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'I PRAY FOR THEM'

A New Year Message from the Chairman of The Baptist Ministers' Fellowship

As another year dawns, it would be well for us to set our ministerial vocation in the context of 'The High Priestly Prayer' (Jn.XVII). By recalling again these intercessory words from the lips of our Lord on behalf of His disciples, we are brought face to face with the essential character of our vocation and task in every generation including our own.

The prayer moves in stages, its first concentration being upon the strangely varied group of disciples as a sharply defined and separated entity; 'I pray for them (v.9) ...' the men whom Thou gavest me out of the world' (v.6) and 'Pray *not* for the world' (v.9) ... a negative that chills the heart until the prayer is comprehended as a whole! Like the earliest disciples, we too are the subject and the objects of the prayers of our Lord and Saviour. We are a prayed-for fraternity; our names are on His lips at the right hand of God. In this 'High Priestly Prayer', Jesus is concerned to bring this first circle of His followers through the tragic happenings of Calvary and He is equally concerned to bring His disciples of today in China and Russia, Asia and Africa and the West through the lesser vicissitudes of these changing days. Peter and John and the rest were to see death claim their precious Master and were to face the awful gap, however short, left by His departure, and so He prays that they may be 'kept' together in good heart and 'kept' in faith till the glorifying for which He prayed was fulfilled. Even as this prayer for the first company of disciples at this most crucial moment was abundantly answered, so may His prayers for us today in our lesser emergencies result in blessings that bear the marks of the miracle of the Resurrection.

Then as the prayer develops in v.15ff, there comes the corrective to the cutting negative of 'I pray not for the world'. It was only momentarily as it were that the world was removed from His intercessory list. Indeed at all times, the world remains the field of disciple witness and service. At the risk of contamination by the evil of the world, of counter-attack by its forces of wickedness and of close association with its contrasting beliefs and practices, the disciples must needs move out into the world as sent by their Lord (v.18), their Lord who died at the hands of the world and its cruel agents. And surely this was exactly the kind of definition that the Apostle Paul gave to his ministry. True enough he was often to be found in synagogue and temple, but streets and ships, market places and lecture rooms, open forums like Mars Hill or the close confines of a court of law most frequently claimed him. Demas who 'loved this present world' (2 Tim. IV:10—surely for us an echo of John III:16) must be regarded as a church casualty at the hands of society and he has had many followers, men and women

who were once in the church even holding high office but who are now no longer so. Why not plan a mission to Demas? He could be found perhaps on the Costa Brava or in the expensive show rooms of a motor company! But at whatever cost, and one remembers Bonhoeffer and others, the world is our sphere of operations and the church the force to be employed, and it is in this capacity the disciples were originally prayed for in 'The High Priestly Prayer'.

In its final phase, this prayer of Jesus in John XVII claims the future. It envisages the disciple-group in the post-Resurrection period making such an impact upon the world that the continuing society of the Church was strengthened by the addition of those who 'shall believe on Me through their word' (v.20). Though there might be Demases who fall victim to the world, our Lord sees the opposite happening also as other religious ties are broken and as men and women, hearing the bold witness of the disciples, accept the good news of the One who died and rose again. Pentecost was in the future; Troas still lay ahead and Carey's 'Expect' and 'Attempt' had not yet been framed, but in the category of 'those who shall believe through their word' are to be found the most recent converts to the Christian faith in the jungle towns of Brazil, the mud villages of India, the outbacks of Australia or the Black Country towns of England. As evangelists today we are operating *within* the 'High Priestly Prayer' and *the believers yet to be* already have their places in the mind and purpose of Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

As Baptist ministers with the closest spiritual ties with clergy and ministers everywhere, for it is in John XVII that we hear the refrain 'that they all may be one', we are a fraternity prayed for by our Lord. Let us with the utmost humility range ourselves with Him as He says, with the whole of mankind in mind, in sheer and final dedication, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself' (v.19).

J. B. MIDDLEBROOK

IN DEFENCE OF THE APOCRYPHA

John Bunyan in his autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, tells how in the year 1652, when he was passing through a period of deep depression and had given up almost all hope, these words 'fell with weight' upon his spirit: 'Look at the generations and see: did ever any trust in the Lord and was confounded?' As a result, he reports, 'I was greatly lightened and encouraged in my soul'. Going home he went to his Bible to find this passage which had come 'with such strength and comfort on my spirit'. He continues, 'Well, I looked, but I found it not . . . Thus I continued above a year, and could not find the place; but at last, casting my eye into the Apocrypha books, I found it in Ecclesiasticus 2.10 . . . This, at the first, did somewhat daunt me; but . . . though it was

not in those Texts that we call Holy and Canonical, yet forasmuch as this sentence was the sum and substance of many of the Promises, it was my duty to take the comfort of it; and I bless God for that word, for it was of God to me. That word doth still oft-times shine before my face'.

I am reminded of a somewhat similar instance in my own experience. It was at a mid-week service when I read a portion from this same book, Ecclesiasticus. At the period of 'open prayer' which followed a revered and godly member rose to his feet and gave thanks to God that new light was 'continually breaking forth from his Word'. He then went on, in his prayer, to indicate that, although he thought he knew his Bible from Genesis to Revelation, he had been caught out with this particular passage!

Our own use of the Apocrypha, as working ministers, is for the most part, I imagine, confined to a brief quotation from the Wisdom of Solomon at the Burial Service: 'The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and no torment shall touch them', etc. But even then, how many of us distinguish this passage from canonical Scripture in our reading and how many of our people are aware of the difference? The question of the Canon of Scripture is a most perplexing and difficult one with which are associated the further questions of inspiration and authority. The aim of this article is not to argue that the books of the Apocrypha be counted within the Bible or that they be given the status of 'Holy Writ', but rather to plead, on historical and religious grounds, that they be given a place of honour in both study and instruction which they rightly deserve.

It is common knowledge that the Bible of the Early Christian Church was essentially the Greek Bible of Hellenistic Judaism which consisted of 'the Law', 'the Prophets' and what Ben Sira's grandson calls 'the rest of the books'. The first two of these sections were available in Greek before the beginning of the Christian era, but it is less certain when the translation of 'the rest of the books' ('the Writings') took place or at what point they were accepted as canonical Scripture by the Jews of the Dispersion. In pre-Christian times in Alexandria, as in Palestine, there was no agreed list of such books, but towards the end of the first Christian century, the Council of Jamnia confirmed what had come to be accepted as Scripture by use and went in the synagogue service and in private devotion. Clarification was given to the position of three books in particular (Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes and Esther) which for some time had been seriously challenged by a number of prominent Rabbis. The Greek version differed from the Hebrew in two respects—apart from 'the Law' the books of Scripture were arranged in a different order, and it included a number of books or parts of books not to be found in the Hebrew version. It is a mistake, however to talk about 'the Greek Canon' as if this were a norm to be set over against the Hebrew Canon. There was in fact only one Canon—that of the Hebrew Bible which by the beginning of the Christian era

at any rate signified virtually the Law and the Prophets. In the Greek Bible which was taken over by the Christian Church no recognisable distinction was made between those books which came to be known as 'the Writings' and others which found their place alongside them. It is those other books which for the most part make up what we know as 'the Apocrypha'. They were not regarded as 'canonical' in the sense that the Law and the Prophets were; nevertheless they were held to be sacred and were valued as part of a precious heritage received from the fathers.

It was as such that the early Christians accepted both them and certain other books which are generally termed 'pseudepigrapha' at the present time. Thus the Book of Enoch is quoted in Jude 14-16 as an authoritative writing and in verse 9 of that same epistle the reference to the dispute between the Devil and the archangel Michael for the body of Moses is taken from the Assumption of Moses. The allusion to resurrection in Hebrews 11. 35 has probably in mind the martyrdom of Eleazar and the seven brothers recorded in II Macc. 6-7, whilst the words of Paul in I Cor. 2.9 ('Things which eye saw not,' etc.), according to Origen and others, may well come from a lost apocryphal book, The Apocalypse (or Prophecy or Mysteries) of Elijah. These and other apocryphal writings were valued highly by reason of their power of edification without the question of 'canonical authority' being raised at all. They were seen to be in the line of revelation from ancient times and, together with the 'canonical' books, bore witness to the age-long purpose of God culminating in the coming of Jesus Christ the Saviour. Those books of an apocalyptic character in particular had a special appeal with their teaching concerning the imminent appearing of the Messiah, the breaking in of the Messianic Kingdom, the 'woes' of the last days, the Final Judgment, the resurrection of the dead, the future destiny of the righteous and the wicked and the doctrine of 'the two ages'. Indeed it is likely that the very popularity of such books among the Christians was one of the factors which led Judaism early on to renounce them almost altogether. And so it was that, whereas those books were at first revered by the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria, in course of time they were appropriated by the Christian Church and it is almost entirely within the Christian religion that they have survived. Their teaching and beliefs, especially on the topic of eschatology, were widespread during the first Christian century and are reflected in the beliefs of the Early Church. This is particularly so in the teaching of the New Testament Apocalypse in which some scholars find a Jewish nucleus.

The authority of the Hebrew Canon, however, in due course asserted itself and found a staunch supporter in Origen (185-254). By the fourth century, however, a distinction had come to be made by a number of the Church Fathers not only between the 'canonical' and the 'apocryphal' books, but also within the apocryphal books themselves. Thus Athanasius names the Wisdom of Solomon,

the Wisdom of Ben Sira, Esther, Judith and Tobit as appointed to be read for 'instruction in the word of true religion'. Jerome (d.420) distinguished between *libri canonici* and *libri ecclesiastici*, the latter being placed *inter apocrypha*; but the distinction was not quite as clear cut as this and so he put forward an intermediate classification termed *libri agiographi* over against the *libri apocryphi*. There thus emerged a class of books termed *antilegomena* ('debatable' or 'disputed' books), permissible for reading and instruction, over against which are set the *apocrypha* among which many of the Jewish apocalyptic writings appear. In lists of 'disputed' books which appeared in subsequent years mention is made of the Books of Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Jesus (son) of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Psalms of Solomon, Esther, Judith, Susanna and Tobit. This evidence of Christian usage throughout the early centuries thus supports the claim of the Apocrypha to a place within the tradition of Christian literature—not on the ground that such books have an equal authority with canonical Scripture or an equal inspiration, but rather that they are 'profitable for reading'.

This is more or less the position adopted by Martin Luther who separated the books of the Apocrypha from the Hebrew Canon and relegated them to an appendix as 'books which cannot be reckoned with the canonical books and yet are useful and good for reading'. Calvin made very sparing use of the Apocrypha which he regarded as distinctly inferior to the canonical writings and nowhere did he use them as a basis for Christian doctrine. In this he, like so many other Reformers, was no doubt influenced by the use long made of them by the Roman Catholic Church to support such doctrines as salvation by works, the merits of the saints, Purgatory and intercession for the dead. The popular and influential Geneva Bible, first issued in 1560, presented the Apocrypha as containing books 'not . . . to be read and expounded publicly in the Church' or 'to prove any point of Christian religion'; nevertheless 'as books proceeding from godly men' they are 'to be read for the advancement and furtherance of the knowledge of the history and for the instruction of godly manners'. The controversy continued, however, with the publication of the Authorised Version in 1611 and has continued ever since. The decision of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1827 to omit the Apocrypha, except for some pulpit bibles, has meant that far fewer Christians than in the days of the Geneva Bible have had ready access to these books.

The idea of canonicity cannot be lightly dismissed; but it is equally true that no explanation of it is adequate which is based, for example, on purely mechanical conceptions of what canonicity (and so inspiration) means. An illustration of this is given by Josephus who records that, according to commonly accepted belief, the canonicity of a book depended upon whether it had been written between the time of Moses and the death of Artaxerxes in 424 B.C.; the assumption of this theory that prophecy had ceased from the time of the Persian period, together with the claim that only those

books which were originally written in Hebrew were acceptable, explains the exclusion of certain writings which might otherwise have aspired to a position of canonical authority. Nor is it adequate—at least for the Protestant—to point to some particular Council of the Church (e.g. the Council of Trent) whose decision in this matter provides ‘a revealed dogma’ and so is to be accepted as binding upon the faithful. No such external authority formed the Canon in the beginning and no formal statement, however ecclesiastically correct or authoritative, is binding on the Christian Church today. These words of H. Wheeler Robinson are surely much more acceptable, reflecting as they do the teaching of the great Reformers: ‘The Protestant . . . must base his own recognition of that unique quality (of canonicity) on the intrinsic worth and ministry of the books themselves, as witnessed by his own response to their message under the guidance of the Holy Spirit . . . The authority of the Scriptures needs no testimony from man, because it rests on the testimony of the Holy Spirit himself, confirming his truth without by the creation of an echoing truth within’. But even on this basis it is difficult to draw up a formal list beneath which we can draw two thick lines indicating that at this point inspiration ceased and revelation took on a new character. The lower edges of the Canon are ragged; or to put it another way, the Canon has fairly broad margins in which the names of other books appear which, as Bunyan and others have testified, have been as a word of God to their souls. If the test of authority is to be found not in mechanical inspiration or in the decisions of a Council but in the intrinsic worth of the writings illumined by the Holy Spirit, it could be argued that, to the eye of Christian faith, Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Solomon, for example, might in certain circumstances minister the grace of God and declare the word of God even more clearly than, say, the Song of Songs or the Book of Esther.

The New Testament and the Old Testament belong together within the same religious heritage; both point to and culminate in Jesus Christ our Lord. But there is a vast difference between the two ‘worlds’ within which they were written. Without an understanding of ‘the years between’ much in the New Testament must remain dark and mysterious. The Apocrypha and related literature supply this want. Such works as I Maccabees, Judith and the Additions to the Book of Esther, for example, emphasise the ardent nationalism of those times; Tobit and the Prayer of Manasseh reveal the deep piety of many Jews who waited for the redemption of Israel; II (4) Esdras, together with books like I Enoch and Psalms of Solomon, illustrate clearly the eschatological and messianic hopes which were at that time front page news; the Wisdom of Solomon shows the fusion of Greek and Hebrew thought so evident also in the New Testament; Ecclesiasticus, with its emphasis on the law as the perfect expression of wisdom, demonstrates the teaching given in Jewish schools of instruction; II Maccabees and other extra-apocryphal books affirm the popular belief in the

resurrection and the coming Kingdom, whilst in book after book the mediation of angels and the evil influence of Satan and his demons gives the setting of so much of Jesus' own teaching. There is a great deal in these writings, then, which perpetuates that God-inspired hope found in prophets, priests and psalmists concerning the coming salvation of the Lord which helps us, as otherwise we should be much less able to do, to appreciate the revelation of God in Christ as contained in the New Testament Scriptures. The truths revealed there may not be authoritative as a basis for Christian doctrine, but they are of no small importance for our understanding of the historical development of such doctrine and so are of real significance for the purpose of instruction.

The Christian's faith is founded on the Incarnation and is rooted in history. For this reason all history for him is sacred and the study of it a sacred task. Books which, in a unique way, describe so graphically the background to our Lord's life and ministry are surely worthy of the most careful study and of an honoured place within the priceless heritage we have received from the past.

D. S. RUSSELL

PARSONS AND POETS (Continued)

V

Most parsons have at some time echoed the sentiment of Robert Burns:

"O would some grace the Giftie gie us,
To see ourselves as others see us."

The poets well perform this function for parsons. Sometimes they point out our faults, as John Milton in "Lycidas" criticised the bishops of his day. He called them "blind mouths": blind, when as overseers they should have been seeing; and mouths, feeding themselves when they should have been feeding the flock. It followed that "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed." More often the poets show us the kind of men we ought to be. There is food for thought in the portrait of a parson drawn by Chaucer, concluding with the couplet:

"But Cristes lore, and His apostles twelve,
He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselve."

We may read with profit also Oliver Goldsmith's description in "The Deserted Village". And here is Matthew Arnold's description in "East London":

"Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, looked thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
'Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene?'
'Bravely!' said he; 'for I of late have been
Much cheered by thoughts of Christ, the living Bread.'

O human soul! so long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

These poems bear the stamp of a past age, but Thomas Kenn has given us in the following lines an ideal that is never out of place:

Give me the priest whose graces shall possess:
Of an ambassador the just address,
A father's tenderness, a shepherd's care,
A leader's courage which the cross can bear,
A ruler's awe, a watchman's wakeful eye,
A pilot's skill, the helm in storms to ply,
A fisher's patience and a labourer's toil,
A guide's dexterity to disembroil,
A prophet's inspiration from above,
A teacher's knowledge, and a Saviour's love.

VI

Few of the poets mentioned in this or the previous article belong to this century. Does this mean that nothing of value to parsons has been written in modern times? By no means. But it must be confessed that the general run of modern poetry bears little comparison with the old masters. It seems that modern poetry shares with modern art and modern music the confusion of our times. Many of us find them all difficult to understand. Two things may be regarded as of the essence of poetry: rhythm and a message. But in modern poetry rhythm is often completely broken. And the poet seems to have nothing much to say. (Incidentally, there is a lesson for us here—to preach our confidence, not our doubts). Perhaps we ought not to expect confidence from a generation that has lived through modern warfare. Richard Church begins "The War-Time Singers" thus:

"It is time for us, the middle generation,
To stop singing. The bells of our hearts are cracked."

Yet despite these conditions, some have given us worth-while poetry. Laurence Binyon's "For the Fallen" met the need and fitted the mood of a generation emerging from war. Studdert Kennedy brought his Christian faith to bear on the terrible situation he knew. His poems are vigorous and challenging, and the following lines, spoken in the last address he gave, are a good sample:

We shall build on—
On through the cynic's scorning,
On through the coward's warning,
On through the cheat's suborning,
We shall build on.

We shall build on—
Firm on the Rock of Ages,
City of saints and sages,
Laugh while the tempest rages,
We shall build on.

Christ, though my hands be bleeding,
Fierce though my flesh be pleading,
Still let me see Thee leading—
Let me build on.

Till through death's cruel dealing,
Brain wrecked and reason reeling,
I hear love's trumpets pealing,
And I pass on.

A sane man's protest at the mad race in armaments is well expressed in the following poem by John Lehmann:

This excellent machine is neatly planned,
A child, a half-wit would not feel perplexed:
No chance to err, you simply press the button;
At once each cog in motion moves the next,
The whole revolves, and anything that lives
Is quickly sucked towards the running band,
Where, shot between the automatic knives,
It's guaranteed to finish dead as mutton.

This excellent machine will illustrate
The Modern World divided into nations;
So neatly planned, that if you merely tap it
The armaments will start their devastations,
And though we're for it, though we're all convinced
Some fool will press the button soon or late,
We stand and stare, expecting to be minced,
And very few are asking, *Why not scrap it?*

And John Masfield, our present Poet Laureate, has recognised that the most thrilling story in the world is still a conversion story, and has left us immeasurably in his debt for "The Everlasting Mercy," containing the new convert's experience of wonder:

O glory of the lighted mind;
How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind.
The station brook, to my new eyes,
Was babbling out of Paradise;
The waters rushing from the rain
Were singing Christ has risen again.
I thought all earthly creatures knelt
From rapture of the joy I felt.

VII

Finally, amid a great variety of parsons' pleasures, the reading of poetry for its sheer delight has a place. It affords a welcome relaxation, and offers something to suit all tastes. If we are in the mood for forthright poetry, we may turn to Sir Henry Newbolt in "Drake's Drum" and "Vitai Lampada," or to Macaulay in "How Horatius kept the Bridge." If we desire to revel in the world around us, almost any poet may be our companion, for all are lovers of nature. But Wordsworth in particular encourages us:—

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He too is no mean preacher;
Come forth into the light of things,
Let nature be your teacher.

The carefree, happy life of childhood is portrayed in Whittier's "The Barefoot Boy," and the drama of the relief of a city is set forth in his "The Pipes at Lucknow," which is of particular interest to us because the relieving General, Sir Henry Havelock, was a Baptist. For dry humour we may read "The Owl Critic," by James Field, and for more genial fun, "The Diverting History of John Gilpin", by William Cowper. Kipling is at his best in "The Glory of the Garden," including the following familiar lines:

Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing—"Oh, how beautiful!" and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner-knives.

Then seek your job with thankfulness and work till further orders,
If it's only netting strawberries or killing slugs on borders;
And when your back stops aching and your hands begin to harden,
You will find yourself a partner in the Glory of the Garden.

Oh, Adam was a gardener, and God who made him sees
That half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees,
So when your work is finished, you can wash your hands and pray
For the Glory of the Garden, that it may not pass away!
And the Glory of the Garden it shall never pass away!

All dog lovers will enjoy "His Apologies" by the same author, in which the dog speaks to his master, first as a puppy, later as a veteran:

Master—again Thy Sinner! This that was once Thy Shoe,
He has found and taken and carried aside, as fitting matter to chew.
Now there is neither blacking nor tongue, and the Housemaid has
us in tow.

Master, remember Thy Servant is young, and tell her to let him go!
Lord, look down on Thy Servant! Bad things have come to pass!
There is no heat in the midday sun, nor health in the wayside grass.
His bones are full of an old disease—his torments run and increase.

Lord, make haste with Thy Lightnings and grant him a quick release!

In 1959 a Russian poet, Samuel Marshak, wrote a poem in honour of Robert Burns, on the occasion of the bi-centenary of his birth. He has well caught the spirit of his hero, as the following verse shows:—

Behind your broad, unfurrowed brow,
Great thoughts were given birth, man,
And clad in words so wise that now
They're known o'er a' the earth, man.
For Auld Lang Syne we're in your debt,
It brings mankind together;
Your proffered cup of kindness yet
Makes every man a brother;
And in this boundless land of ours
Your homespun views we cherish.
From Baltic to Pacific shores
Your fame will never perish.

In "Roundabouts and Swings" Patrick Chalmers tells of meeting a travelling showman in a country lane, and learning something of his philosophy of life:—

'E thumped upon the footboard an' 'e lumbered on again
To meet a gold-dust sunset down the owl-light in the lane;
An' the moon she climbed the 'azels, while a nightjar seemed to spin
That Pharaoh's wisdom o'er again, 'is sooth of lose-and-win;
For "up an' down an' round," said 'e, "goes all appointed things,
An' losses on the roundabouts means profits on the swings!"

Robert Browning has delighted many generations of children with his story of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin". Who that has read his rhyming description of the quaint figure can ever forget it? Older folk reading the story to children appreciate the moral at the end (sometimes unfortunately omitted):—

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!
And, whether they free us from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

John Masefield reminds us of our pilgrimage in "Seekers"—

We travel the dusty road till the light of day is dim,
And sunset shows us spires away on the world's rim.

We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is past and by,
Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of the sky.

Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blessed abode,
But the hope of the City of God at the other end of the road.

Last, but not least, Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" brings us into the world of chivalry, with all the lore of King Arthur and the

Knights of the Round Table—round, so that no knight should rank higher than another. It was the period.

When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.

And because even in his relaxation a parson's calling can never be far away, mention may be made of Tennyson's "Merlin and the Gleam". Here the old magician is talking to the young mariner and seeking to inspire in him the ideals and faith that have guided his life. (Lovers of art may compare this story with the picture of "The Boyhood of Raleigh," by Sir John Millais.) The final stanza runs:—

Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam.

Most parsons would agree that it is highly undesirable to lard our sermons with poetry. But it would be as great a mistake to neglect the wonderful heritage that is ours in the poets. They have given us insights that can enrich our life and our ministry.

W. B. HARRIS

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE OF KOINONIA

There is great need in our churches for the rediscovery of the Biblical truth and experience of Koinonia, a word which represents one of the leading ideas of the New Testament. That which began on the day of Pentecost with a deep sense of 'togetherness' as the Holy Spirit came upon believers was nothing less than the sharing of a common life. No English word can fully do justice to its meaning, although the sense is well given in our word 'fellowship' deriving as it does from the ancient Saxon "feolaga" or system of "common land" used for grazing together! We still speak of such land as a 'common', although this term suggests derogation, since what is shared easily becomes devalued. This Biblical concept of fellowship whilst holding the basic idea of the 'common' is a far cry from anything that is cheap, for the Divine life within all believers is 'communis' and not 'vulgaris'. What God has cleansed

we cannot call common or unclean. Koinonia then is something unique and is the very 'esse' of the church of God.

The Common Life Originates in the Holy Trinity

Christian fellowship is not natural human affinity, but something essentially Divine imparted to us by the Spirit of God, as the words of John 17:23 have it "I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in one". Of this L. S. Thornton says "The Spirit is the bond of union between the Father and the Son, and love is the perfect expression. In the life common to Him and to us there is a mystical identity corresponding to the life common to the Persons of the Blessed Trinity". This statement is further explained in the words "The vital organic bond between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is now amongst Christians" (Thornton, *Common Life in the Body of Christ*).

This is high doctrine, giving to fellowship the unique quality shown in the New Testament. It means that koinonia has its expression on earth but its origin in heaven, it exists in time but is by nature eternal, is experienced between people but is created by God. It is therefore not dependant on age, race or sex, nor should it be conditioned by these, since it transcends them. It is the sharing of the life of the Spirit who flows to and through the church from the Father and the Son. To allow fellowship to be governed wholly by human factors (as when older Christians cannot have fellowship with younger, even in the same church) is to reveal the inadequacy of our understanding of its true mystery. Once we have caught even a glimpse of its meaning we find something above and beyond any association of this world. No wonder Paul speaks of "the riches of the glory of this mystery—which is Christ in you (all)".

The Common Life is only made possible by the Cross

This truth is made clear in Ephesians 2:11-12, where the two problems of access to God and unity between men are dealt with under the figures (familiar to the Jews) of the temple veil, and the "middle wall of partition" separating the temple precincts from the court of the Gentiles. Beyond the first no Jew dare penetrate, beyond the second no Gentile could ever go.

Now both of these, says Paul, have been abolished by the sacrifice of the Cross. The 'veil' has been rent, because sin has been removed between God and man; the 'mesotoichos' dividing Jew from Gentile has been broken down, since Christ has died for the sins of both. Access is therefore possible for all who repent and believe, and since both must come by the same way, reconciliation is effected between those hitherto divided.

The important issue here is that the Cross in dealing with the separation between God and man, deals also with that between man and man. Both veil and wall having been rent, they need no longer exist, provided we repent of those sins that have created them. Without such repentance there can be no koinonia, either with God or my brother. Yet once we come to the Cross together

the way is opened for the Spirit to build us up as a holy temple in the Lord. It is not so much our denominations we need to repent of as our sins of pride, jealousy, unlove and unfaithfulness to the truth.

*The Common Life is rooted in the New Birth
and realised by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit*

That no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven without new birth is clear in the teaching of our Lord who categorically insists in John Ch. 3 on the need to be born of water and the Spirit. A study of such a passage as Ezekiel Ch. 36 v. 25f makes it clear that water and Spirit mean inward cleansing and moral change through the gift of the Spirit, which experience the New Testament shows must involve repentance, faith in Christ and a personal receiving of Him (Acts 2:38, I John 5:1, John 1:12). On this repentance—faith basis, the Spirit is given, the effect of which is to produce fellowship between those thus regenerated. Of course, the new birth is effected through the operation of the Word, and they who are born from above must walk in the Truth, else is their fellowship vitiated as John clearly shows in his Epistles.

Here was the secret of the *koinonia* in Acts. They who were born of God, continued in the apostles' teaching, while at the same time the Spirit created among them a sense of spiritual oneness, so profound that they were 'of one heart and one soul and had all things common'. Communion in the Spirit created community of life. Here is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the experience of new birth the Spirit is given to indwell those who repent and believe in Christ, so that all are incorporated into Him. Where this is truly realised it is accompanied by an infusion of Divine love, which is both the gift and fruit of the Spirit, the perfect expression of the *koinonia*.

The vision of Ezekiel 37 is an apt illustration of this. The bones while dead and dry lay scattered in isolation. When the Word of Grace and the Spirit of Life touched them it is recorded that "the bones came together, bone to his bone". The miracle of new life produced fellowship.

The Common Life is Linked with Baptism

The New Testament speaks of two baptismal events—baptism in the Holy Spirit and baptism in water. The first is the immersion of the Christian at conversion into the corporate life of Christ by the bestowal of the Spirit upon him. The second is his physical immersion in water as the representation of his spiritual baptism. That the literal baptism is useless without the spiritual may be seen from the incidents of Simon Magus and the Ephesian disciples in Acts 8 and 19.

These two baptisms are held together in New Testament thought and experience. In water baptism we are said to be 'baptised into Christ's death and resurrection', and in spiritual baptism, to be "baptised by One Spirit into one Body" The literal thus *enacts* the spiritual but does not necessarily *convey* it. Baptism is, therefore,

directly related to fellowship in that it is not simply a witness to personal faith but a symbol of that action of the Holy Spirit in which every believer is baptised into the corporate life of Christ which is the Church. In being 'baptised into Christ' we are 'baptised into one body'. It is, therefore, right that baptism and reception into visible church membership should go together.

*The Common Life must be Learned and Expressed
in the local Church.*

It is significant that the New Testament knows no ground of division between churches save that of geography. It thus presents the one church of God as being expressed in many local churches in which the fulness of koinonia may be realised. As we learn society in our home, so we learn fellowship in the local church, for it is here the challenges, opportunities, demands and even pains of mutual caring are continually faced, while the crusts of selfish individualism are broken again and again. The church is nothing if it is not a caring community, for it is the sphere of a Divine life whose very nature is agapé.

Of the variety of ways in which this fellowship-in-love may be expressed in the local church, we have space only to refer to the Lord's Table which is the focus of all koinonia. It is noticeable that whilst the eleventh chapter of first Corinthians emphasises the commemorative aspect of the Table with its requirement to "discern the body of the Lord", the tenth chapter in verses sixteen and seventeen lays equal stress on the fellowship aspect. By our common participation in Christ's death and resurrection life we who are many individuals are made one corporate body, which fact we demonstrate as we eat of the one loaf and drink of the one cup. Here, as in baptism, the literal action declares the spiritual experience and should not be divorced from it, neither must our symbolic declaration of being 'one body' be contradicted by our attitude one towards another. The table is no place for dissension, indifference or impassive spectatorship, but for warm response to God and to one another. Here the vital current of the love of God should flow through all our hearts.

Koinonia is not a technique, neither is it a theory. We refer to it as "it", and yet it is not an "it", for it is Christ Himself in us, Christ the bond of union, the hope of glory. The measure in which we experience koinonia, therefore, depends on our personal relation with Christ. I can do no better in conclusion than stress three words which for St. John at least constitute the true elements of koinonia.

The first is "Life" (I John 1:1-3). Koinonia is that fellowship of spiritual life of which God is the source, Christ the expression and the Holy Spirit the power. Only as we come to be continually renewed in that 'life', can we share it with others who live together in Him as fellow-members of His Body.

The second is "Light" (I John 1:7). Here the emphasis is on God

as Light. There is in Him no darkness of unreality or deception. If then we are to have fellowship either with Him or one another it must be as we "walk in the light". This means that we are willing to be open, honest, transparent in the Divine presence, and since John's emphasis is always that our relation with God be realised in our relation with our brother, 'walking in the light' involves transparent fellowship. This means repentance and confession of all known sin, and a relationship of reality with one another in Christ. This the church sadly needs, for everywhere men walk with one another in mists and shadows, hiding from God and each other.

The third is Love (I John 4:20-5:1). Because God is love, the life He imparts to His children must of necessity be imbued with this quality. It is a great thing when there dawns on us the discovery that we all have the same divine and eternal life by the Spirit. Yet without love this evaporates into theory. It is breakthrough into new dimensions of fellowship when the masks are dropped, we are willing to be known as we really are and the clear light of reality shines among us. But without love, such light can become cold and cruel. Love is the ultimate in koinonia, for here we reach the Heart of God, here the Holy Ghost within us imparts God's highest gift. It is the most satisfying, strengthening and convincing thing in the Christian church. Without it we are nothing.

If we know these things we are only blessed as we do them. The question is whether we are prepared to examine in the light of Scripture, the poverty, the unreality, the virtual non-existence of koinonia in our churches, and then before God to humble ourselves in repentance about our many sins of wrong relationship, however subtle they may be. This fellowship of the Holy Spirit, this communion of the Body of Christ, is the will of God, the very life-blood of the church, the crying need of the world. Indeed, if we know it, it is heaven begun below.

STANLEY VOKE

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ashton-under-Lyne, Hastings, Hatfield Peverel, Leicester, Luton, Oxford, Mortlake and East Sheen—in each place an experiment is taking place in Christian Social Responsibility. This spate of experiments is listed in a pamphlet published by the National Council of Social Service on 'Good Neighbour' schemes. Each scheme is distinct in approach and the list points to a wider movement. Christians are looking closely at their society and are working in co-operation with Social Workers. It is happening. Ought it to happen?

If all this current concern is based upon emotion or reflects the desperation of a Church anxious to justify its existence to a sceptical world we are all due to be disillusioned. Either this approach has

its roots in the nature of the Gospel and the Church or it is a sociological accretion. Recently writers have been underlining the theological foundation of the Christian involvement in social work. The review of the book *The Church in Social Work* (M. Penelope Hall and Ismene V. Howes) that appeared in the *British Weekly* by Arthur Hoyles contained a key paragraph: "The Church's responsibility for social care stems from her title deeds and cannot be lightly surrendered. If she is to be true to her Lord, she must be a caring as well as a witnessing community, and she must minister, not only to her own members and the deserving, but to outcasts and sinners, those rejected by society as well as those secure in the sympathy of their fellow men".

Even though the true function of the Church in our Welfare State is still to emerge (are we to compete, co-operate or abdicate?) we must be involved. This is not an extra-mural exercise. It is to be part of the caring ministry of, and to, our society. Of course, many of our people are already engaged. Some are professional Social Workers, many are in the voluntary organisations like WVS. But the Church as a whole knows little, and seems to care less, about the pressure-points and problems of the complex society of which we are part.

Underlying this contemporary stress on Social Responsibility are deep theological roots. They are the only valid answer to the view that this movement is a deviation from the true task of the Church. They are the only persuasive answer to the lingering fear of 'the Social Gospel'. Baptists, with their emphasis upon individual conversion, their 'gathered community' and the half-submerged view that Christians should be 'in, but not of' the world need thoroughly convincing that this road is right. The superficial answer is to point sceptics to the Good Samaritan or to refer them to Cain's question: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' But the motivation for social responsibility is deeper and wider.

Social Responsibility is rooted in the doctrine of creation. The whole world is the creation of God: this is motive for missionary outreach and for social care. The whole of man is the creation of God: this breaks the false demarcation lines we erect between that which is spiritual and that which is material. The Bishop of Colchester, writing in the Quarterly Review of the Church Assembly Board of Social Responsibility (*Crucible*—July, 1962) makes this quite clear: "The principle of social obligation lies by implication and in embryo in the very first chapter of the Bible. The ascription to God of the creation of the physical world indicates a responsibility towards Him for the use made of all material things . . . God, just because He is God, must have everything or He becomes as nothing. The reality of God to any one of us depends on our readiness to bring Him into every department of our lives'. To believe in the One who is 'Father of all men' is to be concerned for the welfare of everyone of His creatures—individually and in social groupings.

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To the Members of the Baptist Ministers' Fraternal.

Dear Friends,

Mass Culture

Lord Annan, Provost of King's College, Cambridge, said on November 16th, 1965 in his Romanes lecture at Oxford: "It is true that much of the material of mass culture is vulgar, titillating and incites violence."

A bus conductor in London was heard on the same day to announce "Trafalgar Square, Strand and Charing Cross Stations, Nelson's Column, Whitehall, Admiralty House and Horseguards". A voice from the upper deck called out "What about the National Gallery?" The conductor shouted back "I only do the points of interest. The bus behind does the culture."

It is a pity that culture should so often trail behind an awakened interest and that when it does catch up it should "incite violence". Of course, that is a broad generalisation and I do not pretend that it would necessarily stand up in debate.

But there is no pretence about the rising tide of crime; no pretence either about the still mounting record of thefts from Churches and Halls. That is my excuse for yet again emphasising the need for the exercise of care in taking precautions against theft.

It is impossible overnight to change the outlook of the perpetrators of theft but it is not impossible to make it more difficult for thieves to operate. Much can be done if there is a will to have it done. Some of the fastenings on doors and windows seem designed only to prevent their being opened by a zephyr breeze—theft prevention calls for the sterner stuff of modern mortice deadlocks and fastenings. What about trimming back shrubs or felling trees so that convenient shadows no longer conceal points of access.

Ambidexterity has been defined as the art of not letting the right hand know what the left hand is doing. Are your church organisations ambidextrous in terms of security?

Prevention is better than cure and certainly cheaper for all concerned in the long run and indeed in the short run.

Yours sincerely,

C. J. L. COLVIN,
General Manager

Social Responsibility is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation speaks of the invasion of the whole of human life. There is no false separation in the person or the action of Jesus as He moves within our world. The notes of this incarnational life are those of compassion and healing. Wherever men or women need help they find it in Jesus. This is far more than preaching the Gospel—it is doing the Gospel. When the Bishop of Middleton (better known as Ted Wickham of Sheffield) writes about the justification of the Church's engagement in social work he begins at once with the example of Jesus Christ. "Fundamentally the justification of the Church's engagement in social work springs from the compassion of our Lord, exemplified in deed and word. The mission of Christ's body, the Church, can never be reduced to a spoken word, even a word of saving revelation. The whole of the Scriptures affirm this. The New Testament is explicit that the 'diakonia' is inseparable from 'kerugma' and all the centuries of Church history give evidence of the support of the Christian faith to this fact." This is the example we are to follow—the caring, demonstrating, costly identification of the Son of God with men in need.

Social Responsibility is rooted in the doctrine of the Church. Is the Church 'the body of Christ?' Then we are to be to our world what He was to His world. Is the Church 'the extension of the Incarnation?' Then our road is that of involvement and identification. We are the 'Servant-Church' commanded to serve men without thought of reward, gratitude, or even conversion! It is now a platitude to say that the Church does not exist for itself but is here for the world, but the verbal platitude does not seem to have penetrated our Church life. The searching writing of F. Gibson Winter in *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches* puts it another way: "It is essential to recognise the radical change in Protestantism which has come with the confining of religious interest to the private concerns of residential life. The attentiveness of the Churches to this sphere is certainly legitimate but exclusive identification of religion with the private sphere creates a special culture in congregational life; the inevitable consequence is social irresponsibility". When the Church really becomes the Church, society knows of its ministry and its witness. Until then the Church will languish as a withdrawn club for religious enthusiasts who enter into a social cul-de-sac as they become Church members.

Social Responsibility is rooted in the Scriptures. Implicitly in our doctrinal beliefs of the creation, the person of Jesus Christ and the nature of the Church. Explicitly in the sayings of Jesus . . . 'Love your neighbour as yourself'; in the parables of Jesus . . . the judgement upon men in Matthew 25 is based upon their attitudes and actions to people in need. It is taken up by John . . . 'If a man has enough to live on, and yet when he sees his brother in need shuts up his heart against him, how can it be said that the divine love dwells in him?' and stressed by James with his teaching that 'faith without works is dead'.

The Church cannot evade the issue. Nearly 20 years of the Welfare State in this country has taught us that the State and its workers cannot answer the clamant needs of those in our society whose condition cries out for help. Much has been done, much will be done, but it is now clear that the compassion, strength and faith of the Church is welcomed by Social Workers. Social Responsibility becomes an act of obedience, it crosses the gap that all our attempts at evangelism have failed to do, it is an integral part of the ministry of the Church towards our world.

The working out of details is determined by the local situation. The theological foundation and motivation are the principles by which we work. But the emerging patterns come through the intertwining of theological conviction and sociological fact. Certain consequences are now evident. More of our people must be encouraged to become professional Social Workers, others can learn of the possibilities within the wide range of voluntary activities. But the Church itself must know about local needs and be prepared to undertake specific tasks with groups needing help—the immigrants, the handicapped, the mentally ill, the secular youth clubs, the old folk.

COLIN MARCHANT

AN EXPERIMENT IN PREACHING

When I began my ministry at Custom House Baptist Church in September 1958, my presentation of the Christian Gospel in terms of preaching followed an orthodox and traditional pattern. The introduction was followed by biblical description, which, in turn, led to biblical interpretation, and concluded with an application in general terms.

After eighteen months I was having a discussion with some of our young people, and I invited them to speak frankly about ministers and their sermons. They spoke of long, boring addresses, with little relevance to life as it has to be lived today. Variety, freshness and visual aids were mentioned as sadly lacking in the average sermon, and several positive suggestions were made. I went home thinking that we had had a good chat, but, of course, the youngsters were asking for the moon. They would see things differently as they grew older. However, I felt encouraged to experiment a little, and on the basis of those experiments I am now convinced that those youngsters were right.

Sermons are boring, they said. I see their point. For one thing, there are several boring factors in many preachers' voices. We joke about the "parsonic" voice, but too many of us possess this doubtful gift. A man talks naturally outside the church building, but enclose him in a pulpit, and he assumes a monotone and expression suitable only for the British Museum. Can I be heard? This ought to be a question we should pin up on the wall of our vestry. A surprising

thing is the number of preachers who just cannot be heard in a normal building. A deacon went up to a visiting preacher, and said, Thank God, we were able to hear you, and at least we know what we disagree with! Thus it is inevitable that sermons become boring if the preacher carries on in a parsonic mumble which no-one can hear.

The length of some sermons was criticised by our young people. In many ministers' minds there seems to be the impression that a long oration of three quarters of an hour must be effective by reason of its length. They believe that something that lasts fifteen minutes reflects either the work of a beginner, or a man who is weak in his spiritual life. I am sure length is no indication of good preaching. Indeed, I feel this might be one more reason why our church buildings are half empty. Whilst I am dealing with negative criticism, perhaps I can mention one other interesting comment made at this discussion. Why do preachers preface their sermon with such comments as, Of course, this vast subject cannot be covered by one sermon, it needs twelve, or, Of course, I am not competent to deal with this theme? Let the preacher get on with it, and cut out this needless waste of time, was the conclusion of that speaker. He has a point!

The content of the sermon was next on the list for consideration. On examining my own efforts, I found that I rarely came away from the Bible. There was biblical description and interpretation, all couched in the phrases of the Authorised Version. One voice within me said, Ah, but you apply it to the present day, don't you? Another voice said in reply, But do you? Is it good enough to finish by saying, Accept Christ as your Saviour, and leaving people to work out that great decision for themselves? Is it good enough to plead, Because God has forgiven us, we ought to forgive others, and not to go on to indicate how we forgive others? The result of all this was as follows.

I split the sermon into two parts, each of which is never longer than ten minutes. The sermon consists of one facet of the Christian Gospel, and one only. The first half is devoted to illustrating this one facet. If we are considering a parable then I present a contemporary situation, portraying that parable in the life of today. If we are considering one verse in the Sermon on the Mount I attempt to illustrate it by a local situation, or an incident in the life of a great Christian. Frequently I use pictures and models to illustrate the illustration. We then sing a hymn, and the second half begins. Unkind footballing critics have said, What happens then, do you preach from the other end of the church building, and the congregation turn round? No, I remain in the pulpit, and as simply and carefully as one can, try to indicate the obvious one point of the parable, verse or whatever is under consideration. The visual aids remain to link the halves together in the minds of the congregation. To provide even greater variety, I sometimes reverse the process with the story coming second.

In discussing this approach to preaching with ministerial colleagues, several points have been raised. Doesn't it all become rather like a glorified children's address? I am one of those who firmly believes in the children's address, and I deplore its disappearance in many churches. There are terrible talks given to children, and we have all heard them. On the other hand there are those who can speak to children, and all in the congregation are gripped. The methods employed by these people are sorely needed in our preaching. I say sorely needed because the methods used recognised the limitations of a child, and yet try to appeal to his or her great sense of imagination. We preach sometimes as though our congregation were university students. However, this criticism which says I may be aping the children's address contains within it another criticism. Some preachers "lift" a story out of a book, give it a moral, and then deliver the result to the children. The process is easy, and doesn't require a lot of time. What the critic is saying is that I merely have a folder full of stories and illustrations, and deliver these to the congregation, with a little moral bit tacked on. It does not require a great deal of study and reflection.

To be thoroughly honest, I have never worked harder in my ministry. Prior to my "conversion" to this style of preaching I could hammer together something resembling a sermon in a short time, and it would pass muster. Now, one has to find out very clearly what the biblical writer is saying, and then make that thought live for the congregation. Finding the correct illustration to match the biblical thought can take up time. I have a number of Sunday School Guides, and these are excellent for that purpose. Both national and local newspapers provide more material. The most effective way is to become the playwright, and using the local situation pose the biblical thought as living in local characters, in our case in Custom House, E.16. To bring a parable up to date is not as easy as it sounds, but it can be done and ought to be done. Clothing the Bible in modern dress has brought home to me the difficulties and trials of the ordinary Christian in the outside world. Preaching in this fashion has enabled me to avoid platitudes and superficiality. We plan our sermons in the warmth and peace of our studies, and unfortunately this is reflected in our sermons. Perhaps if we could plan in the shop, or the factory, or even on the dining room table they might reflect more of the world we live in.

My conclusion is that this kind of approach was that of the Master, Who used the life of His day to depict the eternal truth of His Gospel. The parable of the sower, the story of the good Samaritan, and the wonderful tale of the prodigal son all encourage me to go on in the fashion I have been describing. I am quite sure Jesus would do the same thing if He was conducting His ministry now.

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SAFEGUARDING OUR HISTORY

I was very pleased to read Dr B. R. White's article in a recent issue of *The Fraternal* on "Writing and Preserving Baptist History" and can only hope that the good seed will not fall on rocky soil. In view of what he has written, it may be of interest to others to learn of what we are doing in the East Midland Baptist Association.

Just three years ago I was appointed "Custodian of the Historical Documents". Our Association, with much encouragement from the Rev. W. J. Grant, the General Superintendent, became alive to the risks and needs to which Dr. White draws our attention. My task is to collect and collate Baptist material, as well as to encourage and answer questions from our folks, on the history of their Churches. In brief, to be a Repository of Baptist records, as well as an Office of Information, with the aim of encouraging and helping folk to see the wealth of their inheritance and giving them assistance when compiling any history of their own.

It has been encouraging to receive letters either requesting or giving information, to be handed pamphlets and brochures, and in some cases complete records of Sunday Schools, besides Church minute and account books; which only goes to show that although people may smile at the title I have been given they do recognise and appreciate the work that is being done.

It would seem to me that we have a suggestion that answers the important question Dr. White asks—"Is it not time that we had a campaign to rebind with expert care some of these documents?" The answer, of course, is an emphatic "Yes", but how to go about it, and where is the money or the necessary skill to be found? This is how we are tackling the problem. I have been granted permission by the Association to deposit our material in the Record Offices of each county in our area which covers the counties of Derby, Lincoln, Leicester and Rutland, and Nottingham. Each town and county in the country has a Record Office, and most of them will be only too ready to accept on permanent loan any material we care to pass on. It may save me a lot of trouble by way of explanation if I quote most of a letter I have received from the County Archivist of Leicester, which he wrote when accepting our proposal:

"I shall be pleased to make the facilities of the County Record Office available for the older records of the Baptist Churches in the County. I would be very happy to fall in with your suggestion that deposits by particular churches be made through the custodians for the time being of historical documents appointed by the East Midlands Baptist Association. Under the terms of permanent loan the depositor retains all his rights to the documents, and, if circumstances should require, they may be withdrawn. We on our part will ensure their physical preservation and carry out free of charge any repairs that may be necessary. We only stipulate that in

return, subject to the above proviso, they be left indefinitely and be made available for historical research; in cases of publication, the approval of the East Midlands Baptist Association be first sought through its custodian.

“As you know, all documents are kept in a specially constructed muniment room which is fire-proof, damp-proof, rat-proof and burglar-proof and it is fitted with an automatic smoke detector system connected direct to the fire brigade so that all precautions are taken against fire. Documents are only produced for inspection under the supervision of the Record Office Staff in the search room which is equipped with a reference library and reading aids for faded documents. All repairs are carried out by two qualified book-binders and manuscript repairers who are on the Record Office's permanent staff.”

Let us admit that in Leicester we are fortunate in having such fine facilities available. Facilities in the various Record Offices will vary, but in the poorest of them material will be safely kept, properly listed and preserved. In many cases photo-copying and micro-filming are included in the facilities for which there would be some charge.

At our Association Assembly we are having an Exhibition of Documents arranged with the cooperation of the County Archivist for Nottingham. In this way, by showing an example of expert repair, giving examples of deterioration suffered by some of our minute books, and showing samples of the kind of material we are wanting—we hope to win the trust and confidence of all our Church Officers, so that they will no longer leave important documents lying about in safes and cupboards, but send them to us for safe keeping and therefore make them available for research.

In carrying out my job I have already made some interesting discoveries of Baptist material already deposited in Record Offices. One example is that of a 17th century Church minute book having become (to quote Dr. White's words) “the jealously guarded private property of a provincial dragon”—the dragon departed and without the church knowing, locked away the book in a castle. Pleased to report that these records are now freely available for inspection.

T. J. BUDGE