

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Fraternal / Baptist Ministers Journal* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bmj-06.php

The Fraternal

APRIL, 1965

No. 136

	<i>Page</i>
EDITORIAL	4
WRITING AND PRESERVING BAPTIST HISTORY	4
Rev. Dr B. R. White, M.A., Lecturer, Regent's Park College, Oxford.	
1980: MUST THEY INCLUDE US IN?	9
Rev. J. D. Pawson, M.A., B.Sc., Minister, Gold Hill, Chalfont St. Peter.	
THE SILENT REVOLUTION	13
Rev. James Sutton, Overseas Secretary, United Society for Christian Literature.	
CHURCH NIGHTS: AN EXPERIMENT	16
Rev. Norman P. Wright, M.A., Minister, Mutley, Plymouth.	
THE STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT THUS FAR	19
Rev. E. Ungood Davies, B.A., B.D., Joint-Adviser, Baptist Stewardship Department.	
THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE ASSOCIATIONS:	
A B.M.F. COMMENT	22
OF INTEREST TO YOU	25
THE WIDER CIRCLE	29
BOOK REVIEWS	32

EDITORIAL

The personal factor

In our task of establishing the Kingdom of God amongst men it is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of pastoral care for the individual. Yet for a variety of reasons this is often difficult to achieve. The minister sees his congregation from the pulpit on Sunday, manages to get a word with some of them as they leave, and then is hard put to it to find an opportunity for closer contact. All the men and many of the women are only free in the evening, and may then go out or be relaxing with a favourite TV programme at home. On the practical level a notice in the church magazine of the time when the minister will be available in the vestry or an announcement each Sunday of the roads in which he will be visiting in the coming week can help.

Recently a London conference on ministerial work had this theme: "Limitations of personal pastoral work by the individual minister", and these can be on another level than the practical. He needs a capacity to get alongside men and women, and whilst there are those who are blessed with the gift of doing this naturally and the insight to recognise the need, there are others who must work to acquire this understanding, and some training in psychology is called for. Guidance and help should be available for those already within the church's orbit but it should not stop there. "Christianity taught people to care", and even in our affluent society there are very many old, lonely, or perhaps still more feeling inadequate to deal with life, who greatly need this care. The good minister will recognise that his church members must share this task with him. He must help "to equip God's people for work in His service" (Ephesians 4:12). Especially he must enthuse the young men and women of the church, those who will be its nucleus in the coming years, with a vision of their responsibility to their fellows. Thus pastoral care may spread in an ever-widening circle.

WRITING AND PRESERVING BAPTIST HISTORY

WHY DOES MORE and better Baptist history need to be written? So that the wisdom and experience of our past may be harnessed to the making of decisions about our present and our future. It needs to be written so that we may come to a better understanding of what the Holy Spirit would teach us through tradition. It is at this point that the theology of the Holy Spirit among all shades of evangelical—from Keswick to Woolwich—is normally most defective. If it is the distinctive "catholic" heresy to attach too much weight to the past, it is certainly the distinctive "protestant" heresy to speak, act and write as if it did not exist. It has been too easy for us to be so enamoured of the doctrine of the immediate (unmediated, *if* such a thing be possible) guidance and authority of the Spirit His vertical activity, that His horizontal activity in history has been overlooked. Tradition is that which has been handed down from the yesterday of the people of God and, more narrowly, our tradition is that which has been handed down from our denominational

yesterday. Our tradition cannot be claimed to enshrine the whole truth (he would be a fool who made such a claim); nor can our tradition be claimed to be infallible, for Scripture must master and must judge tradition; nor can our tradition be claimed to have one voice (any more than that of the Fathers of the "undivided" Church). We may not award tradition a throne which she may not have but there is no need to make her cinderella, and forget her altogether.

Tradition has a place: what the Holy Spirit taught yesterday may have, must have, a bearing upon what He would teach us today. Nevertheless we must beware of a crude fundamentalism, which in place of "Holy Church says" or "the Bible says" inserts "the Puritans say" and so commit our mind and conscience to the keeping of another age. That way lies blind dogmatism and a theological strait-jacket. Some of our brethren might like to appeal to John Smyth, others to the Confession of 1677, others yet again to the assembly of 1689, and still others to the wide canvas of the 17th century Baptists. They are all wrong: we may not confide ourselves to the keeping of a man, or of a confession, or of an assembly, or of an era. *But* we should listen respectfully to what they have to say when, in the light of Scripture and of the Spirit, we are on our knees on behalf of our tomorrow.

When we make up our minds about our denominational policy and future (and these may not be quite as much bound up together as some people think), when we strive to evaluate just what it is that God has entrusted to us, which we have to contribute to the wider family of the people of God—then let us take into account our yesterdays. To neglect this is to deny, implicitly at least, that the Holy Spirit ever had anything worth saying to another generation which has not yet been said (or heard!) by ours. But there is one other thing which I believe both Scriptures and our tradition teach us; that is that there may come a time when, having weighed the present situation, and the witness of our past and having searched the Scriptures on our knees, we may receive the command of the Spirit to cut loose from our yesterdays. When and if that day should come I trust that I would not be too timid to venture untrodden paths.

But the time for talking about untrodden paths is when we have given due care to the exploration of the highways and byeways of our past. The time is coming, if it be not already upon us, when the ears of ministerial brethren and of their unwilling flocks are going to be assaulted by hosts of precedents culled from "Baptist" history. It will be wise not too hastily to listen to those who cry 'lo here' or 'lo there' are the authentic handholds or footholds of the Spirit in our tradition. Nowadays secular historians are a little wary about that idea of total history which implied that if you collected all the facts in a vast heap the one true pattern would emerge. "Total" history is out of fashion. Yet "total" history has one great value: it has the aim and intention of filling in the light and shadow, of filling

in history's context—so that the importance of a precedent, of an act, of a doctrine, of a personality can be tested by a recalling of its contemporary context. No preacher worth his salt would dare to tear his text from context: such action does despite to the Holy Word of God. Even so no theologian or ecclesiastical statesman should tear his precedents from their context in history for he will be guilty of the (lesser) blasphemy of doing despite to the history of salvation between the first and the last Coming.

The importance of context can be simply underlined with a hypothetical case. Supposing that in 1695 the Baptist Congregations of London had put their liberty into the hands of an all-powerful committee of three. To judge how important such a precedent might be for us today we would need to have history written in sufficient detail to answer a number of important questions. What train of events led to this decision; what exactly were the powers entrusted to them; how did they use them; what were the Churches' reactions; the arguments for and against its continuance; whether the experiment was repeated, and, if so in what circumstances and with what results? We need to have Baptist history written *in depth* so that at least the ordinary man in the pew knows what is mainstream in our tradition and what has turned out to be byepath meadow.

On the other hand the brutal fact of the matter is that the state of Baptist historical writing at the moment, in both quality and quantity of work done, is such that it is virtually impossible to claim that any era of our history has been treated in depth. By "in depth" I mean given an adequate historial context such as would help to answer similar questions such as those suggested above. We need to remember this if the debate about historical precedents in our history, to which the booklet *Liberty in the Lord* contributed another round, is to be in the least fruitful. The authors there thought Everyman too much in the hands of the expert(s). I can at least ease their minds on that point; there is no full, expert, published work in whose hands any of us can be. And I am not aware that anyone has ever been committed to claiming that there is. In short, Baptist history has not been written on a sufficiently large scale.

I believe it is high time that we got down to producing big books on Baptist history. It is not to be ungrateful to state emphatically that neither of the books by Whitley (Rev. Edn. 1932) or by Underwood (1947) will do. The basic problem with each of these volumes is that it is too small to be interesting, certainly too small to be authoritative, or to supply the background for authoritative studies. On the other hand it must be made quite clear that to comment on the inadequacy of either of these two distinguished authors and their books is not merely to criticise them. Adequate writing of general history rests upon the quality and quantity of detailed monographs. Whitley and Underwood provided us with maps of our history to the scale of ten miles to the inch. What we need is detailed studies covering the ground at six inches to the mile, and they are

just not available. And not only are the monographs chiefly notable for their absence but, as a denomination we are, generally speaking, almost criminally careless with our primary records.

Let me illustrate this matter of carelessness with source material for this is a matter about which many ministers who have neither the time nor the inclination to write history themselves can really help. In the last few months I have come across the following treatment of four churchbooks whose records go back into the 17th century. One had got so damp that it fell apart and, now dried, is held together with pink tape; another has become virtually the jealously guarded private property of a provincial dragon; yet another is kept in a tin trunk at the back of an unlocked Church; and the fourth, according to one of Dr. Payne's footnotes, has been dispatched to America in order, I can only imagine, to help our export. In each case these manuscripts are unique and priceless. Is it not time that we had a campaign (a) to re-bind with expert care some of these documents and (b) to microfilm them depositing a copy with the Church House, with the Angus Library at Oxford and the British Museum.

If, on the other hand, there are ministers who would like to use some of their hardwon leisure, in writing up their history more adequately than it has hitherto been done, such brethren will be doing the denomination a real service. In the past local pastors and other enthusiasts have rendered valuable service by doing just this. Unfortunately too often their efforts have been partly spoiled by a natural concern for the picturesque and the edifying: after all the local Church is apt to provide most of the consumers. But it will be readily appreciated that though it may be amusing that in the early 18th century Devonshire Square excommunicated a soldier churchmember for deserting to the French, it may prove to be of far greater value to the historian to follow the course of a long inter-church wrangle about one of the members. This latter affair may well throw interesting light on the nature and privileges of church membership as conceived in the London Baptist community of the day. Incidentally I would not play down the value of these Churchbooks for sermon illustration: illustrations from the past may sometimes make modern sermon points more piercing if less personal. My favourite among those I have so far discovered was the case of the London congregation who, about 1800 because of the distress of the "labouring poor", due to the then current high prices, decided to have a special prayer meeting. The anecdote will need to be carefully used, being at least double-edged!

If, then, you plan a new history of your Church, and particularly if it is one with 17th or 18th century records, make sure you get everything you can out of them. Even if the Church cannot afford to print all your manuscript, the complete work could be usefully deposited either in the Angus Library or at Church House.

Next, I would recommend to all who are going to attempt this sort of work that they beg or borrow a copy of W. G. Hoskins,

Local History in England. This will suggest many other possible local sources from which you may be able to supplement your actual Churchbook: old newspapers, diaries, letters, maps. The result should be to anchor your church history firmly into the community to which it has belonged. One of the weaknesses of our history writing has been the way in which the churchlife has gone on, apparently, in a vacuum. Here the local man has enormous advantages over the research student from afar.

On the other hand, the man who is less interested in the local community or congregational history may like to follow up one man—perhaps a minister moving from pastorate to pastorate and producing occasional writings, or perhaps, with greater difficulty, a layman; they are harder to trace for obvious reasons. Last summer I was able to get some time to spend on Thomas Crosby, the first historian of the English Baptists, and a Southwark schoolmaster. The article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is somewhat meagre and more than a little inaccurate but by following up clues in his own writings I was able to discover quite a bit about him from various sources, some of them quite unexpected. Of course I had disappointments—the one volume of Trinity House records which might have told me a little more about him was the one destroyed by wartime bombing but the investigation was both interesting and fruitful. One thing I learned was that, on the whole, people are most kind to enquirers whether you are seeking out the records of Thomas Crosby's old school, asking the Clerk to the Clothworkers' Company about his father, or wandering into the Public Records Office with a query. My point is that this sort of research can be extremely worthwhile; with only a moderate amount of information and pertinacity, you can help to fill in the dark places in Baptist history. For example, Crosby helped to make a little Church history as well as to write about it. But that is another story.

But the weakness of our contemporary one volume Baptist histories is not only in their lack of detailed information about Church life and biography; it is also reflected in their treatment of some of the central theological themes which have always been our Baptist concern. It is really due again to the paucity of scholarly studies of these matters: big books can only be written if sufficient people write small ones. It would be valuable if we had some full length studies of theological themes for the period 1609-1959. For example, it is really remarkable that there is no detailed study of what English Baptists have said about *Baptism* over the years. Neither have there been full-length studies across the centuries of our attitudes to ordination, to the Lord's Supper, to authority in Church and State. There have been one or two nibbles at these and other subjects but no one need feel that there is no room for him. Many of our associations lack histories, or, if they have them, there is still room for more work because the original authors were either skimped for space or time.

This is work that cannot be done by one man although we must all be grateful for the stimulus given to these studies by Dr. Whitley in the last generation and by Dr. Payne in our own. Although there are several projects in progress at the present time there is still room for many and, at last, we can hope that the patchwork quilt which is our denominational history will take on something of that order and beauty which all work which is worthily done must have.

Remember: in your church records there are to be traced, faintly enough sometimes, the footsteps of the Holy Spirit—even if the sound of His Presence is not always recognised in the expected places.

B. R. WHITE

Dr. White has been appointed Research Officer of the Baptist Historical Society. Readers of The Fraternal are reminded that the Society will welcome enquiries and be pleased to give advice on matters regarding our denominational history.

1980: MUST THEY INCLUDE US IN?

I AM WRITING on behalf of those who are Christian by experience, conservative by theology and Baptist by churchmanship—in that order of priority. Our hesitation and even awkwardness in relation to the ecumenical movement is now proverbial, though it is still not fully understood. We are grateful for the increasing recognition of our point of view. The majority of us share neither the violent antagonism of the International Council of Christian Churches nor the eager enthusiasm of the World Council of Churches, both established in 1948. Our sentiments are more akin to those principles which found expression in the Evangelical Alliance of 1845 and which stimulated such social reforms as Factory Acts and District Nurses and such ecumenical ventures as the Young Men's Christian Association and the Student Christian Movement—all of which later ignored or repudiated their parentage. It would be a great mistake to assume that the ecumenical movement began in 1910 at Edinburgh, though its character before and after that historic missionary conference were quite different.

Our caution, which seems excessive to many, is largely due to this change. The uncertain and transitional nature of our present situation makes dogmatism difficult and unpopular. It is right that our fears should be expressed, however, if only to show that they are not mere obscurantism or phobia. Another fifteen years will have clarified many of the issues raised in this article, perhaps in unexpected ways. Meanwhile, we see neither a red nor a green light—but a strong amber!

We do not quarrel with the MOTIVES behind the current surge towards unity. While there may be a small minority who want to play power politics in ecclesiastical affairs, we believe most ecumenical participants feel an obligation to fulfil the will of God as

revealed in such passages as John 17 and Ephesians 4 (which are now 'proof-texts' of the movement). We acknowledge freely the challenge to let our relationship with one another in Christ be seen by the world as proof of our discipleship (John 13.34).

With many of the statements associated with the World Council we could not disagree, except perhaps to point out that their wording is so general as to allow a wide variety of interpretation, as the membership of the Council reflects. For example, who could disagree with the Basis itself, now greatly improved with references to the Trinity and to the Scriptures? But it lacks any direct reference to salvation and relies on the acceptance of an extremely limited creed as a means of identifying Christians. Could anyone take exception to the words of the Roman Priest, the Abbe Couturier, when he taught us to pray for unity "in the way Christ wills and the means He chooses"? Fine words—but how do we discover the ways and means? The debate at Nottingham on the relation of Scripture to Tradition pinpoints one of the difficulties, which that conference tried to resolve by the curious casuistry of defining the Gospel as Tradition! The definition of "The Unity We Seek" presented at New Delhi is exceptionally good. But what does "baptised into Christ" mean, and what form of universal unity is envisaged?

It is obvious that denominationalism cannot be justified from Scripture and must go. Our labels reflect the ludicrous position that each of us knows fellow believers in our own communion all over the country better than those who live in our own district but worship with a different lot! This applies just as much to independent bodies like Baptists and Brethren as to connexional bodies like Anglicans and Methodists. No thinking Christian can tolerate such anomalies. We look forward to the funeral of the word "Baptist" and a lot of its sentimental attachments.

The crucial question remains, however. If and when our "unhappy divisions" are abolished, what will be put in their place? Ecumenical spokesmen are divided in their answer. Some seem very sure of the ultimate destination; others glory in the fact that the movement does not yet know where it is going! Evangelicals are trying to assess the future in the light of present trends—and are deeply disturbed by their implications. In a word, there are five characteristics which we fear will be part of the "Coming Great Church".

1. A SYNCRETIST TREND IN MEMBERSHIP. It cannot be pointed out too often that Councils bring ecclesiastical bodies together, not individual Christians. It must therefore contain many nominal members who have no knowledge of the Head of the Church and are not part of His Body at all. Yet all are included in the category of "separated brethren". It is this failure to define a Christian brother in terms of being born again of the Spirit that causes us greatest anxiety. There can never be true unity with such people, for the essential pre-requisite is missing. Those who

believe that the purity of the Church demands a regenerate membership wonder if this will ever be possible under such conditions.

2. A LATITUDINARIAN TREND IN DOCTRINE. An official publication of the British Council has stated that evangelicals "believe that there can only be true fellowship after agreement on essential doctrine has been achieved . . . It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the whole method of the modern ecumenical movement is precisely contrary to this." Nottingham confirmed this attitude by appealing for a settlement of our theological differences from within a united church, on the ground that none of them is significant enough to keep us separate! It is strange that so little notice can be taken of "word" and "truth" in John 17 and Ephesians 4. The New Testament is full of warnings against doctrinal compromise. One would like to see ecumenical studies concentrating on the Epistles of John and to the Galatians.

3. A SACERDOTAL TREND IN MINISTRY. The majority of participating bodies accept the dichotomy of clergy and laity. It is true that the latter are being encouraged to take more part, but there is little apparent desire of the clergy to relinquish monopoly of certain functions, particularly those related to the Sacraments. The notion of a mediating priesthood seems to us closely connected with what has come to be called the "Liturgical Movement". We may be wrong and await developments with interest. But we cannot afford to lose those fundamental insights of the New Testament which were rediscovered at the time of the Reformation and provided the foundation of our religious liberty.

4. A CONNEXIONAL TREND IN POLICY. If the World Council were simply a forum for discussion, evangelicals would be readier to co-operate—but it is already far more than that. By its constitution it is not, and cannot ever become, a super-Church. But the declared aim of so many of its leaders is to render the Council obsolete as soon as its loose federation can give way to the 'Coming Great Church'. Where would the centre of authority lie in this ultimate body? Would the local church be directly responsible to its Head in heaven? Or would hierarchical personages and representative councils make the decisions at national and international level? Every indication is toward the latter. Apart from the fact that a number of denominations already have this arrangement, it is the trend of our age—as much in political and commercial as in religious spheres. In emphasising that this would more truly demonstrate the unity of the Body, we overlook the equally valid principle of the authority of the Head.

5. A TOTALITARIAN TREND IN AUTHORITY. Perhaps the greatest fear of the evangelical stems from his study of Biblical prophecy—yet this aspect has never to our knowledge been included in public discussion. Many of us believe that the Bible foretells one world state with an established religion led by a man of Christ-like appearance. This system will be of the devil, not God; and it will persecute the scattered minority of true believers.

To say that the World Council is consciously aiming to be that system would be gross speculation. To say that it is unconsciously preparing for this would be premature. But to say that it could be used in such a way is valid. There have already been some criticisms of evangelicals for "proselytising" in a member church's territory. It has also been necessary for some of the leaders to utter a warning against syncretism with other religions (notably Lesslie Newbigin and Visser 't Hooft).

Such are our main fears. Some dismiss them as utterly groundless and the product of a fertile but perverted imagination. Others have frankly admitted the dangers and urged evangelicals to attack them from within the movement. Nottingham made a gesture in this direction by inviting 'conservative' delegates—though many were Anglican and most were already committed to the policy of co-operation. In the Free Churches, the system of democratic election of representatives usually prevents the evangelical minority from being present at ecumenical discussions. We admit, however, that quite a number would not avail themselves of such opportunities, even if they were presented. This is not due to an isolationist unwillingness to discuss vital points of difference, but reflects a reluctance to be unequally yoked in activities beyond such discussion. Already joint activities in worship and witness are an established part of the programme. For us this is far too premature.

It has been pointed out to us that some of these trends are already within our own denomination, at least in embryo. This is true, though the situation is neutralised by our independency. But it does illustrate one of our convictions—that the real divisions are within the denominations rather than between them, a situation which is either not fully realised or deliberately overlooked by most ecumenical pronouncements. Already, through such agencies as the Evangelical Alliance and other interdenominational organisations for evangelistic, missionary and convention work, evangelicals of different traditions are finding as much fellowship with each other as with others in their own communion. We are not satisfied with this, wonderful though it is to us, for there are obviously true believers outside these activities. But they do show that we are not wholly negative and are seeking a positive way of demonstrating our "Spiritual Unity in Action".

Ultimately, these issues are resolved by two factors. The first is the presence of the Holy Spirit. This solved the first 'ecumenical' problem, in the case of Peter and Cornelius. In the absence of such objective signs of His supernatural power in the ecumenical movement, each is left to make his own subjective assessment. It would probably be equally wrong to claim that all or none of it is of Him. We need discernment and some standard of reference by which to test the spirits—and this is the second factor, the Scriptures. Here is our God-given reference. We rejoice in the emphasis that re-union demands renewal, and hope that this will be radical enough to be a true reformation according to the Word of God.

If the wind of change blowing at Nottingham was indeed the breath of the Spirit, there will be unmistakable signs following; and no one will welcome that more than those who have been praying for revival as earnestly as others have prayed for re-union. And beyond it all we look and long for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the final answer to all our present dilemmas, for the people He will then gather to Himself will be truly ecumenical and truly evangelical. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

J. D. PAWSON

THE SILENT REVOLUTION

New Readers by the Million. "millions of newly literate people. ." How many readers of Douglas Chesterton's article in the last *Fraternal* were startled by these words? Are they an exaggeration? In fact they are the sober truth, and represent one of the great but largely unnoticed revolutions of our time. We are awakening to the fact of millions who go hungry to bed every night, and we are beginning to respond to their need. We are not yet aware of the millions of young people and older folk who are new readers, and who now experience a deeper hunger; the hunger for knowledge and truth which comes through access to the printed page. No one knows the end of this revolution; but it may well be judged as one of the most potent forces for change in our own century.

The facts are not hard to come by. Russia and Japan have become completely literate during the last fifty years. The rest of Asia, together with Latin America and the whole of Africa, are rapidly following suit. There is a stampede for education, and a rising literacy rate in all the newly developing territories. Governments, UNESCO with its ten year plan to teach 330 million illiterates, the churches, all combine to keep the momentum going. There is a determination to wipe out the shame of illiteracy for good. The revolution is well under way; nothing will stop it now.

Two brief personal experiences may perhaps help to light up the facts. During my last six months of living in China I saw a young army of the new China being trained. In the morning new recruits were given physical training and military drill. In the afternoon they went to school—some learning to read for the first time, all of them studying the works of President Mao, which were pouring off the press at that time, in newspaper, magazine and book. The shouldering of the rifle and writing with the pen went together. More recently I had an evening meal with friends in Bombay. We had as guests three young students, all in the University, the modern elite of their nation. I might easily have been in a drawing room in Britain. We talked in English of everything under the sun. They had access to, and were using, all the tools of knowledge available to students in the West. They are open both to the challenge of the Christian faith, and of every secular philosophy abroad in the world today.

The Exploiters. The facts outlined above have not escaped the notice of many keen observers. Here is a huge new market to exploit. The printed word is, with the radio, a major means of mass communication. This is why Russia and China pour out propaganda in English and in every other important language, and subsidize it to the tune of many millions of pounds each year. Control, or monopoly, of the press becomes an increasing feature of government policy in many countries. Unscrupulous commercial publishers flood the bookshops and street stalls with magazines in which sex and sensation feature prominently, and which corrupt the mind of the new reader all the more effectively because he takes all he reads as gospel—simply because it is in print. The ancient religions and the modern sects alike print and circulate their teachings widespread. The Jehovah's Witnesses are found knocking on doors in Bombay and in Nairobi as well as in London. By and large non-Christian agencies seem much more alive to the power of print than are Christians—an acute modern commentary on the words of our Lord: "The sons of this age are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light".

The Crisis for the Churches. It is surely part of God's providence that the Church is found in all parts of the world today. It is therefore strategically placed to use the printed word in all its forms—Scriptures, books and magazines—to feed the minds of millions. But time is not on our side. There is a real danger of nations and communities being overwhelmed by propaganda, debased by sensual writings, perverted by distortions of the truth. New readers who have had some form of faith find that this is undermined, but are given nothing beyond a secular and material view of life to take its place.

There is on the other hand a great—and unprecedented—opportunity for the Churches abroad (which have grown out of the work of the B.M.S. and other missions) to co-operate with government, and many other agencies, in providing the basic means by which the millions of new readers are taught and led on to mature reading. If we have the will, and the means, we can help to plan the literacy primers, and the mass of post-literacy booklets which will be used in thousands of classrooms, and which from the start will bring the learners into contact with Christian truth and wholesome ideas. Half the battle for the mind is then won. Much else is needed, but this does illustrate, at one basic level, the danger and the opportunities which face us today. The centre of the battle may be geographically somewhat removed from us, but we are all involved. The *Feed the Minds Campaign* is a vital part of the whole effort which needs to be made.

What is Needed—Overseas. Christian Literature needs to be recognised as a first priority in the planning and promotion of the work of the Churches. The Archbishop of York, Dr. Coggan, has pointed out that much of the previous work of missions, medical and educational, is now being done by Governments. He pleads

that the resources thus released should be channelled into literature and other means of mass communication. If this could be done, it would alter radically the present situation in which the Churches are simply unable to seize and use the opportunities facing them.

No one should underestimate the size of the operation needed if we are to take advantage of the silent revolution, and seek to help millions of new readers to satisfy their new-found aspirations. Our aim must be to help in the setting up of self-sufficient literature operations in all the territories of the 'younger Churches'. We are self-sufficient in Britain. We have the writers and publishers, the printers and bookshops; we have adequate supplies of Scripture, books and other materials. We may criticize these at various points, but by and large we have all our needs met. This is what we want to see all across Asia and Africa.

In certain places this will mean providing presses and other printing equipment, and having within the Church those, both nationals and Western missionaries, who can produce attractive books and magazines by using the commercial facilities available. It will mean the setting up of special literature centres where writers, editors and other literature workers can be trained, and where expert advice can be given to enable writing and translation to be carried out. These centres will be to literature what the school is to education, and the hospital is to medicine. A few are already beginning to operate.

We shall have to provide capital for large new publications programmes, with the work being done in places like Tokyo and Hongkong, Madras, Lagos and Leopoldville. We shall need to help provide for the establishing of new bookshops, and put mobile book-vans on the road, so that the new flow of books reaches those for whom it is intended. Most important perhaps, we shall have to recruit and support those who, with their local colleagues in the younger Churches, will mount this large and complex operation and see it through.

What is Needed—at Home. If the plans outlined above are to be translated into action, the Feed the Minds Campaign is an absolute necessity. This is not something dreamed up in the West, but a British response to the Macedonian call for help from the Churches set in the midst of this opportunity. This is why the British and Foreign Bible Society feels it must raise its income by half a million pounds. Then, with its sister societies, it can go on to treble the present production and distribution of Scriptures. This is why we in the United Society for Christian Literature have thrown our whole weight into the Campaign. We have requests for help which have come in during the last two years which amount to almost half a million pounds. We believe that only as the fact of millions of new readers is brought to the notice of the public in our land, and only as the issue of feeding *hungry minds* as well as bodies, becomes a burning public issue, can consciences be aroused, and an adequate response be made.

It is at this point that we so much need the support of the Churches within our Baptist denomination, and of course, outside it. It is comparatively easy to stir men up about the facts of physical hunger by showing a pot-bellied boy or the skeleton-like frame of a girl. What can we use as a popular equivalent symbol of the illiterate, or a new reader? The issue of hungry minds and spirits is understood most readily by those with Christian convictions. This is why we are so keen to see Christian pastors and leaders taking the initiative to challenge and encourage the civic leaders and the community in which they live, to take action in response to the Campaign. Where this is done we are confident it will lead on to good success. And, it is surely not an insignificant thing to believe that we are 'workers together with God', in feeding the minds of millions.

J. SUTTON

CHURCH NIGHTS : AN EXPERIMENT

FOR NEARLY FIVE YEARS a slogan has been in constant use at Mutley Baptist Church, Plymouth—"Tuesday Night is Church Night." By its constant repetition Tuesday nights have been reserved in people's diaries and minds for Church. I am not relating any success story, or suggesting that we have solved the problem of the mid-week meeting, but simply, by request, I am outlining an experiment which has proved to be of inestimable value to the life of the whole fellowship. There is nothing unique or very outstanding about the experiment, but all have agreed that Mutley has been greatly enriched by it.

The Church accepted the general principle of "Family Church" for its Sunday programme, and this brought many more children and parents to the services. It bound the fellowship together in a vital way. From Sunday we turned our attention to the week-nights, to see what opportunities there were to foster the family fellowship created on Sunday. So often the programme of the church divides the family by calling out different members on different evenings. Obviously, in some situations there may be a need for separate meetings for husbands and wives, but we felt that we would concentrate on one meeting a week which would be specially for husbands and wives and older young people combined. (The Youth Fellowships do meet on a different night.) For about five years now the regular attendance at that meeting has been over one hundred people, both in summer and winter, fine weather or foul. Church Night does not close save for very rare exceptions.

Now what is the programme for Church Nights? It is primarily planned to stimulate spiritual growth, and the three aims which are stressed on all our printed syllabi are: 1. to talk with God, 2. to listen to God's Word, and 3. to get to know God's people. I, personally, feel that the church must be the church in this respect.

So often people are called out to a meeting on church premises to learn about growing chrysanthemums, to hear about someone's travels, or to learn how the ladies can care for their "crowning glory". All of this is no doubt very interesting, but is it the task of the church? People can hear about these things through many secular groups, or just by sitting in the warmth of their own homes watching television. "Ah!" you say: "These groups are a means of contact with the outsider." Are they, in all honesty? Isn't it more true to say that people come to our Sunday services in the first place, and then they get badgered into joining one of the sectional meetings and consequently the meeting for spiritual growth gets neglected. Surely the church's ministry is to strengthen people in the faith and then to encourage them to go out into the local community and serve in various societies and on public bodies. Let the church be gathered for growth and then scattered for service. It was with these thoughts in mind that the pattern of Church Nights emerged. A quarter's programme is printed and widely distributed. Each quarter has an overall theme and here are one or two examples:

"The Lion Roars"—eight studies in the book of Amos. His relevance for today.

"What they believe"—a series to help answer the challenge of the sects: the Mormons, etc.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit"—six studies on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Six challenging questions from the New Testament.

"A Letter from Prison"—seven studies in Philipians.

These subjects may over-run into another quarter as we try to ring the changes quite often by having Church Nights with a difference. For example, we have Christian films on occasion, or a panel of regular members in "Any Questions"; a missionary evening; an evening on the good causes we as a church support, such as the British and Foreign Bible Society. An outside speaker is sometimes engaged to speak on the way the Christian Faith affects his attitude to various aspects of life. Variety does add interest, although the overall theme produces continuity. People are encouraged to ask questions, and, of course, such a meeting could easily be broken up into discussion groups from time to time.

When people arrive, sometimes half an hour before the meeting is due to start, they enter a warm, lighted hall, and they hear Gospel music attractively played on a tape recorder. In one corner of the hall there is a permanent Carey Kingsgate bookstall where a constant supply of Christian books is displayed. Through one year over £150 worth of books are sold in this way. Another item to arouse interest is a display of library books from our collection of over two thousand. Our librarian is there to answer questions and to introduce newcomers to the facilities of the library. We are fortunate in having an artist in the fellowship who often illustrates

the theme of the evening by appropriate posters which are pinned to the blackboard, and in this way the main points of the address are emphasised in a most attractive way.

To help focus attention on Tuesday most of the Junior Church training classes are held either before or after the main session of Church Night, and it is a great encouragement to see the Junior Church staff come in every week. Such committees as the church Home and Overseas Missionary Council and the Visitation Committee also hold their quarterly meetings on a Tuesday at 8.45 p.m. In this way Church Night becomes a real hive of activity.

In the main session, which begins at 7.30 p.m., we commence with a simple act of worship, after which there is always "Newstime", when a list of the sick members is read out, any special event either in the church or in the wider Christian fellowship of the city is mentioned; needs and requests are made known; individual members give any news of interest; newcomers are welcomed and are asked to stand, and in this way they quickly become known and get integrated into the church life. Once a month the B.M.S. prayer tape is played, and with the aid of maps and pictures the work and the challenge of the Society is brought before the people. Over the months the fields of our missionary work and the names of active missionaries become familiar. If interest is to be powerful it must become personal. Through these tapes and aids the work of the B.M.S. is personalized. After this Newstime we have ten minutes of corporate prayer when people are urged to take one item and commend it to the Lord in prayer. At first people who were used to praying in their small groups, such as training classes, found it difficult to lead in prayer in this larger gathering, but by encouragement more and more friends are doing so. After another hymn I speak for about twenty to twenty-five minutes on the subject for the evening, and then at about 8.30 p.m. trays of tea and biscuits are brought in. For a further fifteen or twenty minutes everyone is free to talk to new and old friends. This, perhaps, is one of the most important parts of Church Night. Many of the people come from a distance and on Sundays it is almost impossible to get to know others. New friends are introduced and linked up with others of like interest, or with those who live near them. It is good to hear the hum of conversation. If there are committees to be held, those who are involved take their tea to the committee room. The Church Night is brought to a close by an epilogue which is conducted by one of the members or by myself. Perhaps it ought to be stated that no collections are taken during the evening.

In what I have described I realise that there is nothing out of the ordinary. I have tried this type of evening elsewhere and it has not caught on, primarily because of the multitude of other meetings which, as I stated above, often discuss interesting but not essentially Christian subjects. Has the time come for churches to spring-clean their programmes? Quite a number of our meet-

ings are "hang-overs" from the past when the church was the focal point of the country's social life. It is not today, and the few often have to keep an elaborate machinery of organisation going. The few remaining members of a certain meeting were despairing of their numbers and of the prospect for their future. I suggested closing the organisation. My! what coals of fire I brought down on my head! Are our meetings cul-de-sacs or avenues leading to Christ and Christian development? If they are the former, should they not be closed down? Let the Church be the Church.

NORMAN P. WRIGHT

THE STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT THUS FAR

IT IS A YEAR SINCE we conducted our first Stewardship Campaign. One of our greatest encouragements in recent weeks has come from re-visiting the Churches where Campaigns were first conducted. In each case we found that the results achieved in the Campaign had been lasting. Enquiries for baptism and Church membership had been followed up (at Tooting Junction 18 of the 20 who had enquired had been baptised and received into Church membership). Offers of service had been taken up and Visiting Organisations brought into being, though one or two of the Churches involved realised that more could and should be done with the many offers of service. The greatly increased financial giving had in each case been maintained, with only a very few who did not fully honour their pledges. Each of those Churches had already completely met *all* Campaign expenses and fees out of their increased income. Here was the living evidence that a fully-directed Stewardship Campaign was no "flash-in-the-pan", but the beginning of a new onward going movement of spiritual renewal in the life of the Church.

It is because we are concerned with the lasting results of a Campaign, that a three year contract is made with the Church which books a fully-directed Campaign, and one of the Advisers returns at the beginning of the second and third years to help to organise the annual review Campaigns.

During the first year the Department conducted six fully-directed Campaigns in Churches of very different kinds, in very different situations: Carshalton Beeches, Hucknall, Tooting Junction, Rochdale, Welwyn Garden City and Rushden. Whatever misgivings some in these Churches may have felt before the Campaign, they are all now profoundly thankful that they were led to take this leap of faith. In all these Churches the results were most gratifying, in some really remarkable. The spiritual impact on the Church as a whole and on the members of the Church and Congregation has been deep and enduring. In each case there were hundreds of offers of service, in one (Rushden) there were actually 1,000 such offers. Campaigns of this kind are truly an inner mission, calling the people as a whole to deeper dedication—in detailed, practical ways to which they can and do respond. There is also an evangelistic outreach to those on the fringe of the Church, and many of

the trained visitors find themselves inevitably witnessing to their faith. Numbers have enquired for baptism and Church membership: in one Church ten, in another twenty, and still another as many as thirty five. The financial giving in each Church has been greatly increased. It is not merely that Sunday offerings have risen, often spectacularly, but that the all-in giving of these Churches has risen from between 30% to 65%. There has been such a healthy stirring in some of these Churches that they have been able to take the opportunity of reviewing the whole life and activities of the Church and its organisations, with the view of making them more relevant to the needs and opportunities of the day. The Church as a whole is challenged to examine its Stewardship of its premises, its resources, its use of its people's time and service and money.

There is no need to stress in an article for brother Ministers the fact that the Stewardship we in this Department are concerned with is not just that of money, but of the whole man and the whole Church. If Stewardship is to be real in the Biblical sense it must be a stewardship of time, abilities and money, and not one of these must be emphasised at the expense of the other two. As we have gone round speaking at Associations, Churches and Deacons' Meetings we have been confronted with many misconceptions of Stewardship. There is still the feeling abroad that to speak of the Stewardship of money is somehow to descend below the spiritual level. Fortunately we are able to get many of them to see that to leave out of account the getting and using of money is to be totally unrealistic. We like to remind people of the fact, to which Dr. James Denney drew attention, that our Lord spoke more often about money than He did about almost anything else. It is not we as Advisers, however, who bring the question of money to the fore. It is the questions which come after we have spoken which tend to centre on money.

There is in the denomination a widespread interest in Stewardship. In between campaign periods both of us, as Advisers, have travelled extensively in answer to the many calls from Churches who wish to know more about the Stewardship Movement. It is a pity if a Church lets the thought of expense deter it from going forward with a Campaign. This is what the Church Secretary at Rushden said (in the "Baptist Times") after their campaign: "Some Churches are afraid of the expense involved in a Campaign, but in comparison with the results that are achieved this is negligible".

We in the Department owe a real debt of gratitude to our fellow Ministers. In so many cases it is they who have sowed the seed, which eventually flowers in a Campaign. Where a Minister is wholly enthusiastic about Stewardship, the battle is often more than half won, though it is also true that some of our keenest Ministers are having to wait until their people share their vision and enthusiasm.

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

To the Members of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship

Dear Friends,

THE PANDORA OPAL

A black opal, uncut but polished on one surface, weighing 196 carats and which had been mined in 1928 in New South Wales, was sold at Southeby's on February 19th this year for £6,200. The Times in its report goes on to say that this opal is known to the specialist world as Pandora and displays remarkable fire and play of colour—it originally formed part of the opalized rib of a plesiosaurus. (I had to look that one up—it was an extinct marine reptile with long neck, short tail and four large paddles—Concise Oxford Dictionary).

And so something originally quite worthless became worth over £6,000.

That sounds a romantic story but in terms of hard economic fact we in the Insurance Company can turn a little over £3 into £6,000 for one of our insured whose church premises or other property suffer damage by fire! Because £3 odd is the premium for £6,000 of fire insurance cover. A premium of £33 odd would secure fire insurance cover for £60,000!

Is your own insurance or your church insurance on a full up-to-date basis? A little more "rib" now could mean a bigger "opal" in time of trouble.

Yours sincerely,

C. J. L. COLVIN,

General Manager

P.S. Need I add that the time to revise a policy is before a fire—THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.

What of the future? Not only are Fully-directed and Supervised Campaigns being booked up, but the Department, in answer to pleas made at a meeting of the Baptist Union Council, is seeking to devise ways of serving the smaller Churches as well as the larger, and to meet the widely felt need for Stewardship teaching.

These are pioneering days in this field. We have only begun to meet the urgent need for Christian Stewardship in our Churches. So much remains to be done. We shall value the continued encouragement and co-operation of our fellow Ministers in this vital work.

E. UNGOED DAVIES

THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE ASSOCIATIONS : SOME B.M.F. COMMENTS

The Report of the Commission on the Associations, presented to the Baptist Union Council last November, has stimulated some lively discussion both in our denominational newspaper and in local Fraternal and Association meetings. The last Editorial of *The Fraternal* gave expression to the conviction that the Report is not likely to be pigeon-holed. The B.U. Council sent copies of this well-prepared document for study and comment by the Secretaries of the Baptist Unions of Wales and Scotland, the Associations in membership with the Union, the General Superintendents, the College Principals, the Honorary Solicitor of the Baptist Union and, we are happy to say, the Executive Committee of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship. It was believed that when all these comments were tabulated they might form the main material for a supplementary document to be issued for the guidance of the Council.

The main purpose of this brief article is to inform the members of the Fellowship of the nature of our Executive Committee's comments so that they might be used as a basis for further discussion in local fraternal and Associations. The Executive held a special one-day conference in London to discuss the Report and submitted the following observations to the General Secretary of the Baptist Union.

"In presenting these comments on the *Report of the Commission on the Associations*, the Executive Committee of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship desire to express their gratitude to

- (i) the members of the Commission for their painstaking work in producing such a comprehensive and stimulating Report.
- (ii) the Baptist Union Council for its decision to list the Committee of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship as one of the bodies to whom the document should be sent for initial comment. The Executive Committee of the Fellowship desire the Council to know that this gesture is greatly appreciated.

Obviously the comments of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship Executive Committee are *not intended to commit all the members of the Fellowship* but neither are these comments to be regarded merely as the personal views of the Committee members. Our observations are made in the light of a number of letters received

from members of our General Committee to whom copies of the Report were submitted for consideration. Some of these letters indicate local opinion on some of the matters raised by the Report and the Executive's comments are made with these local discussions in mind.

The Executive Committee of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship wish to make the following observations and comments:

1. That the Executive finds itself in full agreement with the basic suggestion made by the Report that the right theological concept of the Union is that of 'an Association of Associations'.
2. Disappointed by the isolationism which characterises the life of many of our Churches, the Executive feels that there is an urgent need for education *at the local Church level* regarding the identity of the local Church and the unquestionable fact that fellowship with other churches belongs to its inherent life. There is need for us to affirm that, acknowledging as we do the authority of Christ, we can confidently expect clear guidance from Christ, the Lord of the Church, both in the affairs of the local Church *and* in the Associations of Churches. This kind of guidance is vital to our continuing witness and we ought to expect it in Association fellowship and discussions on such question as, for example, the Ministry, Church Extension and Church Property.

The Executive believe that much of our failure to persuade local Churches to play an active part in Association life is due to a widespread apathy on the part of our members which fails to recognise the theological importance of 'associating' and it is hoped that an introduction of some of these matters discussed in the *Report* might be presented to our Churches in a more popular literary form for discussion at Church Meetings or specially convened Church Conferences.

3. The Executive believe that special attention will have to be paid to the geographical limits of Associations but it also recognises that Associations cannot be cut down to a stereotyped size. It is also agreed that the question of boundaries must be a matter for serious review from time to time.
4. The Executive Committee would wish to give majority support to the suggestion of the Commission that Area Committees should cease to exist.
5. On the question of the composition of the Baptist Union Council the Executive find themselves in agreement with the recommendation that there should be fewer elected members and *more delegates from Associations*.
6. Regarding the composition of Association Committees it was agreed that the emphasis must be laid on the importance of linking *every Church* into the life of the Association and for this reason it was stressed that the representation on Association Committees ought to be based on the number of Churches in the Association and not on the numerical strength of particular Churches within the Association.

7. In their discussion of the relationship between the Baptist Union Council and the Annual Assembly of the denomination, the Executive found themselves in agreement with the suggestion that the Constitution of the Baptist Union Council should be revised so that an enlarged Baptist Union Council becomes the basic legislative body with the Annual Assembly remaining as an occasion for fellowship, inspiration and propaganda.

8. The Executive agree with the recommendation that a scheme for 'Friends of the Union' is preferable to the present system of Personal Membership, and that these 'Friends of the Union' should not have voting rights.

9. Regarding the question of the Vice-Presidency of the Union, the Executive believe that the matter of the election ought to be a decision of the newly-constituted Baptist Union Council. Nominations for the Vice-Presidency would be sent to the Council from the Associations, and delegates from the Associations would be regarded as representatives of the mind of the Association on this matter.

10. The Executive are deeply convinced that the work of the General Superintendents is an essential part of the pastoral office and that, if released from some of their present heavy administrative responsibilities, they would be able to make an even greater contribution to the spiritual needs of our Churches and the pastoral needs of our Ministers. In view of this it was appreciated that there ought to be an increase in the number of General Superintendents, though the Executive hope that there will be a new method of election to this office. The Executive wish to stress that they continue to believe in the office of the General Superintendent and maintain that the desire for more Superintendents is demanded if we believe in the importance of their work as outlined in their terms of reference (*Report*, 29f).

It was also agreed that an increase in the number of Superintendents would demand a serious discussion of the status, qualifications and responsibilities of Association Secretaries.

11. The Executive agree with the list of particular matters which ought to be under constant review by Associations (*Report*, 1, 12ff) but feel that

- (i) Under the topic of *Christian Education* some reference might be made to the wider educational interests of our Churches. It is felt that the Christian Education interests have been somewhat narrowly defined and some reference might be made to other educational matters such as, for example, our responsibility in local education authority work, and our representation on Joint Policy Committees.
- (ii) In discussing those aspects of our life which ought to be under constant survey by Associations some reference should be made to *the ecumenical task of the Church* and it is suggested that this further item might be added to the list, i.e. (i) to experiment in Church relationships.

12. The Executive are persuaded that a full and free discussion of denominational affairs is essential to our life and for this reason the papers of the Baptist Union Council ought not to be marked as 'private'.

13. Deeply concerned as we all are for the regular supply of suitable men for the Ministry, we strongly support the suggestion made by the Commission that Associations must give themselves to the task of seeking out and encouraging those people who might have a vocation to full-time Christian Service.

14. In conclusion, the Executive wish to draw special attention to the importance of the ideas expressed in the final paragraphs of the *Report* (p.49) and particularly where the members of the Commission emphasise that, although many of the matters discussed in the document are of an organisational or administrative nature, their motive throughout has been evangelical. The Executive hopes that the denomination will use the *Report* as a basis for thoughtful and prayerful discussion in order that its publication might eventually lead to deep spiritual renewal in all our Churches. To this end the Executive strongly recommends a serious consideration of the *Report* by fraternal and hopes that the members of the Fellowship will see that its ideas are commended to our people believing that it will make some real spiritual impact on the life of our Churches."