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The Breakdown in Infant Baptism

A GROWING discontent is everywhere in evidence in the Christian world with the age-old, but unscriptural, practice of Infant Baptism.

In the Church of England, for instance, there is "The Baptismal Reform Movement," which includes over five hundred clergy, of whom at least three are diocesan bishops. The discontent arises out of the abuses to which the rite of infant baptism is frequently subjected by the irresponsibility and often the superstition of those who present infants for christening. The rural deanery of Poplar published in 1939, a thirty-two page report on **Infant Baptism: History and**

Modern Practice, which closed with the following "Brief Summary of our Objections to Present Practice":

- "1. It is unscriptural.
- "2. It is contrary to the general teaching of the Church from Apostolic times to the Reformation.
- "3. It is contrary to the clear teaching of the Prayer Book, Articles and Canons of the Church of England.
- "4. It cannot be maintained by the appeal to theology. Rather theology supports our contentions.
- "5. It is irrational. It cannot be reasonable to baptise an infant unless there are adequate grounds for believing that it will be brought up by its parents in the Christian faith and practice.
- "6. It is immoral. By acquiescing in the irreligion of the parents we are suggesting to them that we do not mind what they do, provided they

bring their children to be christened.

- "7. It cannot be maintained that it works well in practice.
- "8. It is our duty to guard the Sacrament from irreverent and profane usage. But our present system has reduced it to the level of a semi-magical rite or symbol of respectability.
- "9. We have obscured the fact that the reception of Holy Baptism brings the recipient into a covenant-relationship with God, which involves for the former strict obligations as well as giving him privileges."

The Report of the Joint Committee on the Administration of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism accepted by Convocation in 1940, makes the same grave criticisms, but in the more restrained language proper to an official document of the Church:

"In many parishes the Sacrament is administered to all comers without discrimination, often on a weekday, usually in an almost empty church, and frequently with no previous notification. The requisite number of godparents is not always insisted upon, and it is not usual for the officiating priest to take any steps to enquire as to the suitability of such sponsors as are forthcoming. "The association of the baptized infant with the Church very commonly terminates at baptism, since the sponsors are often entirely indifferent to their pledges, and take no steps to see that the child is instructed in the faith, confirmed and brought to Holy Communion, and cared for as a living member of the Christian Society.

"The effect of this misuse of one of the most sacred ordinances of the Christian faith is that a majority of parents bring their children to the font with very little apprehension of the real significance of their act, and often from very inadequate motives."

Not only is the laxity of parents and god-parents at fault, but for

many the whole rite is viewed with superstition. For instance, the Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, North Shields, says in an article on "Tyneside Baptismal Customs," published in **Hope**, the New-Sheet of the Baptismal Reform Movement:

"Superstition is very evident in the use of the Sacrament of Baptism among the average type of Tynesiders. The most persistent belief, which is almost universally held, is that it is unlucky to receive an unbaptized baby into one's house. This is so strong that a grandmother will not allow even her first grandchild to be carried over her doorstep unless it has first been baptized. The custom is upheld by all ages."

In 1947 the Bishop of Bradford made the following striking pronouncement in the August issue of **Hope**:—

"The Reform of the Church's practice as to Holy Baptism is long overdue. To a great many clergy it is a constantly recurring burden on their conscience to have to go on administering the Sacrament in so indiscriminate a way that it seems to amount to a constructive desecration of it. And yet, if any of them individually tries to introduce more discipline into his own practice, he finds his efforts frustrated by the refusal of neighbouring clergy to join with him in the attempt. So we go on, trying to build a Church upon a foundation of nominal membership. We encourage the idea that the baptism of a child is a right instead of a privilege, and that any parents may claim the baptism of their child even if it means nothing real to them and they neither profess nor intend to fulfil any of the obligations which it should imply for them. Is it surprising that the Church is weak, that Church membership is too often not rightly valued, that our preparation of Confirmands is consequently rendered very difficult and often leads to no lasting result, and that many even of our Church-goers think of their Church as a place that they patronize, rather than as a society

to which they are proud to confess allegiance?

"I hail the Baptismal Reform Movement with joy and with a hope of relief from humiliation in which we have for too long acquiesced."

It is not only in the Anglican Church, however, that such things are being said. Not long ago a Presbyterian minister in this country expressed himself to me as thoroughly dissatisfied with the position in his Church. He declared he did not know how much longer he could remain in the Presbyterian ministry, if he were continually to be expected to christen the infants of worldly and irreligious parents, who seemed to have no conviction as to their religious duty in regard to the matter. And another Presbyterian minister said to one of our preachers in England: "You don't practise infant baptism do you? I wish to goodness we didn't."

The Rev. H. G. Marsh, a Methodist minister, in the Preface to his book, **The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism**, published by the Manchester University Press in 1941, says: "The pastoral experience of the writer compels the admission that the action of many who seek baptism for themselves or for their children resembles more a tribute to superstition than the seeking of a Christian experience."

Emil Brunner, the Zurich theologian, says: "The contemporary practice of infant baptism can hardly be regarded as anything short of scandalous." (*The Divine-Human Encounter*, p. 132). He also says:

"Most of the contemporary neopagans and also most members of atheistic societies have been baptized as infants; what does the grace of baptism, of which in any event they probably never even heard, mean for them? What does the fact of having been baptized mean for the large number of contemporary people who do not know and do not even care to know whether they have been baptized? Infant baptism, which has its good points

in an entirely Christian fellowship—that is to say, a fellowship of persons who all joyfully profess Jesus Christ as their Lord — becomes a highly questionable arrangement where it is requested more from consideration of custom than from conviction of faith. It becomes a questionable arrangement when judged on the basis of the undervalued fundamental assertion of the Reformation: *Nullum sacramentum sine fide* — the sacrament is not valid without faith. In this Reformation principle the basic Biblical fact of personal correspondence is again expressed."

As we read these things, though we have not the slightest desire to exult over our brethren in the Paedo-baptist Churches, but sympathise deeply with them in their difficulties, we cannot but be confirmed in our view that Infant Baptism ought never to have been introduced into the practice of the Church. In this we have the support of no less an authority than the world-renowned theologian, Karl Barth, who, though himself a member of a Paedo-baptist Church, has had the courage and discernment to write:

"The second foundation principle in the matter of the ordering of baptism relates to the one baptized. As he is without doubt the second of the chief actors in what takes place, one must ask very seriously about him, too. And one does not ascribe too much to him, nor too little to the irresistible grace of baptism, if one says that — not, indeed, to the nature, power, meaning or effect of baptism, but surely to its order there belongs the following: the responsible willingness and readiness of the baptized person to receive the promise of the grace directed towards him and to be party to the pledge of allegiance concerning the grateful service demanded of him . . . Baptism without the willingness and readiness of the baptized is true, effectual and effective baptism, but it is not correct; it is not done in obedience, it is not administered according to proper order, and

therefore it is necessarily clouded baptism. It must and ought not to be repeated. It is, however, a wound in the body of the Church and a weakness for the baptized, which can certainly be cured but which are so dangerous that another question presents itself to the Church: how long is she prepared to be guilty of the occasioning of this wounding and weakening through a baptismal practice which is, from this standpoint, arbitrary and despotic?

"We have in mind here the custom of the baptism of children, or more exactly the *baptismus infantium* . . . According to the sense of the words, this means the baptism of those who before and in the course of what happens have nothing to say; and have nothing to say, because they are not yet able to speak, because one is in consequence not even able to ask what they ought to say, but whom one is wont to baptize with no questions regarding their willingness or their readiness, without making them responsible, in a pure passivity, relying on the fact that they are children of Christian parents. The baptismal teaching prevalent today in all the great Christian Confessions — in the Reformed Church also — has in it at this point not a mere chink but a hole

"Baptism is in the New Testament in every case the indispensable answer to an unavoidable question by a man who has come to faith. It answers the question concerning the divine certainty of the authority of the word which the man has already heard, which in faith he has already laid hold of and to which he has replied in the affirmative

"In the sphere of the New Testament one is not brought to baptism; one comes to baptism. For *infantes* . . . we see in the order there followed no room at all." (*The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, Karl Barth, S.C.M. Press, London, 1948, pp. 40-43.)

From this point Barth goes on to deal with the arguments usually advanced for Infant-Baptism from Christ's blessing of the children,

the rite of circumcision, the "holiness" of the children of Christian parents, and so on. To those who still hold to these arguments we commend his clear and cogent reasoning.

Believer's Baptism is not open to these objections. (We say "believer's baptism" not "adult baptism," for an adolescent may be baptised if, as Barth says, he "comes" to it of his own free will and understanding.) Believer's Baptism is not regarded with superstition, and it is not submitted to by unconscious infants, who do not know what is happening and have to be taught about it afterwards — if the clergy ever see them again! It is undergone by people, who have previously been instructed and know what they are doing, or they would not do it. This is precisely what Jeremiah said would characterise the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant children were brought into it by circumcision, when they were eight days old, and then they had to be taught to know the Lord as they grew up. It was a fleshy, national covenant. But "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . . **not according** to the covenant that I made with their fathers . . . And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; **for they shall all know me**, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord," etc. (Jeremiah 31:31-34), that is to say, people would not enter the New Covenant, until they were old enough to know the Lord for themselves.

Of course, it must be understood that many of those whom I have quoted above are not arguing for the total abolition of infant baptism, but for the abolition of the abuses that attend it. It may seriously be questioned, however, whether this is possible — whether the ivy can be pulled down without bringing down the wall with it. It seems to us, that if an honest attempt were made to strip the rite of its attendant abuses, it would be but a short time before they were all back again.



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The late Rev. S. Holt baptizing in the Nenga River in Tembuland.

Allowing for accidents of race and dress, the primitive New Testament baptisms must have looked very like this.

Consequently we are not surprised to learn that there are in fact a number of paedobaptists who think the rite should be abandoned altogether. According to a leaflet published by the Church of England Baptismal Reform Movement, "There are quite a large number of clergy and one Diocesan Bishop who are pressing for this."

Whether the Bishop referred to is Dr. Kirk, the Bishop of Oxford, or not, I do not know; but in his Diocesan Magazine in September, 1948 he wrote:

"In almost all that has been written on the subject it has been generally assumed that in primitive practice there were three successive stages in admission to the Church—baptism, confirmation, and first communion. This, however, is erroneous. In actual fact there were not three but four; because baptism was invariably preceded by admission to the catechumenate, followed by a period of instruction often of long duration. Baptism, in fact, in primitive practice, was as much the end as the beginning of a

process — the end of the process of instruction and testing for the new life of Christ, of which latter it was at the same time the beginning. Here is something which might with profit be rescued from the oblivion into which it has fallen. Is it not possible that instead of being baptized in infancy a child might at that stage be admitted as a catechumen, or 'learner'; and then after a period of instruction and when 'years of discretion' are reached, be baptized and confirmed, and admitted to communion."

What about infant dedication services, as prevalent in Baptist Churches and in a few of our own? May these not be open to the same abuses as infant baptism? Nothing can be more beautiful and appropriate than that faithful members of the church should bring their children to God's House and there dedicate them to the Lord in the presence of the congregation. But what if this leads to indiscriminate dedication of infants, including those of parents who never darken a church door and come to a dedication service merely from a vague impression that the baby ought to be "done"?

Then, I think, we should put our foot down and refuse to dedicate any but those whose parents give evidence of Christian life and faithfulness to the Church of God. This is not penalising the infant for the sins of the parents. (Nothing dreadful is going to happen to the infant if it is not dedicated.) In the nature of things, the Dedication Service is mainly for the purpose of parents dedicating their child and themselves to God and the duties of Christian parenthood. And if all this means nothing to them, so that at best they will give it but lip-service, why go through with it?

If this cannot be done — the confinement of such services to bona fide Christian parents and church members — then better were it that we gave up this infant ceremony entirely (with or without water), and stuck to the clear New Testament practice of bring-

ing into the Church only such as give evidence of their own conversion and dedication to God.

B.H.

(Acknowledgment is made to Mr. James Gray, *Towards True Baptism*, Berean Press, Birmingham, for many of the quotations contained in the above article.)

A Letter From Malaya

(The writer is a missionary of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, who recently spent some years in South Africa.)

21st September, 1949.

DEAR MR. HOLT.

We are now in Malaya. Our experience in India, etc., has been very interesting. I wish that you could witness what nationalism is doing in this part of the world. The chief lesson to be learned for our work in Africa is that the time-table for changes needed in relationships between whites and non-white peoples must be greatly speeded up or the religious and other cherished institutions which we have will be rejected along with the over-turn of political controls. I wish that more Christian missionaries and community leaders there in Africa could see what changes have had to be made in this part of the world after the impact of the Japanese in the recent war. The days of "white superiority" are definitely numbered. And the concern of the non-white people here about the plight of Africans and Indians in Africa, etc., is marking the hand-writing on the wall for undemocratic white domination in Africa. There are people from Africa here right now, who are soliciting the help and sympathy of the people in Asia. The response clearly indicates that the hundreds of millions in Asia will some day consider it their duty to "liberate" their fellowmen in Africa.

Another important lesson to be learned is that the mere removal of "colour discrimination" does not automatically solve the problems of the people. India is a real example to prove that the basic issue is not colour or race, but **economic**. I am afraid that far too many who are working in the interests of better relationships between races, do not realise this.

While India has had a great many problems to deal with recently, it seems obvious to a visitor that while India is politically free, India still has the task of defeating poverty, illiteracy, disease and exploitation. What is happening in China to the north, is having a significant influence in India. Reforms by present leadership in India are being held up by conflicts of vested interests, etc., which is providing the setting for another social revolution to come. I confess that I am in despair to find how inadequately our Christian leadership here is being prepared for the future developments which are going to be confronted in this part of Asia. We haven't begun to realise that the implications of Christian Love include the equitable and fair use of the resources God has given us, for the use and upliftment of ALL of God's people, and the ignoring of this "law" of love is just as serious in human relationships as ignoring the "law of gravitation" in our physical relationships.

Best wishes to you and your work.

Sincerely,
DARRELL RANDALL.

An Important Call to Prayer

WE have received from the Rev. S. G. Pitts, Secretary of the Christian Council of South Africa, a letter which states:

"At its recent meeting in Cape Town the Executive Committee of the Christian Council was greatly

concerned at the present state of human relationships in our land, and believed that that concern was shared by all right-thinking men and women.

"Seeking the guidance of Almighty God in this matter, the Committee felt that any improvement in the position must have its genesis in an act of Confession and humble waiting upon God. Accordingly it seemed right to prepare a 'Call to Prayer' to which it hopes that the Churches and Missions sharing its concern will respond.

"The Committee would beg that you, as head of your denomination or Mission, will agree to endorse and issue to the people of your Church this 'Call to Prayer' for the Sunday after Ascension Day, May 21st, that together we may wait upon God, seeking His guidance at this critical stage in the relationships of the different sections of our South African population."

We have the greatest pleasure in endorsing this timely action of the Christian Council, and do earnestly urge our Ministers and congregations to respond on May 21st to the "Call to Prayer," which is as follows:—

CALL TO PRAYER

"As Christian leaders in our land we are profoundly disturbed at the growth of those features in our national life which obscure the vision of God, create barriers between those who are members of one family, and quench the life of the Spirit in many of our brethren.

"We have taken unto ourselves the call of Paul the Apostle to the people of Ephesus when he wrote:

'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.'

"We ourselves long to respond to this call and to share the fruits

of obedience to the Divine Will with brethren of all races in our beloved country. But we cannot ignore the power of those passions which belong to unredeemed human nature, which leads us afresh to turn to Him Who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men.

"We pledge ourselves on the Sunday after Ascension Day (May 21st) to observe a time for deep searching of our own lives, casting ourselves in prayer before God, that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same.

"To the observance of such a time of prayer and dedication we call upon all who share our concern and our faith. We urge that in the places where people are accustomed to worship there be prayer, preceded by confession, since we have all sinned. The burden of our present distress is the fruit of failures and weaknesses in our human relationships during the past, from the guilt of which none of us is free.

"It is our firm conviction that God the Holy Spirit can grant us a new experience of love for one another, a new willingness to consult together without fear or prejudice, and a new determination to work, as strength is granted us, for the establishment of justice and righteousness among all men. Without this we cannot grow into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

E. W. GRANT, President,
The Christian Council of S.A.

FAMOUS DISCIPLES

Joseph Bryant
Rotherham

ROTHERHAM'S "Emphasised Bible: A New Translation," used to be found on the shelves of devout Bible students of many denominations the world over and is still prized by persons of

scholarship and discernment. To translate the whole of the Scriptures out of the original tongues is ever an achievement for one man and to this feat Rotherham added an arrangement whereby fine shades of emphasis in the original are indicated by a system of markings.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, who was his friend, spoke of his death as "a very great loss," and added: "He was a man to whom I always wrote in the presence of any difficulty of interpretation or exegesis, and never without receiving scholarly and spiritual help. He was a great scholar; his interpretative understanding of the Hebrew language was very wonderful; and yet he had all the natural and genuine simplicity of a little child, and the high and heroic enthusiasm of youth for high adventure — always qualified and safeguarded by splendid poise and sanity."

Joseph Bryant Rotherham was born in 1828 in Norfolk, where he grew up amid scenes immortalised in English literature by George Borrow. His father was a Methodist Local Preacher, and at the age of fourteen young Joseph made profession of faith in Christ at a Methodist Class-meeting. While still in his teens he began preaching and in due course was a candidate for the Connexional Ministry. Fulfilling the requirements he moved to Manchester and became assistant to the Rev. Mr. Buckley. Thereafter he had circuit appointments at Woolwich and Charlton and at Stockton-on-Tees. At the latter place he commenced his diligent and life-long study of Greek. It was also here that he set himself to study the Scriptures on the subject of Baptism, about which he had long been exercised, with the result that he was dissatisfied with the Methodist position, became immersed and received a call to the ministry of a Baptist Church at Wem, Salop.

Shortly before his baptism at Stockton, Rotherham walked into a book store in Hartlepool and picked up a bound volume of a magazine called "The Millennial

Harbinger." Its contents so interested him that he took it home and read it at night "as long as a halfpenny candle would enlighten me, and was thereby introduced into a new theological world, chiefly through articles found in the magazine from the pen of a Mr. Alexander Campbell, of Bethany, Virginia, U.S.A., which I found wonderfully fresh and interesting."

At Wem, Rotherham made contact with a congregation of Disciples in Shrewsbury, and, after only about a year as a Baptist Minister, his views had undergone such modification as a result of the study of his Greek New Testament and the theological essays of Alexander Campbell, that he found urgent cause once more (as he expressed it) "to adjust my position to my convictions." So he joined the Disciples in 1854 and from that time remained in happy and loyal fellowship with them until his death in 1910 — for the long period of fifty-six years!

For fourteen years he engaged in evangelistic work and then began his real lifework as a Biblical scholar. In 1872 the famous firm of Bible publishers, Samuel Bagster and Sons, of London, issued his critical translation of the New Testament, followed by a second edition in 1878. It was based on the text of Tregelles. In 1897 he rewrote the whole work, adjusting it to the newer and better text of Westcott and Hort. At the same time he had been busy with a translation of the Old Testament and by the end of 1895 the whole Bible — the Old Testament and the rewritten New Testament — stood on his table in sixty small and convenient manuscript volumes. Then Dr. Ginsburg brought out his new rescension of the Hebrew Text, and Rotherham felt his Old Testament should be gone over again, making use of the much improved Ginsburg text and critical apparatus. This cost him another four years' patient toil, till at last the whole was finished. It has remained in print, prized and sought after, ever since.

This leads me to remark that among the early Disciples, scholarship (as contrasted with the mere acquirement of academic degrees) was the order of the day. Long before Weymouth and Moffatt, men like Alexander Campbell, H. T. Anderson and J. B. Rotherham had translated the Bible in whole or in part into modern English from the original tongues.



J. B. ROTHERHAM

Dr. Wm. Robinson states, that in former days in Britain it was common for the laymen of our churches to be able to read their New Testaments in Greek with ease. "There were giants in those days!" Many church members of to-day, who talk much but study little, would do well to heed the Scripture injunction to "tarry in Jericho till their beards be grown."

Rotherham wrote many articles for the **British Millennial Harbinger**, the **Christian Commonwealth** and other journals and published several volumes, "Christian Ministry," "Studies in the Psalms," "Studies in Hebrews" and "Let Us Keep the Feast," besides tracts and pamphlets.

He was buried at Hither Green Cemetery in London on January 17th, 1910, having passed away at the ripe old age of 82, "old and full of years."

News of the British Churches

Claremont Manse,
Claremont Avenue,
Bournemouth, England
2nd March, 1950.

WHEN the Overdale College Re-union was held last October, Professor H. H. Rowley, of Manchester University, delivered the Joseph Smith Memorial lecture. His theme was **The Authority of the Bible**, and his treatment of the subject is a profound discussion of the question and makes an outstanding contribution to a Christian understanding of the matter. The lecture has now been published and may be had from the Secretary, Overdale College, Birmingham.

Overdale students are to conduct, for the third successive year, Vacation Crusades. Two teams of four students will visit Yorkshire and Lancashire. The students' Crusade has been geared in with the National Crusade.

The Social Questions Committee has begun an Information Service for the Churches. A panel of experts will deal with questions of politics, international affairs, child welfare, drink and gambling, etc. Leaders of study groups and youth organisations are being urged to make use of the service.

Focus for March in all the churches is upon the work and needs of the Home Missions Committee, with Sunday, March 5th, as H.M. Sunday. The Committee is directly responsible for fifteen ministers and three H.M. Sisters. The target for the month is set at £1,150.

The Missionary Committee, facing a heavy deficit, is cheered by news from the stations in India and Africa. In India a new ven-

ture will be undertaken next year. A visit has been paid to the capital of the adjoining province, Sarguja, where preaching was previously forbidden, and arrangements have been made for starting a new work there. From Africa comes the news that Mr. R. Gray, senior missionary, has been appointed secretary and treasurer of the Nyasaland Christian Council. Miss Jean Tinto has recently arrived home from that station and will begin deputation work in the near future.

Mr. and Mrs. A. D. Carmichael, Leicester, have reached home after visiting Australia.

Dear Editor,

You may be able to use something of the above in the *Sentinel*. The churches here are deeply interested in the possible effect on your Christian work of present colour tendencies.

Sincerely yours,

G. J. HAMMOND.

IS THIS CHRISTIAN ?

In the "Rand Daily Mail" last year (July 28) appeared the following letter:—

"Sir — The European prides himself on his fairness. Can he say that the treatment of the Coloured people of the Transvaal is fair?

"We pay the same tax as he does, but:

"Our children cannot be apprenticed in any of the skilled trades.

"There is no compulsory education for them, and the little education they get is in the hands of 300 or so Coloured teachers — 43 of whom are matriculated, and yet more than 150 of whom have the actual Transvaal Teachers' Lower Diploma. The school buildings are mostly dilapidated and ill-ventilated hired buildings.

"Our much-lauded liquor permits are scraps of paper which entitle the holder (after he has been finger-printed, visited by the police and questioned as to his

tax, religion, ownership of furniture and relationship with his wife), to one bottle of spirits and two to six malts a month.

"We have one sports ground in Johannesburg, no swimming bath and no municipal tennis courts. Through lack of recreation, our children become delinquents.

"We have three bioscopes in Johannesburg. The patrons are mostly natives, who travel from the locations. They have a perfect right to these bioscopes in the centre of Johannesburg, but their overwhelming numbers make it impossible for us to be sure of a seat.

"In the central area of Johannesburg one cannot buy a cup of tea or get a drink of water. There is not a single public convenience for Coloured people.

"In Pretoria there is no municipally organised transport to and from the suburbs for Coloureds.

"The police have only one word to describe and interrogate us — 'Hotnot.'

"Apartheid seems to have the blessing of the Europeans. If they are human, how would they like to be on the receiving and not the giving end? — NOT A SUCKER."

News of the Churches

CAPE TOWN

This Church has recently bought from us eighteen more copies of the hymnal **Christian Worship**, now in use by all of our congregations in this country except one. They are very fond of this book, and it is a pleasure to hear their fine singing of many of the new hymns.

We were privileged to be present in January at the first baptismal service conducted by our ministerial student, Mr. Bernard Barron. A mother and her daughter were baptised. We have nothing but praise for the fine, dignified man-

ner in which Mr. Barron conducted the service.

JOHANNESBURG

At the end of December last Mr. and Mrs. Holt and their family moved into the new house purchased by the United Christian Missionary Society, at 35 Sixth Street, Linden. It is a short distance from the lot on which the new church is to be built. (Build-should have begun before this appears in print.) Since then, the Brakpan friends came over in a body one evening for a delightful party and singing of hymns around the piano.

Services have also begun on Sunday evenings in the house, pending the erection of the Church, and Mrs. Holt has a weekday afternoon service for children.

A long-time member of our Church, Miss H. Fawcett, was married on March 4th to Mr. Lovell Keys, of Durban. The wedding was conducted by Mr. Holt in the Berea Methodist Church, very kindly placed at our disposal for the occasion.

GERMISTON

Sunday evening services are kept going here with the help of Mr. Louis de Kock and Mr. Stanley Smith, who are doing a fine job of preaching. The Building Fund is slowly but surely mounting, and one of these days this congregation will be buying a lot for a church building.

BOKSBURG

A Harvest Festival was held on Sunday, March 5th, when the platform was beautifully decorated. In connection with this and a social on the following night, the sum of £12/10/0 was raised for the Benevolent Fund initiated by the Board the previous month.

The present regular income of the church has risen to between £40 and £60 per month, a very appreciable increase over the giving a year ago. All departments of the work are in a healthy condition. It is to be hoped that now that the church work is

stabilised and consolidated, this church will be able to give a lead to our churches in South Africa in giving to missions and other extensions of our total work in this country. In common with our other congregations they already contribute to the support of our students at Rhodes.

BENONI

On February 26th a baptismal service was conducted by Rev. J. Duvenage in the presence of a packed congregation, when seven candidates were baptised.

An ex-schoolmaster, Mr. Harold Bowden, having recently become connected with the Church, the Board has authorised the organisation of a Scout Troop to be in charge of Mr. Bowden.

Also in February, a fine social was organised at which the church presented the Editor of the *Sentinel* with a handsome double fountain-pen set for his desk, in acknowledgment of his help to the Benoni Church.

The church has also asked the Editor to conduct another evangelistic mission, April 24th to May 5th, and he has consented.

The women take a very active part in this congregation both in spiritual and in financial affairs. Last year their organisation raised and presented to the Board the sum of £120.

BRAKPAN

Mr. Percy Webber resumed his job on the mines during the long vacation from Rhodes, in order to make a little more of that money so needful to a student at university. However, he was able to give his Sunday evenings to preaching at Brakpan, which was much appreciated by all who heard him. Both Mr. Webber and Mr. Barron are now back at Rhodes for their last year of study there.

On February 4th, Mr. Holt conducted the wedding of Miss Joyce Davies and Mr. Edward Kinsey,

both of Brakpan. The Davies family has been connected with the church for many years.

The Women's Council held a braaivleis on February 17th.

General News

THE next Peter Ainslie Memorial Lecture on Christian Unity will be delivered at Rhodes University on Wednesday, August 9th, this year at 8 p.m.

The Lecturer will be the Rev. S. M. Berry, M.A., D.D., of London, who will be on a visit to this country at that time. Dr. Berry is General Secretary of the International Congregational Council.

The Very Rev. Chief Rabbi, I. Brodie and Frs. Brodie are visiting South Africa. Rabbi Brodie is Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth. A reception to him and Mrs. Brodie is to be held in the Ballroom of the Carlton Hotel on April 12th. It will be attended by representative leaders of the Jewish and Christian communities. Speakers, besides the Chief Rabbi, include the Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Johannesburg, Dr. J. B. Webb, and a Dutch Reformed minister. Rev. Basil Holt, President of the Witwatersrand Church Council, will propose a vote of thanks.

The Annual Meeting of the Johannesburg International Club was held in Darragh Hall, Johannesburg on Wednesday evening, March 15th. The Club, which was started by the Editor of this paper a little over a year ago, at the request of the South African Institute of Race Relations, now has 650 members. Its club rooms are at 4 ort Street in Johannesburg, where lunches and teas are served, facilities are provided for reading and lectures, discussions, concerts and dramatics are arranged. A full-time Secretary is employed.

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