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EDITORIAL

THERE can be no doubt but that the ecumenical discussions this summer in Scotland have been of exceptional significance.

The acorn planted in Edinburgh in 1910 is becoming a sturdy young oak. The "Winds of Change" that have blown about it, and never more violently than today, have clearly had a lot to do with it. There is a growing concern among responsible church leaders the world over, at the impotence of a divided church to utter the Word of God to a world in peril of perishing. Dr. Visser 't Hooft pointed out, for example, how grievous it is today in South Africa, one of the world's explosive points, that the Christian church can give no united witness.

All churches treasure their heritage. Confessional churches, such as ours, are proud of the stand taken by their founding fathers and believe that at the time it needed to be taken. They feel their particular emphasis in doctrine and church order to be a trust committed to them for which they find warrant in the Word of God. But, as we often quote, "The Lord hath more light and truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word".

One of the most valuable of the meetings in Scotland was that of the "Faith and Order Commission", which provides the framework for study and discussion among the 178 member churches of the Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox confession. Too often we dispute with one another from the safe fastnesses of our own pulpits or denominational assemblies. In this commission there is no pressing of sectarian viewpoints, but rather an attempt to set forth the truth of God as seen from this and that angle, in the earnest prayer that, through frank, free discussion in the atmosphere of brotherly love, the Holy Spirit may cause "fresh light to break forth from God's word" to illumine the problems that confront us, and so to enable His people unitedly to speak a living and relevant word in His name to a troubled world.

Much has been written of the great Service of Thanksgiving held in St. Giles's Cathedral, Edinburgh, to celebrate the jubilee of the notable Conference from which this great movement stems. It was good to find so many Baptists there. We noted among several others, Dr. E. A. Payne, leading the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and the beloved Dr. Cawley among British Baptists; Dr. Johannes Norgaard of Denmark, with his gracious smile, a representative of European Baptists, and Rev. John Thetgyi from the Ecumenical Council of Judson's Burma. How Carey and his son Felix would have rejoiced! There were also distinguished representatives from the American Baptist Convention and, among the very few women, Gwenyth Hubble, soon to leave Carey Hall to serve the World Council in a key post in New York.

Few things done by the World Council hit the headlines. One recalls the Lord's words: "the Kingdom of Heaven cometh not with observation". It is like the seed growing secretly. But if the ground is faithfully worked and the good seed is sown, both sunshine and rain will help on the growth and bring, in due time, a harvest. F.C.B.

GLIMPSES OF AMERICAN BAPTIST LIFE

WHEN the editors asked me to write an article for the *Fraternal* I was overjoyed, for after eleven years overseas, eight in Switzerland and three in the United States, I had a deep longing to express my gratitude to all of you and to the Baptist Union for so many kindnesses received, and to say how precious are all the ties which still unite me with you. It has been a delight to welcome Henton Davies, David Russell, Charles Johnson, Ron Goulding and W. G. Channon here in Philadelphia, and as I write we anticipate the visit of Ungoed Davies. I need hardly say how much I look forward to seeing some of you again next year when I return to England to give the Whitley Lectures in my old College, Manchester.

When I was asked to write something on Baptist life in the United States I was in a dilemma. For on the one hand I knew that this was the subject that would interest you most, and on the other hand I knew my limitations for such a task. For my experience is restricted to a four month tour of Southern Baptists in 1956 and three years among Northern, or as they are now called American, Baptists in Philadelphia. It is out of this meagre experience that I speak. I can do no more than present a few glimpses of life here and some personal impressions.

The earliest Baptists of America came from Great Britain, and the Baptists of the United States still have a family resemblance to the British Baptists who gave them birth. They have, however, developed in their own way within the setting of their own history and culture. In two respects they differ in degree though not in kind from British Baptists.

The first is their heightened activism, the second their relative isolationism.

Activism is a characteristic they share with most denominations here. Activism is typical of American life in general and cannot but manifest itself in the churches.

One expression of it is a highly organised church life and a multiplicity of meetings. Every church, large or small, seems to have its Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees, Board of Christian Education, Board of Missions, men's movement, women's movement, youth movement, etc., each with an immense number of meetings. The church member who is "consecrated" has little time for home life or private meditation, and the minister who keeps all the machinery

running has little time for prayer and study and the preparation of sermons. This restless activism leads on the one hand to increased virility, on the other to increased superficiality. How often do tired congregations sit through tedious meetings getting more and more of less and less!

Another expression of American church activism is the stress on evangelism. Appeals for decisions are frequent at the end of the sermon. House to house visitations are frequently conducted. Decisions are often pressed for in Sunday School classes. This is commendable when motivated by a true desire to mediate the saving grace of Christ to needy souls. But too often it is motivated rather by the desire to enhance the prestige of pastor and people by the "success" of an increased membership and an increased budget. It often seems that the preacher is more concerned with the appeal for "decisions" than with the proclamation of the gospel, more eager to baptise large numbers than to baptise true believers. Indeed, the custom which has become prevalent in many churches of baptising children of six or seven years of age threatens to undermine our whole position of *believer's* baptism.

The second way in which United States Baptists differ from British Baptists is in their stronger tendency toward isolationism. This manifests itself in a greater antipathy to the ecumenical movement and in more divisions among Baptists themselves.

Antipathy toward the ecumenical movement is more widespread among Southern Baptists than among Northern (American) Baptists. The Southern Baptist Convention stands officially outside the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches, although a minority of Southern Baptists would like to be inside. The Northern (American) Baptist Convention stands officially inside, although a minority of American Baptists would like to be outside.

Why is there so much antipathy toward the ecumenical movement? Four reasons might be suggested. One is that liberty rather than unity has been the keynote of American life, and this is reflected in church life. Another is that the movement of biblical theology with its recognition of the essential unity of the New Testament church reached America later than Europe. A third is the movement known as Landmarkism which has maintained that the only true Christians are Baptists, the only true Christian churches are Baptist churches, and that there is no general or universal church but only local churches. A fourth is the stress laid here on "Baptist Distinctives". Precisely what these "distinctives" are is far from clear. Sometimes "the lordship of Christ" is cited as the Baptist distinctive, sometimes "the competence of the soul", sometimes "the supremacy of Scripture", sometimes "the regenerate church", sometimes "believers' baptism", sometimes "the autonomy of the local church", sometimes "the priesthood of all believers", sometimes "religious liberty", sometimes "the separation of church and state", sometimes a combination of all or some of these. There is a general tendency

to ignore the fact that many of these are not *distinctive* of Baptists at all, but are either common Christian principles or common Protestant principles or what we would call in England common Free Church principles, or merely convictions shared by most Americans. The consequence is that many Baptists imagine that more barriers to ecumenical fellowship exist than is actually the case.

The second aspect of the tendency toward isolationism is the divisiveness of Baptists among themselves. The old division between particular and general Baptists seems largely to have disappeared, but new ones have taken its place. There is the division between Southern and Northern (American) Baptists resulting principally from different views regarding slavery. In 1845 Baptists in the southern states broke away from those in the north and organised the Southern Baptist Convention. The Foreign and Home Mission Societies, which had been founded earlier, continued to operate in the northern states, and in 1907 the Northern Baptist Convention was formed, changing its name in 1950 to the American Baptist Convention.

The Northern Baptists, however, were unable to maintain their unity. The rise of theological liberalism, which in England produced the Downgrade Controversy, scarcely affected Southern Baptists, but severely hit Northern Baptists, evoking bitter strife and dissension. The leading Baptist seminaries in the north were largely captured by the liberals. The conservatives founded new seminaries, Northern in Chicago, Eastern in Philadelphia, Central in Kansas City and South California in Covina, for the same kind of reason that Spurgeon founded his College in London. Most of the conservatives were satisfied with this, but in 1947 an extreme group broke away from the Northern Convention and founded the Conservative Baptist Association.

Some Baptist groups owe their existence not to differing convictions but to differing ethnic origins. These include the Baptists of Negro descent, of German descent and of Scandinavian descent. There is still very little integration of negroes and whites, and those of German and Scandinavian origin maintain their separate conventions although English is largely used in their churches today. They maintain, however, very cordial relationships with American Baptists. And let me testify, as one who came among American Baptists three years ago, how easy it is to have cordial relations with them, for they abound in the graces of friendliness and freedom.

Before leaving the subject of the American Baptist Convention perhaps I ought to say a word about Paul Harrison's book *Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition*, which my friend Kenneth Dykes tells me is becoming known in Great Britain. In this book Harrison examines the American Convention from a sociological point of view. He defines authority as legitimate and controlled power, and power as illegitimate and uncontrolled power. His general conclusion is that in consequence of an undue emphasis on the

autonomy of the local church, bodies larger than the local church like State Conventions, Home and Foreign Mission Boards, and the Convention itself, have been given no legitimate authority. Yet they have been obliged to function, and could do so only by operating on a power basis which gave rise to much conflict and confusion. Personally I think Harrison is right, and it is easy to trace the development which has led to this result.

The earliest Baptist churches in this country were organised on the associational pattern. The Second London Confession of Faith was adopted by the Philadelphia Association around 1742 as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, and this Confession, as is well known, affirms the reality both of the universal church and of local churches ("particular societies") and the duty of local churches to co-operate for their mutual benefit. The New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1830), which both in the north and south became far more influential than the Philadelphia Confession, omits all reference to the universal church, speaking only of local churches. The Landmark movement denied outright the existence of any but the local church, and affirmed the autonomy of each local church. This is the doctrine which has prevailed in both north and south. The consequence has been that most Baptists have come to regard local Associations, state Conventions, Mission Boards and national Conventions as organisations *outside* the church, against which the local church has to assert its autonomy. The inevitable result has been that these larger bodies, being denuded of all legitimate authority, have been able to operate only by the exercise of whatever power they could amass. In the American Convention this power is not very great, but enough to cause tension, and this Convention faces the danger of ecclesiastical disintegration. In the Southern Convention centralised power has reached huge proportions, and this Convention faces the danger of ecclesiastical totalitarianism.

It would, however, be unfair to speak of the dangers and divisions of Baptists of the United States without mentioning the heartening fact that seven Conventions of the North American continent are at present co-operating with one another in the Baptist Jubilee Advance programme which will extend over several years.

Finally, let me say a closing word about life in Philadelphia Baptist churches and in Eastern Seminary.

The churches of this area are of all kinds and sizes. Some are rigid and traditionalistic, unwilling to adapt to changed conditions. Others are flexible and adventurous, meeting new challenges with amazing vitality. Some have good music, some bad; some a worshipful atmosphere, others a mundane; some are co-operative in the Association and Convention, some unco-operative. But whatever the differences, all have Sunday Schools for all ages, and all have larger morning than evening services. Indeed, in most churches the Sunday evening service has become a problem, for attendance is very small. Some churches have abandoned the evening altogether;

others continue the old evangelistic type of service which no one attends but the pillars of the church; and a few, like Second Baptist, Germantown, of which Dr. Carney Hargroves is pastor, are developing a new type of service of an educational nature.

What is life like on the Faculty of a theological seminary here? In Eastern, at least, it is very delightful. The Administration, with the President at the head, takes care of administrative matters, leaving the Faculty free to devote their attention to teaching. A Faculty of fourteen members (which includes Walter Davis who spent twenty years in Pakistan with the B.M.S.) enables each professor to concentrate on his own field. The policy of the school, which is to be "conservative, but progressive", means that we seek to conserve basic evangelical truths but to express them in ways suited to a changing age and advancing scholarship. Among Faculty members there is sufficient identity of viewpoint to make life harmonious and sufficient diversity to make it stimulating.

The students, about two hundred of them altogether, come from all parts of the northern states, but of course the majority come from the east. All have previously attended "college" and taken there an arts degree. Compared with English B.A. graduates they are usually somewhat deficient in languages (including English language!), but are eminently eager to learn and delightfully teachable. Most of them "work their way through seminary" by doing part-time work alongside their studies. The majority of them are married, and many have children. All of which means they are just about as hard working and harassed as any group could possibly be.

Teaching is a pleasure here, but I am thankful to have spent my student days in the quiet halls of Manchester and Zurich!

ARTHUR B. CRABTREE.

AMERICAN JOURNEY

ON 14th March, in company with W. G. Channon and Ronald Goulding, I landed at New York. We went to the U.S.A. to fulfil preaching and speaking assignments arranged for us by Dr. Clifton Allen on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Sunday School Board. We also went to see and to study the life and work of the Southern Baptist churches. During the following six weeks we travelled from New York to Philadelphia and Washington, then going our various ways we preached in many States down to the Gulf of Mexico and out into the mid-west. We met again for the final week at Nashville. What we saw has left an abiding memory of a great Baptist communion.

My itinerary included preaching at New York, Washington, Louisville, Tulsa, Shawnee, Oklahoma, Little Rock, Nashville and at an Indian church out in the wilds beyond Anadarko. I also preached to the students at Louisville Seminary and Oklahoma Baptist University, and in every city I visited I addressed large

meetings of Ministers. Addresses at men's breakfasts at 7 a.m., church dinners at 6 p.m., prior to the training union meeting or district visitation, brotherhood meetings, a visit to a High School and to a splendid new Baptist hospital and an orphanage at Oklahoma City, completed my programme.

What is the secret of the amazing advance of the Southern Baptist Convention, which now records 9,000,000 members? The answer was given to me by Dr. Clifton Allen. "You cannot understand Southern Baptists", he said, "apart from their Bible-centred teaching and preaching." This is their first priority. Evangelism is their central emphasis, resulting in a deep and strong interest in missions at home and overseas. Dr. Allen also affirmed that the most significant factor for future growth will be the educational programme, especially in relation to adults. The educational programme is focused in the all-age Bible-centred Sunday School. What is this organisation and how does it work?

The all-age Sunday School is the whole family of the church meeting in classes at different age-levels to study the Bible. It is not a separate organisation. It is the church, exercising its teaching ministry. The school meets at 9.30 a.m. prior to the preaching service. Splendid provision is made for the infants in the nursery departments. Teaching through activity begins with the primaries. Classes continue through age-groups of a few years to those of 60 years and over. All equipment is of the highest standard. I was impressed by the sincerity and enthusiasm of school leaders and by their efficiency and organisation. It was refreshing to see so many men in leadership and also teaching classes.

This is the general pattern in Southern Baptist churches. In large city churches the Sunday School reaches fantastic proportions. At Tulsa, Dr. Warren Hultgren has 338 class rooms. Dr. Hershall Hobbs and Dr. Robert Scales at Oklahoma, Dr. Vaught at Little Rock and Dr. Williams at Nashville also have very large schools. I saw the same pattern in Washington where I preached at the first anniversary of a church, meeting in a day school. In one year they have a school of 250 fully planned within the limits of the premises.

The centre of the all-age Sunday Schools is the Sunday School Board of the Southern Convention. Its executive head is Dr. James Sullivan, preacher, administrator, man of vision and man of God. His executive colleagues are Dr. Clifton Allen, Editorial Secretary and Drs. J. M. Crowe, Herman King and Leonard Wedel. From this great headquarters at Nashville, flows literature and equipment to meet every need of the Sunday Schools and other Christian education activity. The Board also owns a modern printing works and is in fact the largest religious publishing house in the U.S.A.

Can the all-age Bible-centre Sunday School and the Christian educational programme of the Southern Baptists be transplanted elsewhere? My colleagues and I feel that its emphasis, pattern and organisation are worthy of prayerful study.

Six years ago the all-age Sunday School appeared in Australia. In the last issue of the *Fraternal* impressive claims were made concerning its effectiveness. One leader says "The movement has caught like a flame. It is rapidly spreading and now assuming the character of a divine imperative". The Editor of *The Australian Baptist*, speaking at the Baptist Church House recently, mentioned three things which have followed where the all-age Sunday School has appeared, viz. larger congregations, a higher number of decisions by youth and increased offerings.

I am aware that Britain is not the U.S.A. or Australia and that many churches lack buildings, personnel and resources to promote the pattern. I would only observe that our Australian friends started by experimenting in one situation. I recall also a wise observation by Dr. Clifton Allen: "While each church in each country will have to discover its organisational pattern and methodology, I believe there is greatest value in sharing on a wide basis of co-operation, planning and promotion". Of one thing I am sure, no experiment should be attempted without adequate preparation. The whole church must be prepared and many workers will need long and intensive training in leadership and efficient organisation. This may take a full year.

Another important aspect of Southern Baptist churches is the Co-operative Programme, i.e. co-operation in allocating giving to meet the needs of the local church and the mission work of the state conventions, the nation and overseas. Many state conventions are responsible for Baptist hospitals, senior Colleges and Universities, junior Colleges and Orphanages. The needs of six theological seminaries with nearly 4,000 students, relief for aged Ministers and Missionaries, nearly 1,000 home Missionaries and approximately the same number of overseas Missionaries come within the orbit of the programme.

The adoption by the churches of the Co-operative Programme has been a big factor in the advance of Southern Baptists. The local church budgets for the year, informs its members of its own operational needs and the needs of the institutions for which the state conventions are responsible, and it intimates the requirements of the Southern Baptist Convention in respect of its commitments at home and overseas. Members are asked to pledge their gifts for the year. The brochure of the church at Tulsa under the title "It's Time to Tithe" contains facts, figures, graphs and drawings which present clearly and attractively the local and wider needs. It presents a budget for 1960 of 400,000 dollars broken down as follows: local operational needs 203,200 dollars, missions 114,000 dollars, debt requirement 82,500 dollars. Of the total budget Tulsa needs 64 per cent and gives 34 per cent to the wider Baptist work. Missionary work at home and overseas is presented as one. In a church with a 20,000 dollar budget, 25 per cent would probably be allocated to the wider work.

I was told that 60 per cent of the missions allocations of local churches would be required by state conventions. The Southern Baptist Convention would receive 40 per cent to meet its commitments at home and overseas. Approximately 50 per cent of all S.B.C. funds go to the Foreign Missions Board. Another considerable source of income to state conventions and to the S.B.C. are the large sums voted annually by the Sunday School Board.

What is the secret of the success of the Co-operative Programme? The secret is the loyalty of the churches to the Convention and the teaching of tithing and planned giving in the Sunday Schools, the training unions and through literature. I spent a session with Dr. Merrill Moore who is responsible for the teaching of tithing. I also discussed stewardship with other leaders and with pastors. The pastors gave me figures indicating that from 50 per cent to 70 per cent of the members, tithe or adopt planned giving. I studied the breakdown of giving of several churches. In both small and large churches I found the giving high by our standards.

The co-operative programme assures that Baptist giving is directed to meet the total needs of Baptist work. Southern Baptists are not plagued by a multiplicity of appeals. I am not unmindful of the good work of many non-Baptist Societies, but I am convinced that if we could teach and train our people so that they really became aware of the specific work and witness the Lord has laid upon us as Baptists, then every need would be met. New resources would become available for evangelism at home and overseas. Our Colleges would not be struggling to balance their budgets and local churches would have resources which at present can only be a dream. Consecrated money is a powerful weapon in spiritual warfare.

I have written primarily about two aspects of Southern Baptist churches, but I would like to comment briefly on other impressions.

I visited four seminaries, one being a negro college. At Louisville I lived in the Faculty House, had fellowship with the tutors, and preached to the students. I visited Fort Worth, which has over 2,000 students, where I had an enjoyable interview with the President, Dr. R. E. Naylor. Both seminaries have magnificent buildings and equipment. The studies appeared to me to be wider in range than at home with more emphasis on pastoral matters, but research students, and there are many of them, achieve a high academic standard.

Ministers came to conferences in large numbers. They showed real interest in the life and work of British Baptists and paid many tributes to the debt they owe to British scholarship. They were concerned to know the reasons why only a small percentage of people attend church in Britain. I endeavoured to indicate the trends here since the beginning of the century, when our churches were well-attended. They were surprised to know the extent of the devastating effects of World War II, in particular in London, where over 200 Baptist churches were destroyed or damaged by bombs, and to learn that only in recent years have we been able to rebuild freely.

An outstanding occasion was the first-ever national convention for Sunday School leaders at the Coliseum, Fort Worth. Ronald Goulding and I were given a great welcome by 12,000 delegates. We also gave greetings to 700 Ministers, many being Ministers of Education.

In the churches I found the services less formal than ours. The Ministers are non-clerical but choirs are beautifully robed. Every service closed with an "invitation" hymn. It was a moving experience to see people come forward without undue pressure for decision or church membership. Laymen have a large share in the services as indeed in the whole work of the church.

Southern Baptist churches are commemorating the Ter-Jubilee of the beginning of Baptist work in North America by the 30,000 Movement. The aim is to establish 30,000 new Southern Baptist Missions and churches by 1964. I saw splendid new buildings everywhere I went. This great church extension project, even for Southern Baptists, betokens a church with vision, confidence and courage.

At many meetings since my return I have been questioned about the colour problem. The Southern Baptist Convention has declared for integration and most people I met agreed. At Little Rock I had an interview with the controversial Governor, Orval Faubus. A good deal of agitation, centred upon certain places in the U.S.A., has been largely promoted by people outside. Moreover, there is no evidence that negro parents are over-eager to send their children to the former white High School at Little Rock. They have an excellent High School of their own and they are proud of it. Brethren will know that the negroes have their own Baptist churches and their own Convention. The colour problem goes deeper than integration. There is history behind it and social, political, cultural and economic factors have yet to be resolved. It is easy to debate the question at a distance, but it looks different when you are in its midst.

Southern Baptists have their problems like the rest of us. The majority of their churches are rural churches and there is real concern for many Ministers whose stipends are inadequate and who have to undertake secular occupations. Nevertheless, the overall picture is one of a denomination which is alive and in touch with people, resolved to win them to Christ and the church. In this task certain factors are in their favour. There is no State-church background. The Free Churches are strong, especially the Baptists. In Britain only 10 per cent of the people are associated with the churches; in the U.S.A. the figure given is 60 per cent or more. Economically the situation is favourable. We have faced recurring crises, the U.S.A. has enjoyed a long period of boom. Nevertheless, no one can explain the growth and virility of Southern Baptists without regard to a supreme factor: it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord".

This script would be incomplete without a tribute to Dr. Ralph Mitchell, our host in New York, and to the wonderful welcome and hospitality given to us by the Convention leaders, the pastors and the people. During our final week at Nashville, Dr. Porter Routh, Dr. James Sullivan, Dr. Clifton Allen and other leaders made themselves available to us at any time. They shared with us in the things of Christ to our great profit and, we trust, to theirs. They received us in their homes to meet other leaders and finally honoured us with a dinner. If our journey helped to strengthen the bonds between the Baptists of the U.S.A. and of Britain, then it will have been well worth while.

W. CHARLES JOHNSON.

BAPTISM: THE DOMESTIC DEBATE

IT is extremely unfortunate that at the very moment when the ecumenical discussion about baptism is reaching its most fruitful stage, the domestic debate about it should show our denomination to be unprepared, not to say divided, on the real issues. Recently, a new flexibility of attitude towards infant baptism has been apparent on both sides, arising partly from new insights into scriptural teaching and partly from a new appreciation of the strength and sincerity of each other's views. There have even been suggestions for baptist-paedobaptist "conversations", or a broadcast discussion. But just when "our point of view" might be considered by scholars of other churches with a respect and attention not accorded us for generations, we ourselves seem to be more confused than ever about the rite by which we mainly justify our separate existence.

One earnest brother demands repeatedly to be told why he was baptised. Another appeals to "more consecrated" exegetes in support of translations which the Greek lexicon and mere linguistic scholarship fail to provide. Views and implications are ascribed to other Baptist writers loosely, and even falsely, in order to show how easily they may be refuted. And some baptismal practices are revealed among us, and are defended as traditional or evangelical, which have as little theological or scriptural justification as infant baptism itself: baptism on the Minister's (or evangelist's) say-so, baptism without preparation, baptism followed by reception into membership, and even by enquiry as to membership, are obvious examples. While students of the question in other denominations are learning with astonishment how unimportant baptism is coming to be among Baptists as a whole.

All this, in other circumstances, might be welcomed as healthy discussion; and indeed the situation revealed by the spate of baptismal addresses, articles and correspondence cries aloud for still fuller and deeper examination, even though its timing is so inappropriate. But it becomes increasingly evident that some care is going to be needed to keep the real issues clear, and in perspective.

One aspect of the domestic debate which demands very careful assessment is the Baptist attitude to scripture. Few would have foreseen that such an issue would emerge. Every researching student must assume something, and it seemed above reproach to assume without further question the absolute authority of scripture over Baptist consciences. In theory this is probably still the case: but in practice several devices seem to be available for turning the edge of scriptural argument. It has actually been said, in answer to a colleague's careful exegesis of a crucial passage, "One can prove anything from scripture". "Another meaning may be got from the texts" is solemnly offered as a serious argument against unwelcome ideas which honest and capable interpreters feel driven to accept from the New Testament. Sometimes a nebulous, undefined standard of "Biblical truth" seems to be used to straight-jacket every passage so that its "evangelical" meaning is imposed upon it, or must be reconciled with it at all costs. Whence this "Biblical truth" is derived, since it is certainly not from the passages in question, is not explained. And the complete unanimity of scripture is generally taken for granted without examination.

The more one loves the Word of God, and appreciates its saving relevance to every perennial problem, the more dangerous, and even treacherous, do such makeshifts appear. The elementary, but fundamental, question of the true relation of exegesis to doctrine seems to need answering again. If the strict disciplines of exegesis—textual criticism, lexicology, grammar, historical perspective and religious insight—are not made to *control* interpretation under the constant vigilance of a sensitive expository conscience, then we have neither basis nor authority for any doctrinal summary or standard. We are at the mercy of purely personal preferences and private interpretations, and exposition is reduced (as one leading commentator on baptismal questions has unconsciously shown) to a series of remarks of the order: "I think I like . . .", "I find myself disliking the thought . . .".

Whether we "like" it or not, the New Testament does contain Acts xix, 2-5; ii, 38; 1 Corinthians vi, 11; xii, 13; Galatians iii, 27; Titus iii, 5, and Christ's own account of His baptismal experience. In the wider baptismal debate many things will certainly be said which some Baptists will dislike. It may well be that the scripture evidence is being misread by this student or that, on any side of the question. But unless we are to surrender another of our "principles", scriptural argument must be answered with better scriptural argument, and not with patent evasions of scriptural statements, or with denials that the plain text of scripture is important.

The second aspect of our domestic argument which calls for careful evaluation concerns the ecumenical situation. As J. R. C. Perkin has said, "There can be no doubt that sooner or later the church will have to settle this question of baptism, which threatens to become one of the major stumbling blocks in the path of the

ecumenical conversations". It is not surprising that baptism should emerge from reunion discussions as the sore place at which our good intentions wince. The description of baptism as the sacrament of Christian unity is demanded by 1 Corinthians xii, 13, where in the midst of the discussion about the unity and disunity of the local church, Paul suddenly reverts to the baptism of each member as the point at which the various individuals in the church realised their oneness in Christ. To this clear statement it seems unnecessary to add Ephesians iv, 4-6, where in the assertion of the sevenfold unity *inherent* in the church baptism is surprisingly included alongside faith, God, Christ and the Spirit; or Galatians iii, 26, where the "all one in Christ Jesus" is dependent upon "as many of you as were baptised into Christ".

This scriptural characterisation of the rite condemns all attempts, in theory or in practice, to make of baptism a sacrament of unbridled individualism, or a point of intransigent disagreement where all schemes and visions of a united church must founder. Here we simply *must* clear our consciences, however muddled our minds. If in fact we are standing out from our brethren in other denominations, refusing the path of unity, because we prize a real sacrament of Christian experience, a valid scriptural emphasis upon the baptism of the believer into Christ, into the Spirit, and into the church, then we may be justified in our stand. We can do no other, though we do it with humility, and even with regret.

But if in fact we are standing out from our brethren in other denominations because we want to retain a bit of traditional symbolism, a somewhat self-righteous and very theatrical way of telling the congregation that we have come to the opinion that the gospel is true, then we are abandoning most of the New Testament teaching about baptism, and other denominations have every right to protest; and we are inflicting a grievous wound on the unity of the church *for no good reason*. Believers' baptism as sometimes practised is not worth contending for, and the contention is damaging to the whole ecumenical movement, and so to the body of Christ. This is no appeal for compromise, or for the tolerance of two baptisms in a united church, but for honest recognition of the fact that when all the church seems out of step except ourselves it might conceivably be because we—ourselves—are dragging our feet.

Still more important, however, than either of these issues is the very grave omission, which the current domestic debate about baptism has served to illumine, in our common portrayal of the pattern of evangelical experience. Whatever occasional misgivings we may feel about the introspectiveness of "Convention" movements for the deepening of the spiritual life, or about the emotionalism of "Pentecostal" movements, most of us realise that such emphases do not arise without some predisposing cause. The oft-confessed and widespread bewilderment about the meaning of Pentecost in modern experiential terms is the clue to that cause.

So very many in the modern church stand in the shoes of John's disciples at Ephesus, their lives giving little evidence of the enduement of the Spirit, and their honest explanation being "We never so much as heard . . .".

For a great deal of current evangelical teaching includes no specific point at which the gift of the Spirit to the believer may be expected to take place. That the Spirit is at work in conviction and regeneration is assumed; that Christian life and work are impossible without His constant assistance is well understood. But the young convert entering church membership is—very frequently—neither expected to understand, *nor led to expect*, the infilling of the Holy Spirit in any conscious and definite experience comparable, say, to the first joy of forgiveness. If the young Christian attains to this truth at all, it will probably be under the influence of older Christian friends as a "second blessing" following upon some later "full consecration".

This is certainly better than no conscious experience of the Spirit at all. But it has very slender New Testament basis, and is—like the post-apostolic invention of the Confirmation service—a belated attempt to rectify an omission that ought never to have occurred. The New Testament connection of the gift of the Spirit with baptism, illustrated in the verses cited above and resting upon the baptismal experience of Jesus, is a truth that demands preservation: without it Christian experience is incomplete, and the church remains, in consequence, to a large extent bereft of the enduement that should ensure her power and fruitfulness. But if this whole view be rejected, then the omission *must be repaired* in some other way; and the form and place of the individual's reception of the Spirit be defined in some other terms—mere denial achieves nothing.

It is clear that the debate amongst ourselves must certainly continue, until the meaning and spiritual value of believers' baptism are clarified afresh for our generation. But the real issues must not be lost sight of in the contention of parties. Far more is at stake than can be served by the reiteration of slogans like "conversion, not ritual", "profession of faith only", "mere symbolism", "pure sacramentalism". It is the conviction of some that all our hope of a scriptural, united and Spirit-filled church is bound up with the recovery of a true baptism, but such an end will not be reached without much patient, responsible and penetrating discussion—and willingness to learn.

R. E. O. WHITE.

So, you have left School. An open letter to Boys. By R. E. Cooper. Carey Kingsgate Press. 1s.

It is a sign of the general confusion of our day that much more attention is being given to the change from school to job. This little book is an attempt frankly to indicate the challenges to be met and to suggest the way to do it. A religious faith is a *sine qua non*. It is a useful booklet to put into the hands of teenage school-leavers.

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF INITIATION

ALTHOUGH not ostensibly concerned with improving Church relations, a recent book by R. E. O. White, "The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation" (Hodder & Stoughton, 30s.) is, in fact, a major contribution to that end. Its eirenical temper is well expressed in a foreword quoted from Alexander Carson (1844), who said he wished to avoid two extremes—"on the one hand, a spirit of liberalism that supposes the Christian his own master, and hesitates not to sacrifice the commandments of God to the courtesies of religious intercourse—on the other, that sort of dogmatism that finds all excellence in its own party, and is reluctant to acknowledge the people of the Lord in any denomination but its own . . .". Mr. White's book is a worthy commentary on that text. Its importance lies in the fact that it strives to relate the fragmented baptismal practice of the Christian Church today to the profound Biblical intuitions from which the rite originally sprang. In this endeavour the author not only sets current ideas and practices in a new light; he also points, by implication, at any rate, to the true mode of reconciling them, namely, by a return to the dynamic Biblical conception of the Kingdom of God, and to the conditions upon which this may become by faith the joyous heritage of all men. The result is a notable work of Biblical scholarship, which admirably illustrates the benefits to be derived from a reverent and fearless application of the historical method to the study of the Scriptures. "God gave the Gospel; the father of lies invented theology", wrote J. A. Froude, in pessimistic mood. But I fancy that, if Froude could read this distinguished piece of historical writing, he would hasten to make an exception in its favour! For it is precisely the passion and power of the Gospel to which this penetrating theological survey bears convincing testimony.

The secret of Mr. White's success derives in part from his obvious conviction of the importance of his subject to the health and efficiency of the Church. As he puts it: "An impoverished baptism means an impoverished Christian life, and inevitably an impoverished church" (p. 317). But it also owes not a little to the fact that he has chosen to treat his subject from a standpoint which has enabled him to order and comprehend with unusual clarity a large body of varied material, the details of which are all too often left unrelated to one another. Thus the idea of Initiation, which can easily degenerate into the notion of a formal act of admission to an ecclesiastical institution, is here recognised from the outset as involving nothing less than the introduction of an individual into true and lasting relationship with God. The effect is to secure a freshness of treatment in the matter of Baptism which is altogether welcome, even though some of Mr. White's readers will probably not be prepared to adopt quite so elastic an interpretation of the meaning of "initiation" as he does himself (p. 155).

The roots of Christian initiation lie primarily in Israel, and the book begins with a study of the concept of the divine Covenant, which the author describes as "the most fundamental, most comprehensive, and most original of all Hebrew contributions to religious thought" (p. 14). While careful to emphasise the divine initiative underlying the covenant relationship between God and His people, Mr. White insists that the idea of Israel's response to God's offer is also essential. "*So early in biblical thought is the pattern of man's relationship with God set once and for all, as free human response to a divine initiative of grace in history, upon terms which are in no sense agreed between God and man, but presented by God for man's unforced acceptance or rejection, for his weal or woe*" (p. 17, Author's italics). The terms of the Covenant did not—we are told—originally include the practice of Circumcision, for although this rite was widely observed in the ancient world, it was "neither qualification for nor initiation into" the divine covenant with Israel before the Exile (p. 21). In fact, Circumcision, like many other features of Israel's life, gained a new importance from the experience of the Exile. "An intense exclusiveness, and a new conception of the covenant as a proud privilege rather than a high responsibility", were among the less valuable features of the new nationalism which then sprang up; and with them must be reckoned "a new reliance upon circumcision as of itself sufficient qualification for covenant membership" (pp. 23f.).

In this respect, the post-exilic exaltation of circumcision marked a decline from the older prophetic insights in which the personal and ethical character of man's relationship with God was central. Mr. White shows how the idea of a New Covenant, found in Jeremiah and developed later by Ezekiel, led on to the thought that only a righteous remnant would ultimately be capable of perceiving and responding to the Divine call. "The old conception of Israel as the community of Abraham's descendants is set aside; promises and destiny are henceforth centred in a new community, numerically overlapping the old, but constituted upon a new basis and possessing quite different qualifications from those which might be conveyed by racial continuity" (p. 37).

From this point onwards, the doctrine of initiation is concerned with the moral and spiritual qualifications needed for entry into the new community which God will one day establish. Mr. White maintains that the interest in the individual which characterises the later prophets did not involve the abandonment of the primitive group-conception of religion so much as its transformation. The opportunity was thus created for interpreting the covenant in universal rather than exclusively nationalistic terms. But Judaism tragically failed to seize this. The preaching of John the Baptist consequently precipitated a spiritual crisis, in which the conscience of the nation was quickened and the way prepared for the new and

creative forces, focused in the Person of Jesus, which were destined to control the future.

On the much-disputed question of the origin of the baptism of John, Mr. White argues strongly for its connection with Jewish proselyte baptism which he, in common with many other modern scholars, believes was in use prior to John. He expounds the significance of this rite with unusual sympathy and insight, and his comments on the notion that the *tebilah* was "purely ceremonial" are worth quoting: "To suggest that for several centuries the spiritual leaders of a people whose religious insight and piety have enriched the world maintained public religious performances completely devoid of inner meaning and supposed to remove a purely fictitious uncleanness, is simply incredible" (p. 66, n. 2). Mr. White may not fully satisfy his critics on this issue, but he shows himself thoroughly acquainted with the facts, and well able to defend his reading of them. Accepting H. G. Marsh's view that the baptism of John was "an inspired interpretation of the *tebilah*", Mr. White analyses the characteristic differences between the two rites, and concludes that John's baptism signified fundamentally "purification from evil, the removal of religious defilement" (p. 83).

From the baptism of John the author passes to a study of the baptism of Jesus, the bearing of which upon the subsequent rite of Christian baptism has not always been properly appreciated. He dismisses as unconvincing Oscar Cullmann's theory of a "vicarious, general baptism" by Jesus; but he accepts the suggestion of a deep and intimate relationship between the experience of Jesus and that of His disciples. "Our Lord's submission to baptism ensures for all time that it can never be regarded as a mere negligible form, a ritualist or literalist 'survival', devoid of inner truth and spiritual value" (p. 106).

The teaching of Jesus is then examined in order to discover not merely what He has to say about baptism, but also what conditions He lays down for entry into the Kingdom of God. On this, Mr. White remarks: "Neither evangelists nor sacramentalists have always been faithful to Jesus' insistence that repentance is a *sine qua non* of Christian salvation" (p. 113). A survey follows of the baptismal teaching of the primitive Church, and this is illumined by copious reference to the catechetical material found in I Peter and elsewhere. The Church's authority to baptize is discussed in an additional Note. From this point, the author sees a clear line of development to the fuller—though not essentially different—teaching of the later epistles. There is nothing particularly new in this material; but, in his treatment of it, Mr. White shows himself fully alive to modern exegetical trends, and presents an interpretation of the evidence which is in a high degree skilful and satisfying. His style is happily free from technical jargon, and the temper of discussion is commendably impartial, even when Mr. White feels that the situation demands plain speaking.

THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
4, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1

To the Members of the Baptist Ministers' Fraternal.

Dear Friends,

YOUR PEOPLE AND OUR NEED

The success of any business enterprise relies on the wisdom of its Board, the energy of its executives and the efficiency of its staff.

It is in connection with staff efficiency you can help this Company and thus the Denomination. The Home Work Fund benefits this year by £3,525 from our work and the aggregate since the inception of the Company exceeds £90,000. If therefore you can recommend efficient staff replacements to us you are really sharing in this worth-while venture.

We need to replace a shorthand-typist who came to us straight from school and who, after gaining two years' business experience with us, is seeking a post in the immediate vicinity of her home. We should like another of similar age, but age is not a vital factor.

You may rest assured that you **can, without reserve, recommend** a post with this Insurance Company.

Luncheon vouchers are provided for luncheon in the Church House Staff Restaurant. From age 21 members of the staff participate in a pension scheme from which at their discretion the directors may make grants to female staff as a gift on marriage.

If you are able to help, I should be grateful.

Yours sincerely,

C. J. L. COLVIN,
General Manager.

P.S. Incidentally this letter is not only for London members of the Fraternal. I know from our own experience that there are those outside London and the Home Counties who wish to come to Town.

My sympathy with the general position set out in this book is such that I find it difficult to challenge its main contentions, and must leave that task to others. I will only offer a few remarks on some points of detail. For example: In his treatment of the attitude of Jesus to children, the author does well to insist that "the child, with all others who are helpless, ignored, despised, or in need of protection, is *within the love of Christ*". But I wonder whether, by his assertion that "until by its own attitude it shall place itself outside that sheltered sphere, *the child is safe within the love that saves*" (p. 121), Mr. White has not unintentionally lent colour to the notion, which I am sure he would repudiate, that birth into a Christian, as distinct from a pagan, home is not, after all, a matter of very great moment to the spiritual development of the child? On a quite different point, I should like to ask whether a further reason for "the absence of baptisms from the synoptic records" (p. 125), may not lie in the simple fact that, had Jesus countenanced the continuing administration of baptism by His disciples after the arrest of John the Baptist, the effect would almost certainly have been to obscure the unique character of His own Ministry which was then beginning in Galilee, and to suggest that this was nothing more than a continuation of the work of John the Baptist? Finally, did not the Paulician movement begin in the seventh century? (p. 279, n. 1).

To sum up: The great merit of this book is that it relates baptism once more firmly to the Gospel, in whose interests it was originally instituted; and it lays upon the conscience of all branches of the Church today the duty of re-examining their baptismal teaching and practice accordingly. Mr. White is, in effect, pleading for the work of the great sixteenth century Reformers to be now carried to its rightful conclusion. They were largely instrumental, under God, in freeing the mediaeval Church from the fetters of legalism, and recalling it to its vocation as a fellowship of believers created by the Living Christ to be the agent of His Spirit. But the Reformers' work was never completed, for while they re-interpreted the Mass in terms of the Gospel, they showed a notable reluctance to apply their principles to the rite of Baptism, and attempted instead to defend the current practice of baptizing infants.

The result was to leave to the Anabaptists and their successors the task of maintaining, in the face of bitter persecution, the original purpose and meaning of Baptism. The recent re-opening of general debate on the subject is a welcome sign that the Church at large is becoming aware that the reform of its teaching and practice in this matter is over-due, and cannot be indefinitely postponed. Mr. White's book should powerfully accelerate this process, and the more so because he does not concern himself with the administrative problems involved (which are indeed very great), but concentrates on the theological insights which must ultimately govern the Church's practice.

This is not to say that the author is indifferent to the practical bearing of the truth he is trying to establish. Not the least valuable

section of his book is the closing chapter on "The Biblical Doctrine in the Modern Church", in which he examines the current arguments for and against Infant Baptism. Nor does he lose sight of the relevance of his theme to the spirit of the age. For example, one of the criticisms levelled against Believers' Baptism is that it tends to encourage over-emphasis on the subjective aspect of the rite, and Mr. White thinks that Baptists should recognise this danger. Nevertheless there is a vital difference between "individualism" as a doctrine and "individuality" as a fact, and Mr. White rightly insists that what is really at stake in the Church's doctrine of baptism is nothing less than the place of the individual in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "If the New Testament is not a book—indeed *the* book—of the individual, where in all the world's literature, in this socialised century, shall we look for the assertion of the value, the responsibility, the hope, the redeemableness, of the individual soul? We cannot consent to the sacrifice of a major theme of the gospel—even if that were in our power—in order to defend a highly disputed version of a sacrament!" (p. 291).

Let there be no mistake, however, on one final point. This book is not a Baptist manifesto. Mr. White writes as a Baptist, but he is not defending a pre-determined position. Nor is he here summoning his fellow-Baptists to close their ranks and unite in preaching a new Baptist fundamentalism. He is inviting the members of all branches of the Christian Church, Baptists and Paedo-Baptists alike, to re-examine their foundations in the light of the Biblical doctrine of initiation, and he makes it clear that, if this objective is seriously pursued, it will involve changes for all branches of the Church, and not merely for some.

And why not? Surely we Baptists must be conscious, if only through the painful and persistent decline in our Church-membership figures, that all is not well with us. And if the Spirit of God is now seeking to speak a greatly needed Word to us, why may it not come as well in this way as in any other? The real danger for Baptists is not that they will read this book and dislike it, but that they will not read it at all. And that would be a grave error. This is not just another book about Baptism. It is a thorough-going attempt to re-assess the meaning of Christian initiation in the light of Scriptural teaching. I believe it will be taken very seriously by our brethren in other Denominations. At any rate it deserves to be; and every Baptist Minister worthy of the name should somehow get hold of it, and read it as soon as he can. What he does thereafter is between himself and God.

R. L. CHILD.

Can you help? The Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, have written asking for back numbers of the *Fraternal* for their files. We have been able to get together all but the following, 1-16, 23, 24, 33, 78, 101-110. Will any brother who can help please write to the secretary of the B.M.F. DO NOT send copies, please.

OUR CALLING

*The substance of an address given at the
B.U. Ministerial Recognition Service*

LORD MOYNIHAN once declared that a surgeon needed the courage of a lion and the delicate hand of a lady. For success in the ministry an even wider range of qualities is required. Ability will bring success in most callings, but we must have both ability and character. We need a physician's skill in diagnosis, a poet's imagination and a parent's love. Our work requires the blending of seemingly opposed qualities in a balanced character. Timor of Athens spoke of the necessity "to solder close the impossibilities and make them kiss". It is our task to solder close the God of law and the God of love, to make justice and mercy kiss each other. To use Niebuhr's phrase, we must achieve "the impossible possibilities".

WE REQUIRE A BALANCE OF HUMILITY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE.

Personal pride and a sense of inferiority are both serious ministerial defects. "There is not in the universe", said Henry Fielding, "a more ridiculous nor a more contemptible animal than a proud clergyman". Pride heads the list of Dante's *Seven Deadly Sins*; Augustine regarded obstinate pride as an unpardonable sin; and the Bible says more against pride than murder. I once listened to an eloquent preacher praising himself, when my attention was diverted to a worshipper, who groaned: "He stains the Gospel". We should all do well to ponder Denney's words: "No man can bear witness to Christ and himself at the same time. No man can give the impression that he himself is clever and that Christ is mighty to save."

Yet self-depreciation is as fatal as pride. A sense of inferiority can cause Mr. One Talent to bury his gift and lead Mr. Five Talents to waste life longing for a sixth. Pride goeth before a fall, but fear falls before it goes. If we are sure of our Call, we have no need to apologise for our existence or to think of ourselves as second eleven men. If God is with us there is no need to fear either man or devil.

WE REQUIRE A BALANCE OF SINCERITY AND ARTISTRY.

A Minister's staple diet should be the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Let it once be suspected that we do not really believe what we preach; that we are defending a theory of which we are uncertain; stimulating an enthusiasm that we do not share; urging others to do what we do not endeavour to do ourselves; then the writing is on the wall. We are weighed in three scales—the scales of God, of the Church and of the Market place—and found wanting. Synthetic unction may impress the simple, but it corrupts the preacher. For the Minister sincerity is not an option, it is a must.

Yet sincerity is most effective when allied with artistry. Having mined the truth at great cost, we should study how to present it in a way that secures and maintains attention. It is not easy to determine the limits of legitimate artistry, but it is unworthy to try to atone for

thinness of matter by effectiveness of manner. With this caution, we should be eager to learn from the vocalist how to control our hands; from the actor how to use our voices; from the barrister how to emphasise our points and from the broadcaster how to put a morning's thought into a twenty minute sermon. There is evidence of a master craftsman in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes: "The more wise the speaker became, the more he taught the people knowledge . . . (his) aim was to find pleasing words, even as he put down plainly what was true".

WE REQUIRE A BALANCE OF SHREWDNESS AND SIMPLICITY.

We have the highest authority for attempting to combine the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. The modern Minister needs shrewdness to prevent a certain type of business man from running the Church like a multiple store; to distinguish between self-pity and genuine distress; to regulate the giving of encouragement and repression; and to time the launching of schemes to catch the tide of opportunity. Above all, the use of time demands the highest sagacity. If we waste time, remorse will be inevitable. We shall cry in vain for the recall of misused hours and neglected opportunities. Conscience will remind us of the unprepared sermons, the unvisited hospitals and the unspoken words. The opportunities will not come back, but the Master will say, "Inasmuch as ye did it not . . .".

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,

The saddest are these—it might have been."

Yet shrewdness for the advance of the Kingdom should be coupled with simplicity concerning our personal interests. If we are more concerned with stipend than service, we are not likely to win the love of our people. If we only accept the engagements adorned with guineas, we may forfeit the Master's "Well done". The ideal balance was seen in the teaching and life of Jesus. He bade His disciples sit down and count the cost before embarking upon an enterprise, and was equally emphatic that they should take no thought for the morrow. This counsel was exemplified in the way He retreated from danger—to the desert, to the other side of the lake, to Perea—until His work was done; and also in the fearless way in which He set His face to go to Jerusalem when the right hour came. Perhaps this example inspired Alexander Whyte's dictum: "Be careful of your health, be careless of your life".

WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?

We need to balance many other apparent contradictions, such as dignity and friendliness; conviction and conciliation; sympathy and strength, and we cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Who indeed! We are like the lad in the crowd of five thousand. He was in the presence of a hungry multitude and possessed five barley loaves and two fish. If he had tried to feed the crowd, how far would his supply have gone? Someone asked him to let the Master have his lunch to meet the need. It would have been generous

Please do not overlook questions of Christian conduct, and of the Church's social witness in the neighbourhood, in your programme.

Mr. Cleal will be pleased to make suggestions on subjects and speakers.

The Rev. C. H. Cleal, M.A., B.D.
Citizenship Department, B.U., 4 Southampton Row, London, W.C.1

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if he had offered three loaves and one fish, but he gave all and Christ performed the miracle. Many of us are conscious that our gifts are meagre and altogether inadequate for the work to which we are called, but the Living Christ still performs miracles with and through those who are willing to surrender all that they have to Him. To hold back part of our resources will lead to frustration; to give all will assure the Master's approval, which is the highest ministerial success.

H. BONSER.

THE TER-JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

WE have commenced the second year of our Ter-Jubilee celebrations, and I am grateful for the opportunity to report the result of our effort to date.

The achievement of the first year fills us with hope that we shall succeed in the task we have set ourselves. Ministers and church members in every Association are responding to the call to share in the furtherance of the Gospel, and use is being made of the Ter-Jubilee booklets of which upwards of 131,000 copies have been distributed. We are assured that in the current year enthusiasm for the mission of the church will increase, and our prayer is that many will be won for Christ.

My particular concern is with the Thanksgiving Fund which we are raising. It was anticipated that the year 1959-60 would be a period of preparation in which congregations would be informed about the need to raise £300,000. By this time most of our ministers are persuaded that the Fund is essential for carrying on our work. We need to augment the Loan Fund of the Baptist Union Corporation, enlarge the capital of the Home Work Fund, make a contribution for the training of future ministers, provide some comfort for aged ministers whose special needs cannot be met from the Superannuation Fund and encourage the Departments to adventurous enterprise by additional grants over a period of years. We are aware that some parts of our programme have a stronger appeal than other parts to some of our brethren. But nobody has suggested that the amount for which we ask is excessive: on the contrary we have been criticised for not asking for a much larger sum.

A year ago the Associations were informed, through the Area Superintendents, what amounts we should like them to accept as targets. The response has been magnificent. Twenty-two Associations have, by resolution, accepted the suggested targets, amounting in the aggregate to £235,000. The other Associations have not, as yet, given any *pledge*, but they have not rejected our proposals, and are, in fact, hard at work organising the collection of gifts in the churches. So we are in good heart.

But it is one thing to accept a target at Association level, and another to reach it. And so we appeal to our ministers to commend the programme and organise the collecting in the churches. Some of

our people could contribute under a seven-year covenant, and others are able to make generous donations; but my own experience as a working minister leads me to think that the major part of the Fund will be raised by the regular giving of smaller amounts. We have prepared special envelopes for this purpose, similar in style to those used so successfully by the Baptist Women's League for their Jubilee Appeal. These will be supplied on request.

All of us are debtors to generous men and women who in the past raised the funds that have been so beneficial to our Denomination. Now it is our turn. We shall not fail. Our people have the mind to work, and we shall finish the job.

T. POWELL.