

The Fraternal.

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LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS for the FRATERNAL should be addressed to the Editor, Rev. F. C. SPURR, Regent's Park Chapel, N.W., and all other communications to the Secretary, Rev. E. D. deRUSETT, Baptist Church, Harrow.

EDITOR'S CHAIR.

OUR esteemed secretary, the Rev. E. D. de Rusett, has had to resign his church for reasons of health. He also at the same time tendered his resignation to our Council, but this was not accepted as the doctor assures our brother that if he will rest for six months he will be better than he has been for years. When that period of inactivity is completed our friend does not intend seeking another pastorate for some time, but he will preach as opportunity offers. He will then devote himself to the work of our Fraternal Union. This should give him ample scope for some time, as we are contemplating a change in the constitution of our Council and a wider range of activities for our Union.

The Rev. F. Weal, of 12, Pattru Road, Battersea, S.W. 19, has kindly accepted the Librarianship of our circulating library, and he will be pleased if brethren will form groups and use the books. He has enough for three or four new groups.

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Two or three years ago the suggestion was made in these pages that it would be highly advantageous to many of our brethren if a kind of "Monday Club" could be established in various centres; the idea being to review the work of the previous Sunday and to discuss with the utmost frankness some of the living questions which affect our Ministry. In one or two places this has been done with wonderful effect. Men have come to see in fraternity as they could not see in solitude, what path is best for them to tread and what lines of teaching or preaching are most insistent for the time being. The advantages of

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such gatherings are obvious. It is in fraternal fellowship that our minds become clearer and our best resolutions stronger. So far from being a loss of time to meet in this way, it would be a great gain in every direction. The average local Fraternal does not meet the conditions required. Is it not possible to do something in the way indicated? Several brethren have written urging action along these lines.

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The question of a richer congregational worship is becoming imperative. An increasing number of people are discontented with the poverty-stricken "services," in which a few hymns, a couple of prayers and a sermon make up the "order of worship." During the war, under the pressure of a great need, numerous congregations became accustomed to the use of litanies, collects and other common prayers in which they took part. Since the war ended these special services have been largely discontinued. But the need remains even greater than ever for some common forms of prayer and praise which can be used congregationally. Only thus can we use the wonderful treasures of the Psalter and the wealth of historic prayers belonging to the Eastern and Western Churches, the Lutheran and other Reformed Churches. Dr. Orchard has produced a book admirable in many respects, but marred by the peculiarities which he affects. His book can never be adopted by the Free Churches. The Congregational Union has a book of Common prayer in preparation. Can we do nothing for our own Churches? The ideal to aim at undoubtedly, is a book of Common prayer for all the Free Churches. Meanwhile we must make a start with the denominations. The Editor will welcome any suggestion as to orders of service, devotional material, etc., which have proved to be useful. From these it may be possible to evolve a book comprehensive enough to appeal to most of our Churches. A Committee would get to work upon such material as soon as possible, and include it amongst other material already accumulated, and then, perhaps, through the "Fraternal" offer an outline of what is proposed for serious discussion by the brethren.

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THE VOICE OF THE BIBLE TO THE AGE

Notes of an address to the L.B.A., Ilford. June 24, 1919.

By Professor S. W. GREEN, M.A.

AS the subject is not of my choosing perhaps I may be permitted a brief reference to its terms, which seem to me admirably chosen if I may put my own construction upon them.

THE VOICE.—Not the fixity and finality of a written message, but a voice, living, flexible, changing, ever responsive to new questionings and new needs. God spake in time past in the Prophets and in His Son; we still hear that living voice in the living Book.

THE VOICE OF THE BIBLE.—The books, thirty-nine in the O.T., twenty-seven in the N.T., somehow combine into a Book; the diverse parts have grown together into a unity of the sort we call organic, transcending any human art or mechanism, the vehicle of Life, a body, tenanted by one indivisible spirit “To mortals many tongues, to the immortals but one.” It is as we discern this marvellous One, in, through, and above the divers portions and the divers manners, that we are constrained to say, “A greater than man is here.”

TO THE AGE.—Yes, to every age and therefore to our own. The Word of the Lord endureth to all generations. “In every generation,” says Coleridge, “and wherever the light of revelation has shone, men of all ranks, conditions, and states of mind have found in this volume a correspondent for every movement towards the better felt in their own hearts; the needy soul has found supply, the feeble a help, the sorrowful a comfort. You in one place, I in another, all men somewhere and at some time meet with an assurance that the hopes and fears, the thoughts and yearnings which proceed from, or tend to a right spirit in us, are no dreams or fleeting singularities, no voices heard in sleep, no spectres which the eye suffers but does not perceive.” “I owe my enlightenment,” confesses Heine, “quite simply to the reading of a book, the Book, the Bible. He who has lost

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his God may find Him again in this volume, and he who has never known Him will there be met by the breath of the Divine Word."

" I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ,
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it."

The acknowledgment of God in Christ. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. That is the crown and climax, 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' And it gives us the very meaning of Divine Revelation. Revelation is the gradual unveiling of God through inspired men. Its one object is God, not facts or figures or dates or details of history before it happens, but God, in human life and history. The light once kindled shines on in the darkness, at first a mere point, stabbing the black night, but the darkness did not overcome it. In that unequal struggle light was ever the victor. The stars were swallowed up of the dawn, the dawn was herald of the brightening to the perfect day.

All questionings about the Bible with which we need have any concern leave its religious value unchallenged and supreme. Its historians write **sacred** history, not because they are miraculously exempt from the pains and defects of all research into a distant past, but because, tracing the story of their nation as best they may from the sources available to them, they see God in it all, and tell us what God thinks about it. Its prophets are preachers of righteousness to their own times. They denounce social and national wrongs with more than the fervour of the most advanced socialist of the twentieth century; too often they differ from him in basing all reform upon a changed heart and the acknowledgment of a watching and over-ruling heaven. 'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God,' a Trinity of which to confound the persons or divide the substance is assuredly fatal to human salvation.

The Voice of the Bible, if we can hear it and heed it, solves for us all questions in the earth and out of it.

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In this we are all agreed. But I shall venture to assume that your invitation to speak is a call not simply to emphasise the things on which we are agreed, but to talk frankly on things about which we may differ. Thought on what the Bible is has perpetually changed through all the ages of its possession by the Church; the Bible has held sway over mind and heart and conscience because of what it is, not because of what men have mistakenly supposed it to be. There is a voice of the Bible to each age. There is our problem and our responsibility. It is not simply a matter of private interpretation or of inherited belief. We stand possessed of a solemn trust for our day and generation. We believe we have the Spirit of God. Does that Spirit in the Church make it easy to-day for every man, especially for young and eager minds, to hear in the Bible, each in his own tongue wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God?

Testimonies crowd in upon us that in this we have largely failed. "The time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God." What position is taken by the Bible to-day in the religious life of the majority of the nation? If to many it is a devotional help, to many others it is an intellectual hindrance. In his "Thoughts on Religion at the Front," Neville Talbot names current conceptions of the Bible as one of the greatest stumbling blocks to religion which is met by the more thoughtful men in the Army. "It is wholly pathetic," writes a well-known Padre, "that men who would fain rest in the comfort of a Christian faith should, to this day, be worrying about Jonah and his annoying whale, or about the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis, or about the quaint notion that there is science in the Old Testament which ought somehow to be capable of reconciliation with modern science. "We have failed," says the Report of the Archbishops' Committee on the Teaching Office of the Church, "to discriminate sufficiently between the Christian standards of character and conduct and those displayed in the historical books of the Old Testament." Or take the notable collective testimony of the Committee responsible for the book, "The Army and Religion." "There is no

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more startling indication of the way in which the Churches have got out of touch with the masses of men than is to be found in the general ignorance of the Bible. If there was one thing which the Churches ought to have been able to do, it was to show them the interest and the value of the great Book of God. Here, as elsewhere, the blame must be shared. It is quite clear that no Church can enable, far less compel, an unspiritual man to study the great inspired literature of the Scriptures. But it ought at least to have been able, with all the resources of preaching, teaching, and education at its control, to make the men understand the way in which the Bible should be regarded and interpreted. This is especially true of the Old Testament. Judging from the difficulties that are raised in discussions, the men seem to believe that a Christian man is committed by his faith in Christ to the stiffest theory of the verbal inspiration of the Old Testament, which would imply that the truth of the whole history of redemption which it contains would be shaken if it could be proved that any narrative were mythical, or that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses. There must have been grave want of candour and courage in the teaching of the Church for this to be possible."

Such utterances, and they could, of course, be indefinitely multiplied by the like testimony of devout Christian minds, create a situation for us which we must face whether we welcome it or deplore it. The new learning is no longer academic. It is for public use. Opinions have become convictions. Hundreds of our best Sunday School workers are eagerly drinking in the changed conceptions of the Bible literature, of the nature of its revelation, of the manner of its inspiration.

We shall never again with unanimity think of the Bible just as our fathers thought fifty or sixty years ago. The unchanging voice of the Bible will speak to the coming age with yet greater clearness and insistence through its literature as re-interpreted, largely re-discovered by modern Biblical study. "Criticism," said Dr. T. R. Glover, with characteristic audacity in his Bloomsbury Missionary Sermon of 1918, "Criticism has saved the Bible,"

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There is a great movement, a movement as I believe of life and liberty, swayed by the spirit of God, in matters vital for the influence of the Churches in the coming days. Of that movement we are the natural leaders. The task is not easy. Every break with tradition, be it social, intellectual or religious, costs; and the price has often to be paid in sorrow and tears. On the practical side we are in a strait betwixt two. On no point of their faith are many, I suppose the majority of our people, more justly sensitive than on their unquestioning conviction that the Bible is in every line of it the inspired and authoritative Word of God. This view is so bound up with their certainty of experience of what the Bible is to them, that they cannot change it. To lay 'rude hands upon such a belief would be treason. It calls for tender sympathy and wise reticence. Settled and sensitive conviction has its rigats. But so has the new-born impulse to free and reverent enquiry. To check it, to insist in advance on results at which enquiry must arrive, is no service to the truth. The Word of God is not bound. To seek to bind it by declaring that a certain view is indeed (I quote from current literature on the conservative side) an apostasy from the Christian faith, the spirit of anti-Christ, may be to impose fetters upon young minds which fuller knowledge and riper experience will snap, and the enforced break with tradition may mean collapse of faith. Ideas create tradition, but tradition may in turn kill ideas. Intellectual probity is always to be preferred to emotional comfort. It is with entire consistency that the source from which I quoted just now and which I will not further advertise, permits itself to say of Dr. Horton, Dr. Peake, Dr. Adeney, and Professor George Jackson—names not quite unknown or without honour in the Free Churches—'they discredit the Old Testament, they discredit the recorded teaching of Jesus Christ, they discredit the Apostle Paul and his colleagues, and yet they call themselves Christians. Have such men the moral right to call themselves believers in Christ, to say nothing of calling themselves ministers of Christ?'

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Comment is needless. Heaven save our Bible from such defenders!

If criticism is repudiated let it be with knowledge and understanding. The critic does not hurl results at you: he is not moved by dislike of the Supernatural: and he is not got rid of by the easy label of "German rationalism." He invites to a **method** of Bible study, the historical method, and lets the results take care of themselves. In intention, at least, he interrogates the Bible without any assumption whatever except that of a Personal God, able and willing to speak to men through men, as men at successive stages of human progress are able to hear. Instead of starting with a set of presuppositions, a claim for the Bible which so far as he can discover finds no warrant whatever in the Bible itself, he starts with the facts and draws his conclusions. It is the method of every science and was bound to come. The old method says "The Bible is the Word of God. A Word of God must have certain characteristics, inerrancy, spiritual significance in every syllable of it. Therefore the written Word must have these characteristics, and what seems to contradict them must be explained or explained away." The new method says "No: you cannot argue from the essential nature of a Word of God to the written records through which His Word comes to us. Go to the Bible, examine it, study the facts with open mind and reverent heart. Then and not till then define the nature of God's revelation. Do not bring a theory of Inspiration by which to interpret the facts; gather from the facts themselves the quality and the extent of the Divine Inspiration." That is not German rationalism but reason and common sense. And if any protest, 'No road to the Word of God that way,' we answer from experience, 'Oh, but there is, right into the very heart of it.' We meet at the same goal. What need to quarrel about the path by which we reach it?

"As if the Shepherd who from outer cold
 Leads all his shivering lambs to one sure fold,
 Were careful for the fashion of his crook."

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We agree in our doctrine of the Word of God, the Divine Message to men, the breaking to earth of Heaven's silence in divers portions and divers manners. We differ when that doctrine is perverted into a theory of the text of the Bible. And the critic asks with wonderment of his brother critic (for of course our traditional friend is as much a higher critic as those who disturb his peace): What do you lose by assigning the Biblical writings each to its own age, and so tracing step by step the one unfaltering purpose of God the Redeemer? What do you lose if the prophet is shown by the facts to be less a timeless voice speaking dark riddles for the dubious decipherment of future generations than a living man, an impassioned preacher of righteousness to his own day, an inspired spokesman for God? It is not a unique miracle of prediction 150 years before the event that gives its undying value to that most wonderful book of Second Isaiah. If we let the magic go the prophetic remains untouched, and yet another, perhaps the greatest of them all, is added to the men who spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost. You rightly appeal to the authority of Christ and His Apostles to confirm the supreme worth and Divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. But to extend that authority to cover vexed questions of Biblical criticism—the historicity of Jonah, the authorship of the 110th Psalm—or to support a theory of an inspired Old Testament text, strains it to breaking point. Our Lord has nothing to say on matters beyond the limits of His Father's commission. His Apostles use Old Testament Scripture for their arguments, quoting freely not from the supposed inspired Hebrew text, but from the LXX., often heedless of original significance or of textual accuracy.

The assumption of a verbal inspiration of the Old Testament cannot survive an hour's candid study of the New Testament quotations.

The Bible as disclosed by modern scholarship suffers no loss. That is to put it very low. It gains immensely, in interest, vitality, credibility. So far from dissipating the wonder

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and the glory of it, criticism shows us a brighter, more credible Revelation, clothed with an authority more manifestly divine. We may here and there have mistaken legend for history, gone wrong on questions of date or authorship, been confused in our estimate of the meaning and degree of inspiration in the several parts, failed to discern clearly the gradualness and manifoldness of the divine preparation for the Christ. In one thing we have not been mistaken, in regarding the Bible as the very Word of God. We are not afraid to trace the divers portions and divers manners, low beginnings, checks and hindrances, the rise to the sunlit heights of prophecy, the descent again into the shadows of legalism. For we know that the track of God's ever-advancing footsteps marks the slow and wandering way that man has trodden from Eden to Calvary, where at last He disclosed His Fatherly heart in the Cross of His beloved Son. To that final word of revelation we listen with one mind and one heart, and hear in it the voice of the Bible to this and every age. God so loved the world as to suffer and die for His world in His Son.



THE VITALISING OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

By THE EDITOR.

THE publication of Professor Cairns' book on the "Army and Religion" has produced something of a sensation in certain quarters. It has fallen like a bomb in the midst of a garden of flowers. And it has provoked some criticism on the part of men who, apparently, are more interested in defending their own ineptitude than in facing the realities of a tragic situation. That the book is open to certain criticism must be evident to all who have carefully read it. Things are omitted which might and ought to have been included, and there is, at times, a heightening of colour which inclines to exaggeration. But the man would be hopeless who allowed minor matters to divert his attention from the main facts which in these more than 400 pages are reported

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and analysed. Those of us who had much to do with the men in the camps during the war, were in part prepared for such revelations as these which Dr. Cairns has given to the Church for her serious consideration. But to all, whether prepared or not, the facts adduced are not less than staggering. In this brief article it is not proposed to review the book as a whole. Mr. French will undertake that for us. Attention is focussed upon one point only, namely, the absolute urgency of the revitalising of Christian Doctrine.

No more terrible pages have ever been written than those in this book, which set forth the evidence as to the soldiers' attitude towards Christian Doctrine and the Christian Church. It is a story of almost incredible misunderstanding and ignorance on the part of the men, and of an almost equally incredible failure on the part of the Churches. These men, lately in the Army, were not professional soldiers. They were civilians, withdrawn for a time from their ordinary life, dressed in khaki and sent out to defend their country against the oncoming Hun. They were the men whom we passed in the street every day in normal times: Clerks, shop-keepers, travellers, professional men, artisans and others. They did not attend our Churches and we knew nothing of what they thought about us or our religion. But we know now. We know so much about them as to shiver at the thought of what we know. We know that nearly all of them had received in the day schools an amount of "religious instruction"—often neutral, colourless, general—but still "religious instruction." We know that the majority of them had been through our Sunday Schools and that in earlier life at least very many of them had attended our Churches. And we know, unhappy we! that they are now lost to us—at least, for the time. Please God we may recover them for Christ and the Church! The questionnaire of Dr. Cairns sought to discover why they were out of touch with the Churches and what it was that they really believed about Christianity. And the replies sent in answer to these queries give us the ghastly truth. The vast majority of the men are in the dark as to the Christian truth about God, Christ, Salvation and the Kingdom of God.

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They do not understand the meaning of our terms. They have the "foggiest idea" of what we are talking about. They have their own ideas upon all these subjects—ideas which are as hazy as ideas can be. They hold a watery theism without substance or force; intellectually confused and morally impotent. Of Jesus Christ they know next to nothing. The idea of a living Christ directly influencing the life of man is quite foreign to them. They think of His as a distant character of history, far removed from our time and without any sort of relation to modern life. He is respected as the memory of Marcus Aurelius might be and no more. Any great Christian virtues which flourish in their lives are not connected in their thoughts with Him. As to Christianity itself the misunderstanding seems complete. Its ethics are conceived of as negative—an eternal "keep off the grass." Yet the men recognise the reality of the Christian ideal and remorselessly criticise those who profess it and do not practise it. So great is the ignorance of the Bible that men are discovered who have been through the Schools and yet do not know in what part of the Bible the Gospels are to be found. They hold a doctrine of providence and of prayer much like the Moslem doctrine. Many of them regard the Holy Communion in the light of a charm. They would not enter battle without partaking of it, but what it is they do not know. The majority of them are not in living touch with the Churches—yet they bitterly criticise the Churches and accuse them of a lack of reality, a lack of love and a lack of life. . . . Such is the evidence brought before us by Dr. Cairns' book.

Now somebody is to blame for all this. To think that in a Christian country such a state of mind is possible almost passes belief. But we have to deal with facts. It would be playing to the gallery with a vengeance to absolve the men themselves from all blame in the matter. Many of them are ignorant because they have chosen to be ignorant. They have deliberately avoided the way of learning the truth. They have not tried to understand Christianity or the Churches. They have read with avidity the crude attacks of "Freethought," or the pseudo-

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scientific assaults of "Rationalism" upon the Bible and the Faith, but they have not troubled to read the best that has been written upon the Christian side. Again and again in the Camps I have seen upon the faces of enquirers and critics a look of blank astonishment as the truth has dawned upon them that what they imagined to be the Christian view of the Bible or of God was as far removed from the reality as the poles are apart. Many of the men are to blame for their present ignorance and misunderstanding of Divine Truth, and some of us have felt it necessary to tell them this unpleasant truth to their faces. But the Churches and Schools are also to blame. It is not for me to apportion the degree of fault, but the Churches must be prepared to admit their share of it. There has been something seriously wrong with our teaching both in Church and School when it is possible for boys and youths to be in our hands for a number of years and to leave us with minds utterly confused as to what we teach. Is it that our methods are wrong? or that we are incompetent, or that we have mistaken exhortation for teaching? These rigorous questions apply to school-teachers and ministers alike.

And ministers and teachers of all Churches must face them and answer them. We cannot doubt that in many cases teaching has been perfunctory, or merely dogmatic. The evidence shows that the dogmatic Churches have failed as, or even more, completely than the others. It is a simple fact that more ignorance proportionately was discovered amongst the men labelled C. of E. than amongst the men coming from the Free Churches. But we have no stones to throw, all the same. For we, too, have our dogmatists, and many of the men trained under them have "gone down" religiously, in the terrific spiritual assault of the war. They have found their imperfect Evangelicalism as impotent against the strain as have the Catholics, trained to believe dogmas of another order. In both cases the dogmatic method left in the mind a mass of stuff which proved to be incoherent and inarticulate when the vital demand was made upon it.

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The whole enquiry, of which the results are given by Dr. Cairns, leads to the conclusion that one of the pressing needs of the time is that of the revitalising of Christian doctrine. In spite of all our Schools and Churches, our teachers and preachers, the mass of the people do not know in the least what Christianity means and what its vital truths are. Educated people and the illiterate are alike in this. Most of them possess only fragments of religious knowledge: unrelated and without cohesion.

“The Church,” says Dr. Cairns, “will have to put its very heart and soul into the work of restating the great faiths by which it lives and from which it draws all its inspiration, **in terms which the men can understand.**” It is not a question, God forbid, of abandoning the fundamental truths of the Faith in order to capture for an Institution a vast mass of men. It would be better for the Church to fail utterly than for such a “success” to be achieved. The Church stands for something very definite and woe to her if she abates by so much as a jot or a tittle any part of her essential witness. If perfectly equipped and completely vitalized, she yet failed to capture the world for her Master, such failure would nevertheless be glorious. The Master Himself Who possessed the plenitude of life and love, failed to attract and hold the majority of the people of His day. The Servant is not greater than his Lord. The Cross in Christianity stands partly as the witness to Christ’s “failure.” It represented the world’s triumph over Him: its refusal to yield to His spell. And the Church that is true to the Master can never wholly avoid the Cross. There will be always a number of men and women whose lusts and passions and prejudices and pleasures will rise in revolt against the Lordship of Christ. With such there can never be any question of intellectual stumbling-block: their reason does not enter into the count at all. They are wholly blinded by their passions.

But all this does not absolve us from the duty of teaching Christian truth in such a clear manner that even the fool can understand it. And at present that is not being done. Too

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many men are victims of phrases which they reiterate without thought and which fall into vacant minds without vital result. What does the average person—yea, the average Christian—understand by the theological terms “justification” “sanctification,” “Grace” and the like? How many Churchgoers could give a rational account of what is meant by “Conversion”? And how many Churchgoers have any idea of the historical perspective of those sacred books in which these terms occur?

Our theological terms need retranslating, for one thing, but more than that they need revitalising and bringing into living relation with the spirit of man. The term “God” needs to be made to live in thought and experience. For many it is only a label. The doctrine of God can be so restated as to light up the world without and the world within with an entirely new glory. It is imperative that this be done. And so with every other great Christian doctrine. At present nearly every clause in the great Creeds for a vast number of people stands for something nebulous and unreal. And yet in the Church that gave birth to these Confessions there was a very “riot of spiritual life,” a wealth of Christian experience which made the Church the envy even of her foes. The prime necessity for the modern Church is to recover the fulness of Spiritual power, which can only be done by direct contact with the living Christ and a complete surrender to the energy of His living Spirit. And this must be followed by such a restatement of doctrine as will not only correspond to the new experience, but also appeal to the restless and smarting soul of man everywhere crying for light and guidance and redemption. Says Dr. Cairns: “If men were told of an immeasurable reinforcement of spiritual energy which they could count upon as they count on gravitation, would it not come to them as a Gospel?” In intelligible word as well as in power, our business is to proclaim that Gospel to them. But to do it effectively requires hard study and very clear thinking and more leisure than the majority of our ministers can command in their overcrowded lives. If the Churches realized the situation they could not fail so to re-arrange their life and gifts as to make it

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possible for ministers to have the best tools for their work and the utmost opportunities of devoting their best strength to the supreme work of teaching and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.



ESCHATOLOGY.

BY REV. PITCAIRN WRIGHT.

(Read at a "Fraternal" breakfast).

ONE is met, right away, with the difficulty of defining the subject, or rather of setting some measurable limit within which to discuss it. The 20th Century Christian denies that there are any "Last Things" at all. The very phrase is the negation of Life and religion and God. There is nothing final! Nothing final about God nor about religion nor about man nor about History. So that strictly speaking the phrase "Christian Eschatology" is a contradiction in terms.

Yet this is only one of many unsatisfactory terms with which we have to be content for the present, in days when we are all trying to feel our way from Mediaevalism into a broader vision and a larger liberty. And I think I shall rightly interpret the intention of the proposer of the subject if I allow it to signify the enquiry whether the present order of things is to be brought to a sudden cataclysmic termination by a personal or visible return of our Lord to set up the kingdom of God on the earth, and whether that return is to be expected in the immediate future, or whether on the other hand the Divine method of procedure is along the lines of continuous wise progressive evolution towards a "great far-off Divine event."

When a boy fresh from school, I was honoured with the personal friendship of that great leader of a section of the Plymouth Brethren, Benjamin Wills Newton. He might, I suppose, be called the leader of the Futurist School for prophetic interpretation in the latter half of the last century. His books on the subject are a small library, and I am rather ashamed now

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to confess that I expounded the teachings of the school, with a magnificent dogmatism and assurance, in many sermons and lectures.

The members of that school now appear to me to avoid all the difficulties of Scripture exegesis by pushing all the events they cannot understand out to some unknown and obscure future day, and so far as humanity's progress and history's God-directed movements are concerned, they pull outside the stream, all content to lie undisturbed and uninterested in a backwater.

Thus it came to be an immense relief to turn from the Futurist system to study the works of the Historic School. I am not quite sure where I place Pember and his one-time much-read book, "Earth's Earliest Ages," but Grattan Guinness and Gosset Tanner and others of the same outlook had fascinating leading. One had to construct for oneself special maps and enormous charts and complicated calendars of events and dates in order to appreciate the immense research and patient effort of such students and thinkers.

But the dates were always a difficulty, especially when they would go wrong, when the moon required a special Calendar of her own and would have nothing to do with the arrangement of the sun, and when great and critical dates arrived and yet nothing happened.

I suppose none of us ever took Pastor Russell seriously—I hope not at least. But much later than the others I have mentioned, there arrived that rather irritating person, Sir Robert Anderson with "Daniel in the Critic's Den," "The Silence of God" and "The Coming Prince." In these books of the Futurist School everyone who dared to differ from the author found himself a despised and contemned victim in the private lions' den of Sir Robert. I often think that unwarranted dogmatism and discourtesy to one's opponent have been the bane of prophetic study through all its modern history.

For my own part my study of these writers came to an end when I discovered such great books as those of Robertson Smith, George Adam Smith and Canon Driver. Such teachers brought

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new light, vaster horizons, intellectual and spiritual emancipation. They taught one to ask how the belief came to be. In what relation its many writers stood to the times and the events of their experiences. They made one distrustful of those mental gymnastics by which texts are gathered in the interest of a particular system from every corner of the Old and New Testaments, and fitted into a mysterious mosaic, a sig-saw puzzle according to the individual predilection of the student. And they taught one to discover how the messages of the Bible, by the constant inspiration of the Spirit of God, have been hammered out in the fierce fires of humanity's long centuries of vicissitudinal struggle and aspiration.

Of course texts are difficult. Texts always are difficult! But fortunately the difficult texts of the Bible have a remarkable way of neutralising one another, so that a difficult text on one side of a question is usually counterbalanced by an equally difficult text on the other side, and we are left much as we were to find our way along an intervening path where we discover, not fresh texts to support our special system, but, what is infinitely more important, the general trend of thought and purpose in the Divine movement through history. It is the fascination of choosing texts all on one side of the problem that has resulted in the extravagances that have marked the history of prophetic study in every age.

It is perhaps needless to remark that Paul and the other Apostles expected the return of Jesus almost immediately. "The time is short; it remaineth that those that have wives be as though they had none, and those that weep as though they wept not, etc."

It is an interesting problem to what extent Paul's views of the future changed during his lifetime, but it is certain that the hope of an immediate return of Jesus remained active in the Church until the days of Augustine at the beginning of the 5th Century. After that time the hope appears to have faded away. The year 1000 saw a great revival of the Millennial hope, and from that date onwards one year after another has been selected by one student after another as the year of the Second

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Advent. One may mention among these the years 1260, 1365, 1689, 1694, 1730, 1836, 1843, 1864, 1874, and 1914. There have been many others, but I have taken these from Professor Case's recent book, "The Millennial Hope."

Much more interesting than this playing with dates is the varied interpretation given by apocalyptic writers to the periods of time first introduced to the Bible student in the Book of Daniel, and the successive reinterpretation of Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament Apocalypse as history advanced and unfolded its meaning. Thus while the author of the book of Daniel interpreted the 70 years of Jeremiah as 70 weeks of years, at the end of which the kingdom was to be established, the writer of the first book of Enoch interprets them as meaning 70 successive reigns of 70 Angels, to whom God had committed the care and administration of the world.

In a later section of the same work the history of the world is divided into ten weeks, each of seven generations, and the Messiah's Kingdom is to be established at the beginning of the eighth week and to terminate with the seventh day of the tenth week. But these successive hopes met with successive disappointments. They seem to show, however, how the fascination of fixing dates and the conviction of the nearness of the Advent have come down to us from centuries even before the Christian Era.

It will be vehemently asserted by many, of course, that the Lord Himself definitely and specifically proclaimed his own Second Coming. But the influence of Jewish apocalyptic writings on the narrative of the synoptic gospels seems to me to require careful study, and perhaps would justify the remark of Harnack that "In the matter of eschatology no one can say what sayings came from Christ and what from his disciples."

The real issue the adventist presents to us is between two conceptions of history. In the one conception human history is an evolutionary progress of the Kingdom of God, in the other conception is a dark tragedy of sin and passion which can only end in terrific cataclysm at the coming of the Son of Man. We

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have to choose between these two. And is it not legitimate here to argue that our Lord Himself took the side of progress and of Spiritual evolution? It was He Who said "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." Does not that mean that all history is the record of God—at work? That evolution is not a **force** that does things, but rather a **method** by which **God** does them? That all the problems of human sin and sorrow are God's problems even more than ours?

Can we understand the noble evolution of humanity in any other way? Is it explicable except as we see on every single page the great Worker at his task shrivelling the falsehood of mankind that at last the soul may appear in its purity?

One would like to pay tribute to the noble sanctity that has been developed through the centuries by the advent hope. It has been associated with the purest devotion and with a sacred spirit of love and obedience, and in the darkest days and the most terrible crises of the past it has kept faith and hope alive. That was surely the case in the days of the Apostles—and later in the persecutions of the early Church, and later still amid the agonies of papal persecutions. Those who denied the proximity of the Advent and derided its adherents were correct as to objective fact. Yet the adventists with less correctness of fact found their way by love and faith to sure guidance into the inner shrine of truth and light. Their immediate expectation was an illusion, but it was an illusion that love created in order that it might sustain their spirits and lead them home.

Our Lord indeed seems to hint at a progressive reinterpretation of the Divine purpose when he said "I have many things to say but ye cannot bear them now." Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will lead you into all truth. That at least involves the fact that revelation does not end with the New Testament. That history also under the Spirit's guidance must be allowed to unfold to us the methods of the Divine procedure. Thus I cannot help thinking that for all Christian thinkers the vision of the coming of the kingdom by a spiritual evolution must at last replace the older notion of its arrival by a cataclysmic advent.

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But if the adventist hopes have developed a noble and attractive piety, they have surely on the other hand restrained the practical activities of religion. It seems to me that they have narrowed the conception of the Kingdom of God. I see no logical place whatever in the usual adventist philosophy of the conception of "The world for Christ and Christ for the world." This is a view of the future that has drawn the minds of the Church away from her duty to the world and has obscured the vast fact that God is at work through all events and through all history, and all progress, all politics, all science, and that God seeks our human co-operation in this great enterprise.

Humanity is not grown up, it is only in early childhood as yet. We look back at a thousand years of history and we discover the limitations of men in what we call the Middle Ages, and we never imagine the possibility that men ten thousand years hence will look back upon **us** as men in the dawn of history, and will discuss in like manner **our** limited vision and **our** narrow views, and perhaps some may smile if in that distant day they discover our Secretary's masterly Minute Book and find that a company of serious men ten thousand years before had met to discuss the problem of "The Last Things."

We think in terms of hours and days, weeks and months, and years—but if like the great Kepler—for us to "think the Almighty's thoughts after Him" we must learn to think in terms of centuries and milleniums, and thousands of milleniums.

One turns from the complexity of the intellectual problems to the simplicity of the heart's devotion. It seems to me that the heart may be ready for Him though the mind may be all uncertain as to the method of his coming. The mind deals with the process of the Coming. The heart concerns itself with the Sacred Person whose presence it desires. The mind hesitates and is perplexed, but the heart cries out—"Let Him come as He will and when He will. Let His Coming disturb all our intellectual conceptions, put all our philosophy to shame, shatter our whole intellectual schemes of things. It matters not if the heart be tuned to the infinite music, if the eye be trained to the far-off vision. Then let Him come as He will and when

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He will. We shall "know Him when we meet." We will meet Him in mystic recognition, with abandonment of heart response, with unalloyed delight. It is the Christ Himself who shall suffice us for "He has suffered."

Strange Friend; past, present and to be,
Loved deeper, darklier understood,
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with Thee.

PRAYER UNION NOTES.

IN this hour of change, when the world's life is being recast, we may surely hear the voice of God calling His people to the prayer through which His spiritual power enters the hearts of men. Among the factors which shape the new age that force must be supreme which works from within the soul and produces on earth that Kingdom in which the Divine Will governs and Heaven is mirrored.

In our Fellowship of Prayer I would appeal for intercession on behalf of the many brethren who as demobilised chaplains, or ex-Y.M.C.A. workers are just now without a post. The sudden reduction of war-time staffs has created a very difficult situation, and numerous ministers of ability and experience are for the time learning the meaning of "unemployment." Let us ask that suitable spheres may soon be found, and that in the meantime our brethren may be so cheered by the realised help of Christ that out of this testing time a new power of ministry may spring.

We are looking forward in many parts of the land to the "Internal Mission" planned for the New Year. Ministers and Deacons hope to join in retreat, and then to call the churches together for days of waiting upon God. Let us bring this whole movement much before our Lord. It must proceed from Him if it is to lift us to Him. At His feet we shall obtain guidance, and the Divine anointing on which all depends.

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Ought we not also to remember in our prayers the Annuity Fund Campaign of Mr. Marnham and Mr. Shakespeare? It means much for us all that our aged brethren should be cared for, and that the widows of those who have finished their course should be relieved of unnecessary anxiety. May the hearts and the purses of our people be opened towards these to whom the succour given will, we know, be counted as rendered to our Lord Himself.

My devotional classic for this month is "John Woolman's Journal." Woolman is not one of the men whose fame echoes through the world, but he is one of the purest and sweetest souls that have blest the earth—a man in whom self died. "We are in good society," writes Dr. A. Smellie, "when we walk and talk with one to whom Coleridge and Charles Lamb and Edward Irving delighted to hearken—one who was the favourite of Dora Greenwell and of John Greenleaf Whittier."

Born in Northampton, West Jersey, in 1720, of Quaker parents, he was early drawn towards things Divine. "Before I was seven years old," he writes in the Journal, "I began to be acquainted with the operations of Divine love"; and he tells how one day when returning from school he left his companions and sitting down in a retired spot he read the 22nd chapter of Revelation: "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb." In reading it, his mind was drawn to seek after that pure habitation which God has prepared for His servants.

He did not, however, pass unscathed through the perils of youth. "Though I was preserved from profane language or scandalous conduct, yet I perceived a plant in me which produced much wild grapes." But through the mercy of God he was brought in penitence to give his life over to the Redeemer's keeping and henceforth sought his friends among Christ's people. "I went to meetings in an awful frame of mind, and endeavoured to be inwardly acquainted with the language of the true Shepherd."

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At the beginning of his speaking career he learned a valuable lesson. "One day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up and said some words in a meeting; but not keeping close to the Divine opening, I said more than was required of me." Realising his error he could not rest till he had sought and found forgiveness. "Being thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the pure Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and which taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet, through which the Lord speaks to His flock."

Woolman's trade was that of a working tailor, and though he received business proposals which promised success, he refused to accept them lest he should entangle himself in earthly affairs. "There was a care on my mind so to pass my time, that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the true Shepherd."

Woolman now became a minister in the Society of Friends, and, having found "an enlargement of Gospel love" in his mind, set out to visit Friends in the back settlements of Pennsylvania and Virginia.

In 1750 he lost his Father who had sought particularly to cherish in his children "a spirit of tenderness." This spirit was now manifested in Woolman's growing concern for the slaves around him. Even the Friends were among the slave-owners, trying to justify themselves from Scripture, but Woolman could not endure it, and both publicly and privately testified against this sin against "the poor negroes." Many a slave was set free through him and he was one of the fore-runners of the Emancipation of a century later. Whittier traces the steps by which the influence of Woolman came to tell upon leaders like Thomas Clarkson and William Lloyd Garrison.

Public life in the Colonies was now troubled, and the conflict between England and France was followed by the Revolutionary struggle, but through all Woolman preserved the calm

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breathed in the letter sent out from Philadelphia in 1755—
 “And now, dear friends, with respect to the commotions and stirrings of the powers of the earth at this time near us, we are desirous that none of us may be moved thereat, but repose ourselves in the munition of that rock which all these shakings shall not move, even in the knowledge and feeling of the eternal power of God, keeping us subjectly given up to His heavenly will.”

Woolman had the missionary heart, and, like Brainerd, he was drawn to care for the Indians. “Love was the first motion, and thence a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians.” Various journeys followed, journeys often beset with dangers, from wild beasts and warring tribes, from rivers and storms, but he was borne above all these things. “A weighty and heavenly care came over my mind and love filled my heart toward all mankind.”

In 1772 Woolman felt impelled to visit England, and in crossing the Atlantic he insisted on travelling steerage partly to avoid “luxury,” and partly to get closer to the sailors. It is clear that his influence went through that ship.

Woolman had only been a few months in England, visiting meetings of friends in different parts of the country, when he was stricken with small-pox and after a few days passed away into the unveiled presence of the Saviour he loved.

The key to John Woolman’s later influence is given in the experience which came to him 2½ years before the end, though he wrote it down only a few weeks before his death. In a time of sickness he was lying speechless and helpless. “I then heard a soft melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any I had heard with my ears before; I believed it was the voice of an angel who spake to the other angels; the words were, ‘John Woolman is dead.’” “In the morning, my dear wife and some others coming to my bedside, I asked them if they knew who I was, and they, telling me I was John Woolman, thought I was light-headed.” As I lay still I could speak, and I then said, ‘I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. . . .’ Then the

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mystery was opened and I perceived there was joy in Heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that the language ' John Woolman is dead ' meant no more than the death of my own will."

DR. PEAKE'S COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE.

" A Commentary on the Bible," Edited by Arthur S. Peake,
M.A., D.D. (T. E. and E. C. Jack, 10s. 6d. net).

This is a book for which we have long waited. It is the first serious attempt, we believe, to offer a Commentary on the Bible in one volume, in which the sober results of modern Scholarship are plainly set forth. There are other Commentaries which run into small libraries, and students value these exceedingly, but it may be said at once that Dr. Peake's volume fills a place all its own. It is a marvellous production whether its contents, its size or its price are considered. The book consists of more than one thousand pages, closely printed in double columns. How such a volume can be offered for half a guinea remains the secret of the publisher—it is an astonishment to the purchaser. The name of Dr. Peake, it need hardly be said, is a guarantee that the work under his Editorship is thoroughly well done. He has gathered around him no less than 61 scholars, whose combined work makes an unique volume. The introductory studies are not the least valuable part of the " Commentary." Both Old and New Testaments are set in their proper milieu. Various experts deal with such subjects as the meaning and aim of the Bible; the development of the Literature; the growth of the religion of Israel; the Roman Empire in the First Century, etc., etc. These studies are invaluable. The " Commentary " proper follows the text of the R.V., and the exposition is of the paragraph rather than of the verse. Wherever we have tested the book it has answered splendidly to expectation. The Bibliographies are excellent and are as complete as an ordinary student could desire. A full Index running to 66 pages is a boon that all readers will highly appreciate. Ministers must somehow

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possess themselves of this volume. It is indispensable to them. There are books that are desirable and that may be borrowed: this one is necessary and should be continually at hand. We cannot speak too highly of it. X.

A SHEAF OF GOOD BOOKS.

Messrs. MORGAN & SCOTT, Ltd., are publishing some excellent books, which will be found of great service to ministers, teachers and other workers.

"**The Strategy of Life**," by Arthur Porritt (4s. 6d.), is an ideal volume to put into the hands of older boys and young men. Dr. Jowett, who contributes a foreword, is enthusiastic in its praise. He expresses the wish that it might be placed in the hands of every boy and young fellow throughout the Anglo-Saxon world. We cordially echo his wish. Its twenty-five chapters deal with the living themes which occupy the thoughts of young men; such as "choosing a career," "business aptitude," "open-mindedness," "recreation," "the use and abuse of fancy," "public service," and the like. The book abounds with fresh illustrations, drawn from literature and life, and on this account alone is valuable. Ministers will find in its pages fine suggestions for a series of Sunday night addresses. S.

"**Vision and Vocation**" (4s.) is a new book by Dr. J. C. Carlile, of Folkestone, and contains some of the addresses spoken by him in Canada and the United States during the war. But it is more than a book. The message in its pages is a message for the present hour. The fifteen discourses throb with life. The sermons on "The Revelation in the Face" (text Genesis 33, 10) and "The man who would not bend" (Esther 3, 2) are two of the most suggestive we have read for a long time. But the whole book is good and throughout is marked by that fine literary touch which we associate with all Dr. Carlile's work. S.

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" Cameos of Comfort," by Rev. J. Taylor, B.D. (3s.) is a book of 33 chapters distilling comfort to the sorrowing and the broken-hearted. It is old-fashioned, but rich in spiritual experience; a book that would bring balm and healing to men and women in mid-life who have been hard hit by trouble. The reviewer has found a good deal in it to which his heart makes full answer. X.

" Christ and Woman's Power," by Edith Picton-Turbervill, O.B.E. (3s.)—Here is the woman's case set in glowing light by a woman who can write with force. Throughout runs the story of woman's fight for her true place in life as the equal and comrade of man; not for the sake of dominance, but for service. We have plenty of " militant " books on " the woman question "—as it is not over-reverently called, but this book strikes a higher note than most of these. It is the work of a prophetess who sees clearly what women can do in the new world when their power is released. There are many girls and women in the Churches to whom these pages would bring vision and inspiration. It is a book that should be widely circulated. X.

Dr. Meyer has published, through Messrs. Morgan Scott, the final volume of his biographical series: " Peter—Fisherman, Disciple, Apostle " (4s. 6d.). His many admirers who have profited by his former volumes, will welcome this, the latest—and last of the series.