

# **The Kingdom in Miniature: Building a Colonial Theology**

## **ABSTRACT**

Among the most important occasions in colonial New Zealand Baptist life was the address of the President of the Baptist Union, given at the Annual Conference. These were often insightful 'state of the union' pieces. They were also a vehicle for the articulation of Baptists' sense of themselves, their mission and their theology. This 1908 address by F.G. Buckingham reveals the developing ecclesiology of New Zealand Baptists and the challenges they faced. Many of the issues will seem familiar to readers nearly a century on. It is reprinted from the 1908/9 *Yearbook* of the N.Z. Baptist Union.

## **'OURSELVES'**

Being the Presidential Address delivered at the Conference of the  
New Zealand Baptist Union, held in Nelson, October, 1908.

BY REV. F. G. BUCKINGHAM.

## **Introduction**

Brethren, permit me to thank you for the honour you did me, when last year you elected me to the Presidency of this Union. That mark of your esteem and confidence I appreciate more highly than any words of mine can express. I only regret that the service I have been able to render to the Union during the year has not been commensurate with the honour conferred.

I should like to throw out the hint that arrangements should be made which would make it possible for all future Presidents to visit in the course of the year each of the Churches and Home Mission Stations in the Dominion, with the object of confirming them in the faith, stimulating them in their work, and bringing them into a more vital connection with the Union. These visits should be untrammelled by any immediate financial issue - that should be left to follow as the result of the deepened interest aroused by the visit; the President disguised in the garb of a beggar is not an attractive personality.

We heartily welcome to our shores the new ministers who have arrived in our country since our last Assembly, and are glad that so many of them have found their way to this the first Conference of the Baptist Union of New Zealand since their arrival, and trust we may regard it as an omen of their future attitude towards our annual gatherings.

We remember that for the first time for some years death has visited our ministerial ranks. Our brother, the Rev. J. B. Sneyd, of Mount Eden, after some months of illness, quietly crossed the border on the morning of August the 15th. He had been my personal friend for a little over twenty years. He was a good minister of Jesus Christ, a man of considerable gifts, an earnest preacher, and a faithful pastor; in all his pastorates he made full proof of his ministry. In spite of much physical weakness, he fulfilled the ministry of the Gospel in his last pastorate with much success, and has left as his memorial a flourishing Church, a commodious new sanctuary, and a field of labour possessing great possibilities for the man who may be called to enter into his labours.

Captain and Saviour of the Host  
Of Christian chivalry,

We bless Thee for our comrade true  
Now summoned up to Thee.  
We bless Thee for his every step  
In faithful following Thee,  
And for his good fight, fought so well,  
And crowned with victory.

To the bereaved and lonely widow we offer our tenderest sympathy, and commend her to the loving care of Him who said, 'Let thy widows trust in Me.' In this connection we would also express our condolence with our brother, the Rev. G. D. Cox, who has during the year been called to suffer the loss of his wife. We trust that he and his daughters have since the time of bereavement entered into the consolations which flow 'from the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.'

The outstanding event of the year-so far as the Baptists of Australasia are concerned-has been the Baptist Congress recently held in Sydney. The Assembly was composed of representatives from all the Australasian States, and our own country was represented by the Rev. J. J. North (to whom fell the honour of preaching the Congress Sermon) and the Rev. J. C. Martin. The former is back from these meetings, and before this Assembly breaks up will give us an account of the doings there. We trust that the discussion of the problems dealt with there will help us here.

### **Topic**

During the year a good many topics have suggested themselves as having a claim to consideration on an occasion like this, and like other Presidents I have at times been sorely perplexed; but one subject entered my heart and head, and kept the position against all others.

For some years past, my predecessors have with marked ability dealt with the social aspect of Christianity. It seemed to me therefore that at this interesting stage of our denominational history it would not be inappropriate if I took a shorter range, and availed myself of the opportunity of saying a few earnest things about 'Ourselves'. There is no subject in which we are more deeply interested than that of our own beloved denomination in this Dominion. There are many matters of importance to be considered during this Conference, and I desire at this early Stage to create an atmosphere congenial to their discussion. What are our forces in this Dominion? How are we employing them? What are we doing, and how are we doing it? Can we improve our methods? Are we making the best of the resources at our disposal? These and many other questions arise. I cannot hope to answer or even discuss all the questions, but my aim will be accomplished if the words I speak to-night have the effect of helping the members of this Conference and our Church members generally to see more clearly the possibilities which are theirs, and stimulate them to seize the opportunities which present themselves to turn these possibilities into actualities

### **Our Strength**

The organised Baptist strength in this Dominion consists of 29 Ministers in full work, 6 doing occasional work, 7 Home Missionaries, 111 Local preachers, 658 Sunday School teachers, supported by a Church membership of 4,465. This may be regarded as our fighting force - not a large body certainly, but if each unit of this number were contributing up to the full possibility of consecrated personality and means, our influence in this land would be immensely increased, and our progress much more rapid. The 4,000 members which consti-

tute our Union are divided into 39 Churches, and the condition of these Churches both as to spirituality and liberality determines the strength of our impact upon the forces that are against us. 'If the Church be right in her relationship to God she will come down upon the forces of evil like an invincible army.'

There is no question therefore of more vital importance to the Union than 'How can we improve the condition of our individual Churches?' The strength of our Union depends upon the vigour of our separate Churches.

### **Dormant Members**

The first thing that impresses me as I take this survey of our forces is the number of dormant members to be found in all our Churches. While the battle is raging, they peacefully sleep. The soporific influences of success in business, the deceptive wooing of ease and pleasure, which their increase of wealth has brought within their reach, have thrown them into a profound slumber, and they are out of action. They are never seen at a prayer-meeting, take no part in the active operations of the Church, rarely meet at the Communion Table, are seldom up in time to attend the morning service, and though they are counted in the membership of our Churches, and contribute occasionally to our funds, they add little to the spiritual strength and vigour of our cause. Now, here is a problem at our very doors, as important as any that have to do with the world outside, and I fancy we must solve this problem before we can hope to solve the problems which are farther away.

We have good men amongst us cast in a somewhat stern mould, who would soon solve the problem by removing their

names from the Church roll. I venture to submit, however, that, except in the case of flagrant misconduct, this is the last thing we should do. The class to which I refer are morally without blame; they are only asleep, and they must be awakened out of their sleep.

In all our Churches there are some who are wide awake, full of zeal and activity, whose works, labour, and patience are manifest to all, and who have not lost their first love. These must become missionaries to the sleepers, and must arouse them with the divine message, 'Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works.' With infinite patience, love and tact, we must call into activity the dormant power of our Churches. I am fully persuaded that before a revival comes among the unconverted, there must be an awakening in the Church, and I call upon all living, active members of our Churches to turn their attention to this important matter; pray for them, visit them, converse with them, on the great issues which are involved in their being alive unto God. We have waited long for an Evangelist to visit our Churches in search of the unconverted. May it not be that our Lord sees that we are not ready for this, and has kept us waiting, until driven by the hard facts of the comparatively few conversions from the world, we are led to discern that one of the chief causes of 'arrested progress' is to be found in the fact that many amongst us are weak and sickly, and many asleep? Let us judge ourselves, that we may not be judged.

### **Clearer Conception of a Church**

I think we need a clearer conception of the nature and function of a Church of Jesus Christ. Many of our members have an inadequate idea of what a Church means. They join us with the

crudest notions, and for the slightest cause will leave us, with as little concern as they would sever their connection from a football committee or a sewing meeting. The Church is little more than a social club, which gives an opportunity of frequent gatherings together, provides occasions for entertainment in the shape of public services, and if the preaching is exceptionally interesting, sermons short, and of the lighter kind, they will attend, pay a small sum for the privilege, and consider that they have discharged all the duties incumbent upon them as Church members. Now, we must alter this by a constant presentation of the ideals of the New Testament Church. We are careful, and rightly so, to form our Church polity after the model of our New Testament Churches. Let us be careful that our organisation be permeated with the spirit of the New Testament Church. We cannot maintain too emphatically that the Church is a divine institution, and differs from all other combinations of men in that it was founded by our Lord, who in His great statement made to Peter announced that it was His purpose to build the Church, and indicated that it would consist of those who believed on Him, and confessed Him before the world. The Church is the highest and noblest thought of God, expressed in the concrete form of a community of persons gathered out of the world, and meeting together for worship and service. It is the perennial manifestation of the fact that 'God is Love,' and its origin and continued existence proclaim to all its members, 'If God so loved you, ye ought also to love one another. To belong to such an institution should be considered the greatest privilege and highest honour. The functions of the Church are in harmony with its nature. It is here for a special purpose - to witness for Jesus Christ - the Church as a Church, in the totality of its members, not only its ministers and officers; but

each member is bound by the love which has brought him into fellowship to add his part to the testimony of the Church. Its function is to bear witness in the world; the world is the sphere in which it has to do its work. 'A Church,' says Dr. Dale, 'is the place for the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ, the organ of His redeeming activity in that particular neighbourhood.' To witness for Jesus Christ, then, is the work of all, not only by preaching, but by living 'as becometh the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.' It is for this that the members of Christ's Church are intermingled with the world in social intercourse, in business transactions, in the home, in the markets of the world, in the municipal life of communities, in the legislative halls - that in all the varied and manifold relations of daily life 'men may see their good works, and glorify the Father who is in Heaven.' Twelve months of true living in the world up to the ideals of the standard set by Christ, would do more to impress the world with the reality, beauty, and power of the Christian faith than all our preaching, unconfirmed by Christian lives. Impressed, they would enquire; enquiring, they would become interested; and we should have the joy of seeing multitudes who are estranged from God turning their faces to Him. We should do something towards solving the problem of how to get at men. If the 4,000 members of our Churches could be transformed into living witnesses for Jesus Christ, many men whose outlook is very limited, and who know nothing of the cumulative evidence of the power of the Christian faith in the world at large, would be won for Christ by the consistent Christian life of the men with whom they are in daily contact. What is heard from the pulpit must be readable in the living epistles which circulate among men.



### **The Church in its Corporate Capacity**

In addition to what I have tried to enforce as to personal witness, the Church in its corporate capacity is a witness for Christ. If that testimony be clear and strong, we influence our environment accordingly. The opportunities of this united testimony is found in the Sunday and week-day services of the Church, and the ordinances which we from time to time observe. In these we speak with united voice. Our personal testimony is combined; it is not the voice of one crying in the wilderness, but the united testimony of a company, all bearing witness to one Supreme Person, offering worship to the one God, who has been made known to them in Jesus Christ. Of Christ they say, 'We have known Him, and declare that which we have seen and heard. We are not deceived; we have not followed cunningly-devised fables; we have been with Him on the mount; we have heard the voice which said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' We have said in response, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' We heard Him say, 'Come unto Me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' and we answered 'Lord, that I may have rest.' We were sore troubled about our sin. We heard that He in whom there was no sin was manifested to take away our sin; we believed it; we believed on Him, and 'being justified through faith, we have peace with God.' We were dissatisfied with our broken, mean, and ignoble lives. We heard that 'He made all things new,' and we know that to be true. We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

Thus the truths of the Gospel are confirmed by the subjective experience of the Church; and that experience, voiced in the devout and reverent worship of God, in loyal obedience to the commands of Christ, in earnest consecrated service, be-

comes the most convincing proof of the reality of our message, and the grandest manifestation of the fact that Christ dwells with His people. Although the presence of Christ is not confined to Churches or Church services, He has promised to be wherever His people meet, and the person who from any motive turns into our service at least expects to find Him there, if He is to be found at all. I am afraid that our united testimony is sadly weakened by the attitude of many of our members toward the regular services of the sanctuary. Everyone absent from the service lessens the total power of our testimony, not only by the depressing effect upon the minister, but by the effect that it has upon those in the building outside the fellowship of the Church. And who can tell the effect it has upon those who have no thought or desire for the service of God? In our smaller Churches, particularly in our smaller towns, every professing Christian is known, and the Church to which he belongs. When a non-church goer, on a Sunday morning, sees a man he knows to be a member of a certain Church loafing about his garden or verandah, he concludes that Church matters must be of little importance, that there cannot be much value in religion, and he is not encouraged to try it for himself.

### **A Church a Miniature of the Kingdom of God**

I should like to say here that each local Church should be a miniature of the Kingdom of God upon earth. All that we desire to accomplish in the world should be manifested in the Church. It should be the standing advertisement of what our principles would do for the world, if men would hear our message, and accept our Lord as Saviour and Ruler of life. Here should dwell the brotherhood of men; not each one for himself, but each one for the good of all. Here the world should be able to see how, under the gentle rule of Christ, men who have

been offended forgive one another, because God for Christ sake has forgiven them. Here should be shown the beautiful sight of men bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ. The Church should be the home of unselfishness, of love, of purity and goodness, of all that makes for the uplifting and ennobling of man. We teach that God is love; that He desires all men to be brothers in Jesus Christ; that men should 'do unto others as they would have others do to them;' that sin, which in its many forms is the cause of so much of the world's misery, need not have dominion over men. We set forth in glowing language that Christ in the heart accomplishes this; that to avoid the very appearances of evil is the surest way of becoming expert in all that is good - in a word, we say that if men accepted our Lord, and allowed Him to rule their lives, all that is wrong would be righted, and His Kingdom would have come on earth. This is our talk. And if our speech is to impress the world, the Church must show these things in actual existence. We must be able to say, pointing to the Church, 'If you men of the world will listen to our message, yield to our appeal, and take our Master for yours, this is what would happen.' Do you say this is an ideal too high for attainment? Well, let us keep the ideal before us, and strive to reach it; the effort will strengthen us, and hope inspire us, and in the very attempt to reach it, our influence upon the world will be immensely increased. I have dwelt at some length upon this point, because I feel the importance of increasing the power of the Church's influence upon the world. Only in this way can we win men. We must manifest in our individual and corporate life the truths for which we stand. Even our distinguishing ordinance of Baptism will die out, if we do not manifest the death unto sin and the life unto righteousness which it symbolises. People care little to-day for rites of any kind out

of which the meaning has gone. It is not enough to say that it has the authority of the New Testament. We members of this Union must make clear to the world that the truths which it declares are embodied in the lives of the 4,000 men and women of our Churches in this Dominion. If we have this united, unbroken testimony, I believe it would soon manifest itself in numerical increase.

Let us dream for a moment that the power of Jesus Christ has gripped every member, officer and minister of our Churches. What results would follow! What spiritual warmth in our assemblies! Every hymn a melody of the heart, every prayer the aspiration of the soul towards God, every gathering of the brotherhood 'fellowship with the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ.' Then would come back the old-time spirit of the days when no one said that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, and in this Twentieth Century would be repeated the miracle of a community of people so enthralled by Jesus Christ, that they would consecrate of their earthly possessions sufficient to meet the demands of His service. Your officers would be able to distribute to every institution according to its need; great grace would rest upon all; and with great power your preachers would bear witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Delegates to this Assembly, let us go back to our brethren, and impress upon them the tremendous importance of this personal and united testimony to the advancement of the Cross of Christ in this Dominion. Try to combine all the strength that is available; do your best to rouse the sleepers, and bring about a truer consecration of the whole brotherhood to the service of God in the service of man, so that our witness may be one harmonious whole, and the attacks we make on the world may be made with the full strength of the forces available in this land.

### **A Matter That Troubles Us**

There is one matter that is troubling not a few of us at the present time - the few applications for Baptism and Church membership. If we are not suffering from 'arrested progress' as acutely as they are in some parts of the Old World, our rate of increase is not as fast as we could desire. Converts are not as numerous as we should like; and there is a reluctance on the part of those who have professed conversion to be baptised and join the Church - a reluctance which at present is more pronounced than at any previous time in my experience. Many of the young converts seem quite content to belong to the C.E. Society, or to some kindred institution which offers like social privileges, and provides outlets for Christian activity somewhat similar to the Church. But they have no desire to pass on to Church membership. Now, we owe much to our C.E. Societies. They have in many instances been a training-ground for the Church; but to many they have become a substitute for the Church. The converts know all about Baptism, and could pass an examination on the subject with credit; yet they make no move in the direction of obedience. We recognise that it is the office of the Holy Spirit to guide into all truth; but are there any influences at work counteracting the operations of the Spirit? I think there is one, and one that is removable by the Church. Baptism, in the mind of the young convert, is synonymous with Church membership, and I think it is the unpopularity of the business Church-meeting that causes the halt - the only meeting that now distinguishes the ordinary Christian attendant from the member in full standing. How do the majority of members treat this meeting? They generally ignore it. Your young convert probably lives in a home where father or mother, or both, are members of a Church. He hears the

Church-meeting announced on the Sunday, and asks, 'Are you going to the Church-meeting, to-night?' The reply is, 'No, I never go to a business Church-meeting. It is not a pleasant place.' He comes naturally to the conclusion that there is no reason why he should connect himself with an organisation in the special meeting of which his parents take no pleasure, and I think it is time we either ended the monthly business Church-meeting or mended it. We should be careful that our words and actions in all matters relating to our Church be such as to create in the minds of the young people favourable impressions. If we do not esteem and love the Church, and find a pleasure in all that pertains to it, neither will our children. The question of the attitude of the young people of our Baptist families towards our Churches is a very important one, and fraught with great issues for the future. To-day, individuality early asserts itself. Family religion, where it does exist, is not always harmonious. Denominationally, many of our families are divided. We have taught the doctrine, 'Think for yourself.' Let us give them good and solid grounds on which to form their judgments. It is the duty of all Baptist parents to see that there is no lack of instruction on points which have to do with Church membership. We should teach our children the necessity of Baptism as an act of obedience to our Lord's command; that the ideal of Christ is not realised until the saved one becomes a part of the organised brotherhood; that to be saved is to become one of many; that the highest ideal is the corporate life of the Church; that it is the will of Christ that all who believe on Him should be added to the visible Church.

### **The Relationship of Our Churches to the Union**

I come now to speak of the relationship of our Churches to the Union. It was an historic day when our Churches, conscious of

their isolation and their consequent weakness for aggressive work, drew together in fellowship, and decided to combine for work which no single Church could attempt by itself, and thus formed the Baptist Union of New Zealand, the semi-Jubilee of which we close at this Conference. Since that start, the history of our denomination in this Dominion is intensely interesting. It is the story of something attempted, something done. It is the record of steady growth and increasing influence; of difficulties bravely faced and nobly met; of the perfecting and adjusting of machinery, as the combined wisdom and experience of the Churches judged necessary, to meet the varying needs of the times. The Union gave birth to our Baptist Missionary Society (which of itself would have justified its formation); it gave a new impetus to Home Missions; it has brought into existence a Students' Committee, Sunday Schools' and Young People's Committee, Board of Introduction and Advice, a Manse Fund, and last, but not least, an Annuity Fund, for which all your missionaries and pastors are quietly thankful; it has sent a ray of light through the dark cloud that hung on the distant horizon. These and other things have been brought into existence, none of them perhaps perfect, but they are here, and will grow in strength and usefulness as the years pass. All of them would have been impossible but for the formation of the Union. The Union has done splendid service, and deserves well of the entire brotherhood. This has been recognised, as is evidenced by the contributions which have flowed into its coffers from its Churches, most of which are struggling hard to keep local work going. It is because the Union has done so well that we want it to do better; because it has so increased our power as a denomination we want it to be more powerful still and I believe this result can be obtained without any undue infringement of our Congregational polity. As Churches

we are free and self-governing in all local matters; but we are federated under the name of 'The Baptist Union of New Zealand.' I think the name Union is significant, and expresses exactly the ideal to which I am anxious we should attain. As I understand the term, it means something more than a symbol of the brotherly regard of the Churches toward one another. Union concerns organisation, and has been brought into existence for the purpose of providing the best possible machinery for extending the work of our denomination at home and abroad - a means by which may be gathered the resources of the entire Baptist community, its thought, its prayers, its money, to be directed to any given spot where it can be used to the best purpose. I want it to be recognised that every Church and every member is an integral part of this Union, not only in the ethical sense of fellowship, but in the hard matter-of-fact sense of organisation. This feeling must be stimulated and encouraged where it does exist, and created where it does not. In these Conferences, the voice of all the Churches should be heard through their representatives, the will of the Churches expressed, and that expressed will of the Churches should bear the same authority for the whole denomination as the expressed will of the individual Church over its own local affairs. The officers of the Union should be able to feel that they have behind them the whole body of believers; and as the officers of a local Church execute the will of the members of that particular Church, so the officers of the Union should have authority over all matters which are the result of combined action. I regard the Union as an expansion of our Church polity, and I do not feel that I am unduly straining the authority of the New Testament when I regard the Union as the Baptist Church in New Zealand, and this Assembly as the most important business Church-meeting of the year. It is the lack of this



sense of vital union that makes it so difficult to get all the members of our Churches harnessed to our denominational movement. I hope the day is near when the matters that concern the Union will find a place on the business paper of every local Church meeting, and be considered as much a part of their work as local matters. When the 814 personal members are changed to the 4,000 standing on our books, then Forward movements will be neither impossible, spasmodic, nor uncertain; but we shall be working up to the full strength of our resources. We want the combined wisdom of our Churches in making our decisions, and the combined power of our Churches in carrying them out.

You will remember that the year started with a call to work up to the ideals of the last Conference. We then resolved to bring our Home Mission Fund up to £1,000. I think that the experience of your deputations would indicate that some of the Churches were not ready, and they never will be until they realise their true connection with the Union. As I have already indicated, there is in the 3,000 members who do not appear on our list of subscribers a large area to be cultivated, from which rich harvests may yet be gathered. There is nothing we should do that it is impossible to do. We already occupy an important position in the religious life of this country. If we are not very bulky, we have strong limbs, for we belong to the athletes of the Christian faith, and to the call 'Forward!' we must respond. The past inspires; the present, by its very difficulties, stimulates; the future offers a splendid reward for the best we can do. So we are going to be 'steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

### **Our Home Missions**

Our Home Mission is the organ of our aggressive work in this Dominion, and aggressive work is the very life of the Union. We rise or fall by that; and if we fall, we bring our Foreign Mission down with us. There must be no thought of failure. We hope we have come within the spell of Christ's purpose concerning this land, and we believe that He will make clear to us the lines on which we should move, and will supply our spiritual power from His own exhaustless energy. We have a glorious chance in this fair land. We enjoy a liberty which took our fathers of the Old Land centuries to obtain.

We are under no religious disabilities, socially, educationally, or politically; there are no leases issued in this country containing a clause 'forbidding the erection of a Dissenting chapel, slaughter-house, or other nuisance upon the land.' The course is clear. We can have for Jesus Christ in this land just as much as we are able to take. Let us, then, face our work with a Christ-like optimism. We are yet in our youth, in the growing stage, having the advantages and disadvantages of youth - buoyant with hope, and ready for the fray. We have already added our quota to the forces in this land which make for righteousness, and are intensely anxious that the future shall eclipse the past. For that end, with unabated energy, we are determined to strive, not as though we had already attained, or were already perfect; but we press forward. The golden age of the Christian Church is not in the past. The sun that gilds the peaks is the *morning* sun; that singing among the trees is the whisper of the *morning* breeze; there may be shadows still in the valley, but it is enough that the meridian of the day of the Lord is in *front* of us - the sun is *rising*, not setting.

### **Our Missionary Society**

I should fail to satisfy my own desire and your expectation if I did not say a word in reference to our beloved Missionary Society. Brought into being early in the fourth year of our existence as a Union, nourished with tenderest care during the period of its infancy, it remains to-day our most beloved child, and its future is safe in the growing affections of the Union. And no wonder! Think of our missionaries - how God has blessed us in them. They are the sons and daughters of our own Churches, some of the choicest spirits of our Christian faith, called out by the Head of the Church for this work; loved at home for their splendid character, their devotion to the Master's service, shown in their study to equip themselves for this work; sent out with the love that enswathes a child as it leaves the parental roof for a new land; watched with the deepest interest as they seek to master the language of the people; toiling on under the heat of an Indian sky, until physical and mental exhaustion compel a respite. We rejoice in them, we welcome their visits home, and assure them that our love for them knows no abatement. We have a noble band on the field - men and women who are keenly alive to the needs of the Mission, wise to read the signs of the times, and to adopt the best means to obtain the desired end, 'Tipperah for Christ!' They have fully justified the confidence we have placed in them; they have laboured on under all the difficulties belonging to mission work in India, with the added difficulties caused by the political unrest of the last few years. They are doing their work loyally and faithfully. No complaints reach us; no sign that they are weary *of* their work, though often they must be weary *in* it. They have consecrated themselves to this service, and by their lives are writing the thrilling sentence which all may read, 'We will pay our vows unto the Lord.'

Their work has been largely foundation work. It is awaiting its manifestation. The names of John Takle, Dr. Charles North, Miss Beckingsale, Miss Macgeorge, Miss Pillow, Miss Gainsford and others will be interwoven with the history of our work in Eastern Bengal. There is no place on the map of the world more dear to this Union than that spot in India where seven European missionaries with their eighteen native helpers are seeking to win for Jesus Christ the million and a-quarter of people resident in its two towns and 3,000 villages.

Now, how are we going to show our love to these devoted workers upon our Mission Field? Certainly, not by decreased revenue at home, which would tell them in very plain language that their needs in matters which touch their convenience and comfort, and in some instances menace their health, cannot be attended to; that their constant prayer, 'Send us more workers,' cannot be answered. I understand that our esteemed Treasurer has had an uneasy time during the year. He has been in the position of a skipper whose boat has got into shallow water, has felt the bumping of the river bed, and has sometimes wondered if his little craft would go aground. The rivulets and streamlets have not been flowing in as they should have done. In a word, the income has been as irregular as the expenditure has been regular. Brethren, this must be altered, and in some way we must see to it that the income shall meet the expenditure with fair regularity. This, I believe, can be done. It is not want of love to our Missions, or lack of interest in the movement, but the absence of systematic method in the gathering of the funds. There may be a few who still think that we have enough to do at home, without bothering about things in distant lands; but this number is fast decreasing. The Christian to-day who takes no interest in Missionary work is out of the swing of Christ's eternal purpose, and the Church which

slackens its efforts for missions falls out of the ranks of progressive Christianity. Then, I do not believe that giving to missions interferes with the other funds of the Church. Take a concrete example. I know of one Church, with a little over 100 members, which this year increased its contributions for missions from £54 to £92 - a rise of £38. Now, what has happened to the other funds? The Home Mission collections went up £10; the Manse Fund of the Union got two years' reduction of loan, instead of one; the Church spent £40 in improving its building, and finished the year with a small credit balance on the general fund. How can it be done? By ministers recognising that they are members of the Baptist Union, and impressing the people to the same effect; by reading occasional chapters from the new Book of Acts, which is being issued to-day in the shape of records from the Mission field; by appointing a good local Secretary, with a staff of collectors. All filled with the missionary spirit and a mind to work. We are able, not only to keep our staff at its present strength, but to increase it. The last few years have been glorious years in the Mission fields of the world. The Laymen's movement is bringing into existence a tremendous new force for Christ. Men are awaking to the world's need. They are being seized with the conviction that Christianity is a dominant factor in true human progress. They have enquired, 'What wouldest Thou have us to do?' and have received the answer, 'Give the Gospel to the world during the present generation.' They have investigated if this be possible, and they report that it is. With their business capacity, command of wealth, and power of organisation, they have decided that it shall be done, and they are changing missionary enterprise from a bit of cheap philanthropy to a real business for Jesus Christ. Sometimes, it seems as though the Kingdom of God was very slow in coming; but that is because we stand

in the valley. Get upon the mountains, and you will see that the army of Jesus Christ is larger than could bivouack in any of our Church grounds; and in every direction His hosts are moving on. From His throne to-day He commands an ever-increasing number, and the ages are His, in which to display His grace towards us. While missionary enthusiasm is apparent in the Church the world over, we shall not be lacking in our own field. We shall remember that our Lord is on His throne, guiding our movements, and bestowing His power, and that He also still 'sits over against the treasury.'

### **Our Ministry**

I come now to speak for a few minutes upon the subject of our ministry, not the least important item in this survey of our forces. Strong men as leaders are of vital importance to our progress as a body. Weakness here would be disastrous to us. Inefficiency in officers means inefficiency throughout the ranks. It is therefore of vital importance that we should have the very best men the Church can supply - the best in heart, intellect and spiritual power; men of sterling character, because they have submitted, and are daily submitting, to the moulding touch of Him 'who has saved them, and called them with a holy calling;' 'apt to teach,' because they have taken the trouble to learn. In this respect, as a denomination, we are fortunate; for though few of us are privileged to add to our names the letters which indicate a high position in academic scholarship, the knowledge we do possess is of the serviceable rather than the decorative kind. I hope, however, that the day is near when our candidates for the ministry will consider that University degrees are worth striving for, in order that the attainments in knowledge which they indicate may be consecrated to the service of their Lord. There is no natural gift or

accomplishment that is not worth cultivating or attaining, that we may with greater efficiency serve our Master. It is becoming increasingly evident to all who think for the future of our Churches, that our aim must be to secure as ministers men of the finest natural gifts and the highest culture obtainable. It should be distinctly understood that no young man has the slightest chance of a place in the stated ministry of our Churches who is not prepared to undergo the best training it is within our power to give. Next to the fact that he is a Christian man, and endowed with natural gifts, his willingness to submit to this and his capacity for the ordeal should be regarded as the first clear indication that he is called to this office. This may seem a somewhat harsh condition to make; but the demands of the times are such, that only a spiritual and an educated ministry can meet them. While I thus speak, I would keep the door open for any God-sent genius who might appear, even though he may not come along the path I have indicated.

The Rev. F. B Meyer said, in his address from the Chair of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, 'An uneducated ministry is not necessarily a gracious one, nor an educated one graceless. The greatest leaders in our ranks to-day are men who have passed through the rarest culture of their time. God does not disdain the use of the ram's-horn; but the camp moved, and the jubilee was announced, by the sounding of silver trumpets.' Those of us who have been long in the ministry would say to all who aspire to this office, We want you to be better men than we are. The demands made upon us sometimes strain us almost to the breaking point. Reckon no work too hard to prepare yourself for filling up the ranks, as one after another we drop out.

No slacker grows the fight, no feebler is the foe;  
No less the need of armour tried, of shield, and spear, and  
bow.

While I am speaking of the Ministry, the necessity for an efficient Minister to the development of a strong Church, I should like to say that it would be to the advantage of our Churches if they paid a little more attention to the adequate support of the Ministry. I speak all the more freely upon this matter, as I have no reason to complain of my own position. The average stipends of our ministers are too low, and it is the duty of the Church to see that men who have given their lives to its service should be kept free from harassment concerning the needs of their daily life. The cost of living, and the consequent need for a corresponding rise in wages, is a cry we hear from people both inside and outside our congregations, and we often wonder when they will remember that 'we are men of like bodies with themselves.' You ought not to expect an efficient ministry on any other lines than those laid down by the Apostle, when he said, 'They who preach the Gospel, shall live of the Gospel.' By live, is meant that he shall be provided with what is necessary to keep body and mind in the best condition for work. It is easy, when a reference is made to this subject, to meet it with the silly sneer, 'Loaves and fishes;' but think for a moment. We want the best gifted of our young men for the ministry; but what son, however gifted and gracious, who has for years witnessed the carking care and struggles of a good and gifted father, or the weariness and anxious solicitude of a devoted mother, is likely to venture his life on the same contingency? The chances are that he will follow some pursuit in which there is a probability of obtaining a decent living, and at the best the Churches can only obtain from him the fragments of his time, a fraction of his ability; whereas we want



the whole of his ability, and all his time. No man who is worth anything will enter the ministry with a view to money-making. It is not the fear of being unable to save that deters men from entering the ministry, or makes men who are in it miserable, but the straits to which they are sometimes put 'to make ends meet.' The little bills, which to many of our members would not cause an anxious thought, to the poor pastor and his devoted wife are 'clouds', not 'big with mercy', and do not 'break in blessings on their head'. I do not plead for large salaries and luxurious living for our pastors, but for sufficient to keep them and their families without undue anxiety, and to enable them to fulfil the modern conditions of life in the manner expected of them. I hope that the Churches of this Union will move in the direction of securing a minimum salary of £200 a year and a manse for all married ministers. This would be of immense service to the Churches, as well as to the ministers. It would obviate some of the difficulties in the way of exchange of pastorates, and it would assure our coming students that, if they fully equipped themselves for the work of becoming the ministers of our Churches, there would be provided for them and their families a living wage.

Now I maintain that a more adequate support of our ministry and all Church institutions is possible, even though our congregations may not be wealthy, and possible on simple New Testament principles. The one great principle of New Testament finance is that members shall give according to their ability. The difficulty does not arise from the non-recognition of this principle, nor as a rule from the difficulty of members gauging their ability, but from the lack of systematic method in carrying it out. Of all modern methods, I commend what is known as the 'weekly envelope system.' My experience is, that wherever this method is adopted and faith-

fully carried out, the needed funds are raised. Where it is not in use, or only indifferently carried out, there are periodical seasons of financial perplexity and distress. Someone says 'I don't use envelopes on principle.' There is no principle involved; it is simply a matter of method, the best way of obtaining certain result. The principle is 'Give according to your ability', and the verdict of experience is, that the envelope system is the best method of doing it. I believe that attention to this matter would result in great blessing all round. The Churches would be able to meet current liabilities, to get and to keep good men. Being happy and prosperous at home, they would be able to help more largely the denominational funds, and there would be an increase of prosperity all along the lines. I have ventured to speak clearly on this subject to the delegates of our Churches assembled here, because I feel that we should leave nothing undone that would add to our power for Jesus Christ in this Dominion.

### **Conclusion**

And now, brethren in the Ministry, 'fellow stewards of the mysteries of God,' let my closing words be addressed to you. We are doing our work to-day amidst surroundings that tax our powers to the utmost, both in the Church and in the world. Our first relationship is to the Churches. We have been called by them to watch over their spiritual interests, and our first care as pastors is the Church or Churches where we minister. We have received for them a ministry in the Lord; let us see that we fulfil it. We are their servants for Jesus' sake; let us see that we serve them up to the full measure of our strength. Our work as pastors and preachers is not easy. We often have to face congregations whose minds are preoccupied, whose interest in spiritual matters is declining, who have a weakening

sense of the authority of our message. We must make the truths of the New Testament practical among them, bring them into their lives, see that the doctrines contained there are regarded, not as ancient coins kept as curios, but as the current coins of the spiritual realm. We must meet the weakening sense of the authority of our message by showing wherein that authority exists. We must show due regard to the reverent and devout criticism which has altered the conception of many as to the shape of the casket which holds the treasures of the Divine Word, and point out with unmistakable clearness that the authority is in Him 'who in times past spake unto our fathers by the prophets, and in these last days hath spoken unto us by His Son;' that the authority is not in the shape of the material of the phonograph, but in Him whose message it contains, whose word endureth for ever, which word we preach in the Gospel. From this source we must get back the lost tone of authority. Remembering that for this ministry none of us is sufficient, but that our sufficiency is of God, we must drop the tone of the beggar, of one who asks a favour, for that of men whose mission it is first of all to feed the Church of God. And our resources are in Him; they are inexhaustible. All the centuries of the Christian Era grow out of the first. It was then that men behold His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. That vision has never left the earth. The Church through all the ages since has been interpreting Him, and He has met the needs of each age. If we only know how to interpret Him, He will meet the needs of our age. We are also related to the life and the age of the world. We are not ecclesiastical hermits; whatever price we may have paid for the office of ministers, we did not sacrifice our manhood and citizenship. We know exactly how to regard the cry of 'Let politics and other matters alone in the pulpit.' Politics and

other matters make up a large part of the life of the men and women with whom we have to do, and we should touch all these matters on the moral side. This cry comes from two quarters. A feeble cry from some in our own camp, who need to re-read the parables of our Lord, and learn that the soil is the world, that the leaven is to leaven the whole lump, that though the Kingdom of Heaven is not of this world, and though as yet we do not see all things put under Him, the Kingdoms of this world are to become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.

The louder cry comes from the enemy's ranks, from the opposers of all social reforms, who are afraid of the forces that would emanate from the pulpit, if all preachers recognised that, while they are the heralds of the good news of the Gospel, they are also prophets, and wear the mantle and discharge the functions of the ancient seers, who from the footstool of Jehovah spoke to the people of their day about the right and wrong things of their day. The guns that are fired from the mount on which the Son of Man 'opened His mouth and taught' make the greatest havoc in the enemy's ranks.

We are fortunate in having among our leaders men who are alive to the needs of the day; who, while they regard the Cross of Jesus Christ as the centre, regard the world as the circumference - men alive and alert, children of the day and up-to-date, men who are to be found fighting on the side of every reform, and some of whom are champions of the host. We thank God for you. You have not been born too late; you have come into the world at the right time. Many of you have youth on your side; and if God gives you the spirit to discern the times, your day is the very best. It is yet the formative period of New Zealand history, and you are honoured in being called to help in the making of it. It is yours to keep before

men the Cross, and the Christ in whom man's salvation is found. It is yours to keep in touch with the moral ideals and spiritual forces which make for righteousness. We stand firm upon the great fundamental truths of the Gospel of the New Testament; but we live in the open-air, with the free winds of heaven blowing around us; we are not enclosed in any ecclesiastical or credal structure. The truths we stand for are the truths we have put to the test, and which have been confirmed by the experience of our own souls and our own ministry. We do not assume that we have all knowledge, or that there is nothing more to experience. We wait for more light. We believe in growth. We are not afraid of new revelations of truth, or of new settings for old truths. We are thankful for all light from whatever source it comes. But we believe not every spirit. We exercise the right to put the spirits to the test, whether they are from God, and they are judged from what they say about Christ. Do they exalt Him or degrade Him? enthrone or dethrone Him? Do they give Him the unique place as the Redeemer? Then we welcome them. We know in whom we have believed, and we have no fear for the future; for in that faith we find safety in doctrine, and obtain all our resources for all branches of our work - from the leading of the penitent sinner into peace, to the righting of all social wrongs that press upon us in our environment.

Brethren, I have spoken to you about ourselves to-night; I have dwelt among my own people; and I ask you to join in the prayer, 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that His way may be known upon earth, and His saving health among all nations.'

**F.G. Buckingham**