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EDITORIAL

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JOHANNES SCHNEIDER, D.D., Professor of New Testament, Berlin University.

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THE WIDER CIRCLE

EDITORIAL

WE greet our brethren in Baptist Churches the world over as we begin the new year. The *Fraternal* enters many manses and is a bond of union between us. If you have views or feelings about it we are always glad to know. Our new year message shall come to us from Berlin, at the time of writing in the centre of world news. Dr. Schneider is a scholar who has put us in his debt, not least by his lecture on "Baptism and the Church in the New Testament", which Dr. Payne has called "an important contribution to the current discussion". He is kindly allowing us to print the address he gave recently to the Pastors' session of the European Baptist Congress. The first part, which concerns "the greatness of the pastoral service", we adopt as our message and pass on to our readers. The second part concerning the "how" of our pastoral work we hope to print in our next issue.

It is with regret that we are unable to find room for any Reviews this time. Since we have had to reduce our size to balance the increased cost of postage, it is clearly becoming more than ever desirable that our contributors should keep their articles within 2,000 words, so that excellence may be combined with variety in our pages. We have readers in many lands and the interests of the ministry cover a wide range. From time to time we like to give space to writers in some special field overseas. And we look forward in April to a special New Zealand issue. We have three articles forthcoming on different aspects of Baptist thought and activity there, from a well-known ex-President of their Baptist Union, the in-coming President, and the President of their Baptist College.

As we have no Reviews, a word in conclusion about a new book, "Reflections on the Psalms", by C. S. Lewis, Bles, 12s. 6d. It is a common complaint among ministers that there is a dearth of good books on the Psalms, especially books of the kind that open windows and kindle fires. Here is such a book. The chapter "Sweeter than Honey" (Psalm xix, 10), alone was worth the price to one member of our Board, with its description of the sun piercing everywhere in its "strong, clean ardour" and that something "so like the all-piercing all-detecting sunshine"—the Law—that good thing of which the bad thing seen in the Pharisees is the corruption! How to a Jew "when he thought of sacred prostitution, sacred sodomy, and babies thrown into the fire for Moloch" his Law "must have shone with an extraordinary radiance". Yes, and how much more to us the Christ Himself to whom the Law points, shines out with "the light of the glory of God".

May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with us all.

THE PASTORAL OFFICE OF THE SERVANT OF THE WORD

IN 1 Peter v, the Apostle speaks as a pastor to pastors. He was particularly fitted for this task, for he had experienced the pastoral care of Jesus as had no other Apostle. Three times had he denied his Lord and three times he had to face the question of the Risen One: " Lovest thou Me ? ". Only when Jesus is convinced that Peter is sincere in his answer and the unconditional confession implied in it, does he entrust him with the pastoral office over his community. And it is a unique commission thus imparted to him.

From this commission the Apostle derived his authority to address pastors and to place them under obligation for the proper fulfilment of their office. He mentions the elders, to whom he shows the glory of their service, whom also he admonishes to fulfil their task properly. Peter knows that no pastor can dispense with his brotherly, pastoral service. Whoever does not himself receive pastoral care, cannot exercise any pastoral ministry. True, the pastor is under obligation to his divine Lord, but he constantly stands in danger of being isolated. The soul of the pastor needs the blessing of pastoral care. He needs a trusted brother before whose authority he bows, from whom he learns, receiving wisdom and help. He needs to unburden his heart, and to orientate himself anew, and in united prayer to allow himself to be strengthened for his responsible service. He must receive correction and get counsel for his own troubles before he can minister to others.

The Apostle knows of a divine ordinance in which the office of pastor is established. It is a spiritual, ecclesiastical ordinance. At the summit stands the chief shepherd, Jesus Christ, Who surrounds with His love the community and its office bearers. In immediate succession to him, particularly gifted leaders of the community, the Apostles, exercise their office, who possess not only the gift of preaching but also that of pastoral care. Then the pastors of the individual communities follow them, who recognise the spiritual authority of the Apostles and subject themselves to their advice. It is significant, however, that Peter does not call himself a fellow-elder. He has no higher spiritual degree. He is a brother among brethren. But he is rightly accorded an outstanding position as an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Today there are no longer apostles but we are grateful for brethren among us proved in service, who through the grace of God possess an inner authority which qualifies them to be pastors of the pastors. Certainly all of us who serve in preaching the Word and in pastoral ministry possess a direct relationship with the chief shepherd, Christ; but pastors of the pastors are also indispensable to us.

The Apostle Paul took the same line as Peter. He also claimed for himself the right to give clear and definite instructions to the pastors. Therefore his farewell speech to the elders of Ephesus is particularly significant. In Acts xx, 28 we find the particularly significant words:

“Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood”. In the admonition each word is important: 1. The pastor bears a heavy responsibility not only for the community but also for himself. Whoever does not live himself under a holy discipline cannot demand it from the members of the community. 2. The origin of the pastoral office does not lie in us and in our human qualities; but in the Holy Spirit. 3. Even if the pastor may be called by the community he is not installed as pastor by men but by the Holy Spirit who chose him and empowers him to be a spiritual office bearer. 4. The pastor is able to fulfil his service in the community aright only when he sees the community entrusted to him not as his community, but the community of the Lord. He has the right inner relation to the community only when this is for him the flock which Christ has won for his possession through the blood shed on the cross. If the pastor considers only the weakness and defects, the errors and failures of his brothers and sisters he will have a false attitude to the community. The community is and remains the fellowship of “saints” purchased by the precious blood of Christ. Whoever has not this faith or does not possess it any longer, is failing as a pastor. The true pastor must be assured that the blood of Christ still today possesses in the community a cleansing and forgiving power. A trust in the all-prevailing power of the blood of Christ is essential to the pastoral office.

How the Apostle Paul served as pastor to the pastors is shown in verse 36: “And when he had thus spoken he kneeled down and prayed with them all”. To give pastors lectures on the art of pastoral work is indeed of value. A pastor needs to be instructed in the problems of modern man. He can never know enough. He should know what the care and direction of souls is; he should understand the heights and depths of the inner life of man; it will be a help to him if he is acquainted with psychology and especially with depth-psychology; he should have some knowledge of the results of psycho-therapy and psychiatry, and of the relationship of soul and body. Woe to the pastor who neglects the study of such matters! But this knowledge does not make him a good Christian pastor. The deepest secret of true pastoral work is the constantly renewed experience of the Holy Spirit. For pastoral work is not a technique but a spiritual gift. Therefore the pastor must be one who prays. He who does not seek God's face in the stillness cannot truly serve other men.

But it is also necessary for the pastor himself that experienced brethren who possess in some special measure the pastoral gift should interest themselves in him. That is of more value than all the scientific knowledge that a man is able to acquire for himself. For the strength of pastoral work derives from a life dedicated to Christ and sanctified by Him. Such a life must further be given to intercession—a service which the Apostle offered to the elders of Ephesus: he kneeled down with them and prayed with them.

Paul himself experienced the blessing of brotherly pastoral care at the beginning of his Christian life. After his conversion, when he spent three days as a blind man in Damascus and did not know how his way would be further ordered, the Lord sent a disciple named Ananias to him. This simple man, steadfast in the service of Jesus, performed the first pastoral service to him with the words: "Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me". Brother Saul! It is a classical pastoral address. In this phrase lies the entire, sacred art of pastoral work. The Pastor Ananias has mastered his feelings against the persecutor of the community of Jesus. "Brother!" It is the divine magic formula which opens the human heart and wins it for Christ.

It is of the utmost importance when we reflect upon pastoral work that we do not begin with theories about it but with the injunctions of Scripture and with pastoral examples from the early days of our faith. Yet what men like Peter and Paul were for their fellow elders is but a glimpse of Him Who in His unique way was the pastor of His own. Jesus is the pattern of all genuine Christian pastoral work. The outstanding mark of it is His compassion for men who go wrong because they have no shepherd, His complete self-giving to the weary and heavy-laden, His love ever seeking and saving the lost. Jesus calls sinners to him and offers them the forgiveness of sins. And it is just in this forgiving grace that is seen the greatness of his pastoral work. But Jesus was concerned not merely with the souls of men. His pastoral work is to be seen also in the healing of the diseased and the driving out of demons. He gave to the whole life of man a new foundation.

The picture of Jesus, the pastor, is incomplete without reference to his inexorable seriousness. Salvation of the soul is possible only through repentance and self-denial. Therefore in his pastoral work Jesus fought against everything which would lead man to a false understanding of himself. Only when a man turns from himself and finds release from bondage to the things of this world will his way be free to true manhood, to sonship with God, to citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven.

One thing more. In the tenth chapter of John's Gospel Jesus represents himself in one of the "I am" words as the true pastor: "I am the good shepherd". The true pastoral office finds its completion in complete selflessness which goes to the uttermost limit of self-giving. "The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep". And the goal he has in view through the sacrifice of his life is "the one flock under the one shepherd".

Every pastoral work is a priestly work. A pastor who is not a priest is not in a position to fulfil his task properly. A priest is a sanctified man who himself has gone through all the depths of need and trouble and who now stands before God and lays upon the altar of God not only his prayers but also the people with whom he has to do.

In this, too, Jesus is our example. He is the true high priest just because during his earthly life he had the deepest sympathy with men and knew them in the depths of their emotions and the abyss of their inner life; for he is, as Hebrews iv, 15 states, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. So must the pastor who is in the service of Jesus, be a man of deep sympathy who lives and struggles along with his brethren in their inner and outer needs. J. SCHNEIDER.

GOD WHO REDEEMS

ONE of the most interesting of modern plays is Samuel Becket's "Waiting for Godot". Not the least interesting feature of the play is the diversity of judgment among the critics and of reaction from the audiences. The play depicts two tramps sitting by a desolate road waiting for someone called Godot. Neither they nor the audience ever really know why they are waiting for Godot, except that he has promised, or they think that he has promised, to meet them.

The tramps spend the long hours in talking—about everything! At times they are friendly, at times they quarrel—but they seem never able to escape from each other—just as within the human personality, as the depth psychologists have taught us, diverse elements may at times be in agreement and at times be in tension, yet they can never be separated for they belong to the one personality. Is Becket portraying the inner tensions, conflicts, anxieties, dichotomies that afflict so many lives? Are the two tramps a representation of modern man, divided against himself, hiding his inner division beneath a cloak of philosophical thought or of instinctive desire or of frantic busyness, yet sometimes terribly aware of the division, beset by it, frightened by it—and always waiting with pathetic and vain delusion for some one other than himself to come and answer his questions?

The two tramps are joined by two other men; grotesque figures. One is fat with prosperity, jolly with good living, a dominant, masterful figure—yet afraid that life will call his bluff and find him out. The other is haggard and blind and burdened—a mere slave. He is silent, a bit of mechanism designed to act according to orders. He is man in the mass without individuality or freedom. Is this a portrait of our society with its competing interests and its divided groups? Certainly modern society offers many examples of domination and subjection; of empty arrogance on the one hand and pathetic nonentity on the other. To me the most horrifying moment in the play occurred when the slave, Lucky, is bidden by his master to think. After many commands "Think, pig" the silent burdened figure breaks into a stream of speech. It is a sequence of disconnected phrases, delivered in rapid monotone like the incoherent mental processes of a mass society. Bits of religion, bits of obscenity,

tags of philosophy and science, slogans from politics or films—the torrent of chaotic phrases pours out. The depersonalised, subjugated man letting loose the bewildered, irrational thoughts, feelings, instincts that make up his inner life.

What is the play all about? An analysis of the individual's inner life? An analysis of the conflict in society? Perhaps both, for they belong together! But in addition to this, a portrayal of bewilderment, frustration, anxiety. A recognition that this situation needs someone else to come in and solve it—yet Godot, for whom men wait, never comes.

Becket's play portrays a situation of which many thoughtful people are increasingly aware. It stresses the truth we have already enunciated, that life is in relationships. It sees clearly that all human life is involved in broken relationships. The relationship with the unseen is broken; the inner harmonies of the personality are broken; the relationships of human society are broken. This is just what the Bible means in asserting that man is sinner.

The most vivid picture of sin in the Old Testament is the picture of Adam and Eve moving away from the presence of God out of the garden, thus involving themselves in labour, pain and death—and all the family quarrels exemplified by Cain's murder of Abel. In the New Testament we have our Lord's story of a son walking away from the father's home to have a good time and another son keeping outside in unbrotherly self-righteousness.

Once we see that life is fundamentally in relationship we understand the devastating nature of sin as that which affects every relationship and we know that man is sinful in the sense that he is never able to create abiding and true relationships.

But in this situation man need not hopelessly wait for Godot. The core of the Christian gospel is that God has come into the situation of broken relationships to put right what is wrong as the potter in Jeremiah xviii makes again the vessel that was marred. Yet even this assertion: "Behold I make all things new" is insufficient. Put it in the form given to it by John, make the assertion "God is love" and add "In this was manifested the love of God towards us because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him"; yet we have still just stated a fact. We have not really entered into the processes whereby God restores the broken relationships.

For this, we may well remind ourselves of the four metaphors used in the New Testament to express the Divine saving activity.

There is the metaphor of the law-court in which man is seen as one under sentence who yet is given freedom because another has offered the perfect obedience which fulfils all demands.

There is the metaphor of the slave market where men are in bondage so that they may be bought and sold, yet are set free because one has paid the price.

There is the metaphor of the temple thronged with worshippers who look towards an altar whereon a slain animal is offered in sacrifice, reflecting upon the truth that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin".

There is the metaphor of the home in which dissensions occur so that family life is disrupted until One comes Who is our peace giving Himself utterly in the work of reconciliation.

These metaphors remain dominant in Christian thinking, all of them emphasising the cost of restoring what is broken—all of them indicating the sacrificial processes whereby God Himself will bring man into his true life—all of them showing what is involved in renewing a relationship that has gone wrong.

We cannot continue this aspect of our theme in any detail for we have now to consider some implications of the assertion that God has come, that God is One Who redeems.

The first implication is that God is still the One who acts in this way. The uniqueness of the work of Christ is falsely interpreted if it is understood as simply an event of history to which we look back. What Christ did is unique because it has made possible for all time an altered relationship of man to God. But when we say on the basis of that unique work that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" we are speaking of what God is doing constantly. God is among men as a reconciling power and what He reconciles is the world, i.e. human life in all places, and in all its aspects.

We may well ask ourselves whether we who believe in God have accepted in all seriousness this spiritual reality of a God who is eternally present as a reconciling power within the broken relationships of human society? Do we consider with sufficient clarity and force that His power is a factor in every situation of human division? And do we understand fully enough that if our lives were more responsive to God in His reconciling love we should possess more power for bringing into being the relationships which are man's true life? Prayer is by no means all that Christians do in the face of the tensions and division of human society, but prayer as the means whereby God is able to enter into a situation is a factor of utmost significance.

This brings us to the second implication of our emphasis upon God who redeems. It is that God works through His Church. He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation.

The ministry of reconciliation! What pages are being written in our day about the doctrine of the ministry! And what fundamental facts are overlooked in many of these pages! This is not an accusation that one could bring against T. W. Manson in his discussion of the Church's ministry. He makes two points of much importance. He asserts that ministry primarily is what the whole Church does. Ministry is not first of all an office or a status;

it is an activity of the whole Church. The Church ministers. And the "ministry" exists to enable the Church to minister. This is a point which Paul makes in Ephesians iv, 11; 12. When speaking of forms of ministry, apostle, prophet, evangelist, etc., as the gifts of God he says that these "gifts were made that Christians might be properly equipped for their service". John Mackay says that "the whole idea is startling", but decisive . . . it is the function of "ministers" so to equip "saints", i.e., members of the rank and file of the Christian congregation, that they may render service to Christ and the Church". The Bishop of Southwell in a recent book on "Vocation and Ministry", has expressed this in a short sentence: he writes ". . . it is the Church which validates the ministry, not the ministry which validates the Church". Ministry then is what the whole Church does.

And the pattern of this ministry is the Son of man Who came to minister and to give His life. You will remember that that is Manson's other point. The ministry of Christ was not an office or a status or a privilege; it was the compassionate, saving activity of the Servant of the Lord among men and for men. This, says Manson, "provides the standard and pattern for the life of the followers of Jesus". Just as God exercised His reconciling activity among men through Christ Who lived and died, so He continues thus to work through the Body of Christ which is His Church. Therefore the function of the Church is to offer herself continually to God in worship and prayer that she may be renewed in spiritual power and grace, and to men in compassion and service that she may mediate a reconciling love. The fulfilment of this function involves the diversity of gifts possessed by the members of the Church who will share in the total ministry of the Church according to their gift.

God Who redeems implies then a Church which exists to minister and in whose ministry all its members share. It is true that not all members have the same function. This question about the diversity of function within the total ministry of the Church is one that needs careful examination. Ministers in a professional sense, cannot undertake the total ministry of the Church, as at times some try to do! Jethro gave sound advice to Moses (Exodus xviii) when he suggested that Moses was trying to do too much: ". . .this thing is too heavy for thee, thou art not able to perform it thyself alone", and when he proposed that "able men, such as fear God, men of truth", i.e., spiritually gifted men, should assist in the work and that Moses should restrict his own duties: "Be thou for the people God-ward". The realisation of this diversity of function is occurring in many sections of the Church today so that, e.g. in the Anglican Church with its emphasis upon the priesthood, there is a growing recognition of the place of the laity in the life of the Church. What this diversity, and consequently restriction, of function implies in regard to the relationship of the full-time, professional ministry to the needs of an industrial society is not easy to define. We all realise the danger of ministers immersing themselves in so many activities that they are

never "for the people God-ward" and never make real to people the God Who redeems.

What we can certainly say is that the conception of ministry as that in which the whole Church is engaged brings to an end the sense that the Church is separated from the world, for in fact the members of the Church spend a great deal of their lives sharing the activities of the society in which they live and work. The Church which gathers for worship on Sunday is the Church which is scattered at work on Monday; but it is still the Church! And if the members of the Church know that they are responsible for showing the ministry of the Church in and to the world they will realise that the place in which they are to exercise much of the Church's ministry is just the place in which they work.

This leads us to further questions in which we have to ask: what does this exercise of ministry in the world involve for the Church? Obviously we cannot go into detail; we can but state three general attitudes which appear whenever the Church fulfils its ministry of communicating the God Who redeems.

1. THIS MINISTRY INVOLVES A RESPONSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE.

The Christian community cannot ignore anything that affects the lives of men. It cannot turn its back upon the world, just because it ministers in the name of God "who loved the world"—and in Johannine vocabulary the "world" indicates the life of men in opposition to God. God loves that which is organised into rejection of Him. God involves Himself fully in that which is opposed to Him. This divine attitude is a pattern and a mandate for the attitude of the Church.

On this basis it is hard to justify some aspects of both monasticism and Puritanism for they represent a turning away from the world. On the other hand, it must be clearly seen that "responsibility for" does not imply "acceptance of" the world. The Christian Church rooted in eternity and serving divine purposes will always possess a standard by which all human activities and organisations, including those of the Church, are to be judged. But this judgment may be made only as the Church is involved in the total situation.

2. THIS RESPONSIBILITY MEANS AN ACCEPTANCE OF SIN.

When we say that the Church is involved in the total human situation we mean that the Church has to bear the consequences of these broken relationships which are the work of sin. It is obvious that the attitude which is content to condemn the sins of society is no fulfilment of this ministry. It is easy to pass resolutions in which we deplore this or that but such resolutions are no way of bearing the consequences of what is wrong. What the Church should do when relationships in industry or within the nation or among the nations are strained or ruptured is a perplexing question about which Christians differ. But at least this must be clear: that the Church is

involved in the situation and must be prepared to accept some of the consequences of these wrong relationships. Such acceptance may mean financial cost to the Church, it may mean some kind of service, it may mean acts of repentance and prayer, it may mean hard thinking and fearless proclamations: the type of activity will vary according to the situation. What is important, however, is the recognition that we are called to bear the sins of many.

3. SUCH AN INVOLVEMENT IN LIFE IMPLIES A WORK OF RECONCILIATION

This is essentially the ministry of God Who redeems. He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation in all its forms. This ministry certainly has as its primary task the evangelistic call to men to accept the grace of God—"we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God"—but all our argument has been that the relationships in which man is involved cannot be separated one from another. Hence the evangelist's task must include the perpetual task of reconciling whatever is separated.

How far, can we say, that the Church today is deliberately engaged in promoting mutual understanding between the opposing elements that make up our national and international society? Is the Church doing enough to bring people together that barriers may be broken down and mutual trust be created? This is what the Church exists for. But of course such a ministry of reconciliation in any realm of human society can be effectively exercised only from within that realm. It is only as the Church is involved in our society, accepting responsibility for all kinds of people in all their activities; ready to bear the consequences of their sin that the Church is in a position to exercise a truly reconciling ministry and to lead men into the patterns of true living.

L. G. CHAMPION.

PREACHING THE ATONEMENT

EVERY minister of Jesus Christ must preach the Atonement. In the last analysis, he has nothing else to say to the world. At no time has he anything to say of comparable importance. It remains for him, as for Paul, the primary proclamation—"First of all, that Christ died for our sins". It is not only the theme of evangelistic appeals. Every word of exhortation to the godly, every word of comfort to the distressed, every denunciation of evil, carries with it the implication that fellowship with God is possible for sinful men through the Christ Who died and rose again. At every point of ministry we are concerned with the Atonement.

Few would wish to question such statements. There are, however, many who find the doctrine fraught with difficulties. It is not that they are uncertain of the fact of the Atonement, nor of its relevance, but that they have misgivings as to the adequacy of the forms in which it is commonly expressed, and are aware moreover of a nagging

discomfort of mind as to some of the apparent implications of the doctrine. That uneasiness is to be welcomed as evidence of a desire for truth and honesty and effectiveness; but we are also impelled to try to reduce or remove it. Exactly whence does our dissatisfaction spring? How can we preach this baffling truth which we must preach?

Let it be said at once that cleverness is no way to freedom in this matter. It is not in the words of man's wisdom that the truth is made acceptable. There must always remain the authentic simplicity as well as the depth of the Gospel. Nor shall we gain liberty by taking flight to a theory, old or new. Theories of the Atonement are inevitable and innumerable. They are also unpreachable, insofar as they are presented as monopolistic arguments designed to make a fact credible. Preaching can never be that; it must proclaim, not dogmatise. The New Testament has no theory but thrills with the fact. It is a fact which outstrips thought and language and drives us to the attitude of Dora Greenwell's hymn—"I am not skilled to understand . . ."; or that of Spurgeon's dictum—"Atonement was wrought in darkness because its full meaning could not be beheld with the finite mind". Yet we must speak of it, and are therefore bound to seek a way through all misconceptions to the shining fact.

We locate our difficulties, then, not in the spiritual experience of the Atonement, but in our own failures to understand and to translate. We are sure that the fact is true, but far less sure that the ways in which we speak and think of it are true. If they were true, they would not necessarily or conceivably be adequate, and they may well be misleading also. Doubtless that is the reason why some finer souls and more incisive intellects have tended to react unfavourably. "I hate the Cross" cried Goethe. Shelley levels the indictment: "You make a monster of God". "What satisfaction could a good God find in punishing the innocent?"; and George Bernard Shaw refers to "an insane vengeance and trumpery expiation". We see ourselves caught in the snares of jargon and haunted by the spectre of injustice. The first step to greater freedom is to be aware of the real nature of these hindrances.

Consider for a moment the question of language. There are quarters in which preaching that is little more than a string of evangelical clichés will win approval, yet it is not only for that reason that a man will preach in that fashion. It may be that he is shouting to keep up his spirits. He is dimly aware of a chasm which yawns for him, and the familiar terminology stands as a frail fence between. But there is something which even Scriptural terminology cannot do for us. We use it rightly when we see that it cannot do more than point in the right direction. It is a means, not an end, for understanding. Take, for example, the terminology of Sacrifice—priest, altar, victim, blood; is not the New Testament itself clear enough that what Christ wrought is greater than any such terms can compass? His is a "sacrifice" unlike any other ever offered, says the writer to the Hebrews—that is to say, "sacrifice" is only a dim figure of

the Fact, which itself is *sui generis*. Again, we love and must use the terminology of Transaction—ransom, price, redemption, debt, slavery, freedom; yet what we possess in experience utterly surpasses the world of commerce and negotiation, for it is personal and unique. Another field of analogy is the forensic, with its notions of offence and penalty, doom and plea; but to make the Father impartial Judge and the Son counsel for the defence is obviously inadmissible, and any suggestion that the guilty gets off lightly is sad misrepresentation. Equally the thought of Victory over the powers of Darkness, re-emphasised by Aulén, has its strict limitations. All these have the sanction of Holy writ, and yet must be classed as insufficient. They are vivid pictures, not explanations. As servants they are useful, but must not be allowed to ride upon horses. Each of them makes graphic some aspects of the great reconciling work, but of necessity they are borrowed from realms in which there is far less of the interplay and relationship of persons than in the Christian experience of salvation. To permit any of them to dominate is to hold the truth away from real life, which is a matter of the amazing love of God meeting the deep shame of man, and of the great relief and joy of the child of God. All are immeasurable. And the loss in the sin, and the pain in the love, and the fellowship in Christ, cannot be nicely analysed and evaluated. The exalting of analogies, as of theories, to the rank of complete explanations, is a sure way to disorder of thought and dismay of heart.

The mistake appears often enough in the course of the Church's history. Only let Ransom assume a rank above its station, and questions must be asked—What was the price, to whom was it paid? Speculation hurries on to discuss the rights of the Devil, and the Divine adroitness in tricking him by snatching back the Son in surprise Resurrection; or in the unhappy figure of Gregory of Nyssa, by hiding the hook of the Son's Divinity in the bait of the Humanity. We have to recognise that if the Ransom-figure is final for us, such questions will be posed. If, on the other hand, what is meant is that our salvation brings a freedom which was costly to God beyond all reckoning, the Ransom-figure must be allowed to say that and no more. Another group of ideas finds focus in the thought of legal redress for God, who has been injured or insulted. In Anselm's view, God demands satisfaction for the spoiling of His property; to Grotius there appears need for the vindication of the flouted dignity of the great Governor; to Luther and many others there is the supreme need for the exaction of penalty to offset the offence of man's sin. All of these are concerned to speak of the desperate plight of the sinner and the utter sufficiency of the Work of Christ, but may well leave us with the impression that in the work of salvation God is far more concerned about Himself than about the sinner. Did He indeed so love Himself, that He arranged to restore His own position through the Son? Yet if we turn with relief to Abelard who sees in the Cross the love of God which can win response from sinners, we

recognise a measure of truth indeed, but need something more to meet the need of hearts as sluggish as our own. Abelard himself, trying to make his teaching clear, has recourse to the old terms of sacrifice and price. The truth is that there are no words commensurate with this subject—whether they be apostolic words, or even Dominical words. On His lips they glow with the glory of His character and deed; on ours they remain less than the Reality of which they would tell. They are to be used indeed, but not idolised. The preacher who wins through to this position has found a new measure of freedom in the service of the Gospel.

To turn now to difficulties of an ethical kind—how are we to understand the justice of God in the Atonement, so that we may freely speak of it? We are sure that God is just, and that only a forgiveness securely grounded in justice will suffice. Yet objections are commonly brought against the doctrine on the grounds of its immoral nature, and the preacher may well despair of finding a convincing answer to such criticisms, old as they are. (Paul was certainly aware of objections of this type.) Let us at once acknowledge that these objections are valid in a limited sense. They reveal afresh the poverty of our presentation of the Truth, and no more. The Truth stands unscathed.

Simplest is the criticism that the Atonement accords to the guilty an undeserved good. That is something that any preacher of the Gospel would rejoice to answer—"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us". More exacting for our powers of explanation is the cry that this teaching makes no moral demands upon the sinner. Here we need to hold fast the truth that the Work of Christ is more than an objective transaction, and is, in fact, the opening of the way to living fellowship with God. Baptists have here the immense advantage of an eloquent ordinance to keep this truth in evidence. Baptism, as the act of faith in which we die with Christ and rise with Him, may also serve to point the way when we come to deal with a still more troublesome assertion—that it is absurd or immoral to hold that the merits of Christ should be transferred to men who have shared none of His sufferings. This is a real difficulty so long as we think of Christ as an individual in the sense that we are individuals: that is, if He were to bear to us only the kind of relationship in which other men may stand to us. But we are involved with Him from the start through His creative work, which implies and is implied in His redeeming work. The original relation in which He stands to us we have repudiated by our revolt, and He has reaffirmed and enhanced by His Incarnation. This He could do only by that humbling of Himself which included becoming obedient to the death of a Cross, with its sequel in Resurrection. To believe is to abandon revolt, to accept fresh union with Him in an act of faith which repudiates the old life and receives the new, dying and rising again with Him. We share His sufferings then. What is under criticism is an idea of

Substitution, but nevertheless that is a word we cannot afford to lay aside. What we must do is to understand it, not as the arbitrary replacement of one individual by another, quantitatively; but as the doing for every man, by the God-Man, of that which opened the way to living fellowship with God. It is not simply that He took my place. It is more—He made it possible for me to take my place, following Him through death to newness of life. Figure of speech and symbolic act serve again to indicate the glorious Fact.

It is needful, then, that in preaching the Atonement we should keep in mind the close link between the Creative Work and the Redemptive Work of Christ. In so doing, we shall find ourselves drawn to acknowledge another close link—that between the Justice and the Mercy of God. If there is no separation between Creator and Redeemer, Atonement is the deed of the One God, and is not to be split into two irreconcilable parts. Somewhere there is a concept in which the two are reconciled. Luther, hampered by his Penal Theory, could not find it, yet had to believe in it. So must we. What we style Justice in God implies in Him a perfect knowledge which only love could possess, and which could never be achieved by the clumsy approximations of even the best human laws. What we call the Mercy of God likewise cannot be an ignorant or unjust leniency. The two ideas converge in "asymptotic approach", and we believe they meet in God. Then, if there is this reconciliation between our thoughts of Lawgiver and Lover of souls, we shall be bound to accord to our terminology of Sin and Guilt meanings that suit the facts of a marred personal relationship, and shall not allow the impersonal tones of Law and law-breaking to externalise the human tragedy. Given such insights, we shall still use the great words of Scripture (Sacrifice, Ransom, Redemption, Atonement, Justification) but with careful understanding of their origin and service. No poet, hymn-writer or evangelical fashion of speech must be allowed to do our thinking for us.

There is one other matter of the highest practical and spiritual importance which may all too easily be overlooked, and that is a right understanding of the Church as the Redeemed Community, committed to the way of Love.

No man can fully preach the Atonement by himself; it is the Church's task, wrought out in the words of a preacher who speaks in the context of a reconciled fellowship, the nature and quality of which is symbolised in the Atonement-centred Ordinances, but which also, by its selfless concern for the community at large, itself preaches the love of God in very deed. Where in the work and service of the Church people are loved for themselves, loved sincerely, loved at cost, the Atonement can be freely preached.

It remains to be said that when we have done our utmost to be true and clear and simple in what we say about the Cross, we shall still find the Atonement baffling to our minds and a challenge to our hearts; not easy to receive, let alone to preach. It will remain

foolishness to some, a cause of offence to others, and a mystery to all. But it will also remain the power and wisdom of God, leaping out beyond the limits of words to touch and heal the needy hearts of those who hear. We never preach these things in simplicity and candour without the Spirit; and He is the Spirit of Truth who quickens in men a longing, and gives to men the fulfilment, in Christ the Saviour.

S. J. DEWHURST.

A COMMENTARY ON THE CANADIAN SCENE

THE invitation to write a brief article for the *Fraternal* "to keep us in touch with Baptist life and activity, or Baptist thinking in the Canadian scene" was one which I greatly welcomed. There are some who are in closer touch with the general life of the Baptists in Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but not even they can represent the Canadian Baptists as a whole.

Yet, I have one advantage, given to a Canadian Baptist only every five years or so, namely, that for the past two years I have been President of the Canadian Council of Churches. This has given me insights into the Canadian scene which are quite plainly denied to those whose official connection is with one denomination alone. This has been an exacting responsibility on top of my ministerial duties, but it has enabled me to appraise both the strength and weakness of our Baptist witness in Canada.

The overall picture of the Baptist life in Canada can be clearly and simply drawn. We have three Conventions—the Convention of Ontario and Quebec, the Baptist Union of Western Canada and the Maritime Convention. These three are the constituent members of the Baptist Federation of Canada. The Federation is comparatively new and has not yet reached its full maturity in the life of Canadian Baptists. The theological climate of the three conventions differs very seriously, both among themselves and from each other. It is for this reason that the Federation belongs to the Canadian Council of Churches, but is outside the World Council of Churches. The Maritime Convention is divided in its attitude to the World Council, while the Union of Western Canada is strongly opposed. The Convention of Ontario and Quebec would become a participating member without any serious delay. The insistence upon national bodies as members of the World Council is hard on us in Canada, because Ontario alone covers a geographical area in which Great Britain can comfortably be housed five times over, and the geographical area of Canada itself is larger than that of the United States, from which several "national bodies" are permitted.

It is not geography alone, however, which divides us. We have all kinds of Baptists, from the fundamentalist (in the unfortunate sense of that word) to the thoroughly evangelical Baptists who take seriously the fact that the unity of the Church is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that the breaking of fellowship among believers is akin

to breaking afresh the Body of Christ, which is the Church "purchased by His blood". We have literalists, schismatics, sectarians, scholars, saints, all sorts and conditions of men, some whose worship is informal, even casual, and others who have a distinct preference for a formal, liturgical service of worship.

We have some Baptists in Canada who exist only because they cannot "fellowship" with fellow-Baptists. They do not belong to any one of our Conventions and have no association with the Baptist World Alliance. But they are delighted when Baptists from Britain come over and occupy their pulpits, for that gives them a certain kudos, which they skilfully exploit to the full. The Baptist Ministers who come over and who further this somewhat sordid practice are for the most part completely ignorant of the situation, but, if I may say so, they could consult either the Baptist Church House in Southampton Row or the Baptist Federation of Canada.

Religiously, the Canadian scene is a microcosm of the general church situation throughout the western world. If we may judge, however, by some of the addresses, given by leaders of the Church in the East, at Ghana, for example, this comment is true, also, for their part of the world as well. Certainly, what we have in Canada is very similar to that which obtains in the church life of many other nations.

There is no state church in Canada, but the political power of the Roman Catholic Church is so deeply entrenched in the Province of Quebec and her influence in education, taxation, law, politics, marriage and culture so extensive, that the result is virtually the same. Nationally, each denomination is competing for the support of the rapidly growing population, and the main line seems to be drawn between the United Church of Canada, an organisational unity of Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians since 1925, and the Roman Catholic Church, which claims all those who are born of Roman Catholic parents as members of the Roman Church. Far more than any other religious body, they have increased numerically as a result of immigration during the past decade, and their numbers were considerably swollen by the Hungarian refugees. From the religious point of view the United Church has shown a deeper concern for the spiritual need of the nation as a whole, and there are obvious signs of a new theological awakening within the leadership of that Church. The theological significance of Union is now being examined much more closely, and in this theological conversation the Anglicans, Baptists and Presbyterians are playing a welcome part.

The Roman Church, with one or two notable exceptions among its academic leaders, is self-centred and there is little passion for the lost or concern for the poor. It is content to consolidate its social and political position. Theological issues regarding the truth of the gospel and the nature of the Church are, for Rome, beyond discussion and outside further conversation. All that is required now is the time to work out "the revenge of the cradle", and then, once a political majority has been assured, there will be the customary treatment of

other religious bodies. It is not a pleasant prospect, but the possibility of it constitutes one important factor in the future of the Church in Canada.

Indeed, already this situation has compelled Church leaders in Canada to raise some very serious questions. The on-going concern of those who stand within the Protestant tradition is, "What is the Gospel?" and "What is the nature of the Church?" In view of the peculiar situation which obtains on the North American continent, constant and prior attention has to be given to this whole interrogation.

On this continent success has almost become a cult. Returns are looked for and sought. Where they are forthcoming, they are accepted as a just reward; where they are not, some other device must be tried. Failure is not tolerated. In religion, no less than in any other sphere of human enterprise, success is regarded as one of the marks of the Church and of the ministry. Consequently, statistics, budgets, baptisms, membership, all those things which can be measured or counted, take upon themselves a new and deep significance. Even the witness of the Church is looked upon virtually as a promotion campaign, and all the techniques of high pressure salesmanship are put into effective operation. The Church is "God's organisation", "God's enterprise", and on the North American continent it must be "run" with all the "drive", the "know-how" and the "success" of "private enterprise". At all costs, the world must know that the Church is a "going concern" and that to support the Church is really the high privilege of every good citizen. It is "good" for the nation to have the Church and, therefore, the percentage of the population who support the Church or the synagogue is remarkably high. "Church" and "religion" are "big business", and "jumping on the bandwagon" is "the right thing to do".

Let no one imagine for a moment that this is a supreme example of "religious showmanship". There is showmanship in it; it is a most successful advertising campaign; it is conducted by men who have mastered all the techniques of Radio and T.V. methods. But it is undertaken with complete sincerity by those who have been "sold" on the gospel and on the Church, and they are fully convinced that this is the only way to promote the cause of Christ in the Western hemisphere in this day and age. They do not question the truth of the gospel; their one concern is to communicate the gospel to their contemporaries in the only way their contemporaries are likely to understand and to accept. They are applying the tried and tested ways of advertising in the commercial field, partly because they have "a selling job" to do, and partly because on our continent this is the most effective way of doing such a job.

What is not appreciated is that this very method of communication may change the nature of the "product" which is being sold. The question, "What does all this do to the gospel itself or to the

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Church? ", is hardly ever raised. Precisely because it is not raised, the success which attends all the investment of time, talent and substance is seriously held to be the unmistakable mark of divine approval. They feel this is God's way of saying " Amen " to their efforts. " It is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes ".

It is their refusal to face these prior questions which vitiates so much of their best efforts in the area of evangelism. Most of the evangelism which we have is sub-Christian. It is not the mission of the Church to those who have never heard the gospel before. It is an impressive display of the financial and numerical strength of the forces which claim the name Christian. It is a commonplace that many who become enthusiastic members of the *ad hoc* committee which is set up to promote the project have no Christian fellowship among themselves when the campaign is over. They will not worship together. They will not " fellowship " together. They do not sit at the Lord's Table together. Indeed, they continue in their sectarian and divisive ways as though the " seamless robe " were meant to be torn, and as though the " koinonia of the Spirit " were a matter of no importance. Consequently, whatever impression the enterprise may make upon the public, and the support of the Press is invariably generous and constant, the total Christian effect is negligible. There is no building up of the Body of Christ in " the most holy faith ". The Church remains divided and the world is still presented with competing Christian groups, each claiming to be more truly a representative of the " New Testament Church " than any other. We still have over one hundred and fifty separate Christian bodies, each insisting that its separate existence is justified either on the grounds of fidelity to the Bible or on account of the " pure doctrine of the Church ", and the world remains confused, bewildered and unbelieving in the presence of the monumental absurdity of it all.

Because Baptists are committed to the task of building up the Church and to the maintenance of the purity of the Gospel, they have a peculiar responsibility in this kind of situation. For them worship is more important than evangelism, the acknowledgment of God prior to the service of man. They cannot divorce worship from work, or evangelism from education, or prayer from practice. They ought however, to make up their minds as to the true nature of worship before they begin to establish a rhythm between worship and work. Is it the gospel which is being promoted? Or is the gospel being used to buttress a way of life which is preferable, on social and political grounds, to some other which is based on differing ideological foundations? Is the Church being built up to the glory of God?

These are the questions which we are obliged to ask. That they are being asked at all is an indication that Baptists are still alert to their historic mission. They will never be a large group. Once they become large they establish a hierarchy of their own, and theirs is no more attractive than any other. Perhaps the Baptist testimony to the purity of the gospel and to the nature of the Church is more urgently

needed in the rapidly expanding and developing life of Canada than we realise. Certainly, the temptation to succumb to the snare of success as the world understands it, is far too real for anyone to assume that these issues are no longer important. Moreover, the relation between the Baptist Federation and the World Council of Churches is a further indication of the confusion which is still present in our thinking regarding the ecumenical movement and the deepening world concern for the unity of the Church. Is this some modern ecclesiastical device, or does it belong inherently to the truth of the gospel? This is one of the questions which we are being forced to face. For, unless I am gravely mistaken, Baptists, no less than any other Christian communion, will stand or fall on their fidelity to the truth of the gospel. For it is the whole gospel, the "whole counsel of God", we are committed to preach, and it is the ministry of the one Church we are commissioned to exercise.

Once again, then, Baptists are being forced to examine their churchmanship. They can do this only in the light of the gospel, and, although the theological concern is limited to a few, there is a deepening interest in theological conversation both among Baptists and between Baptists and members of other Christian communions. This undertaking is not so widely publicised as some others, but its existence amongst Baptists in Canada augurs well for that continuing reformation of which the Church always stands in need, and for the preservation of "the faith once delivered to the saints". Our methods certainly will be historically conditioned; but our theology and our ministry can be determined only by the truth of the gospel.

EMLYN DAVIES.

CAREY'S COTTAGE

CAREY'S COTTAGE, Leicester, has been in the news recently, for enthusiastic town-planners have schemed its destruction, and have been restrained only with difficulty. It is useful to set down some of the story of this famous house, its early history as well as an account of the struggle to save it from demolition.

Little is known about its early days. It was built about 1750, about the same time as the Harvey Lane Chapel, immediately opposite it. Whether it was the Manse of the Church (in our modern sense) is not known, but it seems unlikely, for the Ministers who succeeded William Carey at Harvey Lane did not live in that house.

The Leicester Directory for 1794 informs us that Mr. Cave, who followed Carey, lived in Cank Street. The 1815 Directory records that Robert Hall lived in St. Nicholas' Street, and the 1827 Leicester Directory tells that the Rev. T. Murcell lived in King Street. Cook's Leicester Directory of 1849 says that Harvey Lane Chapel, "though now deserted by the general congregation" (they had moved to Belvoir Street), "has connected with it reminiscences of peculiar interest, as the scene of the labours of the immortal Carey and Hall".

The names of those living in Harvey Lane are given, but the numbers of the houses are not. If a guess may be hazarded, the famous Cottage was at this date occupied either by a maltster or by a chimney sweeper!

Some time before 1882, the date of the earliest records, the Cottage, along with several other houses in Harvey Lane, became the property jointly of George Whiles, a Yeoman, and Adam Whiles, a Trimmer and Dyer. In 1884 George Whiles bequeathed his share in the property to Trustees for the lifetime of his widow, and after her death to his daughter and to his son. The property was mortgaged to Samuel Harris and D. Harris, and thereafter to J. and L. E. Staynes, who subsequently transferred the mortgage to several others of the same name.

Adam Whiles bequeathed his share in 1882 to his son, who mortgaged the property to the Bank, and later to a certain T. Harrison, of Leicester. He bequeathed his interest to his widow, and on her death it passed to three ladies named Rowson, of Bayswater.

In 1916 all the parties which had an interest in the two shares transferred the complete property to a small group of Baptist business men in Leicester, Messrs. Thomas Brown, J. W. Goddard, Alec Tyler, T. J. Thorniloe, A. C. Wates, and Alfred Yates, for the sum of £1,300. They entered into a Deed Poll declaring the Trusts which they intended should attach to the property. It was their hope at that time that Carey's house might be developed as a worthy memorial, and become a Cottage in a garden.

Four of the houses bought were demolished and a warehouse erected. The house at No. 8, Harvey Lane, immediately adjacent to Carey's, was retained as accommodation for a Caretaker.

In December, 1929, Messrs. Brown, Tyler, Wates, and Yates, the surviving Trustees, transferred the property to the Leicester Baptist Association. By April, 1936, all the original Trustees were dead, without having appointed successors, and the Association sealed a Deed whereby the Baptist Missionary Society Corporation was appointed Trustee of the Settlement in place of the Grantors.

On the transfer to the B.M.S. a local Committee was formed to manage the property. It consists of the Officers of the Leicester Baptist Association, and the Leicester Auxiliary of the B.M.S., along with three representatives from each body.

Two Leicester Ministers who had visited the Livingstone Memorial at Blantyre suggested that the Cottage should be developed after that pattern. The plan was to have nine Tableaux, portraying Carey and his work. With help from the College of Art, three of these were completed before the War. When the work was resumed in 1945, it was realised that nine were too many, and would involve some structural alterations. It was therefore agreed to have six, and they represent important episodes in Carey's life.

During the War years the Ter-Jubilee of the B.M.S. was celebrated, and a plaque of Carey's head was placed over the front door of the Cottage. This plaque has an interesting history.

When Harvey Lane Memorial Hall was being built in 1923, following the devastating fire which destroyed the old building, Mr. Alfred Yates promised a plaque of William Carey if a suitable place could be found for it. A place was found over the doorway in Thornton Lane, and the plaque, made by Mr. J. H. Morcom, of Leicester, was erected there.

When the building was sold early in the 30's, the plaque was removed by somebody, and later turned up in a dealer's shop. It was bought by a brother of Councillor S. J. Perry, who presented it to the Trustees, and performed the unveiling ceremony at the time of the remembrance of the 150th anniversary of Carey's valediction.

The recent history of the Cottage is of more immediate interest, and the writer was personally involved in the events. In October, 1957, an article appeared in the *Leicester Mercury*, saying that Carey's Cottage was to be destroyed in the development of the City's Inner Ring Road. When the City Council met, on 29th October, I asked the Chairman of the Town Planning Committee if the newspaper reports were true. The answer was, Yes.

A subsequent item of business that evening was the approval of further details of the Inner Ring Road scheme which would bring about the demolition of the Cottage. I rose to speak against this, and to move an amendment, asking that further consideration be given to saving the historic house. On a trivial technicality I was ruled out of order on the advice of the Town Clerk. My amendment did not precisely tie up with the resolution that had been moved, and therefore was technically "out of order". The impression that was given to many at this meeting of the Council was that the Cottage was in the middle of the proposed new road, and therefore could not possibly be saved.

When W. J. Grant and I called at the City Surveyor's Department to inspect the plans, it was plain that the Council had not been told the whole truth about the relation of the Cottage to the new road scheme. Only a portion of the pavement on a broad road cut through a corner of the Cottage. It was clear that a small adjustment to the plan could effect the saving of the Cottage.

The Leicester Auxiliary of the B.M.S. met a few days later and agreed to prepare a Petition to the Council, asking it to reconsider its plans so as to save the Cottage. There were various ways in which the business could be raised again in the City Council, but the best method was by a Petition which would be sent to the Highways Committee, and reported upon within three months.

All the Churches of the City, Anglican and Free, were sent copies of the Petition forms. There was a supply at the Cottage itself—which did better business than usual in the winter months!

The B.M.S. General Committee expressed its concern, and asked for the support of the British Council of Churches, and

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the Conference of British Missionary Societies. They both sent letters. The Baptist Union sent a letter, as did the British and Foreign Bible Society. Individuals wrote registering their protest as the news was made known in the religious press. A letter to Dr. C. E. Abraham, Principal of Serampore, telling him of the proposal, resulted in a whole sheaf of letters being sent from India.

The number of signatories to the Petition was a little disappointing, around 1,500. I should have preferred 15,000! However, that was sufficient to get the business discussed again by the Highways Committee. It was during the period prior to receiving the Petition that this same Committee agreed that the section of the Inner Ring Road nearest to Harvey Lane should be re-named Carey's Way, thus further perpetuating the memory of this great man.

When the Highways Committee looked at the whole plan again as the result of the Petition and the various representations, it was seen that a modification of the road plan to spare the Cottage would actually be advantageous so far as the road was concerned. It was therefore agreed that the line of the road be altered to avoid the Cottage. A recommendation to spare the Cottage, subject to its receiving certain amenity treatment, was therefore sent to the Council.

A statement was given to the Press on the morning following the decision of the Highways Committee. The Chairman expressed himself rather ungraciously, saying that they were not really interested in saving a dirty old Cottage, only in making the road plan better! Whatever the reason for the change, one thing was agreed: the famous house was to be spared.

The recommendation was brought to the City Council at the end of March, 1958. The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Highways Committee were both absent, and the business was introduced by a member of the Committee, sympathetic to our point of view. In the short debate I expressed the profound satisfaction that would be felt by thousands the world over as they learned the news of the sparing of what is the most significant memorial to William Carey in Great Britain, the house in which he spent the most creative years of his life in this land.

The amenity treatment suggested by the Corporation should make the Cottage a much more worthy and attractive Memorial. It will become a house in a garden, as was originally intended, and it may be possible to feature in the garden some aspects of Carey the botanist. The plans are being carefully examined, and the structure of the house is being investigated by experts.

How soon the re-development will take place is not known, but good progress is being made with the section of the Inner Ring Road leading to the Cottage. It may be that the bicentenary of Carey's birth will be celebrated by the completion of this work.

ARTHUR H. KIRKBY.

RELIGION AND RADICAL NONCONFORMITY

A DISTINGUISHED student of Buddhism, T. W. Rhys Davids, more than once remarked on the similarities which exist, in practice, between two religious systems so fundamentally different in origin as Buddhism and Romanism. The similarities are most clearly to be observed in the Tibetan form of Buddhism, "with its shaven priests, its bells and rosaries, its images and holy water, and gorgeous dresses; its services with double choirs, and processions and creeds and mystic rites . . . its huge monasteries . . . cathedrals . . . hierarchy . . . cardinals . . . Pope".

This is a particularly vivid illustration of a principle which seems to run through the story of all the major religions, namely, the tendency to overlay spiritual experience with forms and ceremonies which eventually stifle the very spirit they are intended to express. It would be difficult, for example, to recognise much of what J. B. Pratt called "The Positive Side of the Buddhist Ethic" in the Buddhism of the Himalayas today, just as it is difficult to recognise anything of the spirit of the Suffering Servant in the pomp of the Vatican City.

The New Testament takes note of this tendency and utters warnings against it. Most notable in this connection are the references in Galatians and Colossians to the corrupt angelic powers, described as "principalities and powers", or "elemental spirits of the world", etc. These are identified, by modern Protestant scholars at any rate, as the spirit forces of religious legalism and cultus. Formerly they had a function to fulfil in the life of mankind, prior to the coming of Christ, but now they are superseded. They are demonic, says Professor Charles Masson, in the measure in which they still seek to give permanence to those forms of religious life to which Christ has put an end.* The same kind of comment is made by Professor G. B. Caird. "The demonic forces of legalism, then, both Jewish and Gentile, can be called 'principalities and powers', or 'the elemental spirits of the world'." A further most important point is made by Caird with regard to the Jews' reaction to Jesus: "it was not their irreligion, but their religion, their enthusiasm for the Torah, which had crucified the Son of God".†

This doctrine, that all religion, even the highest, can harden into dogmatic and legalistic forms such as merit the description "demonic" (in the theological sense), should not fall strangely upon non-conformist ears. We do not find it as hard as some do to recognise that these spirit-forces of legalism and ritual were among the foes with which Jesus did battle, and that they are spirit forces which are nourished by human sin and pride. The gospel of God's grace sounds the knell of all legalistic and ritualistic religion. Nevertheless,

* *L'Épître de S. Paul aux Ephésiens*, page 219.

† *Principalities and Powers*, page 51.

these now superseded angelic powers continue to exist, and to struggle against the Gospel, and will do so until the parousia of Christ. They will, says Paul, be ever seeking to extend or re-establish their hold over men, and even over the fellowship of believers. As we contemplate the course of Christian history, can we say that they have been altogether unsuccessful?

In an article written just before the International Missionary Conference at Willingen, Professor J. C. Hoekendijk uttered a strong warning against what seemed to him the danger of "ecclesiology" or "the tendency towards churchism in contemporary missionary thinking".* He added the challenging contention that "in history a keen ecclesiological interest has, almost without exception, been a sign of spiritual decadence". What Hoekendijk said regarding the ecclesiology of the missionary enterprise, whether right or wrong in that connection, is worth pondering in connection with our Free Church life today.

In this context "ecclesiology" may be taken to mean the current tendencies (a) in matters of doctrine, to conform, more or less, to the rigid patterns of neo-orthodoxy ("Church Dogmatics") and (b) in practical matters, to be well versed in ecclesiastical practices often alien to our own genius. Consider how many current ministerial concerns are pseudo-ecclesiastical; right ways of ordination, endless discussions on baptism, dedication, etc.; the adoption of formal liturgical patterns of various kinds; more meticulous observance of the Christian Year: these are some that spring readily to mind.

Both from the study of the history of religions, and from the teaching of the Epistle to the Galatians, it becomes clear that there is every possibility that in our hands also, as well as in those of the Roman and similar Churches, the gospel of God's grace may degenerate into something alien, into another "religion" or religious system, where the Spirit is once again crowded out by the thick growths of the letter and the form. There are numerous examples in the history of religions of this tendency to take refuge in outward forms in order to escape from, or in default of, the searching experience of an encounter with the Eternal. As far as the observable facts of religion are concerned there is a real possibility that the Name that is above every name could become one name among many, all honoured alike by an institutional system of temples, priests, rites, dogmas, laws, festivals and so on.

Within such Christian circles as I know, any strong emphasis on what may be called "spiritual" religion now seems most conspicuously confined to the fundamentalists and their fellow-travellers. I say seems, because their apparent monopoly of spiritual concern is misleading, since fundamentalism is as much a denial of the freedom of the Spirit as ecclesiasticism is. But fundamentalists may plausibly claim to be the champions of spiritual religion, if others of us are so

* *International Review of Missions*, July, 1952, page 325.

engrossed in examining and elaborating outward forms of one kind and another that we neglect to let it be seen just what is that essential emphasis which is our birthright.

The volume in the Library of Christian Classics that deals with the "left wing of the Reformation" is entitled "Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers". The association of adjectives there is worthy of note. In the sixteenth century, there was a recognisably close relationship between the two emphases. Common to both, and precisely what made theirs a "radical Reformation", say the editors of this volume, was an experience of the "driving of the Spirit" and an opposition to "the suffocating growth of ecclesiastical tradition". It is also worth recalling in these days when humanism is regarded with suspicion by Christian "orthodoxy" that, although the word "humanist" may have had a slightly different significance then, it was as such that the radical reformers were not infrequently known.

Today, however, I sometimes have the feeling that Baptists are in a cleft stick between two forms of legalism: the religious orthodoxy of fundamentalism, and the orthodox religiosity of ecclesiasticism. This is, of course, an exaggeration; things have not yet reached that stage. But the danger exists, and we ought to ask ourselves seriously whether we have not already allowed ourselves to be jostled too far in the direction of that dilemma. I recognise that many of our current ecclesiastical concerns are thrust upon us by others. When I hear certain of my Baptist brethren for whom I have a great affection and esteem urging that some further item of ecclesiastical furniture be brought into our Baptist house, or lamenting that we are not nearly so well equipped to cut liturgical capers as Anglican ordinands are, I suspect that the attitude they are adopting is not really part of their heritage as radical nonconformists, but has been derived unconsciously from the generally churchy atmosphere of the times. I fear also that they are playing into the hands of those extremists who will be quick to say, "That's what oecumenism does for you!" The Radical Reformation has indisputably a contribution to make to the World Church, and one which needs to be made; but it will not be made by bringing into the circle yet another, paler variety of ecclesiasticism, or by endeavouring to be able to say to the Anglicans, "Anything you can do we can do nearly as well".

The contribution which radical nonconformity can make is rather the kind that is made by those who, on the one hand, are evangelical enough not to be afraid of the real freedom of the Spirit, and who, on the other hand, are evangelically convinced that what is institutional must always be subservient to what is human and personal, and not vice versa. The kind of attitude shown by Jesus in the matter of Sabbath observance (human and personal *v.* the institutional; see Mark ii, 23; iii, 6, etc.), is the direct opposite of the kind of attitude that can so easily be taken, with the best of intentions, by the defender of ecclesiastical good order and churchly discipline, be he an Anglican vicar or (less probably) nonconformist minister,

B. M. S.

JANUARY TO MARCH, 1959

The year ending 31st March, 1959, may well be one of the most notable in our history. **We earnestly ask for your help in prayer and general support to make it so.**

1. We thank God for the ready response which so quickly cleared the £24,000 deficit on last year's account.
2. We pray for success in raising in this financial year £342,092—the minimum required for continuing our present work. Though £22,690 more than last year, it is not beyond the resources of a denomination of 327,000 enrolled members and many thousands of adherents and young people.
3. We have to launch a special appeal for £25,000 for a desperately needed new hospital in Angola.

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London, W.1

who allows compassionate Christlike love for people to be crowded out by his desire that, at the wedding, the funeral, the dedication, etc., all things shall be done with absolute ecclesiastical rectitude.

Our *raison d'être*, as heirs of the Radical Reformation is our consciousness that what has been committed to men is the gospel of God's grace, which lifts us above and beyond all religious formalism and all the large or small tyrannies of ecclesiasticism. In making this emphasis at the present time I believe we are strengthened by the sharply re-awakened awareness in our day of the value of what is personal, over against the tyranny of things and laws. Men are today realising afresh the paramount importance of human values for the very reason that these values are increasingly at the mercy of political and economic dogma; the truly personal is being threatened by the institutional over a wide area of modern life. The Christian community ought to be the one place where men should not look in vain for an experience and an expression of that which is truly Personal. The essence of this community's life is the new structure of personal relationships of which Christ, the New Man, is the focus; here is the place where men may know one another in the Spirit. Christ's body is not a new religious institution, Hoekendijk reminds us, but the coming into being of a new humanity.

Ecclesiasticism involves the obscuring of all this, the de-personalising of what ought to be a real Christlike and human inter-relatedness. Dr. Payne has wisely reminded us that the study of Christian history confirms us in our basic contention "that Faith comes before Order, the Gospel before the Church. Tradition, whether in doctrine or practice, is a valuable guide but a poor master".* It is important to remember that tradition *can* become our master. It is an indication of the demonic nature of the spirit-forces of religious formalism that they are deceptive: they have an *animus* of their own, and though they may appear at first in the guise of servants, they end by enslaving those who make use of them.

In the same context Dr. Payne adds, "It is impossible in the twentieth century to put back the wine of the Spirit into the old bottles of ecclesiastical order . . .". Yet this is precisely what some of us seem to be attempting.

TREVOR LING.

* *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England* (1944 edition), page 151.