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## EDITORIAL

From this year's Assembly, and especially from the utterances of G. R. Beasley-Murray and D. S. Russell, comes the realisation that in the present condition of our denomination the responsibility which we ministers bear is both tremendous and critical.

Cherishing, as we do, our freedom in matters theological as well as in other things, we must surely be driven to a thorough re-appraisal of that freedom and its implications.

Nor would it be out of place to remind ourselves that church history is littered with examples of men who wrought havoc among the children of God **and thought that they were doing Him a service.**

This is not a time for the passing of judgments upon one another; rather is it a time for a man to "examine himself" most soberly. And though the Apostle's exhortation to do so was made in the immediate context of the approach to the Lord's Table it would seem reasonable to think that it holds good for the whole spectrum of Christian life and thought—not least for our own life and thought at this point in our denominational history.

The clue to our true destiny must lie in an even greater devotion to the Master, from which will inevitably spring a closer drawing together of His men. This sounds trite, of course; but the importance of a statement may lie not so much in how often it is made as in how often it is headed, and that is why, on this occasion, we are prepared to sound trite.

## EASTER 1969

Presidents can be tiresome people, with their bright and not so bright ideas, which they push out and expect everyone to acknowledge with becoming awe. Ministers already burdened with responsibilities can be forgiven if they experience a certain irritation at yet another "call" to include yet another programme in their timetable of church activities. In appealing for 1968-69 to become a year of evangelism, culminating with special effort at Easter 1969, I have to plead guilty in putting more on the full plate. On the other hand the Holy Spirit and witness for Christ can hardly be viewed as "bright ideas", and there's nothing original in linking them. It's simply a question of recognising their place in Christian proclamation, and of doing the best we can with the resources we have.

I'm told that in the early days of what Americans in the Deep South call "the war" (the only one in history deserving that name!), General McClellan's waiting tactics and indecision so irked Abraham Lincoln that he finally wrote to the general, "My dear McClellan, if you do not want to use the Army I should like to borrow it for a while". If McClellan's forces looked anything like the Baptist contingent of the Army of the Lord in Britain, I can understand his hesitation.

Yet it's all part of the glory of grace that the Lord so often accomplishes his purpose through the nobodies of this world (see 1-Cor. 1.26ff), and I think it's time we moved out of our hideouts and put our army into action.

In reality it was not an ambitious programme that was suggested at the 1968 Assembly of the Baptist Union in London, though I'm certain that any church which threw itself into it with enthusiasm could not fail to be blessed and to make an impact on men and women about it. Two basic requests were made: for study and action.

The **study** was channelled into consideration of the booklet "The Spirit and the Mission". This booklet contains eight brief studies, hardly more than three pages each, on renewal by the Holy Spirit and witnessing to the Gospel. There's hardly a Baptist church member incapable of reading them (it would be no mean task to get every Baptist in Britain reading a few syllables of Christian writing!). Practically every minister has a mid-week meeting of some kind; these studies could form a welcome change in the programme for the coming autumn and winter, and they could form the starting point of profitable discussions on vital subjects. In the early autumn a Year Book of Evangelism 1968-69 will also be issued; it contains a miscellany of excellent suggestions about the nature of evangelism, and it deserves wide circulation.

The **action** mentioned at the Assembly was particularly directed to Easter 1969, but in association rallies throughout the country I have been appealing to Baptists not to wait till then, but to get into action at once. Personal evangelism admittedly is not easy, but it has to be encouraged. And to make fuller use of Sunday services is an obvious way of members participating in co-operative effort at spreading the Gospel. Guest services have long been used in this way. I suggest that they be taken more seriously—that they be arranged with the benefit of the non-churchgoer solely in view, and that every member of the church be urged to bring people to them. The use of lay testimony in the meetings would greatly help their effectiveness.

The appeal to concentrate effort in Christian witness on Holy Week 1969 is not a gimmick to get churches to work together at a common time. It is a plea to recognise that Easter is the most strategic time in the year for talking about Christ to non-Christians. Britain is not an atheistic country. There's a lot of religion among British people which could give place to Christ if only we went for it. Moreover, in view of the associations of Easter, known to everybody, it is not at all strange that Christians should talk to others about the meaning of the crucifixion and what the resurrection of Christ is all about. That is to say, at Easter we can talk not simply about Christ in a vague way, but about Christ in the Gospel.

My convictions about this matter have been interestingly strengthened by a recent Gallup Poll inquiry on the religious significance of Easter, reported on in the Sunday Telegraph

and Daily Telegraph at Easter 1968. The inquiry showed that while Christmas is primarily regarded by the non-churchgoing public as a secular holiday, Easter is widely recognised as possessing a religious significance. One in four people questioned stated their intention of going to Church on Easter Sunday, but in fact the indications were that nearly half of them did not go. Clearly, had they been encouraged by someone to attend Church on Easter Sunday they would have put their intentions into practice.

The Daily Telegraph article had a significant conclusion: "The churches have an immense fund of goodwill and interest on which to call, particularly at Easter. Yet nearly half of the 27 per cent who intended to go to church were not expected to do so. **A manufacturer, faced with such a vast market potential, would do better than the churches are doing in marketing and advertising his product**". Surely only the blind will refuse to see the lesson! In the churches we constantly bemoan the apathy of the non-Christian populace in the midst of which we live, and the difficulty of contacting them effectively with the Gospel. Here is plain demonstration that on one occasion in the year at least, much of the apathy is ready for removal and men and women are open to consider the Gospel. It would seem folly not to use to the full this opportunity to declare the good news to our fellows.

Now in order to give churches ideas on how to engage in witness at Easter, the Evangelism Committee in its Year Book of Evangelism has produced a whole range of suggestions as to what can be done by a congregation, including the use of personal evangelism, group evangelism, literature and advertising, programmes for use in church, others for use in the open-air, in schools and in clubs etc. A detailed programme for the whole week from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday is also provided, with subjects that could be dealt with, and ideas on how to deal with them, and where. Quite deliberately a profusion of ideas, too great to be adopted by any one church, is given, so that churches can reflect on what would be most suitable for them in their particular situations. The presentation is controlled by the idea "by all means save some".

Whether a church decides to go in for this in a big way, or whether it decides to concentrate on a few activities, there is something here for everyone to bite on. Indeed it is not too much to say that there's not a Baptist Church in the country, no matter how small or large, in village or town, in city suburb or city centre, that couldn't tackle something here offered. It will require pretty tough hides on tough church members that could look at this lot and refuse to have anything to do with it.

It will almost certainly be found necessary to produce in leaflet form these detailed suggestions that are at present embodied in the Year Book, and doubtless you will be hearing shortly from the Baptist Church House about its availability.

It was my hope that the British Council of Churches would catch the vision and call **all** the Churches of Britain to witness for Christ at Easter 1969. At the time of writing it is quite unknown whether any other denominations will move along these lines. It may be that God is calling our people to set a pattern of evangelism for other Churches to emulate at Easter in later years. The responsibility resting on us in any case is great. The burden is upon us to go out and make Christ known to men and women. I hope that every Baptist pastor in our land, without exception, will respond to the opportunity presented to us next Easter and lead his church in witness for Christ.

G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY

## MEMBERSHIP AND MOBILITY

On July 4th, 1821, William Upton was ordained to the ministry and commenced his pastorate at Dagnall Street Baptist Church, St. Albans. On March 25th 1865 William Upton died at the age of 69 still the minister of the same church. For 44 years he served at Dagnall Street. During those years he rejoiced with parents at the birth of children and when the children grew up he shared in the joy of their marriages and rejoiced in turn with them at the birth of their children. The people of St. Albans of those days grew up where they were born, worked their lives through in the city of their birth and died there. Many of them scarcely travelled at all beyond the confines of the city and the villages round about. Society tended to be static. It is not so now. Those were the days of the local Baptist church with its static membership and its structures to match. Things have changed. Of the present membership of Dagnall Street over half have joined in the last decade and only about 15 per cent of the members have belonged for more than twenty years.

One of the great needs of our time is for us to come to terms with the mobility of people and the ways such mobility affect our membership. By mobility we mean the way in which people move around the country as they move from job to job and from home to home. It is, of course, possible to exaggerate this mobility. But the greater risk for us as Baptist ministers is to fail to come to terms with it.

Every minister has the best of intentions to keep in touch with his membership and to follow up every move or rumour of a move into or out of his district. The ideal is, of course, to notify other ministers in advance of people moving into their areas and to receive such advance notification oneself. To receive notification of the date and address of removal is ideal. The church in the new area can be, as it were, on the doorstep when people arrive with offers of help and—when the vases are unpacked—with a bunch of welcoming flowers.

We do not always seem to take this notification of moves seriously enough. It is true that there are some members whom we can trust to find their way quickly to a church in the new area. But is it fair to leave it at that? An immediate contact from the church is often all the more welcome where members are keen christians. Sometimes we come across folk who, on moving, request that no notification should be sent, because they want, as it were, to 'shop around' the churches in the new area. This request presents a problem but it is certainly the home minister's responsibility to keep in touch with such people and, if they show little signs of settling in a church, then to risk writing to a brother minister in the new area.

These are all simple matters but are the sort which too easily go by default. We must not allow them to do so. We are dealing with people who may be in danger of losing their roots within the church and within our denomination. Indeed this very mobility is likely to produce a rootless society and it could be that perhaps only in the fellowship of the christian church will stability and continuity be found.

One wonders sometimes whether it might not be useful, in these days, to issue all church members with a small card—a sort of certificate of church membership. This would be in addition to any certificate with scriptural texts which is often given to new members. It would state simply the person's name and the name of the home church. Now the facetious reader may be already conjuring up the image of a sidesman standing at the church door refusing to issue a hymn book without the production of such a card! But the suggestion is made seriously. For each church to issue a uniform card of membership renewed annually and which could easily be carried in a pocket or handbag would not only help to give a general sense of belonging but would also enable ministers and sidesmen quickly to learn the person's name and church of origin. One could also state a case for these cards to be 'transferable', not from person to person but from church to church. Often our present system of transfer takes longer than it ought and we all know that people are more likely to feel really part of a church when they become members of it. This would not remove the advisability of seeking a letter of commendation from the church from which new members come, but transfer of membership need not wait upon the receipt of such a letter.

Within this matter of mobility is a particular group of people who need our special care and attention—namely the young people who go away from home either to jobs or to further education. Obviously the matter of student chaplaincies is urgent and no doubt is being actively pursued by the Baptist Union and by the Baptist Students' Federation. But, for our purpose, a word should be said about the relationship of the local church to these young people. First and foremost it is essential that they are commended to someone in the place to which they are going. For those going into further education the B.S.F. runs its commendation scheme, details of which we receive each summer, in the new situation with more and

more young people going away every effort must be made to establish contacts for them in the place of their training. But when we have done this as ministers we have not done all. We need to maintain constant touch from the home church with all our young people who are away. This is essential. Most of them return for vacations and we must make a point of expecting them and talking things over with them.

Where there are a number of young people away, then a church member might be made responsible for ensuring that written contact is maintained. Often—one might say usually—during term time this will be one way contact as young people are not normally very good at letter writing—except to boy or girl friends. But the regular receiving of letters from the home church will keep them in touch and help them to feel expected and wanted when they return for the vacations. It is the present writer's opinion that during this time away it is the home church which must continue to be the place of rooted church membership for the young person. No attempt should be made to move their church membership to the church in their place of training unless they are taking up permanent residence there. This care and concern for these younger people is of the highest priority for not only is there a responsibility upon us to care for them for their own sakes but also, of course, they represent so many of the potential church office bearers of the future.

Neither should we be satisfied to feel that our care of them has finished when they complete their training and settle in a new area. It is at that very point that they may need our encouragement most in settling in another church. One of the facts of life is that, in these days, all too few of our young marrieds look to see what the church situation is before they buy a house. Other things are looked at, the nearest shopping centre, the bus route, the proximity to the railway station etc., but it is often only when the house is bought and all is settled that the question is asked: 'Where is the nearest Baptist Church?' Whether we shall ever succeed in changing these priorities—or whether we ought to—is a matter for discussion, but what is certain is that we must not lose sight of these folk until they are settled in a church and their membership transferred.

A further development which arises from within the pattern of our mobile society is the effect which constant change around them tends to have upon the relatively small number of church members who remain continuously in one church. The comings and goings around them tend to make them more aware of their responsibility as those who know how things have always been done in their particular church. This produces a tendency to resist change. Understandably, for them, the fact of the unchanging ways of doing things provides a stability in the ever changing membership situation around them. This can cause a conservatism and a hesitation to accept new ideas. For they fear that the prime mover of new ideas who is here to-day may be gone tomorrow.

This situation affects, not only the mobile laity, but also the ministry in which ministers are tending towards shorter ministries rather than longer. Sometimes ministers can find themselves in difficulties when they wish to make radical changes in local church life. The question arises in the minds of some of the laity as to whether the minister will stay long enough to see the changes through and also the resultant challenges which can arise from them. As ministers we have to ask ourselves whether we give sufficient thought to accepting the challenge and discipline of longer ministries in order to provide both the stability and also the carrying through of long term planning in the life of the local church.

There is one further point which should be raised though as yet it cannot be adequately answered. This is as to how far the present structure of our local churches and our ministerial system will do in the society of to-day. For, as we said at the beginning of this article, our churches and our ministerial system developed in a society which was basically static. Our concept of the gathered local church with its two services on Sunday and its organisational life dates from a time before the common ownership of the motor car and of a society on the move. Things have changed radically. Is not this a further reason for the denomination urgently to review its policy and life and to produce new and long term planning for church and ministry alike?

W. M. S. WEST

*The following article is offered as a contribution to the continuing debate upon baptism by one whose point of view is special and noteworthy. It must be appreciated that, as with any article in this journal, the views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the members of the Editorial Board of "The Fraternal".*

## BAPTISM AND CHURCH UNION

Two statements read by me come to mind as the subject of "Baptism and Church Union" is considered. The first is from the book **God and Son** by Dewi Morgan. The context is a consideration of the relationship of Christianity to Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. The writer refers to the fear Christians have that if they yield one jot of their faith, or even find something admirable in a non-Christian religion, they lose everything. Then comes the following: "There is an antidote to such a fear. It is the realization that if a Christian cannot momentarily at least see from the standpoint of another faith he has no vantage point by which to judge his own". This statement is pertinent to our subject. I write as one who for over half of his life was officially a Baptist, and who, during that time, had the privilege of being Principal of Baptist Theological Colleges successively in two different

countries. Now, though not from theological persuasion where baptism is concerned, I am ministering in the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and enjoying a freedom undreamed-of hitherto both in this matter and many others. The opportunity of standing within another denomination than that which I served so long, tempers considerably views which once I held. I think that I can judge better now than I did formerly, the attitude of Baptists towards Church Union, and at the same time appreciate more realistically the seeming obstinacy of Paedo-Baptists towards Baptist beliefs in regard to Church Union. I am not saying this in order to disarm Baptist critics in advance, nor to suggest that they do not know what they are talking about! I say it simply as testimony to the fact that circumstances alter things almost as much as do convictions. And, even though we may not like it, most people are what they are denominationally today by reason of the former rather than the latter.

The second statement is one from Vol. III, No. 3, 1967 of **Risk**, the publication of the Youth Department, World Council of Churches and the World Council of Christian Education. The whole volume is devoted to Luther's Ninety-five Theses which led to the Reformation, and was issued in celebration of the 450th anniversary of Luther's defiance of Rome. In the editorial are these words: "We started by reading again the Ninety-five Theses. To our surprise, we discovered that there is little of eternal significance in them. Most could be forgotten without permanent damage to the Christian Church. We decided, however, that on the occasion of the anniversary they had to be reprinted, to remind of what perishable stuff revolutionary events are made". If we read contemporary Church History aright, we must agree with this statement. The Second Vatican Council, and Church Union moves across confessional boundaries, are making it abundantly clear that earlier revolutions, whether violent or otherwise, hold little lasting significance in the world of today. Baptists must face this seriously. To speak of Baptist "distinctives" now is to ignore historical developments which are gathering up into Church Union schemes all such "distinctives" and enriching them in the process. It is, of course, open to Baptists to declare that the things they hold cannot be enriched, only acknowledged and practised. But such arrogance would be self-condemning.

This article does not propose to travel the worn way of argument for and against the correctness of biblical teaching regarding baptism of infants or believers. I am aware of current discussions in this field. As far as Baptists are concerned it would be hard to find a better discussion of baptism or a more detailed one than that developed by G. R. Beasley-Murray in his recent books. But it is doubtful if even his erudite scholarship will do much to persuade people not already persuaded otherwise about baptism. In any case, it seems to me, we are faced today by the strange anomaly, that increasing concern for biblical studies is being paralleled by a like increase in the rejection of biblical authority as such.

More and more people, when confronted by what may appear irrefutable biblical arguments for some theological position, are left cold and unmoved. It is no longer sufficient to declare "the Bible says", as the end of all disputation. Men want to know if what it says is relevant still in our modern situation. Even to ask questions like this, is to be taken seriously, not as the final apostasy, but as an indication that there is developing a real break-through to a greater authority which is not of the nature of propositions or of a Christianity which cannot change—a break-through to an authority which is personal, the authority of Christ Himself authenticated in human experience. This attitude is not a repudiation of the testimony of the Bible, but a reminder that the Bible is testimony, and that in particular the New Testament is testimony to Jesus Christ.

In the Church of Jesus Christ as a whole there is a far humbler spirit than existed a few decades ago. Even in the discussion on baptism, biblical scholars differ greatly, but they do not fight one another as formerly. Though there is no great evidence that either side in the debate is prepared to give way to the other, there is increasing evidence, indeed irrefutable evidence, that they may be willing to live together rather than live separately. In this lies a distinct challenge to the rank and file of churchmen to be willing to do likewise. But is this possible? Not if we persist in declaring that our final loyalty is to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament in relation to all matters of faith and practice. And it is just here, it seems to me, that the rub appears. We have confused, for too long, loyalty to the Scriptures with loyalty to The Christ of the Scriptures. Some would protest this hotly. But take, for example, the matter of baptism itself. Does it seem like the Christ to insist on the performance of an external act (whether of christening or immersion) in order to ensure one being part of His Body the Church? It would take me too much out of my way to enlarge on this here. I put it in these stark terms in order to highlight the dilemma which faces all who insist on a sacramental act as a necessity to Christian life.

The blurring of the lines between Scripture and the Christ represents a hang-over from post-Reformation days. Because of it, both Baptists and Paedo-Baptists have found it difficult to find much common ground on many marginal issues, even though both affirm Scriptures as the ground of their faith and practice. Few scholars today believe that the truth lies unmistakably with either side. What is seen and avowed depends largely upon the vantage point from which particular subjects are viewed. On the baptismal issue there are exceptions, of course. Without seeking to compare them, one may think of Barth and Brunner on the one side, and Clark and Gilmore on the other. Here it would seem that what one side desires to abandon the other would like to seize. But will adding a little here, or subtracting a little there, resolve the seeming impasse? At least it is worth trying. And this is what is being attempted in North India/Pakistan, and in New Zealand. In the former attempt, Baptists are involved. In the latter they

are absent. And this is a pity, because it has left the Churches of Christ to convey alone convictions held mutually by them and the Baptists with regard to baptism.

If I understand Baptist history aright, baptism was not a crucial issue at first. The vital question related to membership in the Church, the Body of Christ. Was one a member by reason of his baptism (in infancy), or because of personal faith? Baptism, as such, was quite a subordinate issue. The answer of Baptists was that faith, personal faith in Jesus Christ, was the deciding factor. But having decided that battle, they went on then to wage war on another front, that of baptism. And it is to this front that Baptists have been sending their troops in modern times, to battle for that which has "little of eternal significance" in it. By many it has gathered to itself such importance that it has become the bastion of all unity moves. In speaking like this, I am not asserting that baptism is valueless. It has values both at the level of infant baptism and at that of believers. But so long as baptism is regarded as a crucial matter in relation to Church Union, so long will Christianity remain an increasing irrelevancy in our modern world. If we cannot find a point of reconciliation with our brethren in Christ on this about which He seems not to have spoken, what hope have we of becoming a reconciling force in the modern world?

I do not think that either side is going to admit that its practice is wrong. Both sides are admitting weaknesses in what they do. In the search for unity baptism has become a battle-ground of mounting importance, yet, one cannot help feeling, with little appreciation of its relative insignificance. But, in any moves towards unity in which Baptists might be involved in the near future all the denominations have one thing in common—the insistence that ACTIVE membership in the Church, the Body of Christ, comes by way of public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Do we need any other affirmation than the historic one "Jesus Christ is Lord"? If we insist in declaring that we must understand that confession in a certain way theologically, we go beyond what biblical evidence warrants. We should be ready to acknowledge that while Paedo-Baptists make much or little of infant baptism, and Baptists make much or little of baptism of believers, both groups make it their aim to call forth personal response. If in the course of confirmation there may be some "hypocrites and feigners . . . hidden among the repenting" as John Smyth puts it; or, as the Lutherans say, both "sancti" and "mali et hypocritae", this charge cannot be laid at the feet of Paedo-Baptists alone, or made on the grounds of an unscriptural(?) form of baptism. Every Baptist minister is faced with roll reviews which assume that IF there was a faith in the defaulters (who were baptised correctly), it was of a very defective kind. Has baptism safe-guarded the purity of the Church either doctrinally or practically? My experience is that neither side can afford to cast the first stone.

The more I have read and thought and discussed and reviewed the vexed question of baptism, the more I have be-

come convinced that it does not lie at the centre of the Gospel but on its periphery. What does lie at the centre is personal response to Jesus Christ, and confession thereof, however that confession may be made. What has been said already is sufficient to indicate that in practice most denominations make a difference between those baptised and those confirmed or received into active membership in the Church. So that, even though today both sides are expressing increasingly their desire to bring the two acts into closest union with one another, they do not confuse baptism and its expression in the confession whereby the baptised are received into the visible order of the Body of Christ, the Church.

In 1950 P. Rowntree Clifford wrote in **The Baptist Times** about the visible and the invisible Church. What he said then has not received the attention it deserves. He declared that: "there is an urgent need for Baptists to apply themselves afresh to the doctrine concerning the Church. At a time when this doctrine is receiving the close attention of theologians of all traditions and when ecumenical discussion is to the forefront, Baptists are too often found using phraseology which has not been sufficiently scrutinised and matched against the Word of God. We take our stand on the Scriptures. It is therefore vitally important that we should make certain that what we say squares with the teaching of Scripture and so deals with the realities of the situation". He suggested that in view of the discussion going on in ecumenical circles, centring chiefly upon the visible Church, the Church as it is organised on earth, Baptists should give an account of their own views more explicitly. He felt that to ignore the question of the visible Church was to fail to take seriously the New Testament; likewise the tendency to define the Church in terms of an invisible society. "When this issue is frankly faced Baptists can give one of three answers to the question, 'what do you believe about the visible Church'? First, we can try to define it in terms of the local gathered fellowship of believers. Second, we may say that the visible Church consists of those who have been baptised on profession of their faith. Third, we may hold that it consists of all professed believers in Christ in whatever way they are organised. We would decline to accept a view of the visible Church which does not rest upon profession of faith as the basis for membership." The third answer is taken by Mr Clifford to be the only one which does not do violence to the facts. This, he feels, "covers all members of Baptist churches and members of other churches in the evangelical tradition. It also covers confessing Christians of other communions. . . . If it is objected that the line of demarcation is not sufficiently clearly defined, it may be replied that the same objection in some degree may be advanced in the case of the most evangelical communions . . . when we are seeking to define the visible Church, we can only go by outward signs, and it is clear that in all Christian traditions these outward signs of profession of faith are recognised and the Confessing Church as distinct from the larger community of those attached to it is a visible

reality". This view, in my opinion, draws attention to the two essential facts which alone Baptists and others need in connection with the union of the churches, namely, personal faith making for incorporation in the Body of Christ, and the vital link there must be between all who belong to Him. It has the advantage, also, of keeping the biblical perspective clear. For far too long the question of baptism has occupied a position in the Christian Church disproportionate to its real significance. One would be hard pressed to show from New Testament evidence, for example, that any of the immediate disciples of Jesus were, after His death, resurrection and ascension, baptised again, this time with "Christian" baptism. It is still an open question whether the statements on baptism at the end of Matthew and Mark are dominical. It is undeniable that, very early, baptism became closely associated with discipleship. Yet Paul, who was himself baptised as a believer, could move easily from one position to another about baptism, without any suggestion that in so doing he was contradicting himself. On the one hand he could speak of baptism as though it effected some real transformation in the lives of people. But on the other hand he could brush it aside as of little account, the "gospel" alone being important. Yet, even when he did speak of baptism significantly, it was always in the context of a believing community, so that his words could never be mistaken. Baptism and faith were not synonymous with him. The latter always underscored the former. Furthermore, if we insist on the necessity of baptism for faith, as some would do, is not this a falling into the kind of error Paul attributed to the Galatians, that of wanting two props to our salvation? Could this be interpreted as 'the mind of Christ'? I am not asking—'can we find New Testament support for baptism as an act of incorporation into Christ'? Rather—is it like Him to require of His followers an external act in order to effect, or maybe complete, a spiritual change'?

So long as we major on the peripheral, we shall continue the battle. But why battle about baptism and its relative place in the scheme of things, when we are all of one mind in the affirmation that communicant or active membership in the Church belongs to "all professed believers in Christ" however they are organised. Decision regarding baptism can be left to the churches seeking united witness, hammered out finally within the framework of their unity, not in advance of it. And, if this means accepting BOTH forms of baptism at first within the uniting Church, and possibly for a long time to come, is anything lost, really, thereby? I know that many will hasten to say 'Yes! Biblical authority is repudiated!' But perhaps, in this matter, as in some others too, it needs to be. For if it blinds us to the Presence of Christ and His activity in the world, and to His own personal authority which exceeds that of Bible or Church, can that authority be justified? It was our Lord Himself who said to the biblicists of His day: "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life".

Sometimes, in the search for unity, I almost despair. For we want to over-lay the unity we have already, and may have more abundantly, with so much tradition that in practice we would deny that unity unless "Christian" were spelled out our way. In *Risk* No. 4, 1966, A. H. vanden Heuval calls for "that smallest possible consensus in which we can find one another", as the basis for church union. In saying that, this youth leader is voicing the impatience of those who would press ahead with union without tarrying for any to finish their skirmishing over things which have so little of eternal significance in them. I find my heart strangely warmed by the thought that this approach, and this alone, will lead to the fruitful results for which we yearn. But are we big enough, or brave enough, to move out from behind our safety walls to find one another in Him Who is "out there" at the place where the wall is broken and retreat cannot be sounded?

E. ROBERTS-THOMSON

## NOUGHT TO NINETY

There are now 10 Baptist Churches in London, about 30 in the rest of England, 30 in Scotland and a number in Ireland that are using the "All-Age" system of Christian Education; others are beginning to make plans. All-Age Sunday Schools in their modern form began in the U.S.A. many years ago and are now firmly established in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, as well as in countries where American Missionaries have been at work. The Baptist Union of Scotland officially adopted "All-Age Christian Education" six years ago.

What is this system all about? It is much more than simply adding babies at one end and adults at the other end of the traditional Sunday School. It is the Church in its teaching ministry providing for the Christian education of every age-group, offering a deepening fellowship and reaching out to the neighbourhood with a planned pattern of evangelism. Usually the teaching period precedes Family Worship although, especially in this country, there are various modifications of the pattern used in other parts of the World. In addition to graded Adult, Young People's and Children's Departments, a Nursery is provided for babies and toddlers so that whole families can come and learn and worship together. The Extension Department gathers into the same curriculum those who cannot attend on Sunday mornings for reasons of illness, old age or duty.

Let me give twelve reasons for the All-Age Sunday School:-

- 1 It bases Christian education fairly and squarely on the open Bible. The Scriptures are taught systematically and the Word of God is applied to the whole of life.
- 2 It follows the New Testament pattern of teaching, for Jesus chose His disciples in order to teach them as a group before sending them out as witnesses (it is recognised today that 12 is the ideal teaching unit).

- 3 It makes possible the fullest expression of the Church's teaching ministry by catering for all age-groups, with an extension department for the "shut-ins".
- 4 It fosters fellowship and pastoral care by breaking down a large congregation into smaller units within the total framework of the Church's ministry.
- 5 It gives an opportunity for personal and group testimony such as was blessed in the Methodist class system.
- 6 It strengthens family life by encouraging whole families to attend church together, the united worship service following the teaching session.
- 7 It creates an atmosphere in which spiritual worship follows easily and naturally, and provides the Minister with a well-taught congregation ready for both inspirational and evangelistic preaching.
- 8 It bridges, instead of accentuating, the gap between childhood and teen-ages: the example given by older young people and adults in Sunday School is invaluable.
- 9 It unifies the whole programme of a Church's work and witness, and makes Sunday School what it really is—the Church teaching, the Church at work.
- 10 It provides opportunities for evangelism and "follow-up" by gathering into the groups unconverted people who would not be attracted by an invitation to "Come to Church", together with those who have been converted through the Church's normal outreach or at an evangelistic campaign.
- 11 It utilises offers of service of various kinds and encourages a regular workers' training evening, in this way supplementing and making permanent the challenge of a Stewardship Campaign.
- 12 It offers a way of presenting teaching concerning marriage, temperance and other matters of Christian citizenship, which cannot always be dealt with frankly and effectively from the pulpit.

The London Baptist Association has produced a digest of reports of All-Age Sunday School experiments in London, the Scottish Baptist Union has a useful leaflet entitled "All-Age Christian Education", and the Rev. Andrew MacRae, Secretary of the Baptist Union of Scotland, has published two booklets, "Facing the Facts" (2/-) and "Your Questions Answered" (1/6). We are hoping that Rev. A. Stuart Arnold, now at the American Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, will be producing a useful handbook on the All-Age Sunday School. The school which he started at Guildford is probably the most successful of any in Britain up to the present time.

In the United States and elsewhere it is possible to gather people for an hour's instruction with a short break before the Worship Service begins and this lasts for another hour. Few of us in this Country have yet had the faith to begin on such a scale! We have either shortened the teaching or we have streamlined the worship. Another difference between the set-up in this Country and the States is the number of children

which the average British School attracts whose parents at present hardly ever attend the Worship Service. A large group of such children in Worship is almost bound to require the shortening of the service and some way has to be found of excusing them from a full sermon. The pattern that has evolved after some experimentation at Belvedere is as follows:

- 9.50 a.m. Arrival of staff
- 10.00 a.m. Teaching period in all departments (Adults meet in the church; in our case, chairs make groupings easy)
- 10.45 a.m. Worship in the church begins, including a 15 minute sermon
- 11.15 a.m. Children (except Nursery and usually Beginners) and Young people join the service; offerings received separately are now presented and dedicated together
- 11.15 a.m. Close of Worship approx.

This has the advantage of giving younger age groups all the time they need for teaching and practical work and at the same time enables the Minister to press home in the short sermon some truth that has been discussed in the preliminary Bible groups. The presence of all Departments together for the last 20 minutes of worship is more spiritually inspiring and psychologically desirable than for the children to be withdrawn at an earlier stage in a service. At present we are experimenting with morning Communion, including a brief scripture comment, in the period between 10.45 and 11.15 a.m. and this is proving each month far better than having a handful of members remaining after the church has emptied at 11.35. The atmosphere of worship has been appreciated even by those in the Adult department who are not yet committed to Christ and who do not of course receive the elements.

There is no doubt that at the moment both in Scotland and in England one of the main problems is the attendance of adults. At a London "workshop" held in the Autumn of 1967 and a similar "consultation" in Scotland in January 1968 almost all the Schools reported that numbers attending Adult classes were less than at the time when their scheme was launched. In some cases this was thought to be due to the increasingly large number of adults involved in teaching in other Departments or in branch Sunday Schools. In other cases lack of enthusiasm or domestic circumstances or lack of trained guidance in the groups were felt to be the reasons. But in every case when the representatives of these Churches were asked in the light of their experience if they would launch such a scheme again, their replies made it clear that All-Age Christian Education was proving beneficial to the Churches. They would certainly introduce it again if they had the opportunity.

The All-Age Sunday School can be an effective method of Christian education, but it requires at least two years careful

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Yesterday evening I attended a dinner to celebrate the centenary of the Fire Offices Committee of which this Company is a member.

Not unnaturally we were expected to earn our dinners by listening to the speeches. The Ministry of Technology had sent a speaker who emphasised the extent of the technical partnership between all Insurance Offices and the Government in fire prevention.

At one point, with his tongue in his cheek, he referred to recent press reports which had advanced the theory that the curve of fire damage experience reached its zenith about the time of a full moon. I smiled as I mentally listened to my chairman saying after a bad fire "It is the stars, the stars above us, govern our conditions!" Astrology is no substitute for applied technology.

A little care could save many claims. Recently the impatient throwing of a switch resulted in fire damage of nearly £3,000; recently too a vestry door was left unlocked overnight so that a cleaner could enter without trouble next morning—but a thief entered with equal facility that night and stole without trouble a ciné sound-projector.

Prevention demands commonsense security because in terms of fire damage or theft there is no cure. Fire or theft means a direct loss to the community which cannot be replaced. An insurance claim payment is a palliative and very welcome to an insured but in terms of economics the loss to the community can never be cured.

"The cure for this ill, is not to sit still  
Or frowst with a book by the fire,  
But to take a large hoe and shovel also  
And dig till you gently perspire."

A healthy sweat induced in working out and carrying out security would do a world of good. Security to be effective must stem from activity.

Yours sincerely,

C. J. L. COLVIN,

General Manager

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preliminary planning; it depends on regular visitation especially in the Adult Department and the trained leadership of dedicated people.

The full effectiveness of this comprehensive system of co-ordinated teaching will not be known for a long time because it is obviously a long-term experiment. Older people naturally tend to resist change of this kind, in some cases disliking discussion and in other cases missing the traditional "quiet" Sunday Morning Service. Until young people, who have enjoyed this particular programme of the Church's teaching Ministry, have taken their place in the full life and leadership of the Church, building up the Adult Department, we shall not be able to assess the volume of the work done but I am convinced that the principles behind this method are right and that it must ultimately succeed.

R. R. R. COLLINS

## MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT

In a few months I shall reach the fiftieth anniversary of entering the Baptist Ministry. It is, perhaps, inevitable that some time is spent looking back down the years. The Thomas Hood kind of reflection can easily be overdone; "I remember! I remember!" Dotage and anecdotage are often akin. But as Kirkegaard reminds us life can only be understood backwards even if it has to be lived forwards. So with this in mind I am following the suggestion of the editor and reflecting upon two of the changes I have seen and in which I have shared.

It will be difficult for many to realise that when I entered the ministry the Sustentation and Settlement Scheme was in its infancy and, wonderful as it was, suffered, as most schemes do, from teething troubles. In any case it could never have been easy to graft on to our denominational life anything which cuts across the stubborn independency of churches and ministers. Many stood aside at the beginning and looked a little askance at it.

It may well be that some of the brethren first appointed as General Superintendents misunderstood the nature of the new office and became a little dictatorial and officious. Certainly they were viewed in many quarters with a measure of suspicion and distrust. It would be foolish to suggest that those who have followed in the Superintendency were better men or more fitted for the office. Certainly those who are serving in this capacity today would be the first to deny any such assumption. But there has been a growing awareness of the office and the potential service it offers. This in turn has created a confidence on the part of churches and ministers and an increasing use of the counsel and help the Superintendent is able to give. There are few occasions where they are not consulted even if their advice is not always accepted. This is shown in many ways but very clearly in the way new methods of introduction have been received and acted upon.

The early practice (there are still a few churches insisting on this method) was for the deacons to receive from the Superintendent a list of names with particulars of the churches the minister had served and the kind of work in which he had been engaged. The deacons or possibly the church members then exercised a choice or placed the names in order of preference. Whereupon the church secretary proceeded to invite two or three ministers to preach on Sundays as near as possible to each other. This frequently led to an unhealthy competition, often to division in the church and then the same process had to be repeated. A most unhappy and often distressing situation was created for the ministers concerned and for the church.

Now, whenever possible, the Superintendent meets with the deacons of the vacant church and together prayerfully they review the kind of ministry most needed and how best the church can fulfil her mission in the neighbourhood where God has placed her. The Superintendent may then suggest one name or more. But the important change is that the deacons will invite the minister who seems most likely to match up to their situation to meet with them so that they may talk together of the work and activities of the church and learn something of each other before an invitation is given to occupy the pulpit. Take one example. The deacons of a vacant church sought the help of the General Superintendent. A meeting was arranged and together, quietly and prayerfully, they considered the whole work of the church, the immediate need and the further objective of the church in mission and service. There followed certain nominations. At a subsequent meeting the deacons, quite unanimously, invited one of the nominees to meet with them one week-evening. This was arranged. The activities of the church were outlined: the interests of the church in the Union, the B.M.S., the F.C.F.C., and local Council of Churches were indicated, and the relationship of the church to other churches and to town affairs was made clear. It was in an atmosphere of prayerful concern that the minister was invited to speak of his view of the ministry and his reactions to the needs of the church as already outlined. It became clear as the conversation went on that this was not quite the ministry the visitor could give and the deacons felt unable to make a recommendation to the church.

Again the Superintendent was consulted and further names were given. Once more a minister was invited to meet the deacons. The same procedure was followed and before the meeting was through there was a warming of hearts, an awareness of the leading of the Holy Spirit and the deacons were able to make a unanimous recommendation to the church. A Sunday engagement followed. The members of the church were equally assured this was of God and an invitation to and acceptance of the pastorate followed. Not one of us would question that the Holy Spirit does operate amid the muddles we often create for ourselves, but God is a God of order and we ought, surely, to fashion a pattern of action in

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which His influence can best be realised. Anything which avoids competition among us as ministers of the gospel or a judgment on the part of the church on one or two Sunday visits is a pattern we would all gladly accept. It would add dignity and worth to a "call" and give greater assurance that this is, indeed, an exercise of the Holy Spirit. The decrease in the ranks of the ministry makes anything in the way of competition both unseemly and unnecessary.

It is sad to hear that there are still churches and, not by any means the smaller ones who still insist in following the old pattern. The pulpit being filled with a long string of "possibles", often to the unsettling of ministers who are doing a good work and from a human point of view ought to remain in their present pastorate. On the other hand we hear of ministers and students who go about collecting "calls" as the old head-hunter collected scalps. We hear of some boasting of having two, three or even four calls in their pocket. This is nothing new: but that does not justify it. There is at the moment a gulf between the number of vacant churches and the number of available ministers—probably as great as three to one. But surely we ought not to exploit such a situation for our own advantage.

Dr Russell in his Annual Report (1968) has referred to the Commission which has been appointed "to undertake a thorough investigation of the present use and distribution of ministerial man-power in relation to the size, geographical location and total circumstances of congregations" and "examine the use, deployment and maintenance of the ministry". The terms are wide enough in all conscience. Such an enquiry may be essential and the report will be eagerly awaited. But all our planning and all our schemes will be unavailing unless we can recover that dedication and sense of God's call which leads to an unreserved acceptance of service for Christ. Unreserved! A sense of call which gives no sanction to picking and choosing where the service is given: which does not seek the easier task; which does not assure the pleasant places to the neglect of urgent work in less salubrious climes.

One Council of Churches has on its agenda for discussion that "Church of England livings should be advertised". We need not concern ourselves with the method by which the Anglican Church affects its settlements but most Baptists would recoil from any such suggestion for ourselves. Yet until we can show this sense of call to be as we believe, an operation of the Holy Spirit, we are not, it seems to me, in any position to criticise the methods adopted by other sections of the Church of Christ. It is at this point some re-thinking is called for. Is it possible to distinguish between a call to service, even a call to whole-time service which is an expression of our love to Christ and desire to work for the coming of His Kingdom and a call to the ministerial and pastoral office? This needs to be faced. Why is it, for instance, that many are leaving the ministry, not only for the teaching profession and the opportunity for giving religious instruction

but for those in the Probation and Welfare services? It may be that a theological training has advantages but clearly it is not essential as it is for the minister and pastor. Indeed can three or four years in a theological college be justified if that is the ultimate service? And are our colleges justified in appealing for financial support from churches and individuals for "the training of pastors and ministers" when a number of students so educated, sometimes after only a few years, enter these other spheres where the remuneration greatly exceeds that of the minister?

The "call" as our fathers knew it was to a life-long task. They never expected their stipend to equal that of other professions or even that of the skilled tradesman. They never imagined that their hours of service could be organised on a kind of trade union basis. They knew that to obey the call would mean self-denial, a tightening of the belt, an absence of luxuries. Worse, perhaps, for them they knew that it would mean self-denial by the wife and mother. Children could not be so well dressed as others. There could be little or no entertainment in the home. All this was involved. It might be said that such conditions should never have been allowed. But here was a call from God. Men put their hands to the plough and would not turn back. They counted the cost and were ready to pay it. The call was not of their seeking. As with some of the Hebrew prophets it was resisted until the spiritual pressure broke down all resistance. Once accepted there could be no escape.

We would all wish to set the word vocation in the widest possible context. Many who enter the service of community or State have a real sense of vocation. It should be so for every believer. But must we not secure from those who seek to enter the ministry a deeper sense of call; a real awareness of all it involves and a dedication which acknowledges that this is a life task.

Then could our colleges open their doors to men who confess that this sense of call is only partially formed and who await the unfolding of God's purpose for them? The curriculum might need adaptation or advantage taken of University courses in a wider range of subjects. This would not put a brake on the theological student. If this can be done in an inter-denominational college is it really impossible in one of our own? The winds of change might blow in this direction as in others.

Lord Attlee called his biography, "An Old Man Remembers". I have tried to remember and reflect on changes which have taken place. The one gives me the utmost satisfaction; for anything which makes the Settlement Scheme more effective and more in line with our conception of the ministry is to be welcomed. The other gives me some concern for I seem to detect an erosion of that spiritual conception of the ministry and a dedication to it which was once an outstanding feature.

H. L. WATSON

## MISSIONARY STRUCTURES IN THE U.S.A.\*

In 1965 I was fortunate enough to spend nine months in New York, in a course of study at Union Theological Seminary. During this course, called the Programme of Advanced Religious Studies, we were encouraged to get out and see for ourselves the experiments where local congregations had developed a new form of life as they became involved in mission.

At first, like all visitors to the U.S.A., I tended to be dazzled not so much by the excitement of new forms as by the apparent success of traditional forms of church life which we in this country are finding so inadequate to meet the needs of our situation. Everything depends of course on the concept of mission which is expressed by the life of the congregation. If the concept of mission is that the role of the Church is to draw "outsiders in", to get bigger and better congregations, to extend church property and improve her premises, to offer words of comfort that help the hearers to escape from the burden of their concerns in the world, then there are traditional churches in America which can certainly teach us a lot about how to succeed. Near us in New York was one very large, splendid pseudo-Gothic style church which was crowded each week with a congregation numbering some 3,000. On the snowbound morning when I attended service there, I discovered that my path was made as easy as possible by the fact that a heating plant had been installed below the pavement so that the snow melted before my feet, and it was possible to have hot air both inside and outside the church! Once I had passed through the palatial premises, which provided for every possible kind of programme one could imagine, I found myself in a singularly beautiful sanctuary where sweet music and soft lights all created an atmosphere of sacred withdrawal from the busy rush of the city outside. All this, I realised, was made possible by the resources available—when the offertory plate was passed it looked to me like the takings from the mail train robbery! So, in terms of the concept of mission I have described above, you could say that this church was in every way a success—and I would not in any way decry the devotion and highly professional efficiency and very well-planned generosity which made all this possible.

But again and again I was led to ask, "What is it all for?" "To fill your churches" would seem the obvious answer. "And then what?" I went on to ask, and met so often with blank astonishment that any other "end-product" should be envisaged. I often recalled the fact that once in Britain too

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we had known how to fill our churches, but at the time when our churches were full, the things that were really happening, that were shaping the life of our society, that were making possible that full human dignity that is the Christ-given right of every man, were so often happening not because of but rather in spite of the Church. And I saw the same danger in America too—that in many of the largest and most prosperous congregations there seemed a strange lack of awareness of the real things that were happening in the very structures of society in that land, the tension points in race relations for example, which seem to me the very testing points of truly Christian integrity.

Suppose then we start from a different concept of mission. Suppose we think of the mission first in terms of what God Himself is doing in the world, and in society, to shape the lives of men and see the role of the Church as being both to discern and to participate in all that is going on—to be present in the things that are happening, both to help make them happen and also to point to the ultimate significance of what is happening, demonstrating within the Church's own life the power and presence of God. What then would be the difference in the worship and structure and life of a church geared to this concept of mission? Let me describe then briefly to you three experiments I came to know in the States.

When I first set out to go to the now world-famous East Harlem Protestant Parish, I thought I knew exactly what to expect. I had of course read Bruce Kenrick's book **Come Out The Wilderness**, a vivid, journalistic account of the area between E. 100th Street and 125th Street, where in a little over one square mile live approximately 185,000 people of varied racial origins, in conditions of over-crowding which have turned the whole district into one of the most notorious of New York's slums. Even on my way across town, for my first visit, I realised what a despised and even suspected district this is. Three times I was stopped by kindly-disposed white Americans who suggested that, for my own sake, it would be safer for me not to walk in those streets alone. So I half-expected to arrive in the midst of a gangster fight in a scene as colourful and exciting as a Cagney film. It was with almost a sense of anti-climax that I arrived instead in a very dreary street, almost deserted save for a few apathetic loungers leaning on the door posts of dingy tenement blocks, who regarded me with veiled glances, in which I suppose I could have read hostility, though even that seems too strong a word to describe what seemed a total lack of interest. I looked eagerly for the church building—the exciting experiment in team ministry of which I had read so much. It was marked simply by a large cross, but apart from that was a quite undistinguished building with some rather forbidding looking iron railings outside.

Inside, however, I became aware at once that this was a place where people met one another and that, most remarkable of all, this was a meeting-place of the races. There was an animated buzz of conversation already among the few

people sitting on the wooden benches in this Italian-style brick building. Their seats were arranged as nearly as possible in a square with a large communion table at the front and in the middle. It was only after a good deal of greeting and chatting that the service began—its beginning being marked by the lighting of the candles on the table and the very dignified entry of the clergy dressed in gowns with stoles of the colours appropriate to the liturgical season. There were many things to remind us of which season this was. It happened to be Advent, a fact of which we were reminded by the mobiles made by the children in Sunday School and hung up before the whole congregation, and by the Advent wreath whose candles we were to light each Sunday. In a few brief spoken sentences spoken first in English and then in Spanish the people were called to worship and the opening hymn of praise reminded us of the greatness and glory of God. The prayers of confession that followed were written very markedly in contemporary language, and were responded to by the whole congregation repeating together the 23rd Psalm. Then came the reading and the preaching of the Word, all at the same point in the service. Even this was a corporate activity, for the sermon was a gathering together of all the things that had been said in the house groups during the preceeding week, who had all been studying the passage appointed for Sunday's meditation, the whole parish keeping to a planned lectionary throughout the year.

Then followed the "response to God's Word". First came the announcements—the "Concerns of the Church" as they were called. These were not given by the minister but by the congregation, various members of which would stand spontaneously and share with the whole congregation the concerns of the local community, which would then become the concerns of the Church, the focus of their prayers and the field for their action. In all these, people were invited to take an active part and interest. Following the announcements, the minister would make mention of all these things in a session of intercessory prayer.

Then the service moved on to its central act—the Communion. Again, the emphasis was on the fact that here we were called as the people of God to be in love and charity with our neighbours as well as with our Lord. In the hymn before the Communion the congregation became a hand-shaking throng, greeting one another by name, the clergy and lay leaders moving around the church to chat with people, and everyone introducing himself to his neighbour. The bread and wine for the Communion were presented in procession—a good, crusty loaf brought by a housewife, one of the loaves she had bought in her week's shopping, and a bottle of wine from the local store. The minister read the words of invitation, again expressed in contemporary idiom, and the whole congregation went forward together to stand in a large, informal circle around the table as the bread was broken and the wine poured out. As bread and wine were passed from one to another we sang together—"Let us break bread together on our knees, let

us drink wine together on our knees"—and we were still singing as we went back to our places—"Let us praise God together on our knees"—in an air of festive celebration and of real community experience which contrasted for me very strongly with the solemnity and even sense of isolation which so often characterises our Communion services.

It was in this mood of celebration that we pronounced together the Parish purpose—"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings, etc."—and as the minister stood at the open door of the church and bade us "Go out into the world," we knew that the end of our service of worship in the church was the beginning of our service in the world.

Celebration—meeting—service—concern—these four words I suppose sum up the impression I received of the East Harlem Protestant Parish. The note of celebration was always there, and particularly of course on the great festival days, for this congregation really believed that God is active in history and so entered whole-heartedly into the celebrations of His mighty acts. The meeting was a real one, a meeting of people of different races, different languages, different strata of society. I must confess that sometimes I wondered how genuine the meeting was. Many of the white members seemed to be imported from outside the East Harlem situation—theological students, ardent Civil Rights supporters and so on, and I wondered where were those who might more genuinely be regarded as the neighbours of the negro members. How far had East Harlem promoted a genuine integration in the community? There was no doubt about the scope and devotion of their service—the Church was geared to social action in every possible way, each new need being seen as a new opportunity for the Church to take action in some ad hoc group, which Bill Webber described as being the kind of group that can say, "Aha, this is what God wants us to do now." As for concern, throughout the whole life of East Harlem Protestant Parish, it is evident that the concerns of the community really are the concerns of the whole Church, and the needs of the community are in fact allowed to shape the very life and worship of the Church.

But let us now look at a church whose structures were until recently much more traditional, a church which had once housed a fashionable, respectable, suburban congregation with little to change its patterns until there arrived there as minister some five years ago a young man who was determined that the Church must cease to exist for its own sake, and learn to exist for others, with as much concern for what goes on outside the church doors as inside them.

Robert Raines initiated the new pattern of his Church's life with a commissioning service in which symbolically he opened the doors of his church, as a sign that from now on this really would be a church with open doors—open for people to come in, but even more important, open for people to go out. Every committee functioning already within the church was challenged to see its commitment not in terms

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merely of continuing to support whatever concern had brought them into being, but also of being committed in some kind of specific action to the community around them. Thus, those who were enthusiastic about overseas missions were challenged to see their mission not only in terms of far-away places with strange sounding names, but in terms too of the other racial groups living in their own town, but separated by a great gulf from the normal life of the First Methodist congregation. For two of these missionary enthusiasts the challenge came at a deeply personal and costly level. Two girls who had intended to offer for the mission field moved instead to live in one of the predominantly negro quarters of the town, in a basement flat which the other members of the group helped them to decorate and prepare as a place which they resolved to keep as open house for their neighbours of all races. This "Covenant House" as they called it was not a mission, in the old sense of that word. The girls were not consciously trying to influence their neighbours—they wanted merely to exercise what they called "the apostolate of just being there", living as good neighbours among those who were far more used to seeing people move away as they got on in the world than seeing anyone voluntarily choosing to move in and share in the life of the community. "Covenant House" soon got a name for itself—"a house that it's fun to be in", as one tradesman described it, and became in itself a very real meetingplace.

Other groups in the church committed themselves to other kinds of social action. One group took very seriously the whole question of political responsibility; another group sought to see and learn what is being said about life through modern art-forms and theatre, and learned how to listen to as well as talk with artists about the insights they seek to communicate. Another group ran special tutorial classes for people needing extra help with their education.

Robert Raines told us that inevitably this new pattern of life led to controversy. Whenever you touch on issues like politics, race or sex you touch people on the raw because these are real issues, very much reflecting the ultimate concerns of those who are involved.

One interesting comment by the lay leader of the First Methodist Church, writing about its new outreach in the April 1966 issue of **The Kingdom Overseas**, was that many of the techniques now being used in the church's programme are in fact rediscoveries of techniques familiar to the Wesleys—and he quotes as an example the new strength of what are called "Koinonia" groups, which are the old Methodist class-meetings revised in a new style, meeting bi-weekly in various homes with twelve to fifteen people sharing Bible Study, worship and social and personal concerns.

The same emphasis on the importance of small groups is found in perhaps the most interesting and radical experiment of all that I saw, the Church of the Saviour in Washington. This church is housed in a large Victorian house and is most well-known for the depth and extent of the training given to

its members. The membership is in fact deliberately restricted to 75 people, grouped in 6 teams all very thoroughly equipped and trained in courses lasting over a period of two years and demanding intensive academic work in Bible Study, Christian Discipline, Christian Doctrine, Ethics, Stewardship and other courses, in particular skills related to practical, social action. Each member in training is expected to take six such courses, to submit a written paper and then to spend a probationary period in the Church under the sponsorship of another member who is regarded as counsellor and guide. Each member is committed to the disciplines of regular prayer and Bible Study, group fellowship and worship, tithing of possessions, confession and involvement in some kind of mission activity. This last included when we were there service in the Potter's House Coffee Bar, a well-known meeting place in Washington where the Christian witness is quite literally one of serving others. (I have heard recently that Sunday services of a very informal kind have now begun in the coffee bar). Another activity was a centre for group renewal, where people in need of psychiatric help could come. Another team was engaged in restoring and re-decorating poor housing and had recently set up a society for purchasing property and letting it at reasonable rents. Another was very deeply involved in the whole Civil Rights movement. In all these activities the Church members saw their responsibility in three-fold terms—first to be present among people, second to serve them and third to enter into dialogue with them as a means of sharing their faith.

All this, of course, was deeply impressive—and it was interesting to learn that when the membership exceeded the limit of 75, the experienced and trained members were expected to leave and take this sense of mission into other churches. It was the first time I have ever heard of a church that rejoiced in the fact that some of its best members moved away! But inevitably, of course, the whole set-up raised some questions in my mind. I wondered whether the limiting of members, the academic bias of the training course, the very intensive discipline did not make that an experiment of an exceptional kind, valuable in itself but by no means a pattern to be followed everywhere.

But that leads me to my final word of warning. It seemed to me that the great strength of all these experiments was precisely the fact that they had grown out of particular situations to meet particular needs and that none of them would want to be regarded as a blue-print to be applied to other quite different situations. The one thing we can learn from them is surely that it is only when we are ready to hear what God is saying to His Church through what is happening in the events of our own day that we shall really understand what kind of Church He needs to co-operate with Him in all that is going on.

PAULINE WEBB

## ... AN HUNDREDFOLD NOW IN THIS TIME ..."

The first and last time I wrote for "The Fraternal" was 34 years ago, at the end of my leaving year at Rawdon; it was in the form of a letter to my minister, telling of my hopes and fears on entering the Ministry, and I have an idea that Sydney Morris wrote in reply. Now John Barrett, another of S.G.M.'s old boys, has asked me to write again. "The Fraternal" seems to me a bit Third Programmish, and not quite my class, but we'll show willing!

Hopes and fears: I wonder what they were? I have had some massive chapels but never a large church and, as with most of us, the going has been too hard to be wholly enjoyable. Among those compensations that have helped to keep one's soul unsoured are the blessings that come through people.

"I wish I loved the Human Race, I wish I loved its silly face. . . ." Well, we need not pretend to have admired everyone; some we shall always remember and others we can never forget! It is surely one of our highest privileges that so many are ready to welcome us into their homes and often into their hearts. In the Memoirs that will never be published, all of us could include a Book of Saints and maybe a Rogues Gallery too; and we can think with charity of them all.

I would enjoy writing of these ordinary folk, but must confine myself to three who were far from ordinary. J. H. Randall in **The Making of the Modern Mind** contrasted St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Francis of Assisi who were contemporaries. St. Bernard was the doughty fighter, immersed in politics, confronting tyranny and uncovering corruption, while St. Francis, caring nothing for these things, went his peaceful way, brother to all Mankind. They call him "the mirror of Christ", but did not St. Bernard also mirror Christ? All His saints will not suffice to make up "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ".

My heroes could not have been more different but they mirrored Christ. I first saw Sydney Morris when returned from Egypt and clad in his padre's khaki, he entered the pulpit at Upper Holloway and cheerily addressed the boys and girls in Arabic! To me at 14, his sermons were an endless bore, but I loved the humour of his children's addresses. It was not long before, my mind and spirit thoroughly awakened, I was taking in those sermons with ears and eyes and mouth as well! Sydney Morris was certainly a great preacher if by that you mean the power to move people to action and decision. Listening to him, I have gone home many a time with my mind on fire and my heart feeling too big for my body, excited and awed by the grandeur of Jesus Christ. Is there something wrong with that sort of emotion? But he taught us too. A series of his, "The Bible in the Light of Modern Knowledge", was full of good things and rather brave. Many of us could write of what his friendship meant to us for more than 40 years. His very faults were endearing, and as the fine

dust in the balance compared with the love and fidelity of his glowing pastoral heart.

In 1933 I began my ministry in Smethwick, where Rev. Hugh Singleton had ministered for 38 years. He could rise to an occasion, but he was not a preacher like S.G.M. and had the good sense to keep his sermons short. I thought him a most attractive old man with his rosy cheeks, blue eyes, and short beard that had once been red. He was a great church-builder. He began at Workington where, starting with a handful of worshippers in a billiards saloon, he left behind him a sturdy and growing church. He had the same sort of success in Smethwick. He was a tireless worker, and a very human man of God who could get on with people of all ages and types, and was of great use to them, especially when they were in trouble. He regularly attended my Sunday services, never interfered, and praised me whenever he could; his mild criticisms were rare and often took the form, "Ah, I wish you hadn't said it quite like that my friend!" I thought him timid, but it is possible he was just wise. When he was 80 a private dinner party was given in his honour by his niece. At the appointed time, each got up and said his little piece in praise of the good old man, but the best speech was the last. It was by a director of I.C.I. and a lifelong friend. "You have been praising Mr Singleton", he said, "but I know a job he'd be no good at: he would be an utter failure at St. Peter's job at the Golden Gates. At the first miserable excuse, he'd let anyone through; and if the wretch couldn't think of an excuse, Hugh Singleton would find him one!" There was no doubt that he had a burning desire to bring people into God's Kingdom.

Father Roberts was Vicar of St. Stephen's, Smethwick, the poorest parish in the town. He had been there for 20 years, although more desirable livings had been offered him. He was a Socialist, a pacifist, a High Churchman and thorn in the flesh to the Bishop of Birmingham, Dr Barnes. There was plenty of St. Francis in Father Roberts, but politics mattered too; he was a rebel and the stuff of which martyrs are made. He used to organize an annual procession through the parish and once we went to see it. He had borrowed drays from Mitchells and Butlers, the local brewers, and on them erected huge tableaux each with its message. One represented the Mammon of the Capitalist System, a bloated, brute of a fellow with his monstrous boot on the neck of a prostrate woman, supposed to be Humanity. Walking meekly behind this, was Councillor H. Spillar of the Conservative Party in the town! And there was Father Roberts, dressed like the Pope of Rome and doing things that made my Protestant hackles rise . . . and yet I loved him and think of him as a model of what a parish priest should be. He was gifted. On Boxing Days we sometimes went to see his Nativity Play, with all the scenery painted by himself, and the costumes glowing and gleaming in scarlet and gold—all rag-bag stuff on a closer view. Again, the crowd used to stream through his parish on the way to the West Bromwich Albion ground,

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I hope that all of you know by now what a magnificent response we had to the Greenwoods appeal fund. I am writing at the end of May and doubtless these figures will be well out of date by the time they are printed, but in response to an appeal for a minimum sum of five thousand pounds I have received just over eleven thousand pounds at the time of writing.

This tremendous and overwhelming response has reinforced certain convictions I have formed over the years. The first is that the West Ham Central Mission is loved and trusted by the whole denomination. Individuals and churches from all over England, Scotland and Wales have sent in gifts to make this result possible and the accompanying letters were very humbling for they expressed the tremendous faith and trust in the Mission held by so many different people.

The second conviction which was reinforced was that there are no people like christian people when it comes to giving. I could write a lot about this but in a day when so many folk are knocking the church and pouring scorn on organised christianity I would like to pay my testimony to the effect that it is the christian folk on whom you can rely when you are really in trouble.

Some of you brethren in the ministry were kind enough to write personally and send your own gifts and many of you led your church to making a special gift for this special appeal. Please receive my warmest thanks and appreciation for this ministry of encouragement.

To come down from the heights let me ask you to be kind enough to remind your sectional secretaries in the Women's meeting, Men's meeting, Sunday School, etc. that we have a first class colour film strip which we send out with an accompanying manuscript which makes a very entertaining session. The more we can get our people to know about our work the better we are pleased and if you can help us in this way please do so.

With warmest good wishes for God's blessing on your own work and on your own loved ones.

Yours very sincerely,

STANLEY TURL,  
*Superintendent of the Mission*

and Father Roberts, sitting by a night-watchman's fire-bucket borrowed for the occasion, smiling away, would invite coins for his new church hall. He lived for his people and would cheerfully have laid down his life for them. He never locked his Vicarage door. When Rearmament started in the mid-thirties, emaciated men from the South Wales coal-fields, came to Birmingham seeking work. Father Roberts filled his Vicarage with them, caring for them until they found a job and somewhere to live. He in his day had no doubts about the church being FOR OTHERS.

Later we moved to Stratford-upon-Avon where our young people invited him to bring his Sunday School on a day's outing, and (in spite of rationing) provided a good spread free. A wealthy member treated them all to a trip on the river. As we came under the shadow of the magnificent Holy Trinity Church, I expressed my honest admiration. He was a sensitive man, an artist who knew about beauty, and I can see now the look of something like embarrassment in his face as he shrugged his shoulders and uttered the laconic words, "It's smug."

God keeps His word, giving to us, as Jesus said He would, "an hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands . . . and in the world to come eternal life." Life given to God is never cheapened but made infinitely more precious. How could I possibly deserve a Sydney Morris AND a Hugh Singleton AND an F. K. Roberts—AND how many more besides?

ROLAND S. ELDRIDGE

## THE MAKING OF A MAN OF GOD

F. B. Meyer once made the observation that a refiner of gold in N.T. Times would work on the metal until he could see his reflection in it. And many a man has found that God does much the same kind of thing with His children. Before we may be "conformed to the image of His Son" there is often quite a bit of refining to do. We don't doubt the necessity for it, of course, but we do quarrel so often with the process! It is always helpful, and sometimes less painful, to see how God dealt with someone else and learn our lessons second hand! As ministers of the Gospel we couldn't do better than to look at His dealings with Moses. Here was a man whose theological training took the best part of 80 years and whose teacher and examiner was God. What kind of things did he learn? The things which turned this proud, impulsive, hot tempered, aristocrat into the leader of God's people are the kind of lessons every minister of the Gospel today would like to know too.

Maybe then, we shall have to learn as he did, something of **The Holiness of God**. On the dusty, dry slopes of Horeb's

mountains, God led Moses to the bush that burned but wasn't consumed. He was about to teach him a lesson that would be basic to his whole future ministry and his greatest failures were to come when he forgot it. Certainly, the burning bush spoke of God's eternity and of His indestructibility. It may have spoken of a hundred other things but God was teaching Moses then about His holiness. "Put off the shoes from your feet for the place on which you are standing is Holy ground".

The ground in God's presence was Holy then and it is now. Isaiah discovered this in the Temple; John did in his exile home when the brilliance of jasper and sardius would have blinded him and filled him with despair were it not for the tempering green of the emerald bow of mercy. Men of God, our Lord is Holy. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. He is higher, far, than our highest thoughts about Him. A thousand hydrogen bombs are as the brush of His hand, and our ministry would be richer far if our understanding of God as Holy motivated our service and our thinking and our leading of worship. Augustine has said that "Pride was the first thing that overcame man, and it is the last thing he overcomes". Maybe the struggle would not be so difficult if we remembered the Holiness of the one who has set us on our task. J. B. Phillips was right when he entitled one of his books—"Your God is too small". Our thoughts about Him are so often just like that.

God taught Moses also **The Arithmetic of Faith**. As Pastor of a somewhat cantankerous congregation Moses stood at the side of what should have been a more-than-welcome oasis at Marah. But it was undrinkable and there could have been trouble on his hands if God hadn't intervened at that moment and answered despairing prayer in what appeared to be an odd sort of way. He declined to take the bitterness out of the water as the people may have expected. Instead He ordered that something should be put in—he was to cast in the tree that grew on the side of the pool. Instead of taking something out—we put something in! Isn't that what He often does? And isn't it true that we so often forget it? We tell our people that God will "exchange their weakness for His strength". We say that what God gives to the sufferer is greater far than anything they seem to have lost. We preach that the man who gives up home, and riches and the rest is rewarded a hundred-fold here and hereafter. And we forget it ourselves. The grass on that side of the fence where our people work less hours and make more money and leave their worries when they shut the office door, always looks greener than on our side. It seems that the Lord has taken something out of our lives to put us into the ministry—but has He? Hasn't He really put something in that can't be measured in terms of material reward at all? How many of us in our less-insular moments have thought of how much we would miss and how much poorer Christians we would be if we crossed over the fence where the grass seems greener. The provision of Grace, the confidence of people, the privilege of sharing lives and experiences gave

and gay, the respect of the community. "I've never made a sacrifice in my life", said a famous missionary. Neither have we! God sees to that. He doesn't take things out—he puts things in as Moses discovered at Marah before they journeyed on a mere 6 miles to Elim with its dozen wells and seventy palm trees. He is no man's debtor!

Finally, Moses learned **If we don't Pray—we can't Lead**. It happened at Amalek. Silhouetted against the skyline, arms held high by Aaron and Hur, Moses held the rod of God heavenwards and Israel surged forward. It seemed as though God poured power into the very being of the Warrior-Saint so long as he maintained fellowship with his source of power. Only when his arms dropped and contact was lost did the enemy win. It makes wonderful reading that "His hands were steady until the going down of the sun". What a testimony for a leader of God's people. He kept contact with God for His people—not occasionally but persistently; right through his ministry until the going down of the sun. So many people depend on that as Israel depended on Moses.

Maybe these three things that helped to make Moses a man of God are still relevant—A recognition of God's holiness, of the privilege of our calling, and of the necessity for a continuing life of prayer: 'until the going down of the sun.'

J. C. McFADYEN

## A NEW DAY FOR CHRISTIAN PREACHING

To write about preaching for those who are engaged in it can be a frustrating experience. The writer might appear to be giving instruction about something which he is not very good at himself. I am reminded of Gerald Manley Hopkins who once said, "I have never once wandered from my vocation, but, alas, I have not always lived up to it". When one reads books about preaching, like James Stewart's great classic, **Heralds of God**, one can only marvel that God still uses the weak things of the world, and, in the words of the hymn say gratefully:

We thank thee Lord for using us  
For thee to work and speak;  
However trembling is the hand,  
The voice however weak.

I would like to 'nail my colours to the mast' right away and say that I believe in preaching, and I believe it has a function and a future. I have faith in preaching, and am sure that preaching is still the most important instrument God is pleased to use to communicate His word to men. I think this must be said because there is an eclipse of preaching today in the Church, and a good deal of disparagement of it both within and without the Church. There is, it seems, a loss of confidence in preaching, and amongst preachers, scholars,

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theologians, as well as many lay-people a kind of underground campaign against it. Many suggest that the day of preaching is over. The popular demand seems to be for shorter and simpler sermons. When a vicar asked the Duke of Wellington what he should preach about, he was told, 'About ten minutes'. This would meet with a good deal of agreement today.

This is ironic, because on the one hand all those Churches which have tended in the past to disparage preaching (Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic) seem to be re-discovering it today, and they are giving it a new priority. The Church of England actually has a College for Preachers. It is ironic, on the other hand, that preaching is being disparaged amongst those churches that have a great preaching tradition, when one sees that the secular world is re-discovering the power of the spoken and written word through radio, television, and advertising. If we tune in to the radio on the short wave, we can pick up station after station which beams its propaganda across the world, throughout twenty-four hours. This tremendous effort represents a massive vote of confidence in preaching. Winston Churchill and Hitler showed us how words could be used in the political sphere. It was said of the former that he mobilised the English language and sent it to war.

The evidence shows that the spoken word is as powerful as ever. Do we have faith to believe that it is even more so (Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic) seem to be re-the power of the Holy Spirit, and backed by prayer? This is the challenge we preachers have to face—do we have faith in preaching today?

F. D. Maurice spoke prophetically a century ago when he said a generation was arising to whom it would be impossible to preach the Gospel. He meant that the outlook of the world would be so imprisoned and conditioned by secularism that men would not be able to hear a word from another world, the spiritual world. That day seems to have come. We are living in a secular world where men are trying to live out their whole lives without any reference to the supernatural at all.

Many suggest that this very situation makes preaching irrelevant, and the day of the preacher is over, simply because it is impossible to communicate with secular man a Gospel which he does not accept, and whose presuppositions he entirely rejects. There is, furthermore the problem of language, that modern working industrialised man does not recognise the preacher's vocabulary or categories. So the whole emphasis is being placed on the Church serving the world in the name of Christ, seeking not to tell men but to show men, not even seeking conversions.

On the other hand there are those men of discernment who see a reaction against all this. P. T. Forsyth was another prophet who, about half a century ago, asserted that by its preaching Christianity stands or falls. H. H. Farmer in his book, **The Servant of the Word** said, 'If one were asked to

indicate in the briefest possible way the most central and distinctive trend in contemporary Christian theology, one would be tempted to answer, 'The re-discovery of the significance of preaching.' Nowhere has this been seen more clearly than where the Church has undergone a baptism of fire and persecution. Rudolf Bultmann has said, 'Christ meets us in the preaching as one crucified and risen. He meets us in the word of preaching and nowhere else. The word of preaching confronts us as the Word of God. It is not for us to question its credentials, it is we who are questioned, we who are asked whether we will believe the Word or reject it'.

I can testify that I was converted through preaching, I matured as a Christian through hearing Christian preaching, I trained at a College, which, although it was originally called Pastor's College, has always laid great emphasis on preaching, and I have never doubted that it still pleases God to save men through the foolishness of preaching. Forsyth again says, 'The preacher's word, when he preaches the Gospel, and not only delivers a sermon is an effective deed, charged with blessing or with judgement. It is an act proclaiming the great act of God in Christ, mediating it, and conveying it. The gospel spoken by man is the energising of the Gospel achieved by God, the preacher, in reproducing this Gospel Word of God, prolongs Christ's sacramental work'. I need not, furthermore, in these pages, point out the great place preaching has in the Bible; the prophets, John the Baptist, our Lord, Peter and Paul and Stephen were all preachers, and the great commission Christ gave his disciples was to preach and teach the Gospel to every creature. Augustine, Origen, and the Fathers were renowned for preaching as were Francis, Savonarola, Huss, Cranmer, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Whitefield, Jeremy Taylor, Spurgeon, Parker, Campbell Morgan, Temple, Sangster, and Billy Graham. It is a great line of succession.

Preaching is not something we exercise in a vacuum. For one thing it is never completely objective, but it comes coloured by our own experience and validated by our own testimony of the grace of God. It cannot be otherwise, and so Phillips Brooks defined it as 'Truth through personality'.

1. Preaching is exercised **in the context of Christian Worship**. Preaching is the crown of worship. Preaching is sacramental, a means of grace. We must never set preaching and worship over against each other as alternatives. Some lay all the emphasis on worship and disparage preaching as something less than worship. Others talk about the 'preliminaries' in a Christian Service and think the opening items of worship are simply to condition the congregation to receive the sermon as the one thing that matters. Both attitudes are wrong. Worship there must be; we may not use a Prayer Book, but through the right use of hymns, Scripture, and prayers, there ought to be adoration and praise, thanksgiving and confession, supplication, intercession and dedication. This is our liturgy. Within this balanced liturgy the sermon takes its

worthy place as an act of worship. Furthermore preaching ought not to be contrasted with the Lord's Supper. They are not alternatives. The contemporary architectural trend which puts the pulpit into a corner of the church and concentrates attention upon the Communion Table can create the impression that one is more important than the other. Christ is the living Bread, but He is also the living Word. Forsyth calls preaching 'The great fundamental sacrament of the Word'. Without preaching, even the Communion Service is inadequate and dumb. Preaching is offered in the context of worship and is part of worship.

2. Preaching is offered **in the context of Christian instruction**. As preachers of the Word, we are commissioned to exercise a teaching ministry. Paul exhorted Timothy to teach, and himself exemplified the Christian preacher as a teacher. In this he followed the example of Christ who was called 'Rabbi', 'Teacher', and whose teaching makes up a sizeable proportion of our Gospel material in the New Testament. In Acts 2 we see the converts of Peter's Pentecostal sermon 'continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching'. There is a necessary place for kerygma and for didache. We have heard the jibe that Christianity is caught not taught, but it is not true. Christianity is both caught and taught. Paul speaks of the 'Faith' as something he received. There is a 'deposit' of Christian teaching which one generation of Christians is commissioned to hand on to the next generation intact. We must be prepared to study if we are to teach; we must make our teaching interesting and comprehensible (pace William Barclay—one of Scotland's T.V.'s 'stars'), and we must strive to make our teaching relevant to daily life. We have to teach the Scriptures, teach Christian doctrine, teach the person and work of Christ, teach about God and man and salvation, teach Church History and Christian Ethics, teach Christian responsibility and Citizenship. Graham Scroggie used to deplore the fact that none of our Colleges had a Chair of the English Bible, and pointed out the mistake of trying to teach theological students to read the Bible in the original tongues when many of them could hardly understand it in their own tongue. There is a hunger for Christian instruction, and many preachers will confirm that the sermons that are most appreciated are teaching sermons. The Word, said our Lord, is like seed which a Sower went forth to sow. The life is in the Seed. If it is faithfully sown, and falls into good ground, and is energised by the Holy Spirit, there will be a harvest.

3. We are called upon to preach today **in the context of a pastoral concern**. Every preacher ought to be a pastor. The preacher can only make his sermons relevant if he knows his people and their needs. The pastor is one of the Old Testament's great names for God (cf. Psalm 23), Jesus Himself is the Good Shepherd, who commissioned Peter 'Feed my Sheep'. We are called upon to preach One who came to heal the broken-hearted, to forgive sinners, and set the captive

free. It is worth recalling Dr. John Watson's reply when asked how he would preach if he had his ministry again, 'I would preach more comfort'. The world, says Paul Tournier, is writhing in pain, men are sick of their own confusion, and in every congregation each Sunday there are those who are broken hearted, sick with worry, guilty, bewildered, hurt, depressed, and even ill. We may not always know their condition accurately, but if we preach the Bible's strong comfort (literally 'to make strong' or 'fortify') we will never find a sermon irrelevant or wasted. God still says 'Comfort ye, comfort ye. . . .' After a morning service, sometimes, a member of my congregation used to say to me simply but sincerely 'Thank you'. I knew a little of the burden she was carrying, the problems she was facing, and I felt that if I had enabled her to face another exhausting week with new courage and strength, as a preacher, I had done my task.

4. We are challenged each Sunday to preach **in the context of evangelism**. Dr. C. H. Dodd says that whenever the New Testament refers to preaching, it really means 'evangelism'. We are heralds of God, commissioned to proclaim good news, and challenge men with the need to decide whom they will serve. Jesus Christ was an evangelist. Mark tells us something of his early preaching, 'He came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying "Repent and believe the Gospel"'. The last words of the Risen Christ to his disciples were 'Go ye into all the world and make all nations my disciples. . . .' Paul was an outstanding evangelist, and he exhorted Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. The Holy Spirit was specifically given for the task of witnessing to Christ. If the Holy Spirit breaks in at the point of obedience, perhaps this is why, for many of us, our ministry is ineffective. Can we claim the Holy Spirit if we are not directing our preaching to the one specific task for which the Holy Spirit was given? Do we expect God's word to be with power today? C. H. Spurgeon's reply to a preacher who complained he wasn't getting conversions, is appropriate here. C.H.S. asked him 'Surely you don't expect conversions every time you open your mouth, do you?' The disillusioned preacher replied, 'Well . . . no'. To which Spurgeon, with a twinkle in his eye replied, 'That's why you don't get them'. He has a good point. One of the first signs of a discouraged and disillusioned minister is when he ceases to look for conversions through his preaching; when he begins to rationalise his failure he ought to recognise the danger signs. Preaching should always have a clear aim; we must preach for a verdict. The hearts of men and women are as sinful and needy as ever; Christ is still the only sufficient Saviour. 'There is none other Name given amongst men whereby they must be saved,' and the Gospel is 'the power of God unto salvation.'

The relevance of Dr. Beasley-Murray's Presidential challenge to the Denomination touches us as preachers here. We are being called upon to go over to the offensive, to stop apologising and excusing our ineffectiveness as evangelists. It

is time we stopped talking about evangelism and holding conferences about evangelism, and simply got on with doing it. It is probably better to do it badly than not to do it at all. Therefore we ought not merely to say 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel' but begin to act and preach accordingly.

RONALD ARMSTRONG

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