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# The Fraternal.

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*Members' Subscriptions should be sent to :*

Rev. W. H. PRATT,

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Dr. JOHN PITTS, M.A.,

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## THE VALUE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

IT happened that when Mr. Leader's request for a contribution to the FRATERNAL reached me I was preparing a sermon (which I am constantly doing still) on the words of our Lord to His baffled and defeated disciples, “ This kind can go forth by nothing but by prayer.”

I have not been a member of the Prayer Union initiated by that beautiful soul F. B. Meyer and of which J. E. Martin has been for so many years the Secretary. I did not feel able to pledge myself to pray for my brother ministers at a certain hour on a certain day in the week, chiefly because I might fail here and there to keep the pledge, and consequently might have the burden on my conscience of a forgotten or neglected duty and a broken pledge. I trust, however, that I have not failed to pray for my brethren in the ministry, and especially for my near neighbours and for those whose lot has been cast in most difficult and discouraging circumstances. If I have not taken the pledge or kept the hour, I have not failed in the duty or privilege and I imagine this is true of most of us. One of my most interesting memories of Dr. Meyer is connected with this subject. During my presidency of the National Free Church Council I accompanied him as Secretary on several motor-car tours, notably two through Wales, South and North. Dr. Meyer was in his element on these tours. In the South we had as many as a dozen meetings in the day, and unlike the President the Secretary never seemed to grow tired. He told

all the people during one tour to be sure to pray for neighbouring churches, because if they did that there would be no need to pray for their own. He was at Regent's Park then and he told them that his custom was to pray for Silvester Horne at Whitfields, for Webb Peploe, then for the minister at Tolmer's Square, and when he had got through his prayer list, the Lord said, "You need not pray for Regent's Park. As you have interceded for others I will see to it that your own ministry shall not fail of a blessing." Of course Dr. Meyer, who was a mystic, never meant that a man should not pray for himself, his own soul and his own work. What he was warning ministers and others against was selfishness in prayer, limiting our requests to God to our own family circle, or our own church or business; as if during the great war, parents should pray for their own sons' safety and not for the sons of other parents; praying with cramped and narrow sympathies. Every man needs to pray for himself, to come face to face with God in the privacy of his prayer chamber. To cry there, "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thought." Prayer is not merely asking for things. It is this coming face to face with the reality of the living all-seeing God.

"Stand still my soul in the silent dark  
I would question thee,  
Alone in the shadow drear and stark  
With God and me."

The man who does not pray for himself and by himself, is not likely to pray effectually for others. Prayer is really adjusting the soul again to the will of the living God. It is not only asking but brooding, meditating; not only speaking but listening, waiting on God, for cleansing and illumination; it is the opening of the sluices that the power of the river of the water of life may flow into the dried up channels, or the feeble trickle of our spent resources. It was because the disciples lacked this power that they were baffled in the presence of the possessed boy.

Of all men ministers need to cultivate sedulously the practice of solitary private prayer. Every man's study should be his oratory. We are all in danger of professionalism. It is terrible in preaching, but it is worse in prayer than anywhere else. We have all heard public pulpit prayers, perhaps we have spoken them, that are manifestly destitute of life and power;

not prayers at all; no vision of God in them; no sense of His nearness; addressed to a congregation, some of them a mere recital of a list of needs of such people as we ought in duty to pray for in the presence of a congregation.

Doubtless some of us lack a philosophy of prayer, especially of intercessory prayer. It is difficult to see precisely the way in which it can help those for whom we pray. For my own part, who am no philosopher, I begin with the fact that it is practised or urged upon us in the New Testament. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," said our Lord to Simon in the day of his peril; and we all know how He poured out His heart to His Father for His disciples in the prayer recorded in John xvii. He could deprive Himself of what we should call necessary sleep and could go hungry for food, but He could not live without prayer. And we may reasonably conclude that His solitary prayers on the mountain side while men slept were often taken up with the needs and failures and weaknesses of His Apostles. They were such a trouble to Him, so uncomprehending, as many of us must be. They could neither understand nor bear what He had to say, and He poured His heart out to the Father.

Again we have noted how constantly Paul makes urgent request for the prayers of his converts on his behalf and assures them of his constant intercession and thanksgiving for them.

One of the most helpful books I have on this subject has been long in my possession. It is by Nolan Rice-Best, an American minister, and is entitled, "Beyond the Natural Order." His argument is that where desire is sincere God can use our prayers, as truly as He can use our work, our efforts, for the blessing of other lives. There is a spiritual ether which under God's guidance conveys the blessing sought in the prayer to the person for whom we pray.

Whatever our philosophy or lack of it may suggest, we have all of us derived immense comfort and strength from the assurance that our people, or our personal friends are praying for us. We believe the statement in James v, 16 (R.V.), that the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working; which Meyer translates, "There is much virtue in a just man's prayer when it is offered earnestly."

It is easy to realise the reflex action of one's prayers, that praying for our neighbours, or for ministers and missionaries far away will, if we are sincere, awaken or deepen our interest and sympathy toward them and their work, and will help to keep our care and love for them alive. Of course it is possible for us to mention the names of people and their needs, as formally as if we were reading a list of names in a directory, without real feeling or desire, or expectation. But that is not prayer. Prayer is thinking and speaking in the conscious presence of the all-seeing God and it does not touch reality unless we are willing wherever possible to answer our own prayers.

For example, Paul's heartfelt prayer for Israel is that they may be saved, but he expresses also his own willingness to be accursed from Christ, if only that stupendous work might be achieved.

It can scarcely be questioned that prayer for one another constantly offered would deepen our mutual sympathy, our desire for the other man's fruitful service, and create and strengthen the bond of brotherhood which ought to hold us together. Nor can it be doubted that such prayer would result in much blessing to our own souls. But beyond that, one is convinced that Nolan Rice-Best is right, and that in ways we cannot understand our prayers, sincerely and earnestly offered, would prove a channel of grace and power to those for whom we pray.

It is impossible to exaggerate the greatness of the task that confronts us ministers, or the responsibility that rests on us, intolerable and crushing but for the grace and power of God.

In the sure belief that our prayers are of immeasurable value, that something is lacking, some channel unused, unconsecrated if they be withheld, let us pray for our brethren every day, especially for those we know, as we pray for ourselves, exercising our mind and thought in our prayers and asking especially that during their sermon preparation and their preaching next Sunday they may be guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit that He may inspire the message and accompany the word by signs following, and it may make a great difference to those for whom we pray.

CHARLES BROWN.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

(Notes of an address given at the British-American Fraternal meeting at the Berlin Congress.)

WE welcome this Fraternal, both for these occasional meetings and for the more frequent meetings of the local Fraternals in the several English-speaking countries. Though established within the precincts of a single race or language group, we welcome this British-American Fraternal as a step towards a wider international and inter-racial fellowship within the World Alliance.

A Fraternal stands for the value of the individual. It implies worth, value and dignity in another, as it implies insufficiency in one's self. Why enter a fellowship if one has no sense of need in himself nor appreciation of the value of another? A Fraternal witnesses to the significance of a person *per se* quite aside from his place as a cog in the wheels of Church or State.

A Fraternal then implies inherent values which may not be disregarded without robbing life of *life*—without taking the spiritual substance out of life, leaving it as a worthless, sterile thing. Without the reserve of dignity in the soul of the individual, organised society has little meaning. You remember that Galsworthy said in his last book: "The old order changeth, yes, but one ought to be able to preserve beauty and dignity." These values reside in individuals; with them this Fraternal is concerned.

The world to-day worships physical force—so the physicist, so the industrialist, so the militarist. The religious man, too, worships force, but finds it in the *dunimis*, the dynamite of God exploded, released, in human personality—a force superior to all others in human society because it is spiritual. We Christians find this *dunimis*, this power of God, in Christ. I recently re-read the New Testament from the Acts to the Revelations to rediscover the early Church's conception of the *Gospel as power*. The effect of this reiterating emphasis which runs through the Acts and the Epistles is startling. Fear not, ye who fear principalities and powers, for I have overcome the world, if I may paraphrase the words of the Master.

From whence force? Force in the physical world is generated from material substances by a machine. It is stored

in a dynamo and transmitted by a cable, but spiritual force is generated only in persons. It resides in them and is transmitted through them. Every political system, every organization in Church and State, has meaning in terms of persons only. It must ever be sustained by the spiritual and moral qualities of individuals. Witness the warning from recent world events.

In these last years the whole world has been enamoured by things and has worshipped physical force. Things have been in the saddle and have almost ridden mankind from the stage, through the general depreciation of the value of personality. Man must again be brought to the front on the stage of human life.

Let me illustrate from our present American crisis. A century or two ago sturdy pioneers from Great Britain, from the Netherlands, from Scandinavia, from Germany and elsewhere, undertook to drive back the physical frontier of America and to establish new spiritual frontiers. Spiritual qualities emerged on the frontier—initiative, courage, daring, abandon, optimism and faith—faith in God, faith in themselves. James Truslow Adams finds the Epic of America in these spiritual qualities. Sturdy woodsmen found them and established homesteads; Peck and Whitman found them and established churches and schools; James Hill found them and laid railroads through the great West; Edison found them and brought electricity into the home; Michael Pupin found them and quickened the communications of the world. Such men as these for their personal qualities were called “rugged individualists.”

But to-day “rugged individualism” is discredited in America. Too often “rugged individualists” as industrialists, as traders, or as others of special privilege, in driving back their own economic frontiers, have fenced in the frontiers of other men. Under an economic *laissez-faire* philosophy without social control they took and kept more than their share of the world’s goods and opportunity, and have attempted to keep them for their children. For these anti-social qualities “rugged individualism” is widely discredited in America. Because the Church has appeared to condone, if not to bless, the process and has appeared to advantage by it, it shares the odium.

But now! Has the Church the qualities demanded of a pioneer on a new world front: initiative, courage, abandon,

optimism, faith in God and faith in itself? Has the Church the power to reshape the ideals of men for the new day and thereby to assure social control? Has it the power to inspire and to direct generally the spiritual forces of men? Has the Church the power to create an individualism for the new day?

We may not here even attempt to answer these questions. It remains only to affirm our faith that the answer to world problems will be had in the creation of spiritual forces within the individual and in the transmission of these forces to organised society.

This Fraternal stands then for the dignity and value of the individual, for the cultivation within him of social imagination and the creation of spiritual forces without which the world will not be redeemed nor society salvaged.

CHARLES H. SEARS,  
(U.S.A.).

### CHRISTIANS AND THE CINEMA.

THE cinema is one of the most powerful influences in our modern world, and it is the duty of Christian people to see that it becomes an influence for good.

In the year 1933 the people of our country spent £40,000,000 to see the films, and it is estimated that no fewer than 26,000,000 men, women and children go weekly to the cinema. These facts are paralleled in many other countries, and a competent judge like Basil Matthews has said that the low standard of many films shown—in India, for example—does much to make the missionary's work hard and ineffective.

A considerable proportion of the habitual cinema-goers are children of school age or young people in their late teens or early twenties, and therefore very susceptible to the impressions any particular film can create. We must guard against the danger of exaggeration, for it may be that those of us who were not reared in the atmosphere of the cinema are more easily affected than the present generation of young people. Yet careful and unbiassed investigations have shown conclusively that bad films are doing a great deal of moral harm.

It will be argued that in these days many films are produced whose effect can be only good. We gratefully acknow-



ledge that this is true, especially of some recent British productions. It is also true that a Committee of very reliable men and women who made a thorough investigation in the Birmingham district reported that after seeing 285 films they were of the opinion that only 109 were definitely satisfactory, 79 were definitely unsatisfactory, and the rest were doubtful. The same or similar conclusions are arrived at in many other large towns, and I will try to classify the objections under two heads.

(1) Unhealthy sex films. These are plentiful, although not every sex film is unhealthy. The cinema is capable of becoming our powerful ally in the spread of sane sex education, though great care must always be used, for evidence was given me that many people went to see *Damaged Lives* merely "because it was dirty." Even a good or well-intentioned film may cater for morbid minds. There are many films which are bad simply because suggestive incidents and scenes are unnecessarily introduced, and there are many others which seem to aim at teaching us that life is made up of vice and crime. In *The Blue Angel*, which is still running, "the woman in the case" was discovered to be leading astray some innocent schoolboys; the master traces them, and is trapped by the woman's wiles. Not much is left to imagination. Another I will mention at random is *Love at First Sight*, a moderately funny film, in which we see a long bedroom scene, and the principal actress is partly undressed in order to maintain interest. Generally speaking there is no need for this kind of thing. The sex element in films could be much more naturally introduced.

(2) Films of crime and brutality. In its 1935 Report, the British Board of Film Censors found it necessary to say that it was determined to stamp out all films showing pain or suffering to animals; it also records that in the year just completed 23 films had been banned and 504 altered. Here again various independent Reports show great concern. The London County Council Education Committee report that on being asked if they were frightened by what they see on the screen 178 out of 213 children replied that they suffered fright or bad dreams. The Birmingham Report tells us that children admitted being afraid to go about in the dark: one child, after seeing *The Bat* would not go to bed alone, another child fainted from fright, and the Headmaster of a certain school wrote "One boy had to be taken out of the cinema while the film *Atlantic* was being

shown. This film has caused many of the children of the city to have nightmares." It looks as though we were trying to breed a race of neurotics!

We are unfortunate in that we have no thoroughly reliable or effective system of control or censorship. Some will argue that censorship of any kind is bad, and there is justification for such an argument. Censorship stultifies production. Italy has a rigid censorship and a clean cinema, but Italy does not produce films of value to other countries. The iniquity of our existing method is that it allows men to make money by doing moral harm to the community.

Our system of "control" is by the Home Office, the local Licensing Authorities and the British Board of Film Censors. In all the other great European countries the State assumes responsibility for censorship. As the "Manchester Guardian" pointed out some time ago, "Great Britain is the only one of the chief European countries in which the censorship of films . . . is not undertaken by the public authorities as a matter of course."

The Home Office operate the Cinema Act of 1909, whereby every theatre must be licensed for showing films—an Act designed in the interests of physical safety. It has also issued Model Rules for the guidance of Local Authorities, and has appointed an Advisory Committee to promote closer co-operation between the authorities and the Film Censors.

The Local Authorities can, within the limits of the Home Office Regulations, make and impose what conditions they like when granting licences, and they have power to withdraw licences in cases of flagrant breach of regulations. If the Local Licensing Authority is composed of men of high character it is likely to be a powerful force in securing a clean local cinema. But even so, a film banned by the authorities in one town may be permitted in another adjoining town, where inhabitants of the first town could see it.

The British Board of Film Censors is appointed by the film industry, and is without legal standing except that given by the Local Authorities. Films banned by the censors could be shown by permission of the local Licensing Committee. The Board examines all films, which are voluntarily submitted to it, and classifies them. The categories "A" and "U" are

intended to guide exhibitors and others, but this classification may easily become a farce. No person under 16 may be admitted to see an "A" film unless accompanied by an adult, but various objections may be raised against such a regulation.

1. A film which is not fit for a child to see alone is equally unfit in any company.

2. "A" films are frequently included in programmes showing good "U" films.

3. Children are often taken to see an "A" film by any adult, even a stranger picked out from a queue.

Even if censorship were an ideal method of securing a clean cinema, the practical difficulties in a country where it has no legal standing would reduce it to impotence. It would be different if some measure of agreement between the censors on the one hand and the various Licensing Authorities on the other could be reached.

In America some good has been done by the action of the Christian churches in calling for a boycott. It is no final solution of the problem of the cinema to hide our faces from it. The estimates of Cardinal Dougherty concerning a boycott are valuable. He tells us that if 200,000 regular cinema-goers would stay away from a given picture it would be a failure; if 2,000,000 would stay away "the financial loss to the producer would constitute such a spanking that he would not forget it." But we have to remember that great multitudes of young people are out of touch with organised religion, and even if we could persuade our church people to stay away from the cinema there would still be multitudes whom we could not hope to influence. We need a clean-up at the base and a healthier type of film.

Then what can Christian people do?

1. They can face the problem and examine the facts.

2. They can bring pressure to bear upon Local Authorities by rousing public opinion.

3. They can echo and emphasise the Birmingham Committee's demand for "An impartial and comprehensive public enquiry" into the production, release and exhibition of films.

W. H. WESTON,  
(Earl Shilton).

## THE DEVOTIONAL LIFE OF THE MINISTER.

(A Paper read to the Ministers' Fraternal at the Annual Assembly of the East Midland Baptist Association.)

MY qualification for speaking on this intimate subject is 35 years of self-discipline, which has had some degree of effectiveness, and 30 years in the practical life of the ministry to put it to the test.

I ask first of all: *Is there a Minister's Devotional Life?* I think there is. We are ministers because we are "called of God" to mediate God to men. This ministry takes the outward form of the conduct of Public Worship and Preaching, and such labours require a *life* harmonious to the sacred office. The question of gift or talent will effect the range or extent of a minister's value in his office, but no gift or talent will make up for want of a fit character. The minister *must be a good man*. The inner life, hidden from the sight of men, must be disciplined and nourished for the office of the ministry with a severity and a care that may not be demanded by any other calling. The life required in the minister must be of the highest possible standard of moral beauty, and to attain this requires the special cultivation of the devotional life.

I now pass on to consider another question: *What is the Purpose of the Devotional Life in the Minister?* I do not consider that the *immediate* function of the Devotional Life is to enable the minister to conduct Public Worship and to Preach. I have placed in the order in which I think they should come, the purposes to which the Devotional Life should be applied.

1. To keep a man right with himself.
2. To keep him sensitive toward God.
3. To keep him sensitive toward men.

1. It seems to me fundamental that a man should be *right with himself*. This does not mean that at any time perfection is attained. It means that a man should frequently look faithfully at himself. He must regularly take stock within his own soul. He must bring his temper, his disposition, his faults

straightforwardly before himself. There will be strong parts to be kept continually in repair; there will be definite failings to overcome, definite temptations to be resisted, and definite lines of sure advance to be made. The minister himself is his own chief tool, and it is part of the purpose of the Devotional Life to keep him in good condition for regular use.

2. Then it is part of the purpose of the Minister's Devotional Life to keep him *sensitive toward God*. The minister has to mediate the realities and values of the spiritual order to men. All his contemplation of the spiritual realm revolves around his thoughts of the Being of God. There is no limit here excepting the limits set within his own soul. Every new thought, every added truth, every fresh experience of the unseen world which the time spent in communion with the divine reveals, open up the way to further explorations. Every lapse, and slackness, and sin that clouds his vision must be dealt with. In common with his fellow ministers, he enjoys three most precious privileges to help him to keep a sensitive soul toward God: his belief in the Book of the Written Word, his faith in Jesus Christ, the Living Word; and his experience of the Holy Spirit, the Inner Word.

3. Then a minister must be *sensitive to men*. At the door of the daily life of the minister are the bewildering hopes, and wants, and sins, and sorrows, and joys of all ages. And the doors are open for him to enter into other lives as they are not open to others. He is privileged beyond all men in being told what may not be heard by other ears. So much anxiety and trouble and disappointment will come to him that he will run dry of pity unless he drinks often of the living waters of divine compassion. He will meet so much deceit and lowness of standard in those in whom he has a right to put his trust that he will become callous if he has no inner sanctuary for the renewal of faith and love.

Added to the personal needs of men are the great social wrongs and oppressions that seem to hold society in the hollow of their hands; and unless a minister is much with Christ he will gradually decline from the high chivalrous courage of his earlier years to the satisfied acceptance of the ways of compromise.

## II.

I pass on to consider *Helps to the Devout Life*. We belong to a ministry which offers little or no help in this important matter. We have none of the methods or the manuals of the historic churches. Nor is an ordered devotional life required of us either by superiors in office or by the churches we serve. In this matter each man is a law unto himself.

College days gave some discipline of mind and methods of study, but offered no discipline of soul and no methods of devotion. It is probable that my experience was the experience of most of our ministers—I was left to myself.

In college days I began in my own way, and I have never ceased. Do not think that the course has been kept continuously; there have been broken periods; times of almost useless slackness, staleness and failure; but on looking back I see that the course has been kept and the way began in college days serves still. Whenever I could do so, I have always spent a short time in the morning and at night-time for private devotion; and I have kept this practice sufficiently to regard it as a habit of daily life.

Here is a list of what I recognise to have served me and to be of lasting value. I am not putting them in order of their value, for I cannot name such an order; each has served the varied needs of the soul. I have chosen them because of their direct helpfulness, and because of the recognisable effects upon the maintenance of the spiritual life.

*Private Prayer.*

My prayer is silent prayer; I do not pray audibly. The act of kneeling in prayer is helpful to me. In prayer I find my mind takes a regular course, of bringing myself before God, of remembering those nearest to me, the church in which I labour, those whom I know to be in trouble, and the day's work. Then my mind goes to the great problems troubling mankind, and rests in deep concern for the Kingdom of God amongst men. At times I have made lists of those for whom I would pray, but I have never kept them. The persons and

matters most near to me move in procession in my mind, and I trust to that.

I confess to times of deep spiritual joy in prayer, and I also confess to times of barrenness, when prayer is a task. I have found guidance out of difficulties in prayer, and I have also found that prayer has made me take ways of difficulty which I should otherwise have shirked.

### *Public Worship.*

I always worship myself when I conduct Public Worship, and I know that it is a valuable contribution to my spiritual life. I am unable to look round upon the congregation for the purpose of seeing who is there or absent. For my own sake I prefer the small congregations of believers, with the sense of oneness marked, and I rarely fail to find in them definite help.

We may easily overlook the place of worship in our devotional life when conducting worship ourselves. But seeing that we do it so constantly, I am persuaded that it may help vitally to our enrichment of soul, or become a corrosive habit. And in public worship not conducted by myself, I rarely fail to receive devotional uplift and cleansing. I have not yet found the body of believers, whatever their creed or form of worship, with whom I could not worship with benefit. The bare services of our own worship have always left me unsatisfied, and I am unsatisfied still. Nevertheless, with all my love of the orderly and the reverential, and of beauty in music and form in worship, I find myself clinging to the spiritual simplicity and reality of our homely worship.

### *Devotional Reading.*

I am not well read in Devotional Literature. I have long wanted to read the great classics of devotional literature, but have not done so. I mean such as St. John of the Cross, Madame Guyon, Juliana of Norwich, and the great Catholic and German mystics. Among books of earlier years which abide with me are Augustine's Confessions, Fenelon's Letters to Men and his Letters to Women, Thomas à Kempis, Law's Serious Call to the Devout Life and the Flowers of St. Francis. The writings of Baxter and Bunyan and Jeremy Taylor and of Sir Thomas Browne have been with me for many years. Then

many books come and go and make their contribution. The Book of Common Prayer, with which I was familiar in boyhood, is always with me, and I turn to it again and again, and find it never-failing in its helpfulness. The reading of sermons finds a place, somewhat occasional, but in earlier days the sermons of F. W. Robertson and John Henry Newman were diligently read. I do not propose to say anything about the Bible, for it seems to me that the Bible must always be read by the minister for devotional purposes, apart from the purpose of making sermons and for religious and critical study.

### *Silence.*

I hesitated to place "silence" in my list. But I cannot leave it out. I have always found spiritual help in quiet hours, and in definitely sought out silence, and I find it more and more necessary. It does not concern me that the silence is sometimes seemingly empty. On the other hand, at times it is certainly full of revealing power. The roots of action are in thought and meditation, and I am ready to put a check on my activities and my reading in order to be quiet and silent. The things that nourish and sustain in the ministry can only be had in the quiet and serenity of some upper chamber. This is in no wise to depreciate hard work on every phase of truth and life, but it is a recognition of the fact that the real sources of strength, like the sources of great rivers, are sometimes excluded in the activities of life, and unless there is a purpose to do so, are seldom visited.

### *Nature.*

There are some souls to whom Nature is always speaking "rememberable things," and with devout thankfulness I acknowledge that to me it has been given to be of the elect lovers of Nature. The earliest religious stirrings of my soul which I recollect began in the intimations of the Unseen Mind and Power that came to me in the beauty and the majesty of Nature. The colours and forms, the infinite variety of beauty and the multitudinous changes of mood of Great Nature have always laid their spell upon me, and they lay their spell upon me still. I can understand the authoress of "Little Women" speaking of her conversion to God in the silences of the woods on a beautiful summer morning, and I can understand Captain Scott speaking of "another" being present with them in the



cold stretches of snow and ice. I can understand that communion with Nature disposes the spirit to a tenderer sensitiveness, but there seems to me to be more—there are times when the lover of nature in his communion receives definite ministrations of the divine presence. Certainly there have been times when the sense of the World Invisible has been intense and real to me when alone in some glade, or upon the mountain side, or before the great sea.

### *Visitation.*

Faithfulness to my experience requires me to find a place for visitation in the cultivation of my devotional life. Visitation has been a joy to me in my ministerial life. It seems to me so great a privilege to be allowed to enter into the confidences and the friendships of all sorts and conditions of men, and into the strange experiences that come to mankind, some so desolating, and some so joyous and glad. Time and again I have gone out to minister to the needy and the sick and the dying, to find that I have been ministered unto. More times that I can remember I have been profoundly humbled in the presence of trouble borne with a fortitude that has put me to shame and has hushed all my inner complainings. How often I have gone out to help, and have found that I have received in giving strength a greater strength from those apparently so weak. If visiting is sometimes disappointing, and always exhausting, it is also, and probably more frequently, a cordial to the soul. Some of the greatest sufferers are the most cheerful of souls. One simple rule has been established in my life by the experience of visitation: that in all times of troubles to turn to the many things for which I should be for ever thankful. It is the simple, "Count your blessings, name them one by one." It is not in my nature to pass lightly from one to another with a chatty word of easy geniality; for me, visitation has been a task, but a task which has rewarded me abundantly in deepest satisfaction, and has served me well in the preservation and the cultivation of a sensitiveness toward God and toward men.

### III.

Before I conclude, it is necessary to say a word or two about *Hindrances to the Devotional Life*. Our ministry is not a celibate ministry. Most of our men are either married or are contemplating marriage. The minister's wife, in her

character and disposition and willingness to be a true partner in his labours, is of such importance, that should he be unhappily or unsuitably married, he will be subject to strain all his days. But though suitably married, with the responsibilities of family life on the usual ministerial stipend the financial strain will wear down many of his ideals, and make inroads upon his devotional life, unless he be a bonnie fighter. Then we have to accept the fact that the ministry tends to become more and more a manager's job instead of a high calling, and to keep the faith the minister needs to be made of stern stuff. Further, difficulties will arise to hinder the cultivation of the devotional life which cannot be foreseen, and which must be met and overcome by a manhood that is required, whatever the difficulties are, to be worthy of a Man of God. He is required to stand, and when difficulties have done all, to stand.

Hidden and inner weakness and slackness, hidden and inner falsenesses and sin must never be tolerated, and it is to help men to keep the faith with themselves for the high calling and the exacting task of being worthy of conducting public worship and preaching the Word of God that I am attempting the task which you have placed in my charge.

W. H. HADEN,

(Burton-on-Trent).

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### A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE.

**I**N these days of hectic speeds, a Safety First warning is never out of place. Any response which we make to the warnings means a very active attitude on our part. It is vital to our world that we should note the warnings. Our life depends on it. But safety is never the end of theological thought, we have been told, though even the theologian must live. The end of theological thought is truth. It has no other. It is the truth which sets us free and to be free is surely to be alive. The difficulty about being free in the theological world is that each generation seems to be born into a special theological category. Every generation has its star giving forth some particular cast of Light. R. B. Lloyd in *The Religious Crisis* says: "Every age in the history of Christendom has appropriated and made its own,

some particular component part of the wholeness of the nature and teaching of Christ. It would not be putting it too strongly to say that the real and ultimate differences between age and age, nation and nation, and man and man, do not consist so much in the changing temporal, racial, or economic circumstances as in the differing views they have held of Christ, and the stresses they have placed on the Gospel. Hence it is possible to proceed in an inverse direction from that of the orthodox historian, and deduce the political circumstances and necessities of a particular era from the dominant picture of our Lord which men of the time built into their imaginations."

To the middle ages He was the Judge of the Quick and the Dead and the Founder of the Church. To the Englishmen of the Evangelical Revival He was the Good Shepherd. To us He is what? Perhaps we stand too near our own times to judge, but probably the image under which most people picture Him to-day is that of the Good Samaritan.

Is that indicative of the theological air we breathe? Does it show how much in danger we are of having our minds made up for us? There is no doubt we are born into a particular theological emphasis. The religious thinker of the middle ages breathed an air of severity; the religious thinker of to-day breathes an air of warm humanity. The two most important stories of Jesus for our day are the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. This because the tendency of our day is to break away from the iron severity of the judge and be introduced to the warm geniality of a love which is as real as it is constant. This is our emphasis. Our danger is the danger of being surfeited with an idea which, while true in itself, is nevertheless an emphasis in part of a whole. The pendulum is always swinging. It has swung for us from severity to geniality, from a Judge who blames to a Love which excuses. This emphasis in the main seems to be linked up with a return to a greater consideration of the nature and life of Jesus. The popular expression of this return is to be found in the recurring statement that God is like Jesus. Probably there is no theme which has been developed as much as this one during the post-war years. Innumerable sermons and broadcast addresses together with a host of little books have laid on our minds the dire necessity of rediscovering the Love of God and finding the expression of the Christian spirit in social services. It is a

great thing to have this emphasis. A shattered world needs it. The danger of it is revealed in that it has caused many to assume that by a careful investigation of the revealed story of the life of Our Lord we should discover all we need to know. This position assumes that by the scientific method of analytic investigation you can discover the whole content of God. While this confirms the reality of God in that He is regarded as an object of scientific data, it has the tendency of limiting the Divine scope. It circumscribes God as being capable of scientific analysis. It suggests that we shall know when the investigation is complete. A bent of this kind has naturally given greater value to the social virtues, and men and women have been made happy in the justification they have found for the actions of the Good Samaritan. So there has arisen a distinct humanistic trend in religious thought. Our danger is to think that this is the only approach that can be made in the Divine avenues. It is well for us to realise there is another. That other is what I will call the artistic approach. Without difficulty we at once recognise that this will be in contrast to the scientific. The methods of the artist and the scientist are poles apart. The scientist goes to the flower, splits it, dissects it, investigates it and hopes by this process to get to its very heart. The artist comes to the flower and takes it as it is in its wholeness. He does not investigate it; he is rather investigated by the flower. The scientist goes to the flower a man armed but the flower comes to the artist armed to evoke such ecstasy as his mind can bear.

“To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

The danger of the scientific attitude is to take away the wonder, the dazzle, of God. To be able to lay anything bare by human analysis is to rob it of a quality which is essential to reverence and worship. If God can be fully investigated we are sure to cease worshipping Him. He must have a reach about Him which is beyond us. He must have unfathomable mines. The artistic attitude permits this, and whoso adopts it comes before the Lord “breathless with adoration.”

The danger of our mechanised world is that of leaving out a poet's dream, and we do need to be caught in the glamour of a God whom we do not fully understand but who can move

us to acts of worship and devotion in deep adoration and reverence.

The pursuit of our theology, the pursuit of truth, would seem to demand the spirit of the rebel in us all. We must estimate the emphasis in which we live. We must know the theological complexion of our time. We must not only know it but know it for a complexion, and treat it accordingly. It is the truth, the whole truth, which we seek. This is vital to us as ministers of the Gospel. We must have our theological balance. We must see the truth steadily and see it whole. But when it comes to the revealing of the truth we are compelled to do it by emphasis. It is this which gives freshness and vitality to what we have to say. Dean Inge says in his book on Ethics that it takes two to tell the truth—one to tell and one to hear. We can never speak apart from those to whom we speak. They live in atmospheres, in emphases, and we have to recognise them. Nobody would question the value of Karl Barth's contribution to theology. But what is the main quality of his work? The outstanding thing, to me, at any rate, is its liveliness. There is about it something that grips, something that makes me sit up and take notice as if his very words are on fire. This is due no doubt to the innate quality of the man, but it is also due to the fact that he speaks with an emphasis as if what he says is the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The menace of our theology lies in its humanistic tendencies. The fear is that we shall be too much concerned with the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, and forget Christ's sermon to the woman at the well. Our world loves the disposition for social welfare and it is good that it does, but what about a God whom you can do no other than worship? Most people want to be good, but do they want to be holy? The world believes in social righteousness, but does it feel the glamour of a holy God Who, though revealed within human limits in the person of Our Lord and Saviour, has limits which we cannot define, and Who, though He breaks us down with the astonishing reaches of His Love, bends us to adoration and reverence by going beyond the reach of our understanding?

J. W. TOWNSEND,  
(Manchester).

## THE MINISTER'S BOOKSHELF.

THOSE of us who have read Dr. George A. Buttrick's "Yale Lectures on Preaching" published three years ago under the title of *Jesus Came Preaching*, will be prepared to welcome anything further from his graceful and suggestive pen. He has just published another book that will put us further in his debt. It is called *The Christian Fact and Modern Doubt* (Charles Scribners Sons, 8s. 6d.). Dr. Buttrick is an English minister who has become one of the most popular preachers in America. This book reveals something of the secret of his power. Dr. Buttrick has his finger on the "pulse of the age" and what he writes has a real relevance to the modern situation. Dr. Lynn Harold Hough (no mean judge) says of Dr. Buttrick: "He is splendidly aware. He is utterly fearless. He is awed neither by hoary convention nor by the last masterful passwords of those who mistake their own assurance for intellectual insight." Dr. Buttrick knows the modern mood, and is especially aware of "the modern deluge of misgiving." What is more, he knows how to speak to this questing and questioning age; and he does it bravely and wisely (the two do not always go together) in this book. He is concerned with an age when for the first time in history belief seems the exception and unbelief the rule, with an age characterised by a new dogmatism—the dogmaticism of doubt. Dr. Buttrick is a sympathetic discerner of the "signs of the times." He shows that modern scepticism has its roots very largely in contemporary *practice* "with its mass production and materialism, its wars and fratricidal indifference." But he does more. He gives the Christian answer to this age of uncertainty and enables intelligent people to understand the causes and sources of the religious perplexity they meet with on every hand. Ministers will rejoice in this book, and will find it a tonic to their faith and a stimulus in their preaching.

Another really great book, though very different from that just noticed, is Prof. Henri Bergson's recent volume *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (MacMillan, 10s.). Prof.

Bergson has been called—and with every justification—“our greatest living thinker,” and this book gives ample evidence of his gifts both as a writer and as a philosopher. It has been said, as a taunt, that “there are no modern philosophers; there are only modern philosophies,” but Dean W. R. Matthews, in making that remark, had forgotten Bergson for the moment. The French philosopher is probably the most influential intellectual force in the world to-day, and such monumental works as *Creative Evolution* and *Time and Freewill* will be studied by successive generations of students of philosophy. His most recent work, first published in March, 1932, has gone through seventeen editions in the original language, and we can safely predict a like success for the English translation. It is really the outcome of the thinking of a lifetime, and develops some of the author's earlier views, especially that of the relation between instinct and intelligence. The four chapters are entitled “Moral Obligation,” “Static Religion,” “Dynamic Religion” and “Mechanics and Mysticism.” Bergson deals with the nature and basis of moral obligation, with the distinctive functions of what he terms static and dynamic religion, and with the essential link between the mystical sense, with its appeal heavenward, and our modern mechanical civilisation; and he deals with all these subjects in a fresh and illuminating way. He has an admirably lucid style and a happy gift for pointed and striking illustration that remind us of William James. “Ten shillings well spent” will be the verdict of the studious minister who buys and reads *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

The Student Christian Movement Press has a niche of its own in the religious publishing world. It is constantly sending forth a stream of excellent books at very reasonable cost and has put us ministers—especially those with limited means—greatly in its debt. Of recent publications there are three deserving of special mention. The first is Leyton Richards's provoking and stimulating book *The Christian's Contribution to Peace* (4s. and 2s. 6d.). There is no need to say that Mr. Richards is an out-and-out pacifist, and, unlike some, his pacificism goes back to the war period when it was very inconvenient to be a pacifist. It is with the problem of International Relationships from the standpoint of the Christian obligation to make peace

that Mr. Richards is concerned. He considers Nationalism as the enemy of universal peace and in its influence upon such vital problems as disarmament and economics. The book is a sequel to his earlier book *The Christian's Alternative to War*, but in the later volume the author goes far towards showing that pacificism is not the colourless and negative thing so many of its opponents represent it to be. Mr. Richards has written a bold book and a sensible one, and even those who cannot accept the point of view of absolute pacificism will be glad that he wrote it.

The second is *The Way to God* (3s. 6d.), which consists of the Broadcast Talks given on Sunday evenings earlier in the year (the present talks, under this title, will be published as a second series later on). There is an introductory chapter by the B.B.C. Director of Religious Programmes, followed by the talks given by Rev. J. S. Whale and Dr. W. R. Matthews. The President of Cheshunt College is concerned to answer the question "What is Man?" while the new Dean of St. Paul's deals with the enquiry "Goes God Speak?" and both of them seek to answer listeners' queries arising out of the talks. There is no need to say that the book is well worth reading. Those who heard the talks originally will be glad to have them in permanent form, while those who missed them will be equally delighted to possess them.

The third S.C.M. Press publication is *The Beatitudes in the Modern World* (3s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.) by Morgan Watcyn-Williams. The title of the book well describes its contents. In eleven chapters (two of which are introductory and one a conclusion) Mr. Watcyn-Williams (who is a minister in a South Wales mining area) deals with the "blessings" pronounced by Jesus on certain types of character. He gives us modern applications rather than mere exposition, and relates these characteristic sayings of Jesus to the life of to-day. Mr. Watcyn-Williams is minister of a church ninety per cent. of the members of which are out of work, and his experience of the ministry under such difficult and heart-rending circumstances colours of interpretation of the Master's teaching. No! the word "colours" is wrong. Rather we should say that his experiences have helped him to take up the right standpoint from which to view the teaching of Jesus in relation to modern life. It is



a good book, one that will considerably help the man who wants to preach a really useful series of sermons on the Beatitudes.

There are two specifically Baptist publications that should be referred to. They are put last, but they are by no means least. One is the *Reports and Resolutions of the Fifth Baptist World Congress*, Berlin, 1934, reprinted from the full official report. It is issued from the Baptist World Alliance Office at 1s. 6d., and many who have been unable to get the larger report will be glad to have this smaller one containing as it does the very heart of the proceedings at Berlin. The second is called *One Hundred Years After*, published by the Carey Press also at 1s. 6d. It consists of the addresses given at the Carey Centenary in London during October of last year, and is excellent value for the money.

JOHN PITTS.

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“Literature, the theatre, the cinema, charity, and even our Church services, easily become outlets for emotions too upsetting for workaday existence. Such unharnessed feeling debauches religion and debases our critical standards. Its root error is that it never attempts to remove the conditions which evoke the emotion. It would be churlish to depreciate the splendid ambulance work which has been done in distressed areas during these latter years. The fact remains that the sending of a cheque or a parcel of clothing often becomes a substitute for the hard thinking, the true praying, and the strenuous action which are needed to alter the situation. Our mercy must find social and political expression in building ‘Jerusalem in England’s green and pleasant land.’ For Jesus a compassion which does nothing, or does the thing which drugs it into quiescence, easily becomes hypocrisy in the literal sense of that word. It is play-acting, not creative living.”

(MORGAN WATCYN-WILLIAMS

in “The Beatitudes in the Modern World.”)

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[The Editor regrets that owing to illness there has been unavoidable delay in sending out this issue, and asks the kind forbearance of his readers.]