

Christian Problems: Settled; and Awaiting Further Exploration.

I CANNOT claim the distinction of being a centenarian, or even a septuagenarian, but fifty years have passed since I passed, as a boy of thirteen, through the waters of baptism on a cold winter's day in a mountain stream a tributary of the Ebbw in the western valleys of Monmouthshire. In no part of Great Britain are Baptists so strong as in those western valleys. It is said that if you sow there non-Baptist seeds, all the chances are that they grow up into Baptist plants. As to my own case I was brought up in a home with a Congregationalist father and a Baptist mother, but all of us ten children turned out Baptists. I was brought up as a strict Baptist of the old Welsh type. Whether I can claim that distinction now, in my humility I leave others to decide. I think there must be something of my early standpoint left in my blood. At any rate I thoroughly understand the position of close communion Baptists—which, assuming their premises are correct, is a very strong one—and I am in no danger of annoying them through misinterpreting their cherished convictions. An old Indian friend of mine, a bishop of the Orthodox Syrian Church in South India, once described me as a man with a Catholic heart, a Protestant brain, and a rationalistic stomach. I presume he meant to be complimentary, and I do not object to this characterisation of my internal organs. I do not, however, wish to be regarded as a Jesuit in disguise, and I am not a member of the Protestant Truth Society, or still less of the Rationalist Press Association. Yet truth is many-sided, and as I see things, nothing but a balanced recognition of all that is good and true in the Catholic, Protestant and Rationalistic temperaments can do justice to the comprehensive genius of the Christian faith. My present purpose is to discuss quite informally certain problems bound up with our systems of theological truth and Christian life. But living Christianity is infinitely greater than all problems arising out of it.

Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Man is a thinking animal, and, like other members of the species, I have tried in my little way to think out my own theological system. But my Christianity in essence is in no way bound up with my little system of theology, but consists in loyalty to the leadership and lordship of Christ; and all my ministerial activity has been governed through and through by this standpoint. All I claim is the same freedom, within their limitations, to express my own standpoint, as I willingly and cordially grant to others. There can in my experience be a very real brotherhood of the spirit even though the intellectual temperament be fundamentally different.

I have spent thirty-five years of my working life in the East, cut off to a large extent from the main currents of Western life and thought. But perhaps prolonged residence in the back waters of world life has one advantage. It enables one to watch the great conflict of ideals in the Western Christian world as a spectator, rather than as an active participator. In the space at my disposal, naturally I can only make comparatively brief reference to and comment on what I consider the dominant issues in my time that have troubled or are still troubling the waters of Christian life and thought in Western lands. Three of these issues I consider practically settled, and four of them as awaiting further exploration. Some no doubt would choose other problems as more important, but perhaps most will regard my own selection as fairly representative. Intricate, though important, philosophical problems I must avoid for my present purpose.

I. ISSUES PRACTICALLY SETTLED.

(1) When I entered Regent's Park College, London, in 1888, a raw lad of seventeen from a Welsh Grammar School, the down-grade controversy was at its height. Certain ministers in the denomination, not to mention many others outside, had dared to question the eternity of hell-flames for sinners, on the ground that everlasting torment for lost souls was inconsistent with the Fatherhood of God. A large number of Christian people in those days believed in a hell veritably material in character, and to suggest that the flames were not real ones, was regarded as rank disloyalty to the Word of God. Many a stirring sermon on hell did I hear as a boy, which made my hair stand on end. I confess I rather liked the sensation. It gave me a delightful sense of horror more thrilling than anything I found in a penny dreadful. Not long after I entered college one of the senior students did me the honour of asking me to go for a walk. In the course of the walk, this reverend

and learned senior ventured to express some doubts about the eternity of hell. I can vividly recall the terrible shock I suffered. If he had confessed to a murder the shock would not have been so great. Yet I knew him to be helpful and Christian in his whole walk and conversation, and the perplexity of my soul was increased correspondingly. All this, however, gave me food for thought. Some few months later an old minister visiting the college was asked by the Principal to conduct morning prayers. He must have felt that the college, notwithstanding the unbending orthodoxy of the Principal, the venerable Dr. Angus, was under suspicion of heresy, and so thought it his duty in talking to the Almighty to say something that would help to keep us students in the straight path on this great issue. I can recall his words as if they were uttered yesterday, "And, Oh God," he tenderly pleaded, "when we hear the shrieks of the damned ascending from the everlasting flames of the bottomless pit, give us grace to shout, Hallelujah, Hallelujah." This was too much for me, and I came to the conclusion that I would rather risk sharing the agonies of the damned, than join in the Hallelujah of the saints. This conflict, known as the down-grade controversy, very keen and real though it was at the time, has been settled by the silent omission of lurid pictures of hell from the modern pulpit. Most Christian people to-day are content to leave the future in the hands of our Father God, and to rest in the assurance "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Our ceasing to believe in the old idea of hell, does not mean that we have ceased to believe in the moral government of God. Good always and everywhere brings forth good, and evil evil, so that man reaps as he has sown, "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him. Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him." Retribution is of the very nature of God as moral governor, no deed of good or evil can fall out of the circle of the Divine Government. If we had reason to believe that "God was cool and comfortable about the evil that is defying His will, and devouring His children, we should cease to call Him Father." But the wrath of God against sinners is not rage, venting itself in the eternal torment of such of His children as have taken the wrong turning. Even a mother may forget her sucking child, but the door of divine mercy can never be closed against any of God's erring children. Rather the wrath of God must be a holy passion, worthily expressive of the divine righteousness, consistent with fair dealing and magnanimity. We may be sure of this, that the government of God, whether in this world, or in the next, will be absolutely faithful to all demands of fair dealing and magnanimity. We know a magnanimous man when we come in touch with him. He makes all allowance for human

weakness and ignorance, and he never passes judgment without taking into account all circumstances that have a reasonable claim to be considered. The largest and most generous ideals of fair dealing that have grown up in the hearts of men, must have been implanted there by God, and He Himself must be the most magnanimous of beings. "The judgment of God is according to truth," and must be an expression of His undying love, for God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in Him. The grave problems of the future world, shrouded in impenetrable darkness, we may in the utmost confidence and faith leave to Him.

(2) Another burning question, burning in another sense, fifty years ago, was the doctrine of evolution. The great body of Christian people were stubbornly resisting the thought on the ground that it was inconsistent with the early chapters of Genesis, and they claimed that if science came in conflict with the Bible as the Infallible Word of God, it is science must go. Not a few good Christian souls were ready to send supporters of Darwin and Huxley to the stake, for venturing to suggest that the Biblical account of creation was to be treated as religious poetry rather than exact science. In my first year in college, I attended a lecture on this problem in a London church, delivered by the great Old Testament scholar, Professor Elmslie, whose early death was such a loss to the Christian life and scholarship of this country. I can remember the painful intensity of thought and mental anxiety mirrored in the faces of the large audience as they listened to the lecturer unfolding his exposition, having as its object the reconciliation of the evolution hypothesis and the Genesis narrative. This was characteristic of the time, and only painfully was the battle won, until evolution has become a commonplace of general and Christian thinking. There are still, it is true, sharply conflicting theories of evolution. No one now believes in the precise type of evolution propounded by Darwin, which tended to give support to a materialist or mechanistic view of the world. The old materialism is dead, if not buried, killed by scientists themselves, and, in its place, philosophers and leading scientists are propounding the creative or emergent aspect of evolution with an immanent principle or life force at the root of the world organism, and determining its growth into new forms of ever expanding life. The Mosaic programme of the creation of the world in six days of twenty-four hours each is now generally recognised as a poetic legend, and in its place we have eras of unimaginable length in the formation of the earth's crust, and vast ranges of space and time thrown open with a perspective of developing life. Surely here is something infinitely grander and more inspiring than the grotesque cos-

mology of mediaeval times with its universe of three floors, which for a thousand years formed the working background of men's thoughts of the universe and which no one was permitted to question on pain of torture and excommunication. Progressive Christians have everywhere now come to see that an enlightened theory of evolution, recognising all the factors of the case as we know them, does not banish God from His universe, but thinks of the world as the product of a long creative process, in which as Milton sang

God from the first was present,
And with mighty wings outspread,
Dovelike sat brooding on the vast abyss
And made it pregnant.

True we still occasionally get echoes of the old unbending attitude. The Principal of a theological college told me that when he was preaching in a Leeds church a little time ago, he happened to mention the word evolution, in a quite innocent way. Straightaway a lady in the congregation rose from her seat, and walked out of the church in stately indignation. It is, however, probably true that in the years that are gone many more have walked out, or silently kept away for quite contrary reasons, turning in repugnance from a creed which seemed to them to be associated with a series of beliefs which their own studies had proved to them to be impossible. Freedom of thought and expression may be dangerous to some minds, but lack of candour or a reactionary attitude on the great fundamental religious issues of our time is attended with far greater perils.

(3) Another issue, so dominant a religious problem in the life of fifty years ago, but now in the main settled, is that of Biblical Criticism. To suggest that Moses did not write the whole of the Pentateuch, that David did not write all the Psalms ascribed to him by Jewish tradition embodied in the supercriptions, that a large part of the Book of Isaiah was composed by another prophet of a different age, that the book of Jonah was a parable, that the Book of Daniel was written not in the sixth century B.C., but in the second, was regarded by the great body of Christian people as unfaithfulness to the inspired word, bound to result in pure atheism. During my college days, Dr. R. F. Horton wrote what would now be considered a very moderate book on Inspiration and Biblical Criticism, and for it he was virulently attacked in all directions. A short time before the publication of the book he had received an invitation to address the Baptist Union, but after the publication the invitation was promptly withdrawn. An incident that happened at New College, London, when I was at Regent's Park, is indicative of the general religious environment of the time. A ministerial

candidate up for the entrance examination was asked if he had read any books on Atheism. He replied that he had, referring to books by writers like Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, finishing up with Horton on Inspiration, and Dr. Horton himself happened to be present as a member of the examining committee. This young man without a doubt reflected the general Christian outlook of his time. We have travelled far since then. Before I entered college, I had to undergo an examination in Biblical knowledge by a committee of Monmouthshire ministers to test my fitness to preach in the churches of the association. I remember proving very conclusively to them that St. Paul was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews and needless to say I came out of the examination with flying colours. Fifty years ago, the old theory of the Bible as a Book verbally inspired and dictated by the Spirit of God, and equally authoritative in all its parts, dominated the Christian outlook. I was brought up on it, and it occurred to no one in the environment I lived in as a boy to question it. We felt as much bound to defend the crude morality of the Book of Judges, the croaking pessimism of Ecclesiastes, and the terrible imprecations of some of the Psalms as if they were an integral part of our Christian faith and life. But we are to-day freed from the bondage of this slavery to the letter by the recognition of the principle that Revelation is progressive, and religious knowledge an evolutionary growth. We have come to see that emphatically everything in the Bible is not of equal value. Literal loyalty to the Bible in all its details means essential disloyalty to a higher principle fully recognised by Christ Himself, "It was said to them of old time, but I say unto you" : that is the voice of God's spirit through the ages, as human ideals under divine guidance take a loftier form, and conscience becomes more sensitive. Revelation, like the rising of the sun, is not a sudden bursting forth of perfect blinding light, but a shining more and more to the perfect day. "God, who in ancient days spoke to ancestors in many fragments and by many methods, through the prophets, has at the end of these days spoken to us through a Son!" God's revelation to His children has always and necessarily been as they have been able to receive the witness. The human messengers through whom He worked, the various prophetic voices of all the passing centuries, have themselves been very imperfect instruments, and the people to whom they were sent much more so. But Christ Himself is able to speak to men of all classes and civilisations in a way that knows no parallel. He has become the touchstone for the teaching of all other forms of truth and revelation, yet not in any mechanical or literalistic way "My words," He said, "they are spirit and they are life." His authority is not some-

thing imposed on us from without, and is not concerned with trifling details. "To love God with all the soul, and one's neighbour as one's self, on these hang all the law and the prophets," this was to Him the summing up of life's duty and privilege. He is, through His spirit, revealing the Divine Purpose to us in all the movements of our time. New light is ever breaking forth from His word, and it is available in all its fulness for all His people to-day, if we do not close our eyes against its approach. We shall never go back to the slavery of the letter involved in the conception of a mechanically inspired Bible, equally infallible in all its parts. We have entered into the freedom with which Christ has made us free. But there is, I am afraid, still a considerable percentage of Jews in our churches, not in blood, but in spirit. To many Christians the Old Testament is a far more living book than the New. To them the Ten Commandments mean much more than the Beatitudes, they are so much easier to keep. Some time ago I listened to a debate on Sunday observance in a certain Christian gathering. Someone gave in faithful detail the teaching of St. Paul on the Sabbath. One good brother, deeply concerned, replied with the remark, "But that will be most dangerous teaching to give to our churches." Yes, there is still much dangerous teaching in the New Testament, dangerous from the standpoint of those whose attitude to religion and the Bible is legalistic, and literalistic like the Jews of old, and like the Jews as we see them in every Christian Church to-day, sometimes in appreciable numbers. But the soul of the Christianity of Christ goes marching on, and in its conquering march it is destined to turn the world upside down.

II.—ISSUES STILL REQUIRING EXPLORATION.

Such issues as in my judgment are still in need of further serious thought and exploration are serious and many, and I cannot pretend to deal with them in any adequate way.

(1) The signs of the times make it clear that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is in need of restatement in terms adapted to the modern mind. I think it must be admitted that there is a considerable amount of what is practically Tritheism in our churches—the worship of three Gods. Perhaps equally common is a certain type of monotheism which conceives of God purely in terms of Christ or in other cases in terms of the Holy Spirit. There is confusion of thought in a variety of directions, and not many people these days get help from resorting to such a document as the Athanasian Creed. One thing to me is clear: that no Trinitarian conception of God must be allowed to tamper with the ethical monotheism proclaimed by Jesus and the great

Hebrew prophets. "The Lord our God is one" must continue to remain the bedrock of our theology. Yet I think nothing but harm would come to religious faith and life if modern Christianity ignored the intimation of God as triune that we find in the New Testament, such as in the threefold benediction, and the baptismal formula. My close personal touch with varied forms of religious belief in India, ranging from a crude animism and polytheism on the one side, to a refined Deism and Pantheism on the other, has driven me to regard the Trinitarian conception of God wisely stated, not as a blot on the Christian faith, but as one of the chief bulwarks of an ethical and spiritual monotheism, for it saves us on the one side from the excesses of an exuberant polytheism, and on the other side from the perils of a bare deistic or theistic unitarianism, or a pantheism lacking firm ethical foundations. A Christianity purely unitarian and rationalistic in its outlook has no message for mystically-minded seekers after God in Eastern lands. I am sure that an experience like mine has some reality in it, from the standpoint of the need of doctrinal restatement of the Christian view of God in Trinitarian terms. Some of the more impatient radicals in our ministry need to remember that Christianity must be restated, not merely from the view point of an enlightened proletariat in this country, but from the view point of an audience world-wide in extent. Ours is a Gospel for all the nations, and our theology must have a world-wide vision. The God of Christianity is no isolated transcendent deity as in the Unitarianism of Islam, no God of pure immanence, as in the orthodox Vedanta of India, no multiplicity of rival powers as in polytheism, but a Triune God transcendent, yet immanent, incarnate through His Son in terms of man, and through His Holy Spirit bringing all men as regenerate sons into the social fellowship of the Kingdom. For men of all races, alienated from God and one another, any Gospel of God, short of this, is no Gospel at all.

(2) Another issue that I consider is in need of more patient exploration is our attitude to the problem of Christian Union. By way of illustration I may be allowed to refer to the attitude of many of our Christian people to the powerful militaristic elements still dominating to a large degree our international outlook. I have met many in our churches who see nothing wrong in any nation piling up armaments of offence or defence against other nations without reference to their use on the basis of the findings of any judicial tribunal. This is a relic of a barbaric age, when every village, as in some parts of Africa to-day, was practically an independent kingdom, with its own weapons ever in readiness against neighbouring villages. That is the mental complex underlying the ecclesiastic policy still

prevailing in many of the churches of modern Europe. We resolutely abandoned such a policy in the Christian enterprise of India a generation ago. Some time back I met a man who remarked, "We are doing badly in our Church, but thank God our plight is not so bad as the Methodist church over the way." Our ecclesiastical methods in this country have still clinging to them far too much of the spirit of competition and *laissez faire* characteristic of the industrial revolution, and the ideals of the Manchester school whose individualism we inherit. In my judgment the church is lagging behind the broader vision characteristic of much that is best in the international economics and politics of our time. In view of the secularistic humanism dominating the modern outlook to such an appalling extent, the call is surely as clamant for a league of churches as there is for a League of Nations. We need the co-operation of all men of spiritual outlook, whether they are able to pronounce our shibboleths or not, yet many Christians have not advanced one whit since the time when the disciples approached Jesus with the indignant complaint, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbid him, because he followed not us." I sometimes wonder whether our increasingly empty churches may not in the long run be found a blessing in disguise. In time even the most stubborn among us may be driven to a realisation of the stark truth that unless we hang together, we may have to hang separately. The compulsions of God are often difficult to understand, and it may in due time dawn upon us, that the words of the old hymn,

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,

may have an important application to the ecclesiastical situation of our own time. If there is to be a solution of this problem, the open mind is indispensable, a readiness to explore and understand the attitude of the other fellow, and the other ecclesiastical system in the interests of Christ's great ideal for His Church. "As Thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, I pray that these may be one in us."

(3) Another problem awaiting solution is the relation of Christian truth and experience to corresponding truths and experiences in all the religions of mankind. I am not one of those who think that one religion is as good as another. Being made as we are we must assign values in the sphere of religion, as we do in every other sphere of life. Religions, as is the case with all things and persons, may, like an egg, be good in parts, but unsound as a whole. True, we generally throw away an egg when to all appearances there is only one small spot of corruption, but if we did the same with all other things, there

would be nothing left, including ourselves, in this imperfect world. Our popular Christianity would not bear the test, for it is often reeking with paganism, and the beggarly elements of an effete Judaism. Christianity is still viewed by many in our churches in the light of a great body of rules and regulations, commands and prohibitions, as a religion of authority rather than a spirit and a life. Yet it is worth preserving in the hope of a gradual transformation in the direction of the dominant purpose of its founder, the kingdom of God within. There is no doubt justification for a certain superiority complex when exponents of Christianity come into contact with the animism and polytheism of a religion like Hinduism. But the ethnic religions, including Hinduism, produce, in very limited numbers no doubt, their great saints, who will bear comparison with the saints of Christianity itself. It has been my privilege to come into intimate touch with many such, and they have made me humble. The inner spiritual experience of real sainthood is practically one and the same in all religions. It is fellowship with God, and the great ocean of His redeeming love. It is nothing but Western arrogance, if in our Christian zeal we deem it our duty to smash to pieces everything good and bad in the old faiths. Truth is divine wherever it is found, and under no conditions can we be disloyal to the God of truth. We are, in my judgment, living in a fools' paradise if we think that ethnic religions are going to collapse in the face of Christianity as presented to-day in the thought and, above all, in the life of Western Christian nations. Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam stand for great truths that deserve to live, and the Christianity of to-morrow must find adequate place for such truths in the restatement of its faith. In view of the rapid spread of secularism and atheism among certain classes of people in great countries like Russia, India and China, there is room not only for a league of Churches, but a league of religions, otherwise the expression of the religious spirit may in such circles be engulfed in universal ruin. The Christian Church, and Christian Theology, stand above all for Christ, and not for any particular system with its vested interests, and as He was the completion of all that was best in Judaism, so is He the completion of all that is best in the deep yearnings of the ethnic faiths, witnessing as they do in their dim way to the silent workings of the Spirit of God in all His children.

(4) Another problem awaiting solution—the greatest of them all—is the detailed application of the Christian ideal to the varied problems of our time. The incarnation has no real meaning for us unless we are ready to carry out its implications in our own life and the life of our time. The essence of the incarnation is God emptying Himself to share our burdens, and

we are called upon as sons of God sharing this Holy passion to share one another's burdens in the spirit of His incarnate Son. The social inequalities existing in Church and State is still a problem that the Church of Christ as a whole has not squarely faced. Vested interests still too often stand in the way as an insuperable barrier. Why some should be rich and others poor, why some should have abundance of this world's goods and opportunities, and others suffer all the degrading restrictions inherent in poverty, has always been a perplexing problem to the thinking mind and the sensitive conscience. Indian sages pored over this problem four thousand years ago, and they arrived at a solution that seemed to them thoroughly adequate and satisfying. Every man, said they, in this life is enjoying the fruits of his good conduct in a former birth, or enduring the penalty of evil conduct. There is no injustice at the heart of things, but everything is meted out to men in this life exactly as the law of strict, unerring justice demands. But India, consciously or unconsciously, has been, during the past century, under the pressure of Western and Christian influences, turning her back on this solution. As I have seen things in India the people of India of all classes are becoming as sensitive as other peoples in recognising essential injustice when they see it, and are by no means as ready as their forefathers were in submitting to it as something deserved and sent by God as punishment for sins in a former birth. All this is gratifying from the standpoint of general world progress, though from the standpoint of the highly placed in India, whether the high castes among their own countrymen, or the ruling classes from abroad, it is attended with anxieties that may have grave issues for the future of India and our own country.

The problem as it presents itself in Western lands has much in it that corresponds to the situation in the East. We have never resorted to transmigration and the law of Karma for an explanation of our own social inequalities. With us rather it has been the thought of an over-ruling Providence who gives men what they deserve, and places them in stations for which they are fitted. That was in essence the basis of the rule of the squire and the parson under the influence of feudal ideals. The substance of the religious service in our parish churches in years gone by is said to have been summed in the prayer

God bless the squire and his relations
And keep us in our proper stations.

The swing of the pendulum has come with terrific force in most Western lands. Abundant evidence of such a swing is manifest in our own country in all departments of our life, political, social, industrial and religious, and we shall do well if we observe the

signs of the times. Our modern system must undergo radical transformation if it is to stand the test of present-day thinking, and become a substantial reflection of the highest Christian ideal. Compared with the situation as it was when I was a boy, great advance has been made within the limits of our present political system. Libraries, educational opportunities, medical assistance, Unemployment and Old Age Insurance, facilities for recreation, better housing, and a multitude of other things which are now to a large extent communal responsibilities, have gone far to remove scandalous inequalities in our own land, but so much still remains to be done. Millions of our people, in most cases through no fault of their own, live within or on the verge of the poverty line, and are housed under practically slum conditions. God clothes the flowers, and feeds all living things. The life of lilies and of birds is one of splendour and of song, and God's plan for His children cannot be one of carking care. Twenty years ago we began a grim fight with a foreign foe, a fight that required for its successful completion the commandeering of all the life-blood of the country. No man's life was his own. What shall a man give in exchange for his life? Yet all had to be ready to make the supreme sacrifice when the call of the country came. We are engaged in a fight to-day against social inequalities and unemployment far more vital to the future of the country and the race than even the great world war. The nation claimed to dispose of its life-blood as it pleased in order to conquer the foreign foe. In this conflict with poverty and slumdom is property more sacred than personality? We are on Christian ground when we say that rights of property must not be allowed to stand in the way of the rights of personality, committed as we are to the quest of a kingdom where human life shall wear the garb of gladness, and none shall be in want of suitable food and raiment and healthy shelter. As a matter of fact we live to-day in a world of plenty. Machines and methods of production have improved to such an extent that all might live in comfort with a minimum of manual toil. The soil was never more bountiful with chemicals to increase its yield, and efficient machinery to work it. A modern mill can make three thousand barrels of flour per man per day, where only one barrel was possible by primitive methods. Yet in an age of plenty large numbers of our fellow men, women and children are in daily want, badly fed, badly clothed, badly housed. But economists are using their brains to curtail production, with the damnable implication that scarcity in the larders of the people is necessary if there is to be prosperity in the money markets of the world. Wheat is fired in the field, coffee and cotton and oranges are dumped into the sea because men have not the money to buy. Many years ago the

world roared with laughter when an American statesman, the late Mr. W. J. Bryan, declared that humanity was being crucified on a cross of gold. To-day large numbers of us believe that he said nothing but sober truth. Our money system, it is recognised on all hands, has broken down, and has proved utterly inadequate to meet the changed circumstances of the twentieth century. The banks have become the virtual proprietors of a large proportion of our land and industrial plant, probably to an extent not less than was the case with the Roman Church in mediaeval times. It is therefore perhaps hardly a matter of surprise that our great bankers and economists cling with a pathetic faith to the money mechanism in which modern industry functions, and regard its laws as mystically sacred and inevitable. "Very readily we grant," to quote the words of the Dean of Canterbury, himself an economist and engineer, "that the laws of the present system inevitably produce certain results: it is just because those results are so disastrous that we challenge the system, and urge that financial and other systems are made for man, and not man for systems." This much I feel sure of as a Christian, that any system that requires us to destroy the bountiful gifts of Providence when men are starving, and to thank God not for a good harvest but for a bad, in the interests of financial stability on the basis of an out-of-date currency, even though men and women and children may starve, is in itself an outrage on the Christian conscience that the Church of Christ cannot continue to countenance. Our present economic plight has a moral aspect that we cannot ignore, and the Church has no right to pass by on the other side. If we as Churches fail to put our whole weight on the side of radical social progress worthy of the Christian brotherhood, others will do the job for us, and in a way that will mean incalculable injury to the highest Christian ideals.

Another problem requiring detailed investigation and action in the light of Christian ideals is the problem of war and disarmament. Many of us feel that the Christian Church was drugged into forgetfulness of its principles during the Great War. It is a startling fact that the Christian Churches, in all the lands where the conflict raged, entered into the struggle with an outlook through and through national. In general Christians in Great Britain, Protestant and Catholic, advocated with all fervour the British cause. Our Christian brethren in Germany, Protestant and Roman, in an equally fervent way sided with their own country. Our boasted claim that the religion we profess rises above race, and that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, fell to pieces, and the echo of the crash is still with us, and will remain to trouble us for many a

long year. Perhaps it was the most deplorable collapse of the Christian ideal in the whole history of the Church, and critical minds outside the Church will not easily allow us to forget it. I am prepared to admit that unscrupulous propaganda in each country accounts for much. We were allowed to hear only as much truth as the Government considered convenient. Even to a modern civilised government, everything is fair in war, and when the national interests seem to require it, moral principles and Christian ideals are thrown to the winds. In this respect all governments are equally unscrupulous. Perhaps in the Providence of God such a terrible world-wide conflict was necessary in order to bring home to the consciences of men all the horror and dirt that war under modern conditions inevitably involves. I hate war as at present understood with all my soul, and yet I confess I cannot bring myself to endorse a position of pure pacifism, in the strictest sense of the term. I believe the maintenance of law and order requires force in the background. A police force is indispensable if hooligans are not to take possession of country, town and village without let or hindrance. I have never yet met a pacifist who is ready to allow a visitor to enter his home, and do what he likes, and take what he likes, without resorting to resistance, and calling in the aid of the police. If there be any such, I shall be glad to have his name and address, as I have need of a few things. Grant the necessity of force in any form for the maintenance of law and order, and the restraint of the evil doer, and the case for an international police force is won. War as at present waged, without reference to any judicial tribunal, is nothing but lawless banditry, even though committed in the name of great nations. Under the conditions existing to-day, surely the way is open for Christians of all persuasions, and all true lovers of peace, now that there is an international tribunal available for passing judgment on issues dividing nation from nation, to take a resolute and united stand for the total abolition of war as hitherto understood and to say with one heart and voice, "Never again." Yet with all my heart I am in favour of Lord Davies when he pleads for an International Police Force for effective use by the League of Nations, when any one of its number breaks loose and adopts hooligan methods in the pursuit of its own selfish purposes. A town is not a family, and a community of nations is not a church. In the interests of peace and order, whether national or international, we dare not refuse to recognise realities, and thereby give the hooligan his opportunity to terrorise the world. I want peace, but my pacifism refuses to be blind in the realities of an imperfect world, in which the devil's influence is still far from negligible. If we as Christian Churches remain hesitant on the great issue

of international peace, and refuse to pull our whole weight against a selfish and unchecked nationalism, we shall be guilty of treason to the kingdom of God.

There is, finally, one other problem, somewhat domestic in character, to which I feel I must refer, though I do so with some hesitancy, in view of the delicate character of the issues involved. It is the problem of ministerial salaries, which in my judgment leaves much to be desired in the application of the spirit of Christian brotherhood. The application of high ideals, like charity, begins at home, and we have very little claim to say much about the lack of brotherhood in the economic, social and international issues of our time if we fail in this respect to set our own house in order. I fail to see that we can be very effective in pleading for a deeper sense of brotherhood between capital and labour, and between the nations of the world in their unbrotherly efforts to promote their own purely national interests, when we have a corresponding problem unsolved in our own denominational organisation. As I see things, there are scandalous inequalities utterly unworthy of the Christian brotherhood in the scale of ministerial salaries prevailing in Christian bodies like the Baptists, Congregationalists and Anglicans. True, our own Sustentation Scheme and Superannuation Fund have as their inspiration the principles of sharing one another's burdens, but we still have a long way to travel before justice and fair dealing come to their own. Our leaders are fond of telling us that our village congregations constitute the great bulwark of our evangelical testimony, but how many of them would be content to spend their days under the conditions characteristic of the average village minister of our day, passing rich in some cases on two or three pounds a week? We have in our ministry to-day not a few who are receiving little more than £100 a year, while some are receiving in the neighbourhood of ten times that amount. Said our Lord to His disciples, "Blessed are ye poor," but it is a form of blessedness not keenly sought after or highly honoured in the official religious organisations of the twentieth century. It is not uncommon to see ministers and clergymen, Baptists among the number, dying wealthy men. In referring to the records of the Baptist denomination as represented in its Union, it is significant that not a single village minister or working man deacon has all through the years been promoted to the giddy heights of its presidency. All our presidents, without exception, have been well-paid town or city ministers or officials or laymen living in quite comfortable circumstances. If the prophet Amos appeared in some of our religious assemblies to-day he would have abundant ground for turning on us with words of scathing indignation, "But let judgment roll down as

waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." But some of our leaders tell us that this kind of inequality is inherent in our democratic individualism, and cannot be remedied without abandoning our Baptist ideals. Nothing is easier than to find some high principle of conscience in defence of their maintenance where vested interests are involved. But if Baptist principles conflict with Christian ideals, which are to prevail? On the foreign field, though we are Baptists, we have found a way out far more, in my judgment, in accord with Christian ideals of brotherhood. Our missionaries are paid, not according to their qualifications, or the kind of service they are engaged in, but according to their needs. Every man is provided with house accommodation, and his allowances are on the basis of providing him with sufficient to free him from financial anxiety and strain. Where special medical expenses are incurred, the mission may come to his aid, and this is the invariable rule during the years of probation. A single man's allowance is less than half that of a married man, while children's allowances; travelling and furlough expenses are extra. No difference is made between evangelistic, industrial, medical and educational missionaries, and even secretaries, who are practically bishops in their area, come under the rule, apart from hospitality and other inevitable extras. What is possible abroad, is surely not beyond the power of consecrated Christian statesmanship at home. I have heard it said that missionaries are better paid than many ministers at home. I grant it, but that is because the resources available for missionary salaries are pooled, and distributed in a Christian way. Let the denomination at home go and do likewise, and the poverty problem in our ministry is solved. Have we among our leaders at home the Christian statesmen who will fairly and squarely face this issue without counting the cost to themselves? Our Methodist brethren have to all intents and purposes solved the problem, and so have the Presbyterians of Scotland, though perhaps in a lesser degree. There is a New Testament law, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." The spirit underlying this injunction, which is the spirit of the Incarnation and the Cross, is surely not less binding than the New Testament teaching on the baptism of believers to which we stedfastly adhere. If Christ visited us to-day He would surely tell us, "This ye should have done, and not left the other undone." As I see things, the scandal of infant baptism is a mere trifle compared with the scandalous inequality prevailing in our midst in regard to the support of our ministry. Some contend that the inequality of economic conditions in our ordinary church life with its profession of common brotherhood, should first be tackled, as being more in accord with our Baptist democratic

ideals. That is only a convenient way of postponing the day of advance until the millennium. It is easy to discuss at large the application of Christian principles to broad and remote issues affecting in the main the other fellow. The test of a living Christianity is to begin with ourselves in the Spirit of Him who faced the Cross with divine courage, despising the shame.

GEORGE HOWELLS.

LEOMINSTER church is due to three founders. Richard Harrison, once a trooper in the army of the Earl of Essex, then dairyman and schoolmaster, became curate of Charlton Kings, preacher in Hereford cathedral, and assistant to the county commission. His Baptist work ranged to Netherton, Dymock, Upton. Because he took tithes, the Leominster Baptists applied for advice to several Associations, whose replies are entered in their book. His work was therefore continued by Edward Price, who avoided all such entanglements; in 1672 he took licences for his own house at Hereford and the house of Frances Prichard at Leominster; in 1689 he attended the London assembly, and lived on to 1702. General Baptists sent Richard Pardoe evangelizing, and his results here were consolidated under Elder Rowland Stead, who had been a soldier and settled down as a weaver. Meanwhile the vicar, John Tombes, who had been accumulating incomes at Bewdley, Ledbury, Ross, and London, returned and gathered a third group of Baptists; in 1657 and 1660 he held here three debates with Quakers. In 1694 Thomas Holder induced all to unite, and had a church of 111 members, including John Davis of Eardisland, who gave land and a house, which was rebuilt. James Caswall, who had on the advice of Tombes, taken parish communion and gone on the borough council, became Bailiff in 1698 and came to the Baptist Church in state. They were rich in ministers, Thomas Lewis founding Glaswcm, Peter Griffin founding Ludlow, John Stocking at Eytton, John and Abdiel Edwards going to Dublin, Joseph Price to Tewkesbury, Joseph Stennett to Exeter. Holder died in 1729, and after two years John Oulton came from Brassey Green in Cheshire; the Hereford members died out, only one being left when he went to Liverpool in 1749. Rees Evans from Bristol academy came on probation next year, but went on to Shrewsbury in three years, disapproved by the eleven members. Old Isaac Marlowe, the London anti-singer, had come to end his days here, and the church revived when Joshua Thomas came from Hay, and Mary Marlowe rebuilt the premises in 1771, endowing the church.