

Christ that divisions seem wicked, and disappear, that men unbuild the old to rebuild on a vaster scale.

John G. Paton tells how, on a South Sea island where timber was scarce, a house was needed for the worship of God, and it needed to be both wide and long. The coral walls arose, and three white principals spanned them. But one bay needed providing for, and the resources of the island seemed exhausted. In the morning the puzzled architect was aroused by tramping and singing: a procession was bearing aloft a smoke-begrimed beam, the chief dancing along in front, a very David. He had uncovered his own house and brought its mighty timber to be hallowed by completing the roof of God's house.

The roof at Kettering was hallowed by sheltering a god-fearing family, and gathering many sacred memories. There has now been a rebuilding, and Wallis House will in future shelter many families that come home for rest. They will dwell in a fitting atmosphere, may gain inspiration from the past, may add year by year to its rich associations. At Olney Cowper had sung:

Behold, at Thy commanding word

We stretch the curtain and the cord;

and had given Carey the idea of his great sermon. That couplet might well be blazoned over a doorway in the re-modelled house, and another from the same hymn will assuredly express the prayers of all who enter:

Dear Shepherd of Thy chosen few,

Thy former mercies here renew.

W. T. WHITLEY.

The Future of our Ministry.

THE Baptist denomination deserves good ministers. It has not always shown a high sense of responsibility either for their equipment or their maintenance in freedom from material cares. During these last years it has made its confession in a handsome way. In return our congregations have a right to expect from its ministry a greater efficiency. If this is not reached, the Sustentation Fund may prove a curse and not a blessing. It may add another to the list of churches in which the ministry becomes a vested interest and a traffic in spiritual things. The danger should be avoided by the pressure of an opinion that demands the highest standard of moral and intellectual power.

Efficiency depends on many other factors than the devotion and gratitude of individual men. At this moment the ministry is a serious problem for the church. We need a large supply of candidates. Our congregational system, which leaves every church unfettered in the choice of its minister, would quickly sift out the inefficient. But the number of those who offer themselves is so small that some colleges seem scarcely to justify their being. Our most desirable young men will rarely even consider the ministry as a vocation. Our congregations frequently invite men to the sacred charge for scarcely any other reason than that they are the best available. This should not be.

We must face the question as to how toll is to be taken of our best Christian manhood for the service of the churches in the ministry. The present reluctance to hear and answer the call shadows the future. Part of the reason is in the loss of the church's grip on the men of our country. The field for our reaping is smaller. Whether the number of men who offer is smaller in proportion to the number in attendance at our places of worship than it used to be, say twenty years ago, who can say?

Other causes are to be found in the intellectual and social unsettlement of the past generation, culminating with the experiences of the war. Men's religious ideas are chaotic, and it is not surprising that there is hesitation to take up the burden of a Christian teacher. The churches have frequently failed to give clear light on modern problems, and we are reaping the harvest of obscurantism in vagueness and uncertainty that debar men from the exercise of any prophetic office.

The arm-chair religion of many professing Christians and churches, with its comfortable quietism, has alienated the sympathies of vigorous men, who see many wrongs around them, challenging, strident, while the city of God is apparently unconcerned, though foes are at the gates and some have even invaded its streets. Men of a more robust faith are turned aside from our ministry by the dread that the fires that burn in them may be quenched, or rendered ineffective, by the indifference of those among whom their work might lie. Only a quickening of the whole life of the church with an ardour of zeal that shall compel men within to interpret the Spirit of Christ to the world in every relation of life, and so win men from without, can ever remove this fear.

The stipends paid to ministers, sometimes placing them on the poverty line, have also been a deterrent. A man prepared himself for personal sacrifice is often unwilling to ask a wife to accept, and possibly to thrust upon children, the handicaps he can foresee. But probably it does not happen

frequently that men of the soul we want are held back by this.

More powerful are causes which lie in the personnel of the ministry, and in the nature of the burden it is called upon to sustain.

Young university men, questioned on the subject, have told the writer that they think their lives will "count for more" in other walks of life. Pressed to explain, they guarded themselves from any charge of snobbery, but declared that our ministers as a rule had no standing among men. Their opinions are not seriously regarded and their influence is small compared with that of men in other professions. To be known as a minister amounts to a disability. The reason for this they found in the fact that on the whole the ministry had not kept pace in education with the scholastic profession, the law, or medicine, where standards are being continually raised and higher demands are being made. It is not enough in these days that a minister should win regard for his character and a life of service. This regard was neither withheld nor the fact disputed, but the minister must also be a man capable of meeting others on equal intellectual terms, if he is to constrain their assent and guide their thought and action in submission to God's will in Christ.

The ministry is only to be rehabilitated, in this respect, by education. In remote places it may still be true occasionally that the minister is the only man in the church with a shelf of good books, but it is rarely so. Knowledge has advanced, and is diffused, to a degree that a century ago, and much less, would have been thought incredible. We may doubt whether the Baptist ministers of to-day have advanced in education to an extent that their forerunners a hundred years back would have thought incredible. When we think of some of those who manned our ministry in the early years of the nineteenth century, it is sometimes difficult to see that we have reached beyond them either in intellectual grasp or in education. But we must not judge by the exceptional names that have come down to us, and the average of education is much higher. It is a fair conclusion though, that we have not gone forward nearly as far as we should, and the criticism that we have not progressed at the same rate as other professions is just. It is true of most denominations.

To regain a lost place and prestige is slow work. We must provide facilities for education, encourage our men, and try to lay the call to the ministry before the most gifted among the youth in our churches. Persistence and patience in this work will in time cause this service to be regarded as, without question, the supreme vocation. It will be de-

sired by more and more of those who, with the Vision Splendid in front of them, would follow the gleam, and, if there be need, "burn out for God." They are not wanting in our churches and universities, but we are getting few of them. They will serve Christ in this calling or that. To the ministry they give no thought.

But perhaps there is no fact that keeps men to-day outside the ministry like the work of the minister. Its many-sidedness need not be dwelt upon. Up to a point it is the joy and glory of a minister's life, but the demands have become in a sense too exacting. The spirit of sacrifice remains among our young people. It is not the poor material remuneration that drives them off. Nor is it always the sense of the call it makes on character. Ministers are always conscious that in their congregations there are often honoured servants of Christ at whose feet they should be ready to sit at all times if character were the only requisite. Our young men realize that as clearly as we do. Again, unpleasant duties fall to the lot of any conscientious minister and recognition is frequently scanty. Yet, even this is not the trouble. It is the range of the minister's task that is becoming a matter of perplexity for our ministers themselves, and a stumbling block for many who might be candidates. It is truly rather appalling for men taught in the modern school where specialization is the order of the day. A medical man speaking to the writer recently forecasted a day in which practitioners would work as partners in medical firms, including several members, each partner taking his own department of medical knowledge. It is felt to be impossible for any one man to compass the range of modern science in that profession. The all-round man is rarely an expert in any branch, and the age demands experts and has the right to them.

The dangers of over-specialization are clear. Yet we may go too far in the other direction, and have a ministry of men who because they are Jacks-of-all-trades are masters of none. Is it not time that we recognized a differentiation of functions as desirable and, indeed, almost necessary.

Some of our churches are large. The pressure of modern business life on the men of the church, and the claims of countless philanthropic agencies outside, mean that increasingly functions, which of right belong to the whole church, have devolved upon the minister, and he is not seldom crushed beneath the burden of them. In our denomination the minister is commonly expected to preach three sermons each week that will satisfy the exacting standards of an educated and often critical audience. Think of the time John Bright took to make a set speech, and how rarely he did it, com-

pared with the speeches and sermons a successful preacher is called upon to deliver. If he is to keep the level up, he has enough in that alone for any man to do. But this is far less than half his work. He must visit all the sick and bereaved and any in trouble, and newcomers. He must be available for consultation and advice at all hours. Committees and meetings are innumerable. Reading must be fitted into his time-table. He has to know his workers and be in close touch with every part of the church's activities. He must keep an eye on the young folk who are growing up around him, and watch for the moment when the right word is to be spoken. In addition to all this, he is expected to take some place in the social and religious life of the town and county, and there are the wider claims of his association and denominational body. He rarely has an evening at home with his family, and the work that imposes the greatest nervous strain comes at the end of the day, when he is already almost exhausted, and other workers are finding recreation and rest. The faithful minister often finds the burden well-nigh intolerable. He has the constant feeling of inadequacy and of being in arrears. There is no opportunity for that quiet hour in which the great things come to a man's soul. He heartily hates the system with the consequent sense of ineffectiveness and futility. He has to withdraw from much of the work to which he believes himself called that other things, that wait to be done in the church, may not be left undone. Again and again he must desert the ministry of the word to serve tables. It makes for unhappiness, disappointment and failure. His own discouragement reacts on his work, and an impression is produced on the minds of others that the ministry is not the triumphant and exhilarating service of Christ that it should be. How many men have broken under the strain. "It is not reason."

The conscientious minister must in common honesty set the situation before the man who, thinking of such work, seeks advice. He will speak of its privileges and compensations, but he may not hide its demands, and the disclosure has been enough many times to turn men's thoughts another way.

May there not at least be a more frequent recognition of the distinction between the pastoral and the preaching offices? It is of course notorious that co-pastorates are rarely an unqualified success. Perhaps that is inevitable in such churches as ours. But need the same difficulties arise when one man is pastor, attending to the organizing of the church, keeping contact with the people, presiding at meetings and committees, representing the church outside, while the other is the preacher, responsible solely for the ministry of the

word. The distinction goes back to the apostolic age. We know of men who believe the Divine Voice has sent them forth to proclaim the everlasting gospel. When they gave themselves to God for the ministry of the church it was for this. The other multifarious activities in which they should be involved never came within their vision. They are preachers. Their business ability is a stock theme of amusement with their officers, and their awkwardness in ordinary social intercourse is the amazement of men who marvel at their command in the pulpit. On the other hand, we could name men with the pastoral heart, diligent and capable in business, with a gift for religious organization, and a "way wid 'em" that Father O'Flynn himself might envy in getting at close quarters with all sorts of men and women and with the young, yet their powers are never given play because, not having any special aptitude for preaching, the larger churches will not invite them. They eat out their hearts in little villages, who should be exercising a pastoral ministry in the thick of some big town. Let these facts be recognized and the moral read.

When a large congregation is without a minister the people say, "We must have a good pastor, and we must have a good preacher, if we are to meet the need around us." Of course! Then why not have one of each? It would mean greater efficiency all round, and a stronger and more contented church. It would also mean a higher standard of giving, and for a time some financial strain, but the men who supported such an arrangement liberally would certainly reap their reward in the joy of seeing its success. To avoid all heartburning, functions should be plainly divided and responsibilities assigned from the first. The pastor need not be condemned to silence. He might preach in the absence of the preacher, and being loved for his own work, he would be welcomed by his people who would not be attracted by a regular preaching ministry from him. The preacher in the absence of the pastor could add for the time the pastoral office to that of the evangelist, and the real preacher will always love men enough not to be a recluse. It is the multiple responsibility continually borne that presses a man down and sometimes kills. At this time the man called to be a preacher has to choose between the career (unsatisfying for most of us) of an itinerant evangelist, with no opportunity for training congregations in the truth by years of patient teaching and exhortation, and that of the pastor-preacher, which prevents him doing his best at his special work. There have been a few strong-minded preachers who have resolutely confined themselves to their divinely appointed task. The church has been the richer for their resolve, but only they have known what it has cost them, not alone in

unsympathetic criticism from without, but in the strain within the soul of any man who realizes that work, that someone should be doing, is being neglected, and he is disappointing the hopes of some of his friends. All honour to such men.

Would it not frequently mean a great gain in effectiveness if congregations merged, two or three of them, and supported not one minister but two, who between them should divide the work. May we not dream of a day when at least in our big towns, the problems before our churches will be more effectively met in some such way?

Meanwhile relief might come along another line. An eminent American preacher once said to another, after they had been watching the finished work of a great actor, "The trouble with us preachers is that we end with the first rehearsal." Any real preacher knows how a sermon preached three of four times gains in power to reach and move men. The irrelevancies are weeded out. The truth shines more clear. The forcefulness of our evangelists is due not a little to the gradual developing of a theme under the sense of the need of the congregations that listen. There is a limit, of course, beyond which repetition means staleness. But how weary one grows of reading in John Wesley's *Journal* the entry that this day he preached on "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God," or some other well-preached theme. He does not seem to have had as many sermons as most Baptist ministers of a few years' standing have had to make, but what sermons they grew to be!

Why cannot we have something like a circuit system for preachers? So long as churches will have only one minister, let each man be pastor of one church, and let none other presume to exercise pastoral functions there. But let the churches be in groups of two or three or four, granted a certain community of sympathy, and let these ministers preach in turn at the various churches. Then each man would have to prepare a sermon say once a week or once a fortnight instead of two or three times a week. He would have more time for study and thought and also for his pastoral tasks. It would not work well perhaps in small towns, but in groups of villages or large towns need there be great difficulty? Imagine a city with three neighbouring ministers, Mr. Smith, Mr. Brown and Mr. Robinson, all men of fine attainments and preaching power. Why should they not pass, as a natural thing, from one pulpit to another regularly, it being understood that they were free to repeat their messages in each? There would be a dual advantage. The congregations would enjoy a fuller presentation of the Christian Gospel and in better sermons, and if ever some listener found that a sermon seemed specially addressed to his need, and was eager to

hear that word again, the opportunity would be there, though, normally, loyalty to a particular church would keep hearers from gadding about from place to place.

The ministry of the future must depend on the church of the future. Some of us dream of our churches as centres of spiritual force, of sympathy and practical help for all who attend them, and a spiritual clinic for the neighbourhood to which all who will may come. Then the pastor should be in his office as regularly as the physician in his consulting room. Like the physician he would have his rounds for the cases that could not come to him. We need a wider thought of the church's task as we take a wider view of its opportunity. There is room, and need, for a far more varied ministry than we have offered the world in recent times.

The question of the colleges, which is in closest relation to that of the ministry, may only be touched upon here, though it is big enough for a series of articles. If the functions of the ministry in the church of the future are to be increased and differentiated, a burden of extra work will be thrown on the colleges. It is more important than ever that adequate training should be given. There would be specialization in addition to a good general groundwork. The studies of the pastor and the preacher would proceed along somewhat divergent lines. To an even greater degree than at present would each student have to be regarded as a separate case. A preliminary year of probation, with a course mapped to take stock of his particular gifts, might be the means of classifying him and deciding the lines of his future studies. For some men the time and labour spent in the attempt to acquire a university degree is virtually wasted. This is not true only of some marked out for the pastoral office but even for some who are destined to be Evangelists. Men react in as markedly different ways to the discipline of academic routine and close study as they do to army discipline. For one man it means the widening of vision and the forging of new weapons. For another it means the close grind that narrows outlook and sympathy and wears down instead of whetting the edge of his speech. Intellectual application and discipline are good for all, but how many men, who look back on laborious college years devoted to university examination work, are conscious that the time might have been spent in other studies to much better purpose. The writer knows the value of a course in Semitics, and will be for ever grateful that he had the opportunity, but he knows men to whom it was sheer drudgery and brought no good.

If it were recognised in our colleges that some men were going out definitely as preachers and evangelists, would there not inevitably be an effort to give more systematic homiletic

and literary study and training in modern apologetics. In one denominational paper lately the suggestion has even been made of a professor of preaching. But homiletics has always had a place on our college curricula, yet how small a place! The men preparing for the pastoral office would have instruction in business methods, and would study the work of churches both here and in America that really reach the people. The gravamen of the complaints, so frequently heard against our colleges, is that so much of what is learned is remote from the needs of the ordinary congregation and the ordinary minister, and that, by a process of learning through much tribulation for both of them, the latter has to acquire a great deal that he always thinks he should have been taught before he accepted the charge of a church.

Great advances have been made in some of our colleges within the last generation, but still men leave some of them with little enough knowledge, not merely of our denominational story and the historical development of our principles, but of the whole of the Evangelical and Free Church progress since Reformation times. For modern preachers the modern book of Acts is scarcely less important than the ancient. At home and abroad, for those who have eyes to read, it is, when opened to them, the great vindication of our faith. Yet men have said that even after they left college it was to them a closed book.

We may be sure that the principals of our colleges, who themselves have been ministers, realize the situation, and wish they could do more to meet it. But however wistful they may be, their power is curtailed by the relative poverty of these institutions and the smallness of the staff. As it is, each professor usually has more subjects to teach than one man can do justice to. At times our teachers may have revealed some lack of imagination and practical insight, but the fault is not chiefly with them. It might be that, with amalgamation of some colleges and the pooling of endowments and other funds, larger staffs, with a better division of labour, could to the needs of our churches to-day, a better college equipment be secured. For the training of an efficient ministry, adequate seems necessary.

It is good to know of the efforts in some of our colleges to make men as well as to teach them. There has been some failure here in the past. The education given has been too much an affair of lectures and examinations, and the real meaning of a college has been missed. Staff and students should not be simply speakers and listeners. They should be fellow-workers in a corporate effort to attain to truth, readers together in the Book of Life, reading on their knees. These are the days for forming those habits of true piety which

are the foundation of every man's best work. Here a man must learn to think as well as to listen, and to school himself with others as they sit, teachers and students alike, at the feet of their Lord.

When the Master bade His disciples not to rejoice that the devils were subject to them, but rather that their names were written in heaven, He laid down for all time the principle that there is a sense in which the workman matters more than the work. We need trained men, efficient men, more and more of them, but, above all, in the future as in the past, men whose names are written in heaven, men well-known at the throne of God.

M. E. AUBREY.

Baptist Church Discipline.

PART II.

31d 1m 1695

It being the First or Lords day after the publike meeting was over, And the Church was intire, Bro : Steed presented againe to the Church the case of Bro : Claridge with his importunate desire to be dismisst from his communion with the Church. And they saw that as He sayd he did not come that day to keep up his place as in times past. Also it was presented to their consideration that it was impossible to detain him in his communion without the endangering the peace and union of the Church, because of necessity if he continued they must have the troubl of hearing Mr Wards case which had already been above a yeare in debate and consideration and had caused much trouble distraction and division amongst the ministers and members that had been employd in that affaire. Moreover the peopl that belongd to Mr. Warburton would bring in a charg against Bro : Claridge which they had already attempted to but because of the disorder that was manifest in their manning of it was rejected. But it must be expected they would again endeavour to introduce it, which would occasion much contention and might in the end make a breach amongst them. Therefore as they would avoid these great and sore inconveniences it was reckoned their best and safest way to dismiss him according to his desire, or else their present Elder could not comfortably keep up his station among them. These things were debated a long time variously by the Brn : Some as Bro : Watson and Bro : Gold with some others were for his being treated with to see if they could make up this breach. But considering the present danger