

# The Fraternal

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## A NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Ye have not passed this way heretofore. Joshua 3:4

I imagine that we have all preached on this text at some time or other. It makes a good starting point for a sermon at any time of the year, but especially so of course for a New Year Sunday. "Not passed this way before"—how true this is! We can reverse the French proverb and write "Plus c'est la même chose, plus ça change", and it is just as true as if we kept to the usual statement. Now that I have been two years retired, I've had an opportunity in my country retreat to notice how true this is of the seasons of the year—I've been too preoccupied with day-to-day affairs hitherto to stop, and look back, and compare the Spring of this year with the Spring of last year or the Winter with the Winter before. But I look more closely at ordinary things now; I have more time to "stand and stare", and it is a great surprise to discover how different one Spring is from another and how no two Summers are alike. Whatever 1968 holds in store we may be quite sure it will be **different**. The crops will not show the same kind of harvest, for what did well last year may fail this year and vice versa. God's artistic wizardry varies the picture while maintaining the same general frame, so that nothing ever happens twice; and this holds true of life in all its aspects, not simply of the world of Nature.

This year will be a new departure for us however much the framework of our lives remains the same. Preaching to the same people in the same Church? Yes, perhaps, but if we watch carefully we shall find that they are not the same people, and we are not the same preachers. If God is having His way with us, we are growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour; and the Church is becoming, by however small a degree, a little more like a true colony of heaven. This year may bring us a more obvious new departure, in that it may be the occasion of our settlement in another pastorate, or our call to our first Church on leaving College, or our retirement, or any one of a number of changes of circumstances. In such cases, our heavenly Father gives us the courage to face the new situation by enabling us to draw upon the past. Joshua was bidden to put the ark in front of the people when they passed over Jordan; and we too have our "ark", which is for us our accumulated storehouse of tested faith in God's Providence and Love. Along the new and unknown way we are to follow **that**, and then we shall be safe. Israel passed safely over the Jordan—a critical moment! But no worse, perhaps even simpler than when Israel escaped from Egypt, or had adventures in the wilderness. Let us be assured that 1968 will not bring us any experience too hard for us to surmount. Indeed, so far from that, it may well bring us to the very gateway of our Promised Land—as the crossing of Jordan did for Israel. So long as we follow our "Joshua" and our "ark", all must be well. HARRY PEWTRESS

## LET BAPTISTS BEWARE

In the "Baptist Quarterly" for January 1967, the Rev. Dr. E. A. Payne reviewed a book by an American writer, named N. H. Maring where references were made to the weakening of denominational consciousness across the Atlantic owing to divisions in Baptist Church circles, resulting from individual and subjective views of authority. Each man seems to have been his own Pope. The trends created such deep divisions that a united witness to basic evangelical truth was undermined. Dr. Payne asks us to learn from our brethren overseas and realise what could happen in our own island and in our Baptist Churches, and then adds "Let Baptists beware". We are bidden to take heed lest we make it more difficult for the present age to meet the challenge of the second half of the 20th century.

This appeal and this warning will be heeded by all Baptists, who realise how much is at stake. The present writer, reared from childhood in Baptist circles, who has learned to be at home with members of differing theological emphases, who rejoices in our Baptist history, in our earlier stalwarts and in those of today, and has grown to appreciate increasingly our particular witness, would view with extreme sadness any threat to our common testimony. It is clear, one feels, that disintegrating forces are at work; the devil still goes about seeking whom he may devour. An instance of this came to our personal notice. A member of one church moved with his family to another area, and, when joining the church in the new sphere, found that minister and members were critical of the Baptist Missionary Society; tares had been sown among the wheat. No one will imagine that the BMS is above criticism; indeed its General Committee would welcome considered opinion and would seek to learn from it, but to abandon support of an overseas ministry which since 1792 has had the blessing of God upon it is utterly unworthy of responsible members. Our workers have gone forth from the noblest heart of England, and from the best circles of our churches, and such have been born of the central faith and fervour of the Gospel. "The love of Christ constraineth us" is the only explanation of this wide and gracious activity, which includes preaching and pastoral ministry, nurturing churches, teaching in schools to liberate the mind, hospitals to heal the sick, all the flowering of a Christian experience rooted in the truth as it is in Jesus, and, be it emphasised, not a vague Christ, but One whose impact upon the soul, with resulting response, emerges from the highest levels of the New Testament Christology. How will this work be maintained unless Baptists remain united and devoted to its Christlike splendours? Interest, prayer and constant support will alone curb and defeat the devil's cynical attempts at disintegration. Sometimes we hear of churches voting themselves out of fellowship with the Baptist Union, an act that sensitive Baptists may be forgiven for thinking such a deed a Judas betrayal.

It will be evident that the issue is not as simple as one would like to think. Respect for truth and costly loyalty to conviction are the life blood of true believers, but is there not room in our fellowship for a varied theological outlook within the circle of an evangelical centred theology? Could we not say that Spurgeon's College and the Tabernacle proved this when they returned to the Union from which C. H. Spurgeon resigned?

We can gain valued insights from a review of our Baptist history as it bears upon our theme. The latter part of the 17th century and the first period of the 18th were periods of Confessions making. R. G. Torbet, in his "A History of the Baptists" has some helpful comments on the subject. On page 49 he outlines the uses of Baptist Confessions. He mentions how they serve as a basis for fellowship within local churches, associations or a General Assembly. When Torbet refers to their use in the discipline of churches and members he especially says confessions; in any act of discipline, must not be interpreted as identifying them with formal creeds; rather through confessions Baptists "have sought to protect the individual's freedom of religious belief and practice before God, while at the same time safeguarding the doctrinal purity of the churches". Confessions thus were seen truly as a guide and not as a chain. But what happened in our Confessions age? One is reminded of that man in the Old Testament, who was commissioned to guard a prisoner of war, but so busied himself with the "here and there" that he forgot his main task and had to confess that while he was so doing "the man had gone". Our Baptists in this period made little progress; energies were exhausted in creed making, and not until the Evangelical Revival broke the bands of barren controversy did Baptists step out into liberty and aggressive Gospel activity.

Our Baptist Churches today are the fruit of an age perilously near the letter that killeth, but which were saved by the new tide of life which made clear that it is the spirit that maketh alive.

What are the distinctive emphases of Baptists on which we can be one? Torbet mentions three, with a fourth of wider reference. The three are, Believers' Baptism, Regenerate church membership, and the supremacy of the Scriptures. What do these things mean today and have they any relevance for the best life of men and women? As in every generation we must be able to give a reason for the hope within us.

Believers' Baptism fastens the mind on the convinced and committed life. The ritual of the act symbolises a death to one manner of life and a rising to another. It sets forth one who has been confronted with Christ, the Christ of the New Testament, the One who lived, died and rose again, and in so doing makes the responsive soul a new creature, and is seen as Saviour and Lord. The ritual becomes a dramatic presentation of one who has become a new creature in Christ, and henceforth declares "the life I now live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself

for me" and into whose life the Light of Life has broken with all the brilliance of a tropical sunshine.

We are living in a world which is sceptical and hesitant about the nature of man. We are declaring that Christ in making us new creatures makes us real persons, of conscious individual worth, with an interpretation of our nature and destiny that sets us on our feet and sends us on our way rejoicing. Relevant? Well! the Gospel we preach is about a God who cares and the human heart today craves for an assurance of personal worth and of abiding significance. We are Custodians of this truth.

Torbet's second word is an emphasis upon regenerate membership. This is a testimony concerning the church, or the "congregation" as the New English Bible translates the work "ecclesia". We are asked to think of a fellowship called into being not by birth or tradition but by a common experience of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. It is the fellowship of believing men and women who are marked off from a complacent worldiness, however cultured, by a common newness of life, a sharing of new born joys with recognised responsibilities. It is not difficult to see the relevance of this today. No group can function fruitfully unless its members are united by a shared understanding of its life and purpose. The Baptist Church stands for a "regenerate" membership, not from any sense of superiority, but in the interests of intelligence and strength. Our Anglican friends are actually coming to a similar conclusion. In "The Times" of Tuesday, 14th February there was a comment on the Anglican Assembly of that week. It spoke of what was involved in membership in that church and of the appeal for a membership confined to the committed. The Assembly wanted a guide to the actual strength of the Church of England and saw that better in terms of two million pledged members than in ten million, once confirmed, but now no longer in active participation. There were those who feared any move that suggested something exclusive, but the ferment was there, and revealed a leaning towards our position. When we are concerned with regenerate membership, or whatever name we give to the claim, we are moved by the need for a definitely shared experience in the interests of strength and clarity. We are not made members of the Christian society by man, we are born into it by the Spirit's activity in the soul. The new life in Christ witnesses to the active participation of God in the destiny of His people and this creates an ever deepening sense of responsibility, realising that as He is so are we in the world. Ethics are thus seen as rooted in Christian faith. Our view of life and its purpose determines how we should behave.

Torbet's third word concerns the supremacy of Scripture. The Baptist Church stands under that verdict. The Bible is a Family Book, the living testimony of believing people, the classic revelation to the breaking in of God on human life, with liberating effect in the souls of men. The Book tells us what God's people saw in the

history of God's dealings with them. Whether in the Old Testament or in the New, the fulfilment, we are everywhere drinking of the Rock that followed, to use St. Paul's richly imaginative word, and that Rock, he says is Christ. What a stimulating paradox, a Rock that moves; this expresses the controlling conviction concerning an overall biblical confession. Baptists will ever rejoice in this supreme word and test its life and work by its judgment. Under this unequivocal testimony, there is surely room for a variety of views on the meaning of the inspiration of the Scripture. The writer's father was a strict Calvinist, that strong creed that made strong men. He would have been uneasy and suspicious of any interpretation of Scripture other than his own settled view that the Bible was the Word of God, and nothing less would do justice to it. The Higher Criticism of the beginning of the century disturbed him greatly, and from many points of view he was right, but we have learned to be gloriously at home in the Bible without any rigid doctrine of inspiration. One would have seen in the Fourth Gospel a presentation of the actual words of our Lord, whereas the other saw in that record the evidence of the richness of the Christian faith seen through the eyes of believing experience. A boy of fourteen could give you a true view of his father, but in old age that view would be taken up and enriched, and would be even more true; father and son went to the same Baptist Church to worship, and when they assembled around the organ at home in the evening they found a deep unity of faith as they sang "Jesus Thou joy of loving hearts" or "Love Divine, all loves excelling". Inspiration in theory was not a chain but a guide. Here is a hint that unity is not to be found in credal statement, however clear, but in the joyous participation in the liberating faith and fervour of the Gospel. "Let Baptists beware" might lead us to say "Let Baptists recognise where unity is born".

Torbet has another word on Baptists and the Free Church principle. We are, he says, best understood as being a part of the Free Church movement in Christianity. We are among those who know that it is in the best interests of the Church to be free from the dominance of secular influences in the social order. Although Disestablishment is not today a political issue, we stand where Thomas Helwys placed us, at great cost to himself, and taught us that vital religion is not safe under the control of the State, but only free when governed by the Spirit of God unhindered by political influence. Has this relevance? Have we not seen in recent history States using religion as an aid to State policy? Torbet says well what we want to say, namely, "They", the Free Churches, see the "True Church as a gathered fellowship of believers, bound together in a covenantal relationship to God, to witness fearlessly to their faith wherever they might be. Freedom then meant not licence in doctrine or personal living but freedom to participate in the discussions by which discipline was arrived at democratically."

Our theme, "Let Baptists Beware", becomes all the more

urgent when we consider the basic needs of men and our desire to speak the right word to meet the real need. What are the basic needs of men in the realm of the spirit?

While the majority of those who meet for worship on a Sunday will be unconscious of these basic needs, and would be unable to state them intelligibly, every leader of the Christian society must be able to do so. The average believer knows in his heart why he is there and rejoices in the experience expressed in the words, "I know whom I have believed", but he would leave theological clarity to those better equipped.

The basic needs which the Gospel seeks to meet may be gathered under three fears. When we speak of fears, we are not thinking of craven fears that swamp the mind, but the fears that brace the soul, and enable us the better to face life's issues with confidence and strength. St. Paul teaches this when he said, "work out your salvation in fear and trembling", no craven fear, but that of one who realises what is at stake, and wants to be braced for the contest, conscious at the same time that it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. This is a paradox, "your own salvation" and "it is God that worketh in you" but the two activities are united in the struggle.

The first fear is that of Death. Or to name it in the language of common speech, we might speak of it as a fear about our destiny. The serious person, serious without being sad, will ask "Whither are we going?" Amid life's alluring attractions, and there are many, this basic fear will not be uppermost; defence mechanism comes into operation, which may say "eat drink and be busy" and so avoid the issue, but even a Robert Burns may remind us,

But pleasures are like poppies spread  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;  
or like the snow falls in the river  
a moment white—then melts for ever

The fear of which we are thinking will, sooner or later, search the soul and demand an answer. A modern philosopher may tell us he is unconcerned, and at the end of a rich life he will be satisfied with extinction, but this verdict will leave the normal man cold. Even Cicero, in "Old Age" when challenged by a disciple, said that while he did not know if there was a future life, he found it better to assume so; he found it more comforting. The New Testament Scriptures boldly face this fear, and rest on what God has done in Christ, and see in the resurrection of Christ the guarantee, the "arrabon", to quote the Greek, of the perfected life, beyond historic time, and can be expressed in words sufficient for our imagination, "where I am you shall be also", or, if one wants to be carried on the flowing tide of a great expectation, we might quote St. Paul, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness . . ." a hope that the hymn says "revives our courage by the way", anticipating a glory yet to be revealed.

A second fear is about the meaning of life here and now. A Plymouth man when asked how the factory carried on without him, during his recent illness, replied with suppressed sorrow, that he was not essential to its prosperity, that it could get on well without him. But it was clear that he wanted to count: he wanted to be of individual worth. Every true man wants to know that his life means something to others. Dr. Farmer called this fear, "Barbed wire sickness". John Henry Newman is dealing with the same mood when he writes, "Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, his birth-place or his family connections, I should conclude that there was some mystery connected with his history, and that he was one, of whom, from one cause or another, his parents were ashamed" (Apologia). How completely the Gospel meets this clamant call. How many passages we might quote. "I have called you friends" said Jesus, no longer servants, but friends who can share the innermost purposes of the Master. The Fourth Gospel declares "As many as received him to them gave he the right to become the sons of God", and St. Paul joins the choral testimony of the New Testament, when he says, "wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, an heir of God through Christ". It is Christ that makes us persons, gives us the consciousness of individual worth, giving us a place in God's purposed end for us, that we should be His witness, living unto the praise of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Here is dignity for the souls of men. In preaching thus, in terms that men can understand, we are addressing ourselves to this deep need. For our effectiveness we must be united, for divided witness will weaken our testimony.

A third fear concerns the sense of guilt. It is more than a generation since a distinguished scientist told us that modern man was not bothering about his sins. That was a correct reading of the average man, and may, although not so confidently, be the mood of our day. But when the serious man asks, in New Testament language, "who is he that condemneth" he is aware of something approximating to guilt: this man will know that the world will condemn him, and is often right: he will know that his own conscience rebukes him, and when confronted with the perfection of Christ, he will finally say, "God be mercifully to me a sinner". The sense of guilt can paralyse a man, even prompt him to suicide. The scriptures are well aware of this basic need. We have only to recall one or two passages to see how this interpretation of experience runs throughout the Book of God. "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions" (Isaiah 43:25) "he will have compassion upon us . . . thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). The Scriptures are about real men who have no dust in their eyes, and declare with open honesty, "Against



Thee and Thee only, have I sinned." (Psa 51:4)

To conclude, there is no possible way of integrating life in confidence and hope apart from the Gospel, and the believing and witnessing society it creates. The New Testament is quite clear about its exclusive claim, "there is no other Name, given among men whereby we must be saved". Since this is so, nothing must be allowed to weaken our witness. Apart from a living witness in persons, we might almost say, Christ will be dead, and make no impact upon our generation. The finest humanism, and we are aware of such, will be mere diagnosis, which flatters the intellect while it disguises its inability to cure. The unbelieving world may neither believe our word or work. A man must stand inside the cathedral before he can appreciate the coloured glass and its story. The finest machinery in Bradford will make no cloth until the wool is placed in the loom. It is when we come to Christ with a sense of need that we are dealing with real experience and find the answers to our need. Unto this end let us weigh up the words with which he began, "Let Baptists beware". Scottish readers will appreciate a reference to their metrical psalms: have they not often stood to sing in unison,

"behold how good a thing it is,  
and how becoming well,  
together such as brethren are  
in unity to dwell"

A. J. WESTLAKE

## THE MINISTRY of WOMEN

When is a minister not a minister? When she is a deaconess! The confusion over this issue is always cropping up among us, whether it is the church member, who cannot understand why the deaconess who is in charge of his church and doing all that a minister does is not called a minister, or the Association who cannot decide whether to put a deaconess on the ministerial or lay side of the Committee list (usually ministerial), or the B.U. Council with the same question (lay this time), or the local fraternal which wonders whether the new deaconess in its area is to be invited, or the B.M.F. Committee that has to decide whether deaconesses are eligible for membership, or the scribe behind the B.U. Handbook who settles for "list of ministers"; "list of women ministers", (not that it says what the others are!), and "list of deaconesses" (most of whom are doing the work of a minister).

A young woman who hears the call to the full-time ministry has to choose between the ordained ministry and the Order of Deaconesses. She may well be told that the former is open to her and would be the logical step but that there will be grave difficulties of settlement, and that the latter will provide full opportunity for her to do the work of a minister but that nobody will be able to say what her position really is.

We have, in fact, developed two forms of ministry for women, more or less identical in function. Is this really providing the most suitable structure for the ministry of women in the denomination?

In March 1965 the B.U. Council set up a Committee to look at this question. In March 1966 this Committee presented to the B.U. Council its report "Women in the Service of the Denomination". The Council referred it back to the General Purposes, Ministerial Recognition and Deaconess Committees, and it should have done the rounds and got back to the Council for this November. The main point at issue is the relation between the first recommendation, i.e. that the Council re-affirms the denomination's acceptance of women ministers, and the second, i.e. that in view of the difficulties of settling women ministers it is hoped that women who wish to exercise a pastoral ministry will do so as deaconesses. It is certainly not easy to decide what should be the standing of deaconesses in our denomination or how their function and status relates to that of ministers, but there are indications that unless we think through the questions involved and make clearer how we intend to use the service of women, then we shall lose those who might otherwise respond to the call.

It is not that God no longer calls, nor that young women no longer hear His voice, but that unless we provide suitable channels of service we cannot mobilise the response of women to the call of God. It may be that all women who are called should be ministers, but if so let us say so, and let the local churches act so. ("I'm all for women in the ministry, but of course we couldn't have one here!"). Or maybe we should discourage women from serving full-time within organised Christianity in this country, and should redirect them to welfare work through the State. Or (and as usual in such reasoning, the climax represents my own views!) maybe we should develop the deaconess strand of ministry, not making them mini-ministers, but providing an alternative channel of ministry, with its own emphases and opportunities.

When asking ourselves where deaconesses ought to fit into our pattern of ministry today, we look first at the Biblical principles. In the New Testament Christ Himself is called "diakonos" and His whole ministry can be understood as "diakonia" for God and men. Christ's "diakonia" must be reflected in the life of the Church, and so the Church is also "diakonos" and its task can be understood as "diakonia". But the Church's "diakonia" can never be considered apart from worship and proclamation. The separation of the two empties both of meaning. On the one hand, to offer worship and preach the Gospel without offering the hand of service to the brother in need is to deny part of the message we proclaim. On the other hand, to give ourselves in service without relating this to worship and evangelism empties that service of its motive and meaning. The whole Church is called to "diakonia", firmly linked with worship and proclamation. To help the Church to fulfil this God-given task, individuals are called to a diaconal

function within the Church. The Church throughout the ages has set apart men and women for this office. The offices of deacon and of deaconess have developed in different ways, and the Editor can find someone else to work out what happened to deacons! As with "deacon" the term "deaconess" has different meanings in different traditions. Romans 16: 1 speaks of Phoebe as "the diakonos". In the eastern part of the Church in the third and fourth centuries, deaconesses were consecrated by the bishop and counted among the clergy. They visited the poor, instructed women, and took the Eucharist to those who were ill. In the early Middle Ages the office of deaconess fell into disuse, although some elements of diaconal service survived in the monastic communities and in the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy.

The revival of deaconess work dates from the nineteenth century when Fliedner set out to renew the office of deaconess. He started a "Motherhouse" for deaconesses at Kaiserswerth, Düsseldorf. The aim was to provide a channel of service for single women in the Church. The Sisters belonged to a community, living together in a Motherhouse, and running their own hospitals, kindergartens and homes for various types of needy people. For practical reasons Fliedner dressed the deaconesses in what was at that time the normal dress of a married middle-class woman—a long black dress and a white lace cap. Kaiserswerth has become the centre of a large organisation numbering thousands of deaconesses, and many Deaconess Houses. Besides the Deaconess Houses belonging to the Kaiserswerth Conference there are others belonging to Zehlendorf, a similar but less strict organisation. There are also many Free Church Deaconess Houses, including two Baptist ones—at Berlin and Hamburg. The idea of this type of deaconess work has spread throughout Europe so that on the Continent "deaconess" means a Christian woman in black habit and white bonnet who belongs to a community and does mainly nursing. She is under the direction of her Motherhouse, receives pocket money, and is cared for in sickness and old age. Such deaconesses clearly serve at the call of God, and in all their work the Christian motive is very much to the fore. The Motherhouses are recognised as an expression of the Church's "diakonia" yet they are not part of the Church's organisation and do not stand under the authority of either the local congregation or the ecclesiastical authorities.

Florence Nightingale visited Kaiserswerth and was deeply impressed by the work there. Back in England, however, although she encouraged Christian women to serve as nurses, she did not set up a deaconess Motherhouse. Here in Britain the renewal of the office of deaconess took a different form. In 1862 the Bishop of London ordained Elizabeth Ferrard as a deaconess to work in the church, and other ordinations followed. There are now about 300 church of England deaconesses employed in various kinds of church work, including parochial, educational and organising

work. The other denominations also saw the need for this kind of service, and around the turn of the century the office of deaconess was established by the Methodist Church, the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church of England, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Baptist Union. In our denomination deaconess work began in 1890 when, under the auspices of the London Baptist Association Forward Movement, F. B. Meyer established the Baptist Deaconesses' Home and Mission. Here a group of Sisters ministered to the people in the London slums, and from this Mission those who had been trained were sent out to serve in the London churches. The object of the Sisterhood was "to help brighten the lives of men, women and children, and most of all to win them to Jesus Christ". Gradually, over the years, the work of deaconesses has developed into that of leadership in the local churches. The form of "diakonia" needed is no longer a ministry of comfort in the poverty-stricken slums but rather leadership in the local church. This may take the form of pioneering on a new estate, caring for a group of village churches, sharing in a team ministry, building up a weak church, leading an established church or assisting a ministry in a larger church. This pattern, rather than the Continental one, has been followed by other English-speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A. and Canada. Thus the British type of deaconess is not primarily a member of a community but holds an office in the church. Such full-time church workers are, in fact, more like the deaconesses of the early church than are the Continental type of deaconesses. The way the forms of service have developed are determined partly by the social setting in which the Church expresses its "diakonia". In a predominantly Roman Catholic area of Germany where there were many Sisters of Mercy, and in a time when it was not fitting for unmarried women to work on their own, there developed the Motherhouse system with its deaconesses who emphasised the service aspect of the diaconal function. In a Welfare State, where Christians can serve as nurses and social workers in organisations run by the State, and where the need is for workers in the local churches, the function of deaconesses emphasises rather the worship and proclamation aspect of the diaconal function.

Whatever form the ministry of deaconesses takes in different situations, the church is currently asking itself questions about this service. The World Council of Churches has been studying questions of deaconess service and has produced a booklet "The Deaconess: A Service of Women in the World Today". It has also shared in the appointment of a liaison officer to study the diaconal ministry of the church, and in particular the ministry of deaconesses. The younger churches are asking "How can the Church here best use trained women in the service of the Church?" Should it be whichever type of deaconess work happens to be established in the country from which they have received missionaries? What pattern of service for women will best mobilise

the resources of women-power that are available, and to what ministry can it set them in its church structure? For instance, the Korea Lutheran Mission is asking groups from other countries and traditions to think with them about what form a diaconate (presumably men and women) should take in that Church. Furthermore, the Motherhouse type of deaconess organisation is asking how it can be more closely linked with the church, whether life-long commitment to a community should still be necessary, and whether the patriarchal system whereby the direction of Deaconess Houses is in the hands of men should be replaced by partnership between men and women.

Where a deaconess is a church worker the questions revolve round the function and status of deaconesses vis à vis other church workers such as ministers. The Anglican report "Women and Holy Orders" notes the unsatisfactory position in which the Church of England Order of Deaconesses is placed and the confusion about whether or not a deaconess is in Holy Orders. The Methodist Church has deaconesses, many of whom are doing the work of ministers, and their Conference has gone on record as favouring women in the ministry, but what pattern of women's ministry will emerge from union with the Church of England which does not allow its deaconesses the same freedom and has not so far allowed women priests? The Church of Scotland has had petitions from two of its deaconesses for ordination to the ministry, and the last General Assembly of the Church of Scotland voted in favour of asking the Presbyteries to consider the ordination of women to the ministry. The Presbyterian Church of England has been sorting out whether or not deaconesses are elders "ex officio" or only if so appointed.

In all this, what pattern of ministry have we to offer which will enable us to use the service of trained women in the church? For women who feel called to be ministers the way is open for them to apply and to receive training on the same terms as men. When it comes to settlement the way is not so open, but this cannot be altered by saying that it should be so. Little by little, (albeit too slowly for the liking of some of us), the prejudice will be overcome and women will, in practice as well as theory, have equal opportunities to respond to the call of God to be ministers. Meanwhile, women who will accept the uncertainty of the standing of a deaconess can frequently do the work of a minister in addition to that of the auxiliary ministry more usually associated with deaconess work. This is useful as a way of getting round the hesitancy of the churches to call women ministers, and some of us have been grateful for the wide opportunities offered deaconesses. Since so many deaconesses are virtually ministers, changes have recently been made in the training to prepare them for this work. But the denominations can hardly wish to go on indefinitely with this illogical policy of having two forms of ministry for women, one called "ministers" and the other affording the better oppor-

tunity to do the work of ministers.

At the same time, we are giving the work of ministers to many deaconesses who neither intended to preach every Sunday and be in charge of churches nor were trained for that work, but who expected to do mainly visiting and similar pastoral work, and children's and young people's work. There is surely need for a development of this kind of ministry among our churches. Instead of reducing this element in deaconess work we could do with increasing it, so that deaconesses offered to the Church a ministry alongside that of ministers but distinguishable from it. As ministers exist to enable the whole Church to fulfil its ministry, so deaconesses should be opening up the "diakonia" of the whole Church. How this works out in detail is by no means clear to us yet. It needs more thought and discussion in order to bring something positive and creative out of the present situation. This is not just a deaconess' question. Neither is it simply a women's question. The present confusion is one which requires the whole Church, men and women in partnership, to seek together to discern God's pattern for the service of women in the denomination.

MARGARET JARMAN

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE NINETEEN SEVENTIES

In English schools the school-leaving age is due to be raised to sixteen in 1970, and already there is a great debate as to how the extra year can best be used to benefit those pupils who are not likely to be taking academic-type public examinations. The question has come to the front in the thinking and research being given to it by the Schools Council—the body established by the Government to advise (though not to compel) schools on matters of curriculum. An interesting interim report has recently been published—"Society and the young school leaver"—(Schools Council, 1967) in which Religious Education, History, Geography and English are fused into practical areas of work as a Humanities programme. In a number of different ways local interests and local studies are used to bring specific areas of knowledge to the attention of the pupils, and in most of the examples it is assumed that the work will be carried out by pupils that are below average in academic ability. For such boys and girls it cannot be assumed that there is any pleasure in the study of literature, or of the Bible; they are not interested in the facts of history, unless they can be persuaded to see that what history tells us of man and his condition, and how man aspired in the past, is part of our understanding of man today. Learning for them is in the first place an evaluation of their experience, and learning takes place only when the threshold of their experience is extended and explored.

Those who see broad perspectives in education recognise that such an approach is an extension of more recent progressive practice in primary schools, where children under the age of eleven are more and more taught in this way in English schools. Indeed, at almost every level, profound changes are taking place in our understanding of the educational process; it is not only that in Religious Education a revolution is to be seen; parents are growing accustomed to "Nuffield Science", to "Primary School Science" to "New Maths" and to much else. Some are inclined to dismiss this as a mere fashion, but teachers are well aware that the newer methods are based on careful studies of the mental development of children throughout school life. When teaching is carefully matched to the growing mental powers of those taught, then is learning most efficient. Much of the present discussion about religious education has arisen because the same type of research has been made into the ways in which religious thinking develops from infancy to maturity.

Our fundamental knowledge of the development of children's powers of thought has been considerably extended by the astonishingly thorough researches carried out for over thirty years by Jean Piaget and his associates in Geneva. More than 24 fullsome books and scores of articles in the journals have come from his pen, so that the broad areas of development which he has charted are based upon investigations carried out with a very great number of children. Early in his career Piaget studied the development of moral ideas (Piaget, 1932); quite recently a very sophisticated study of the development of religious ideas has been made by one of his disciples (Goldman, 1964). Because the surprise at Goldman's findings by those not acquainted with Piaget's work is understandable, one or two illustrations from Piaget ought first to be given.

In his study of children's moral development, many children were asked questions about a story of two boys. One boy, helping his mother entertain friends, was carrying a tray full of cups, when the tray was knocked from his hands, so that all the cups were broken. (The story, told fully, makes it clear that the boy was quite blameless.) The second boy, left alone in the house knocked a single cup from a shelf and broke it, when climbing to take some jam which had been forbidden him. It was found that all younger children regarded the first boy as committing the greater offence, simply because more cups were broken. Not until the age of eight did children begin to see that it was the second boy who was really guilty. The younger children formed their judgements on entirely superficial and quite erroneous criteria, in this case the number of cups broken. Morality at this early stage appears as the unquestioning recognition of the authority of adults. A similar result came from a series of experiments in number (Piaget, 1952). Young children who could count were shown, and allowed to count, two similar displays of nine counters each, both of which were spread

out in a straight line, extending over the same distance. When asked, the children were certain that each array had the same number of counters. But when the array was altered, so that one occupied a much greater length than the other, the children, up to the age of seven, would almost always insist that although there were nine counters in each, there were more in the longer array. "Nine" had not yet gained any significance to them; even though they could count, they did not understand what counting was about. At this stage the thought of the young child is what Piaget calls "intuitive". It is the fairy story stage, the stage of magic and fantasy, and illogical in its reasoning. The fantasy element is very apparent in another series of studies about natural phenomena. (Piaget, 1929) Quite typical are the children who when asked what made the clouds move reply "It's the people" and explain "When they see the people moving about they follow them." The questioner probes "What happens when the people go to bed, do the clouds move then" "Yes". "What makes them move then, at night?" "Oh, it's the cats and dogs".

Goldman has shown that the same type of thinking is found in the religious ideas of young children. God is thought of in crudely anthropomorphic terms; he has a funny face—that is a horrid face, which is fearful and his voice is rough. His actions are unpredictable, and his powers like those of a magician; God can do anything—including being unfair if he wants to. Naughty people are not loved by God, but are heavily punished. God and Jesus are much confused; Jesus is an angelic boy, perfect as a man because all grown-ups are perfect, a mixture of a simple holy man and a magician. The prayers of young children are largely egocentric (as is most of their thought); even when parents are the object of prayer it is "that they may be good to their little boy". If you are naughty your prayers cannot be answered. Such thinking lasts until about the age of eight.

The crudity and confusion of such ideas may be concealed by the ease with which children use words which they hear adults use, and many children acquire a religious vocabulary which has no conceptual substance. In a study paper prepared for the Southern Baptist Convention (Goldman and Torrance, 1964), the authors make it clear that at this stage learning must be by influence rather than by verbal instruction, and the task of the educator is to "feed the child's crude deity concepts and his physical anthropomorphisms in such a way that he refines his crudities of religious thinking as far as his limits of experience and ability allow". Much is learned from the attitude of the teacher. The ideas which are fundamental to Biblical religion are ideas of relationships; these need to be stimulated and explored, often even in play and simple drama, so that children grow in confident security of a God who loves and cares, who has provided for them in this earthly home, and who is always with them. Children learn about Christianity by living; they understand kindness, gentleness, and generosity, not by verbal



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Edward Lucie-Smith puts forward the suggestions that for modern painters "the result of the abandonment of the human scale seems to have been the fragmentation into a multiplicity of styles"; that sculpture "stretches out to embrace larger and larger spatial concepts". He draws the conclusion I have quoted at the head of this letter.

I know very little of art but I remember how one day in the National Gallery in London I listened on the fringe of a lecture tour to an expert's description of an old master. I was enthralled as his finger delicately traced the lines of shade and colour disclosing at least to one of his hearers the plan of development in the mind of the artist. The "syntax and grammar" were clearly to be seen.

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teaching about these qualities, but as opportunities are provided for them at their own level to be kind, gentle, and generous. Just as in the writing of the Bible experience preceded theological definition, so with children. At this young age children need to be helped to explore some of the simple wonders of the world of nature in the context of worship if they are to learn that God is the creator of the world and that they may feel at home within it.

In schools, where-ever a teacher has this concern, religious education is always proceeding, and from time to time becomes quite specific; a group of children gather in wonder around the nature table, and the sensitive teacher translates their wonder into simple prayer and praise. In church-centred work it is being more and more realised that only truths which children can experience are truths which are meaningful for them, and that the teachers' task is to explore with children the content of their experience, even to helping create it for them.

The junior years witness considerable development of the mental powers of children, but they are not yet able to think in adult forms. Fantasy type thinking gives place to simple logical thought—but it is always concrete and pictorial, and is not yet abstract or generalised. For example in school juniors still need plenty of experience in number, and learn most quickly when they actually count, weigh, and measure, rather than learn tables of mensuration and their formal application only as paper exercises. The teacher provides a list of every-day classroom objects, and each child has first to guess its size or weight then to measure it carefully, and then to find out his error. So yards, feet and inches become meaningful. Taught in this way progress can be rapid; at ten children can discover enough trigonometry to measure the height of a tall building by measuring the length of the shadow it casts, and comparing this with the length of shadow of an object of known height. Discovering for themselves is of the greatest importance; what one is told can quickly be forgotten, and frequently may not even be understood, but what is discovered is understood and remembered. The task of the teacher is to provide a situation in which children discover for themselves. In many junior schools this is achieved by developing broad areas of inquiry which will naturally include many fields of knowledge. In one school a class of ten year old children spent a term working on the topic "Fish". Interest had begun with the fact that many accompanied their fathers, who were anglers, on their weekend angling expeditions. With the aid of the school library many facts about the fish their fathers caught (and those that got away) were discovered. The life-cycle of the Salmon led to discovery of the differences between freshwater fish and salt-water fish. This led into an important aspect of number, the difference in density of fresh and salt water, which in turn raised questions about buoyancy, and led on to some understanding of Archimedes principle. The fishing industry was studied, and some useful social geography learned; comparisons between

European, African and Asian needs and methods led into other important areas of knowledge. The fishermen of Galilee were brought early into the topic, and stories of events on the Galilean shore were used. These led to the children asking what "Fishers of Men" meant. They decided it referred to the mission of the church, and went on to look at the lives of some great missionaries, and also to find out for themselves what the church near the school was doing today.

This use of themes is normal in many English schools, and the extension of them to include a content of religious knowledge is rapidly growing. Some are critical of it in so far as there is less working through a syllabus, and complain that what is learned may be disconnected and unsystematised. Exponents of the method reply that at this stage few children are really capable of learning systematically, and that of what is formally taught, much is forgotten, so that the final result is that far less is known. Only in adolescence is religious material—or historical and geographical material, systematised.

Such extensive pieces of work are usually limited to school use, but in church-centred work with juniors the same educational principles must be at work. Biblical truth cannot be learned as something impersonal; it must be appreciated out of the interest and experience of the junior himself. He needs to know a great deal about the background of the Bible if he is to understand that its people were real people, that Jesus was truly man, and that the message of the Bible is not locked in the past and isolated from today's world. Juniors are active and creative, and every junior department needs paper, scissors, pencils, colour, glue and a range of materials for creative activities. Dramatisation and some simple discussion have a place. Because juniors are highly imaginative, many provocative situations can be best understood by them when simulated by drama; a group of children acting the story of the Good Samaritan discovered as never before what the victim felt like when for the second time he was deserted in his desperate need.

By the age of nine children can greatly benefit from such an approach, and until thirteen they are not usually ready for any other. There are still many limits to their powers of thought. D. Ainsworth (1961) in a study of children's understanding of some parables showed that before the tenth year many children were quite unable to understand the analogy which is at the heart of every parable, but could only understand the stories in a very literal way. The Sower was seen as a story similar to another in which a farmer sowing seed in the same conditions had a good crop on every type of soil—they were both stories about farmers. It was nothing like a story about the differing reactions of children to simple moral instruction, which was disregarded, forgotten, or heeded by different groups of children. The Good Samaritan meant only "If you see somebody hurt on the road, you must help him"; not until age ten can the universal scope of the parable be seen

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because the junior is then beginning to be able to make generalisations. Nor should it be forgotten that few junior children have any sense of history, and are unable to distinguish between the recent past and the distant past. (Jahoda, 1963) In a class of eleven year old children which had been learning about the Roman invasion of Britain, a rather dull boy was quite sure this happened in 1939, a date he had learned from his father as a black day in history.

There is still a good deal of primitive thought in their natural religious ideas, and magical concepts still lurk. The miracle stories of the gospels are seen as depicting Jesus as a wonder-worker—the very image he was at pains to avoid. Indeed, even the simple gospel story of Jesus presents many problems in understanding; research has shown that even at twelve, less able pupils cannot really understand it (Hebron, 1957). Formal Old Testament teaching gives rise to many serious and unintended misconceptions. In a day when the theological understanding of the Bible is seen to be of greater importance than a historical study, both theological and educational considerations alike urge that our use of the Bible should be thematic. The great themes of the Bible have to do with the relationships between men and God; a good deal of this can be taught as children explore these relationships in their own experience. People who work for others—the doctor, the policeman, the social worker, raise the question of man's responsibility to his neighbour and to God; when this is understood then can some simple Biblical material be used meaningfully to reinforce the knowledge. Young juniors have a simple trust in parents, teachers, traffic wardens, and many others they meet. Their own experience of this trust can be used to introduce stories of people who have trusted God and found him faithful and lead them to thanksgiving and worship. There is no limit to such exploration of relationships. Home, friends, the seasons, food and hunger, water and many such themes can be used to evoke and explore experiences which gives a conceptual content to the language of the Bible, and prepare the children for later developments. The most recently revised syllabus for school use (West Riding, 1966) is considerably influenced by these ideas, as is the syllabus for use in the churches soon to be published by the British Lessons Council. So too are the new Roman Catholic series "Over to you" (Konstant, 1966). All bear testimony to the fundamental suggestions by Goldman (1966).

This preparation is of importance even with those children who are nurtured in Christian homes, whose spiritual development is therefore likely to be most rapid. (It is widely recognised that the stimulus of a good cultural environment hastens the process of mental development in any area of understanding; this is equally true of religious understanding in a religious environment (Hyde, 1965).) While the ability to engage in abstract thought rather than concrete thinking generally emerges about the age of eleven, in religious thinking, which is particularly difficult, the transition comes later, often not until the age of thirteen or four-

teen. Goldman (1964) found that at fourteen many children still regarded the Bible in a crudely literal manner, superstitiously and childishly.

When adolescence is reached, there is not only the capacity for greater spiritual insight, but with more developed critical powers there is often the beginning of a hostile attitude. A study of the relationships between religious learning and religious attitudes (Hyde, 1965) showed that as this hostility increases, as it does with many adolescents, it inhibits conceptual growth. In secondary schools the results have been thoroughly studied and well chronicled. Direct teaching about the Bible is for many pupils most unwelcome, and often regarded as dull, boring and irrelevant (Loukes, 1961). A group of teachers who were enthusiastic enough about the subject to go to a good deal of trouble to find out how much pupils had learned about the Bible during their school career found that there was widespread ignorance of what would appear to be elementary knowledge among fifteen year old pupils (Sheffield Institute 1961). The same tests were later repeated in what were reported to be "good" secondary schools, where religious education was well taught, but with remarkably similar results. (Loukes, 1965). Loukes stringently commented "Let them know the Bible, it was said. We tried, with a wealth of ingenuity and concern, to let them know it. And at the end, they barely know the first thing about it."

Yet the hostility is to traditional teaching about the Bible, and to traditional institutions of religion; the spiritual hunger remains. Loukes (1961) was able to show that pupils are only too eager to discuss problems which are at heart ethical and religious, and the keen interest in moral problems to be found in adolescence was at an earlier date noted by Hilliard (1959). The same interests were found by Wright (1962) and Daines (1962) who both reported a concern for religious truth among students looking back to their school days. The roots of the hostility are complex. No doubt many young people are affected by the general attitude of apathy or hostility to religious institutions which is widespread. But two factors which help to cause it are within the control of teachers. One is the view that religious teaching is boring, irrelevant to life, and very childish. The other is that instruction has been given as information to be received. Not only does teaching need to be lively and stimulating to the pupil, it needs to ask questions rather than answer them. Adolescents have a deep need to discuss, and to explore for themselves. Recent studies of Sixth-form religious attitudes (Cox, 1967) show the different reactions to formal instruction, which is resented, and lively discussion, in which no point of view is barred. At every age religious learning comes from the interpretation of ordinary experience: the Bible has an essential place in this process, but its use is most effective at the conclusion of the examination, and least effective as the starting point (Hubery, 1965).

There can be little doubt that a much less formal approach to the subject will soon be general in schools, and with it, a more open approach. Other religions and philosophies than the Christian will be touched upon, and even though the teacher must always be prepared to indicate his own position when asked, his role will be seen to be not that of a disguised evangelist, but of a socratic questioner, trying to make his pupils think for themselves, and reach their own conclusions, whether they are acceptable to Christians or not. Much could be said in defence of this point of view; here it must be noted that it puts upon the churches a greater responsibility to make their own beliefs and attitudes plain. But they need to do this in ways that are acceptable to the young. Authoritarian teaching will always make an appeal to certain types of insecure personalities, but even on pragmatic grounds it would seem today to be unsuccessful and doomed to be abandoned. Nor can it be pretended that the more able of our young people have not been affected by some elements at least of the more recent categories of theology, especially of the "Honest to God" type, and often respond positively to it. Once more, it must be insisted, the teacher's task is to provoke thought; it is not to give the answers to the sums, but to show them how to do them for themselves.

There is a dual problem—on one hand, how to stimulate an interest that may grow into knowledge and commitment among those on the circumference of our church life, and on the other hand, how to help the interested towards an understanding of Christian faith that is compatible with contemporary thought-forms. Again the appeal needs to be to the immediate interests and experience of the members of the groups. The teaching method must be that of exploration and discovery. The leader of a group must learn to play a very permissive role; he is not present as an instructor, but only as a chairman, seeing that all points of view represented are fairly expressed. By his attitude of friendliness he has to win the trust of the group, and their respect. From time to time, his knowledge will be sought, but even then he has to resist the temptation to tell them all he knows, which they will as quickly forget, and instead to help them find out the answers for themselves. Few of them come to us with symptoms of guilt and few are brought to Christian commitment by emotionally charged conversion. Most grow in a faith of uncertain personal origin, needing a nurture which requires constant re-examination, reassessing experience, renewing commitments and faith. In this way religious belief comes to take a central place in the adolescent's search for meaning; salvation is not only salvation from inadequacies, failures and sin, but is salvation for a fuller life in which energies and potentialities are used to their maximum in the demanding and adventurous service of God and man.

K. E. HYDE

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## BAPTISTS AND UNITY

### I

At the close of *A History of the English Baptists* by Dr A. C. Underwood there occur these words, "(Baptists) do not imagine that they have reached finality, but they are ready 'as the Lord's free people . . . to walk in all His ways, made known or to be made known to them.'" It is in the spirit of that attitude of true Christian pilgrimage that the new General Secretary, Dr Russell, has recently listed certain major issues which are facing Baptists in Britain and which will need "sound judgement, mutual trust, prayerful concern and resolute action." One of those issues is the attitude of Baptist Churches, and therefore of Baptist ministers, to the ecumenical movement.

The report which is the subject of this review is one which will help its readers to form at least a clear impression of the Pilgrim's Way that lies before the Union at this time: and of all the sentences in the report which merit repeated attention perhaps the most significant is the question posed on page 48. It reads "Do any of us really believe that it is *not* the Spirit of Christ who is drawing churches out of isolation



into discussion and activity together?" Upon our answer to that question depends the amount of determination we shall bring to undertaking the tasks which are outlined so clearly in the "Conclusion".

But let us begin at the beginning. For those who have never turned the pages of their Underwood, Payne or Himbury, or even the *Pocket History of the Baptists* by R. W. Thomson (1/-) the Report is invaluable if only for its first two chapters. The intricacy and diversity of the Baptist 'family' and the resultant diplomacy which has to be exercised by its leaders and representatives, especially in the worldwide ecumenical field, is an aspect of the British religious scene which other Christians, and not only those of the rank and file, need to be fully aware. Because of this varied Baptist composition the part played in our national church life by such figures as Dr Ernest Payne, Dr Beasley Murray, Stephen Winward, Howard Williams and Neville Clark, is all the more remarkable in that they have been able to present to us who are not Baptists the appearance of men with a common heritage behind them and not, as we are here shown, a kaleidoscope of varied Church associations. If, of course, it is contended that such men are not in themselves fully representative of the Baptist position it can only be repeated that this is the impression that is often conveyed and it will need the ecumenical engagement of others of different backgrounds in the Baptist tradition to show their fellow-Christians that what this report states as legally the case is also true in fact.

What is also valuable is the picture which is given of the situation of Baptists in other areas of the globe . . . the Unions of Baptist churches in Asia, Africa and the West Indies and the fact that in areas such as the Congo and Assam the churchmanship is more presbyterian than the congregational pattern familiar in this country. The closer connection in Germany or the USSR with Plymouth Brethren or the Pentecostals is a further and significant factor in the ecumenical scene especially as some Pentecostals are now in affiliation with the World Council of Churches and the Orthodox Churches are so involved in the Council's activities. Here is a field in which Baptist participation could be all the more important.

Yet the main interest of the Report for this reviewer, and, I suspect, for many of its other readers lies not in the description of world affiliations and home associations, real and unavoidable as these are. It is important and interesting to note, on page 17, that "The inaugural meeting of the British Council of Churches was held in 1942 in the Baptist Church House", and that the then Secretary of the Baptist Union (The Rev. M. E. Aubrey) was one of those charged with the responsible task of "drafting a scheme for a World Council of Churches" and the eventual formation of Christian Aid as the agency it is today. It is also worth remarking on the hitherto abortive attempts of Baptists to arrive at a stage of union with the Churches (or Disciples) of Christ, despite the apparent similarity of their main tenets—believer's baptism and congregational policy, especially as the possibility of re-opening the conversation in this direction is welcomed in the final Conclusion (page 51).

Nonetheless, it is the "Old and New Points of Difficulty" and the "Biblical and Theological Principles concerning the Unity of the Church" which are the chapters most meriting attention—at any rate for the non-Baptist. For the truth is that when the report states that "The variety of doctrine and practice within the Baptist denomination has also been made clear" there arises a real sense of fellow feeling amongst other Christians. The issues outlined in Chapter III are not peculiar to Baptists—the desire to avoid an unreal uniformity and rightly to relate diversity to Unity; the desire amongst some Baptists to want to draw more rigid lines around their local church fellowship; the awareness that the New Testament contains hints of more than one type of Church policy; the fact that nowhere is there clearly recorded the intention of our One Lord that one structure was alone valid, and so on. These are insights which are becoming more and more the common property of all informed Christians across the denominational frontiers and there are many who would want to underline the words on page 22 (referring especially to I Corinthians, chapters 1-3), "The Apostle's correspondence . . . places repeated emphasis on the dangers of division into parties or sections on grounds of theological difference or personal attachment." As J. H. Bernard says in the passage quoted from his 'Expositors Greek Testament', "To the Apostle separation from 'heathendom' was imperative, but separation from the 'Christian Church' was a schism and sin." As a personal view I would only echo the further comment that "(Baptists) should bear in mind that other Christian traditions and denominations are engaged in similar heart-searching on these . . . issues."

As I reflected on the sections that followed I could not but recognise how true this was. Many Christians would want to say, as on page 23, that "the subject of baptism is more important than the mode" and that "the rite is by its very nature and character unrepeatable". Starting from these two premises I would hope very much that Baptist ministers will certainly ask themselves whether maintenance of 'believer's baptism' can be a continuing "ground of separation from other Christian traditions". They will find in other churches a growing body of opinion at all levels which takes into serious account the difficulties into which indiscriminate infant baptism has led us and which shares "very general acceptance of the basic Baptism claim". We need the Baptist voice more and more in our ecumenical circle to spell out the words, which I noticed round a 13th century Anglican font the other day, "He that *believeth* and is baptised shall be saved." (Italics mine).

The matters of 'The autonomy of the local company of believers' 'The Lord's Supper', 'Episcopacy' and 'the use of Creeds as a test of membership' all contain insights which are needed in the ecumenical pilgrimage. They all point significantly to the question which underlies all our other teaching and confession, viz the nature of the Church itself and it is in this sphere of debate that the past and the present of Baptist experience needs most urgently to be shared. Was the autonomy of local congregations emphasised overmuch in the 19th century? Is not necessity increasingly demanding that other Christians "charge any of

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(the Church's) officers or members to preside over the Supper"? There are many Anglicans who would claim for episcopacy in its historical pattern only the right to regard it as a form of proven pastoral worth and not to assert that it is essential. It is also true that in the present conversations between Methodists and Anglicans there has been no little heart-searching on both sides about the morality of 'ambiguous' statements—and yet, as this Report rightly concludes (page 32)—this only "emphasises the need of close and sincere discussion".

Space does not permit the kind of treatment for Chapter V (The Unity of the Church) which such a closely reasoned chapter well deserves. It is worthy of prolonged study and my hope would be that after this Report has been digested by local Baptist congregations they will share what they have themselves learned with the Christians in their own neighbourhood. This would be to implement in at least one way the Lund principle (stated at the top of page 46) which is now being seriously considered by all the member churches of the B.C.C. I can only rejoice that my own personal conviction is so admirably voiced in this chapter, as follows. "It is likely that many of the doubts of Baptists concerning the ecumenical movement will diminish if the present speeding-up of local activity together in the mission of the Church continues, showing that talk by theologians on union schemes is being matched by action to make unity visible." Perhaps I would alter only one word there—I would change the word 'matched' by the word 'challenged'.

So the report is commended to the community of British Baptists for careful and prayerful consideration. Whether or not people are affected by that call to action by 1980 which was issued by the Conference at Nottingham to the resolutions of which this Report refers, and in the shaping of which this reviewer had a privileged part, the fact remains that we are all called to patient and urgent exploration as fellow-pilgrims on the way to the oneness which we claim as those who know Jesus Christ to be Lord and Saviour. "If the unity of the Church is of moment to Him, ought it not to be of concern to us?"

NEVILLE CRYER

## II

This remarkable document is particularly strong in the chapter on "Biblical and theological principles concerning the unity of the Church", and I am tremendously grateful for it. The call to unity could scarcely be more trenchantly expressed.

"The entire process of this once-for-all redemption of the Saviour was directed to the creation of the people of the Kingdom. To introduce . . . the thought of a multiplicity of divided Churches is as out of place as the idea of a plurality of kingdoms of God, or a profusion of Saviours, or a number of different Gospels". (p. 40)

The chapter demonstrates from the New Testament that the unity of the Church is in its one Lord, founded upon his redemption and expressed in the mission to which he summons his people. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are both sacraments of unity; the Word "gives

meaning to both", and by it the Church is called into being, summoned to confess the faith and to witness to the world.

"For the Church to engage in mission disunitedly . . . is to split the mission of God and to weaken the power of the Gospel".

"In the Bible the Holy Spirit appears as the One through whom God's Power goes into *action* in this world, alike in creation and redemption. So surely as the activity of the Spirit among God's people should inspire holy actions in the world, so the unity he creates should be expressed in a fellowship that is visible to all". (*ibid.*)

Many of the insights in this chapter reflect the urgent demands which the Nottingham Faith and Order Conference (whose work was also steeped in the study of the Bible) made upon the separated denominations. Others will be new—especially perhaps for Baptists and Congregationalists. For example:

"Paul sets baptism in the context, not only of the response of faith, but also of Unity" (p. 46).

To enquire into the implications of this dictum would dig below the usual battlefield of paedobaptism versus believers' baptism, just as the delineating of early credal statements as "triumphal confessions of faith" rather than "tests for exclusion" opens up new vistas for the use of "creeds" in the Church's worship and mission. While recognising that for Baptists (as for Congregationalists) the focus of Christian life is in the local Church, this chapter says that

"to have insufficient regard for the wider fellowship is to be deficient in churchmanship",

and dares to call the *status quo* of the denominational situation "appalling".

No doubt it is the influence of this chapter which leads to the first "Conclusion" of the Report,

"that Christian unity is of great importance, urgency and complexity; whilst there is an undeniable spiritual unity binding together all believers to our Lord Jesus Christ and to one another, this needs to be given visible expression in a clearer and more unmistakable manner than at present". (p. 49)

However, it has to be said that much of the rest of the Report is couched in a very different tone. If one begins at the beginning, one has to wait quite a long time for the challenging assertions which I have quoted. A source-critic would be justified in suspecting several hands behind the Report. The earlier chapters are inward looking, concerned with Baptist history and traditions. Members of other traditions may be heartened to learn that John Bunyan claimed that differences of judgment about water baptism should be no bar to communion, that in the Congo and Assam Baptist churchmanship is presbyterian, and that in 1918 Dr J. H. Shakespeare was prepared to accept conditional episcopal ordination. But these instances cannot destroy the impression that Baptist teaching upon church order and the sacraments has not moved and is not likely to move. These chapters strike an outsider as being fearful and hesitating. Unity is a "problem", episcopacy is a "danger", Baptist response to the Vatican Council must be "cautious".

There is little sign that the authors of this part of the Report have shared in the thoughts and prayers of members of other parts of the Church; they have not discovered, for example, that in South India ex-Congregationalists have found great blessing in the presence of a "Father-in-God" in a diocese, or that many Roman Catholics are exhilarated by the winds of freedom in the Gospel which are blowing through their denomination, and long to share their enthusiasm with others. Even in the chapter on Biblical and theological principles, the strong plea for unity leading to "the organisational union of church structures" (p. 45) is toned down immediately.

I for one would not want to claim that "organisational union" is the be-all and end-all. More important by far is the work of the Spirit in creating one fellowship. But that fellowship is to be "embodied in church order", and that means that at some point we cannot avoid the hard labour of constitution-making. From experience I might say that it is only at that point that we really get to grips with the Christian experience of our brethren of other denominations, and though it may disturb our ingrained traditions, it can produce real liberation of spirit. More than once this Report expresses its dissatisfaction with "some of the schemes of union proposed"; in this country, Baptists have not yet taken part in the negotiations for these schemes, which might have been more satisfactory if they had been prepared to be involved.

I have no doubt that if Baptists were asked whether a church should be guided by Scripture or Tradition, they would vote for the former. My reading of this Report suggests that the Scriptural case for pressing on in the quest for unity, leading in all probability to organisational union, is crystal clear; the brake is being applied in the name of Tradition, the hallowed Tradition peculiar to Baptists.

But I have every hope that, like the son in the parable, the Baptists, who now appear to be saying to the command "Go" are replying "I will not", will in fact obey; I pray that others of us who have hitherto appeared willing may be delivered from dragging our feet when the moment of decision comes.

J. E. NEWPORT