the primitive Church was but exercising the acknowledged right of every properly constituted society. The good family necessarily has its discipline; the State demands the observance of its laws. Even a club claims the right to exclude the member not conforming to its rules. But for the "colony of heaven", whose distinctive life is her witness, the exercise of corporate discipline is of vital importance.

It is evident both from the New Testament and the history of the Church that in the exercise of Church discipline there are two extremes which should be avoided. We may call these moral laxity and moral rigorism. There are warnings against both in the teaching of Jesus. The gospel of the free grace of God, the indiscriminate invitation to all sorts and conditions of men, can easily be made the excuse for moral laxity. The Master's parable of the man without a wedding garment (Matt. xxii, 11-13) corrects this tendency, with its insistence upon the necessity of repentance, faith, and righteousness. All may enter the Kingdom, but there are conditions and requirements. On the other hand, the Saviour corrects that excessive zeal for the purity of the Church which is the characteristic of moral rigorism. The tares and the wheat must be left to grow together until the harvest. (Matt. xiii, 24-30.) For "men are not capable of carrying out the separation effectively. As in the early stages of growth, darnel and wheat resemble each other, so do true disciples and false believers. Men cannot discern the heart; if they attempt

to make an effective separation, they will inevitably commit errors of judgement and root up good wheat with the tares". (Jeremias—"The Parables of Jesus".) Taking into account these elements in the teaching of Jesus, we shall seek to avoid in the exercise of Church discipline both a complaisant laxity and an inflexible rigorism. Or, to put the same things positively, there must be both concern and charity. How finely these are combined in many a New Testament passage! "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." (Gal. vi, 1.) We are to do something about it and not just ignore it; but it is to be done with a tender heart, with humility and gentleness. Where this combination is preserved we cannot go far wrong in the exercise of church discipline.

The Lord Jesus Himself has given to us explicit directions for the discipline of the offender, in Matthew xviii, 15-20. First of all the attempt is to be made to deal with the matter personally and privately—"go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone". The initiative in putting matters right is to be taken by the Christian who has been wronged, and he is to keep the whole affair, if possible, entirely private. Here we come upon the important principle that we should not advertise wrongdoing unnecessarily. It is not to be brought even before a selected few mature Christians, and certainly not before the whole local Church, unless impenitence and obduracy makes that course necessary. The pastor of a Church can often rectify wrong without anyone other than the offender knowing anything about it. He must also on occasions encourage and urge "Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord". If he can get the unreconciled couple to meet together, they can usually be trusted to put the matter right themselves. But how often the spiritual life of the local Church is marred because we do not insist on the unreconciled putting matters right. Acceptance of the Lordship of Christ in the Church involves obedience to His explicit teaching on this matter.

If this first and private attempt to discipline the offender fails, then the next stage is to "take one or two others along with you". Even now it is not to be taken before the whole Church. It is possible that Paul has such a small group of mature Christians in mind, rather than the whole fellowship, when he appeals to "you who are spiritual" to restore the fallen brother. This was regarded as a duty of the elders of the Church, charged with the spiritual oversight of the flock. The court of elders or of deacons has a special responsibility for the exercise of discipline in the Church. All Church members should know that there is access to "the oversight" at all times, if there is a wrong in the Church which needs to be rectified. It is sometimes the right course to invite offending Church members to appear before the court of elders or of deacons, or before two or three representatives selected by them. Several times in the writer's experience wrongs have been rectified in this way.

“ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church ”. If private remonstrance fails, then the wrongdoer must be disciplined by the Church Meeting. It is quite clear from the New Testament that the local Church has this authority. The incestuous person in the Church at Corinth was to be disciplined and excluded by the decision and act of the Church. “ When you are assembled . . . with the power of the Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan.” For decisions of this kind, unanimity was not required. It is described in 2 Corinthians ii, 6, as “ punishment by the majority ”. Following the precedent of the synagogue, the primitive Church did not hesitate to excommunicate the impenitent and obdurate, although the aim of the exclusion was to bring about reformation and repentance. There comes a point where the purity and reputation of the Church must be protected. If error, vice and sin are tolerated, the witness of the Church is destroyed. Unless we “ cleanse out the old leaven ”, the whole community may be corrupted. (1 Cor. v, 7.) We probably all know Churches which have suffered terribly through failure to exercise their authority to exclude as well as include, to bind as well as to loose.

In the exercise of discipline it is essential that the pastor, the oversight and the Church Meeting should have a balanced conception of Christian morality. For unfortunately it is possible for a Church to be zealous about matters of secondary or even of trivial importance, and to neglect the weightier matters of the law. In other words, for what offences do we consider it necessary to exercise private or public discipline? If it is to be confined to gross and obvious sins, what is to be included in this category? At certain periods the Churches have been strict to the extent of being rigorous on matters of sexual morality; so much so that for many people still “ morality ” means sexual morality. But those same Churches were often lax in the extreme on matters of money, wages, property, the conduct of business, etc. Certainly fornication and adultery should not be tolerated, but what about gossip and malice? If drunkenness and carousing are among “ the works of the flesh ”, so also are strife, dissension and party spirit. It is imperative that we should read, study and teach the New Testament as a whole—otherwise we may tend to be severe on a few sins, arbitrarily selected. Only if we are humbly seeking the mind of Christ revealed in the Scriptures are we equipped as officers and people to exercise discipline.

The discipline of the offender, whether privately or publicly, is by no means the only problem of Church discipline. Indeed, in these days it is not our main problem at all. For there are many members on our Church rolls who are not guilty of any moral offence but who are, nevertheless, in urgent need of discipline. What are we to do about the indifferent Church member who rarely or haphazardly appears at communion or public worship, and treats lightly the responsibilities of Church membership? How are we to exercise the POSITIVE discipline aimed at achieving a higher quality of Christian life and churchmanship? Should we exclude those who

habitually fail to carry out even the most elementary obligations of Church membership? Or would this be breaking the bruised reed and extinguishing the smouldering flax? Is there no middle course here between laxity and rigorism?

The chief need, of course, of the careless or indifferent Church member is pastoral care. And the good shepherd will be zealous to bring back the straying sheep into the fold. It is significant that the first evangelist has a new context and application for the parable of the Lost Sheep. (Matt. xviii, 12-14.) It is a preface to the passage on Church discipline, with its provision for excommunication. The rigorism of verse 17 is prefaced by the parable of compassion and followed by the parable of the unforgiving servant, with its final warning against an unforgiving heart. Discipline and severity can be right only in the setting of mercy and compassion. We must beware of making Church discipline an easier substitute for costly pastoral care. But no such antithesis is necessary—for a wise, positive Church discipline can aid both pastor and people in recovering the lapsed and rousing the indifferent.

But what is meant by a positive Church discipline? One of the basic reasons for a poor quality of churchmanship is the fact that many of our Church members are hopelessly vague about their actual responsibilities. Satan revels in vagueness, and wins many victories in the local Church by creating and maintaining it. On the other hand, "definiteness is the life of religion", and it would be an immense gain if all our Church members had a clear outline or picture of their corporate responsibilities. What is needed is a clear, concise and practical definition of the responsibilities of a Church member. Such a definition could be adopted by the Church meeting, exposed in a public place, presented to all Church members, and taught assiduously in class and pulpit. The corporate acceptance of definite obligations, and the persistent attempt to teach, train and encourage all Church members to accept them, could raise the quality of our churchmanship.

This leads one to ask whether it would not also be profitable to define and teach an "irreducible minimum" requirement of all Church members? This has been done by the Anglicans, and they can certainly claim that it is irreducible! The danger of all such attempts, of course, is that they tend to encourage in certain Church members a satisfaction with having performed the irreducible minimum. The very existence of such a definition seems incompatible with the conviction that "it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness". But then such a definition is not intended for the devoted churchman. Would it not be useful as a means of discipline for the irresponsible and indifferent? There are spiritual children even in the gathered Church, and children need a few rules. Such a definition should include a rule for personal prayer and Bible reading, a rule for attendance at the Lord's Supper and public worship, and a rule about weekly giving to the work of the Church.

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BAPTIST CHURCH HOUSE
4 Southampton Row, London, W.C.1

It is not suggested that either of these definitions should be enforced. The Church of God should proceed by persuasion, not by coercion. But if they are adopted and taught by the community as a whole, then more and more of the individual members will come to regard them as obligations. The moral authority of the fellowship, operative through appeal and persuasion, will create a positive discipline for the individual member. Rules are useful, but no one should ever be excluded from the Church by the impersonal application of rules. The rules must always be applied to each unique case by people who are not under rules but under Agape, free to act as the highest welfare of both individual and community require. For Christian discipline, whether individual or corporate, is not the discipline of law but of love—a love which is both austere and compassionate, which makes demands and yet gives itself to the utmost. So “let all that you do be done in love”.

STEPHEN F. WINWARD.

TELEVISION

THERE are now five million television licences. To some that may come as a shock, for we have been unaware of the revolution going on in many homes throughout the land. Ministers are finding themselves unwelcome if they call during a popular feature such as the “Grove Family”, and in some cases the already difficult task of enticing people to leave their homes and come to meetings has become almost impossible. Viewer Research figures show that on certain occasions twelve million people may be watching screens at the same time, and certain shows rank themselves as failures if they cannot maintain a viewing public in the region of four million.

It is against this background of tremendous opportunity and challenge that this article is written. Although much could be written from the information collated, I have limited myself to two important areas of approach, with a final, brief section on Denominational responsibility.

COMMERCIAL TELEVISION

When the Government announced its plans to introduce commercial television into Great Britain, even Conservative M.P.s were dubious about its acceptability. The T.U.C. in July, 1953, said: “The potential influence of T.V. on the lives of the people, and particularly on the lives of children and young people, requires that . . . programmes should be controlled by a public authority which can give due weight to considerations of a non-commercial character”. The British Council of Churches issued a statement based upon reports of opinion in the Church of England, the Church of Scotland and the Free Churches, that “however stringent the initial controls might be . . . (it would) be an unwise policy not

really desired by any large section of the public, and fraught with graver risks and uncertainties than are justified”.

Thus, in spite of resolutions from conferences, the lobbying of M.P.s, and the writing of hundreds of letters to the Government, commercial television has been introduced.

However, the Government did take partial notice of its critics, and so the 1954 Television Act contains clauses for appointing three advisory committees. One consists of representatives “from the main streams of religious thought”, another deals with standards of conduct and rules for controlling advertising, and another is composed of authorities having a knowledge and interest in the welfare and education of children and young persons. On this latter committee, as now established, it is significant to note that the Free Churches have no representative, although the Anglicans have, through their Mothers’ Union.

The I.T.A. is guided in religion by the same committee which advises the B.B.C. In the Commons on 21st June, 1954, the then Postmaster-General said: “The hon. member for Kilmarnock . . . asked me whether the religious advisory committee could advise on how many religious broadcasts there should be. I should certainly say: ‘Yes, they could’.” On the 17th May, 1955, the I.T.A. confirmed this: “The Central Religious Advisory Committee, as one of its functions, will no doubt wish to ensure . . . that all denominations are allocated their due proportion of time on the air”. But in spite of these assurances, at the time of writing this has not worked out in practice. In fact, Dr. Billy Graham said: “We have accepted the invitation—to become the *only religious programme* on the new commercial T.V. in Great Britain to begin in September”. Personalities apart, this raises a serious issue of principle and must be investigated.

CHILDREN’S TELEVISION

Although it is impossible to survey the whole field of Religion and Television, I would urge that special consideration be given to children’s work, because of the great potentiality for influencing the adult life of this nation fifteen to twenty years hence.

Firstly, we must guard against the introduction of improper material into programmes. Recently a serial play was televised on Sundays called “The Prince and the Pauper”. A viewer was so appalled by what he saw that he wrote to a London evening paper these words: “It was filled with ancient horrors—no doubt under the guise of ‘History’ . . . The beggars tell of horrors inflicted upon them by the judges, show scalded flesh and speak of other inhuman punishments. . . . But without doubt the most abominable breach of convention was when the escaped boy finds sanctuary with, of all persons, a priest. This man becomes obsessed, trusses and gags the child, and with a few incoherent last rites proceeds to plunge a dagger into the boy’s breast with fanatical energy while his victim stares

upward in helpless terror." You may think that this letter exaggerated the case, but the *Star* critic underlined the fact that "it was not Children's Hour material anyway". That kind of thing has happened on the B.B.C. We must see it does not happen again, either on the B.B.C. or the newer I.T.A.

Secondly, the content of religion in programmes has been limited in amount, and very much diluted. During a twelve-month survey ending last June, out of all programmes televised only five could really be listed as Christian, and most of these exemplified Christian conduct without presenting the Christian message. For example, Stanley was shown to be a good man, but it wasn't shown *why* he was a good man. Even when the play presented the life of Christ, only Jesus of History was shown, and not the Living Lord. But perhaps the most serious point at issue is that Sunday, both on B.B.C. and I.T.A., is never regarded as the Lord's day. When we consider that less than half of the children of this country go to Sunday School, we see how important it is to get over some basic facts concerning the Christian Gospel. At the moment there is nothing of this nature at all. The B.B.C., in defence, have replied that items of religious interest for children are presented in Children's Newsreel, which is screened on Sundays, and give as an example the service of blessing the animals. But in a recent showing of this annual ceremony which was screened for 70 seconds, it consisted of 65 seconds of animal pictures (like a zoo film) and five seconds showing a priest, and mentioning the ceremony was in commemoration of St. Francis. Surely such a defence is an admission of an inability to understand the points at issue.

It is argued that there is a shortage of material, and that plays were the best medium. Granted that television is a new medium, surely it cannot be true that those who have specialised in children's work for many years are unable to alter their techniques to conform to television requirements. Such a lack of confidence in our children's workers is unthinkable. All they need is co-operation, and opportunity to present the Gospel on television. No, neither material nor personalities is the problem today. From research and investigations I have made the exclusion of religious material seems a matter of policy. The only way to get the B.B.C. and I.T.A. to alter that policy is to make representations through the various organisations to which we belong. Nothing will be done until the pressure of public and official opinion is brought to bear upon the situation.

DENOMINATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Television is such a dominant factor in our national life that it is time we approached the subject as a denomination to see how we can utilise the opportunities presented to us.

A Television Advisory Committee to be set up to advise the denomination with regard to all matters connected with this powerful medium.

The committee should prepare a survey of the effect of T.V. on home life, analyse successful methods of presentation, and determine the types of programmes people like to view in their homes. Samples of public opinion, on the pattern of the Coventry experiments, could easily be taken through the co-operation of our churches. At the moment too little is known on the basis of *factual* material about the reaction of individuals.

It should seek and encourage men to specialise in television technique, and provide training facilities in conjunction with other Free Churches. Men appear so infrequently on television at the moment that it is obvious they have been unable to master the art of forgetting the movement of men and machines around them while they are putting their message across. Dr. Billy Graham has an immense advantage here, for he is so used to studio work that his movements with regard to camera work and positioning become instinctive, instead of that fumbling which has embarrassed viewers in the past. To be effective, we must have full opportunity for a steady training routine.

Such a committee should act on behalf of the Denomination in all matters relating to choice of speakers. Further, it should have the services of a technical representative, who is a committed Christian, so as to advise both the B.B.C. and the I.T.A. on programmes before and during transmission. In the past, men being televised have suffered from having an enthusiastic producer bubbling over with ideas, but who has no real appreciation of the message being put across. We ought to safeguard this kind of difficulty.

Such suggestions may seem a little unreal. However, it is well to know that the Roman Catholics have already set up a training centre for radio and television in the London area, which is fully equipped with the latest machines.

Baptists should be no less vigorous in thinking and progressive activity, remembering that at times twelve million pairs of eyes are watching the nation's T.V. screens. We should do well to make sure that what they see is of the best, and above all that they should see Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

W. PETER WEST.

The Editorial Board adds the following comments:—

1. The I.T.A. programmes are arranged by subsidiary companies who have "bought" that privilege. It was one such which secured the services of Billy Graham and "exclusive rights are limited to that company". His programmes will run for a limited period only.

2. Church authorities are by no means inactive, and our own B.U. General Secretary is taking a leading part in negotiations. The whole position is somewhat chaotic at this early stage and definite action is therefore limited.

3. Commercial T.V. being Commercial, the governing motive is profit and directly religious considerations are entirely subordinate.

4. A denominational Television Committee may be found to be advisable, but it could not, under the present laws governing the B.B.C. and the I.T.A., *choose* speakers and preachers.

AN EXPERIMENT IN EVANGELISM

THE Leavesden Road Baptist Church is a live and happy fellowship of some 230 members. It is situated in North Watford, a distinct, compact, old-established, densely populated, working-class area. There are ten thousand people within ten minutes' walking distance of our doors.

We came into this situation two years ago and were immediately at home in the fellowship of the Church. But it was the little people outside who worried me—so many good, honest, ordinary folk, hating cant and humbug and with such strange ideas about Christianity and the Church. It seemed to me from the start that our job here was a missionary job—to take the old Gospel which has laid so firm a hold on us and to translate it as surely as we can into the language and thought forms of the natives of our area.

THE FISH

We began with a group we called "The Fish". This was twenty or so folk who were willing to train and experiment to become effective witnesses for Christ in their own surroundings. Rev. Norman Renshaw had first given us the idea, but we worked it out on our own lines. We all wore a little silver "Fish" badge (the *ixovs* of the early Church and a pocket summary of the Gospel). When asked about the badge, we were pledged to witness for Christ as skilfully as we were able.

The group met at the Manse every Tuesday for Bible study, discussion groups, report of contacts, discussion of method and prayer, and they also went sick-visiting once a month.

We perfected the technique of a "Squash" so that we had atheists, communists and others coming along to join in a frank discussion of the claims of Christ without embarrassment, and this in an atmosphere which shouted loud the power of Christ to make lives new and glad and free. We tried different forms of open-air meetings. We made many experiments to find out how best to reach the modern mind effectively. Many were such simple things as planting some folk as part of a queue or crowd to report back on what happens and what is said after others have given out some good modern tracts and gone away.

We spent much discussion time in thinking out the content of many of the phrases we so often use in Christian circles and trying to translate them into the language of the folk we worked with. ("Converted", for instance, means much to us, but to Bill Smith it usually means we once were "C. of E.", the same as everyone else, but now we go to the Baptist Church.)

Baptist Missionary Society

93, GLOUCESTER PLACE, LONDON, W.1

IN 1956

Your brethren at Headquarters and on the fields pray that God will bless you in your work in the New Year, that the churches at home may grow in strength and influence.

* * * * *

They ask you to pray for them in their difficult and responsible tasks, that in other lands the Gospel may be faithfully proclaimed and the churches built up.

* * * * *

They would remind you both of the need of men and women everywhere of Christ, and of His command to teach all nations.

* * * * *

They would share with you their concern about the shortage of missionaries. In this new year 37 new missionaries will be required, including 14 ministers, 4 doctors, and 6 graduate teachers.

* * * * *

For information about the Society, write to :

THE GENERAL HOME SECRETARY
B.M.S.

93, GLOUCESTER PLACE, LONDON, W.1

Throughout our work in "The Fish" five steps to effective witness were emphasised:

- (1) The Life. A clear-cut, attractive, happy, friendly and selfless Christian life must back all you say or best not to speak at all.
- (2) The Preparation. "Study to understand the Bible and take thought to understand people, and learn to love them both."
- (3) The Prayer.
- (4) The Word of Witness. Quiet, wise, timely, friendly, attractive.
- (5) The Follow-up.

THE CHURCH MISSION

"The Fish" was a feeler for the large-scale Church Mission in which we are still engaged. This Mission has had one guiding principle, and that is that evangelism is the constant and normal activity of a truly Christian Church. That is a small but important sentence and almost any page of the New Testament will stand warrant for it.

From that principle spring others:

First, evangelism must be centred in the local Church, which should become a fountain of Life and blessing to the area round about.

Second, the work should be done by our ordinary Church folk (who are, after all, the real bridge between Christ and the workaday world, though so often unused) and not by special people imported for the purpose.

Third, evangelism must flow through our ordinary Church channels and not be cut off into a special week or ten days. Avoid special meetings and special weeks like the plague. They merely announce that in your opinion your ordinary services are not up to scratch and make people think of evangelism as a stunt. Evangelism is not a special effort, after which we may gratefully relax again until next year. It is the normal steady activity of a truly Christian Church.

The Leavesden Road Mission is merely Christian witness writ large, and its progress may best be followed under headings from the five steps to effective witness.

The Life. Your Church is the Body of Christ to your area. If it is not that in some real sense we have no right whatever to speak to folk in His Name or to invite them to come inside our doors.

We began by defining clearly "our area". It contains about 4,000 homes. From the time we came here, if anyone in this area was ill or lonely, or in any kind of need whatever, I have visited them. If they were attached to any other Church I let their own minister know immediately, otherwise I would continue to look after them. We quickly found a large number of lonely old folk, many of whom were confined to their homes. In these cases I arranged for a Church member to visit them once a week and to care for them in the Name of Christ. At least they know that someone cares whether they live

or die, and some ray of the sunshine of God's Love in Christ comes through to them.

For about three months before Christmas our Institutes (Bible Classes) are bringing foodstuffs and this is made up into Christmas hampers. Then for the three nights before Christmas they go around carol singing to all the old and lonely and sick folk. When these folk come to the door (usually with twopence in their hand) a parcel is given to them with happy Christmas greetings from the Church. Last Christmas we sent out over a hundred parcels, and to see the old folk as they received them was a moving experience.

At Christmas-time we send a Christmas card to every home in the area. Every one is put into an envelope, personally addressed and delivered by hand. The Church wishes a happy Christmas to all friends and neighbours, says a timely word for Christ, and offers help to anyone in any kind of need during the coming year. The first time we did this I received 167 very happy replies and the whole area buzzed like a beehive about it. To many of the lonely folk it was the only card they had.

The Preparation. Preparation was necessary in two directions. First the area round about was prepared by a minister's letter once a month, from January to June, 1955. This was notepaper size and was lithograph duplicated by a good professional firm. The result was very much like a personally typed letter. These were again sent in personally addressed envelopes. (A member of ours, training for the Ministry, was paid to address the 24,000 envelopes in one vacation.)

These letters, in which I tried to express the love God felt for folk and His longing that they should bring their sins and sorrows and their lives to Him, had many replies, were very well received and much talked about.

The second line of preparation was within the Church. A letter a month was sent by me to Church members, also giving full details of the plan of the Mission, the spirit of it, how it would be organised and so on, and leading them to a spirit of prayer and of personal and corporate dedication to the task. At one Church meeting we all stood and in prayer pledged ourselves "to do what we could" in the Mission.

I preached much about evangelism and our Mission from different angles, ran a series at our mid-week meeting for the training of workers and generally tried to get everyone to see what we were doing and why we must do it and to be willing to take part.

The Church had been used to an annual Retreat before we came, so this year we turned it into a Retreat on evangelism and published a report of the whole thing for all Church members.

The Prayer. We have two prayer meetings each week and the Mission was constantly remembered. Most of our folk I am sure prayed daily for it. An appeal for prayer-partners and subjects for prayer was issued to all members and congregation.

The Witness. This stage of our Mission, that of two-by-two visitation of all non-churchgoing folk in the area, began last September. As the time came near there was a feeling in the Church of confidence in the plan and motive of the Mission, but a complete stage-fright at the idea of visitation. I pleaded and encouraged in my preaching and then sent a personal letter to every Church member asking them if they were willing to visit.

On 7th September came the Rally for those willing to visit. I expected forty folk and hoped for sixty. Over a hundred came, and there are now fifty-four pairs at work. A copy of the literature they would be using and a large list of hints and tips to visitors was handed to each one and a fortnight was given to them in which they might digest it all.

The plan of campaign was fairly simple. For the first part we sent out our pairs to the non-churchgoing parents of our Sunday school scholars.

Next the whole area was divided into three parts. For the first part a door-to-door census was taken and folk were asked if they attended any place of worship on a Sunday. Those who acknowledged that they went nowhere were subsequently visited by one of our pairs. Hostile folk (very few) are crossed off the list and the names of those saying they go elsewhere will be sent to the appropriate ministers in the town in due course.

The other two parts of the area are being dealt with in the same way, and all information is finally card-indexed and filed so that by next autumn we shall have the spiritual state of the whole area at our finger-tips.

The visitors go in pairs and are matched as carefully as possible with the folk they are to visit. The visitors are given only three names a month to visit and are given an information sheet about each which they return when they have written their report of the visit on the back.

It is important that visitors should have something to give to those they are visiting. Our visitors take a booklet about the Leavesden Road Church, its history, its organisations, its message, and a bit about the Baptist point of view. With this goes a letter—a message of friendship from the Church. There is also a Gospel of John, which is given if the visitors feel it will be a real help.

Their approach is that of friendship. The visitors must be friendly and at all costs leave a good impression. They go in if they are asked. From their personal friendship we hope those visited will follow on to enjoy the fellowship of the Church and finally to find the Friendship of Christ.

The Mission was planned to extend over three years, but will now be over in just two. What everyone asks about is results. Well, results there are and plenty. All our visitors have met with a good reception and there is a widespread good-will toward the Church in the area. There is never a service without new faces and congregations rise steadily all the time. (We get now about four hundred

folk on a Sunday evening. Many more on special occasions.) There has been a quiet and steady flow of decisions for Christ, baptisms and new members, and last September we were able to call our first Deaconess (Sister Joy Ford) to help bear the pressure of work that falls upon me.

However, I am not much bothered about figures. The work of Christ is being done and His Presence made evident, which is what matters most. My main concern now is to ensure that we emerge from this present phase without ever emerging from our sense of Mission. That goes on.

The most important part of any campaign is its spirit and motive. If the aim is to get more members or more money it is better it should fail. Ours is to love and care for and serve our area in its needs of body, soul and spirit in Christ's Name, and believe that if He be truly uplifted He will draw all men unto Him.

Evangelism is properly the heart of Christ beating in the breasts of His people. "Them also I must bring" is the burning passion of his great heart, and it is impossible for us to come near to Him without our own hearts catching the same fire. That is the beginning of evangelism. The rest is to find those channels which best bring the power of it to the hearts and homes in the area for which God has made our Church responsible. L. R. MISSELBROOK.

DISESTABLISHMENT

The Federal Council did well to inform Sir Anthony Eden of its opposition to any form of State control in spiritual affairs, thus correcting his recent House of Commons speech. It further repudiated the idea of a campaign of a political nature for Disestablishment, feeling that it would disturb the growing spirit of fellowship between the Church of England and the Free Churches. Finally, it stated its reliance upon this same spirit to secure, by friendly discussion, the removal of serious anomalies the present situation entails. Amongst such anomalies is the subordinate position assigned to Free Church representatives on public occasions, from Coronation ceremonies to Remembrance Day celebrations, and we are glad of the hint that friendly discussion would be welcome.

The wording of the Federal Council's statement contrasts favourably with the offensively-phrased outburst in a sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral by a Church of England vicar—which probably gave rise to the question on Disestablishment answered by Sir Anthony—in which the said speaker asserted that the historic Commons vote against Prayer Book revision was the result of an alignment between "non-conformists and agnostics"!

We repeat that the Federal Council has set an example of Christian courtesy, but would add that its communication would have in no wise suffered loss had there been imparted into its moderate tone a little more emphasis.