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# The Fraternal.

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New Series.

OCTOBER, 1935.

No. 20

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*Members' Subscriptions should be sent to:*

Rev. W. H. PRATT,

Nocton Rise, Stratford Road, Watford, Herts.

*Literary contributions should be sent to:*

Dr. JOHN PITTS, M.A.,

"Brantwood", Garth Drive, Mossley Hill, Liverpool, 18.

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THOMAS GREENWOOD.

REMEMBRANCE AND THANKSGIVING.

PASTORAL service is a co-operative affair, and faithful ministries are so interwoven that none can terminate without loss to all the rest. The passing homeward of Thomas Greenwood, however, affects us all in an especial degree, and we are each one impoverished by it. He filled many offices and served on numerous committees, more than most people realised; only since his death called forth tributes of affection has it been possible to measure the extent of his influence and the width of his service. The Baptist Union, the London City Mission, the London Baptist Association, the Particular Baptist Fund, all lose a counsellor valued for his wisdom and a friend of abounding though secret generosity. All who worked with him tell of his clearness and coolness of judgment, but not all saw the tender side of his character. He had a great gift of economy in speech, and some of us received a salutary lesson when, our own volubility having been exhausted, he would emerge from his silence with some brief dictum which made our copious speech look as futile as it really was.

In the pages of "The Fraternal," however, it is fitting that we should think rather of our friend as a minister, and the lover and helper of the ministry. For ministerial training, inspiration and support, he planned and pleaded and gave, year after year, with unguessed sacrifice and effectiveness.

One way in which his love for the ministry revealed itself was in his devotion to Spurgeon's College, where he had himself received his theological training. When the war ended, the question had to be faced whether the College should be reopened. Since the great days of its foundation much had changed, and many who had been its ardent supporters were no longer alive. Unless fresh support could be found and new developments undertaken, it seemed impossible to continue the institution. There were those who felt that its day was over, that having fulfilled a great ministry it should pass away. The Trustees sought counsel with former students, and thanks largely to John Bradford and Thomas Greenwood a braver policy prevailed. These two, who had been linked in many denominational enterprises, did more than give counsel and urge advance; they themselves shouldered heavy responsibility. They gave liberally from their own pockets, and enlisted sympathy from many who knew them so well that any cause they advocated was held to deserve support. It was through John Bradford primarily that a new home was made available for the College, but the possibility of entering into the heritage was largely the result of Thomas Greenwood's financial leadership and generosity. If to-day a new opportunity of service is before the College, it is to these two London Baptists that thanks are mainly due.

Mr. Greenwood was Vice-Chairman of the College Council till the death of Mr. Bradford, when he succeeded to the Chairmanship, which he held until his death. It was not with him a mere sinecure. He interested himself in the administration of the College, and in the careers of its students, and strove to impress upon young ministers his own ideals of exactness and scrupulous devotion to the lofty task.

It does not appear to be so well known as it should be, that it was in Mr. Greenwood's mind that the proposals for the more adequate support and organisation of our ministry originated. I understand that the plans which Dr. Shakespeare developed and brought into operation were first suggested to him by Thomas Greenwood. From his father he inherited a high regard for the ministerial calling, and deep sympathy with his brethren. Because his own financial position relieved him from the anxiety too well known to his brethren, he felt compelled to become their advocate and helper. Many a man in the hour of difficulty received gifts that tided over the hard

time, and the gifts were given graciously, so that no hurt to pride ever ensued. To be thanked was distasteful to him, and it was difficult to express gratitude to him, because he waved all such references aside. Deeply affectionate by nature, he so disliked sentimentality and unreality that his tenderness was often unrecognised. He would have no parade of anything he did, because he served the Father Who seeth in secret. We shall discover our loss more and more as his hidden ministries come to light, and we need to pray that his spirit may dwell in those who follow him.

PERCY W. EVANS,  
(London).

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### A NEGLECTED TASK.

*(Concluded.)*

**B**UT there is also a bigger task, the finding of work for the unemployed. We say that it is morally degrading to be long unemployed; to feel that there is no contribution one can make to the community; to know that one must exist for years, perhaps for life, on the earnings of others. We call upon those in power to deal with the matter without seeming to realise that, at first, any comprehensive scheme must involve a sacrifice on the part of the working section of the community, who would be called upon to find the difference between unemployed pay and a working wage for these men. The only alternative methods of financing such an effort are by borrowing, which has the disadvantage of casting our burden, in the form of interest, on the future, or by doubtful monetary experiments, which, even if they are sound, will not be likely to have the support necessary to put them into practise for years to come. It is then by a greater or less degree of sharing, or by borrowing at low interest or without any, that immediate steps can be taken in this matter. Though it seems clear that the useful work which could be accomplished would more than compensate for the initial sacrifice involved, we can scarcely expect the average man to be willing to bear it. Again and again we find non-Christians, however, who put us to shame in this matter, for they are in a small way doing their utmost, and we wonder why the Church, whose basis is love, is so unready to make the sacrifice necessary to find work for its own unemployed. "In the Church of Rome in the middle of the third century,"

says the Copec Report already referred to, "no less than 46 presbyters, 7 deacons, 7 sub-deacons, 42 acolytes, 52 exorcists, readers and doorkeepers, and more than 1,500 widows were supported by the faithful. This is an astonishing total when it is remembered that at this time the Church in Rome could not have been very numerous. It means that the weekly contributions of the faithful were something more than the mere "collection" to which we are accustomed. They involved two aspects, an actual and real sacrifice on the one hand, the acceptance in a spiritual sense of real responsibility on the other." If real sacrifice and a sense of responsibility had characterised our attitude to the unemployed some definite action would have been taken before now. The problem is a complex one, and there would be need of much thought and planning, but there is work on every hand waiting to be done. Meanwhile numerous experimental efforts have been made, the results of which could form the basis of the more comprehensive plan.

Once the problem of unemployment had been faced, the question of honesty in business would be much simplified. The employee thrown out of work through refusal to have part in dishonest methods would be found other employment. The employer who could show that he was being ruined by the unfair tactics of his competitors could surely count on the support of Christian consumers, who would not buy from firms proved dishonest. Thus, within the the Church, Christ's standard would be applied to possessions and to business, and so far as this side of life is concerned, the impossibility of realising the Christian ethic could no longer be maintained.

Business, however, is not the whole of life, and the Church should have a place in connection with our other activities. "The parish church of the 14th century," says the Rev. M. Spencer, "shewed how religion could be the centre and inspiration of every side of social life—its art, its music, its architecture, its thought, its industry and its amusements. The Church was the home of every form of festival and gaiety, the centre of every kind of guild or society. It knew, in those days, how to give unity to the varied interests of men." Have we done well in permitting so many of these interests to pass into non-Christian hands? Missionary periodicals have often informed us of the tremendous influence of schools and hospitals staffed by

Christians, and of the part these institutions play in the evangelisation of those who come to them. Roman Catholic schools are a demonstration that this is still held to be true in our own country. Would not a few thoroughly Christian institutions do more to demonstrate the value of the Christian spirit and outlook than a number of Christians scattered here and there trying to counteract the contrary influence of their colleagues?

Whatever answer may be given to this question it is becoming increasingly clear that much evil has resulted from the secular control of amusements. We hear of efforts being made in America to obtain cleaner films, while the Catholic Young Men's Society in this country pledged itself to boycott undesirable films and to urge other Catholics to do likewise. If, however, it is only the undesirable film that is boycotted, it seems open to the proprietor to provide different types of film on different occasions, and thus to continue to get the support of all classes of people. The least that is required is a boycott of all cinemas where the standard is low. But why should we stop there? Is it in the best interests of the community that this industry, which has such power to influence the millions it entertains, should be almost entirely under secular control? In every large centre a cinema might be provided that did not merely avoid the worst, but which provided the best. There seems no reason either why the Church, as a world society, should not produce films of its own. There must be a great deal of talent that, under present conditions, cannot be devoted to God in the making of films, but which might be so used were there an organisation for their production which maintained a Christian standard.

There is one other matter to which we must refer. The Church should be able to come to some definite opinion about the Christian attitude to war. Consider these words of Ruskin's: "Capitalists when they do not know what to do with their money, persuade the peasants, in various countries, that the said peasants want guns to shoot each other with. The peasants accordingly borrow guns, out of the manufacture of which the capitalists get a percentage, and men of science much amusement and credit. Then the peasants shoot a certain number of each other until they are tired: and burn each other's houses down in various places. Then they put the guns back into towers, arsenals, etc., in ornamental patterns: (and the victorious part put also some ragged flags in churches). And

then the capitalists tax both, annually, ever afterwards, to pay interest on the loan of the guns and gunpowder. And that is what capitalists call 'knowing what to do with their money': and what commercial men in general call 'practical' as opposed to 'sentimental' Political Economy." Do you think this is untrue? It is not the whole truth, of course, but is perhaps much nearer to it than we suppose. The question of the private manufacture of arms, and of the profits derived from it, has received a good deal of publicity of late, so we will let that pass and consider another aspect of the problem. During the war men were called to face suffering and death on behalf of their country, and they received but little in return. Suppose the Government of the day had said, "We are asking men to risk their lives and women to work for their country. We ask also for one lesser sacrifice. Let the money required be provided free of interest, to be repaid as the country finds itself able to do so." Surely it would be a small thing to be denied interest when lives were at stake, but for how many days do you suppose a modern war would last on such a basis? It casts a flood of light on Ruskin's assertion when one realises that apart from the profit made out of destruction through the high interest rates paid on the money that finances it, modern warfare would be impossible. When no one can make any financial gain from war, it will cease.

How long are we going to remain undecided about this evil, the futility of which is everywhere recognised? Jesus simplified life, instead a host of complicated rules He provided one, the law of love. To-day we imagine all kinds of complex situations instead of facing the plain issue that you cannot follow the Golden Rule and kill your fellow Christian at one and the same time. God does not ask us to be responsible for the results of acting in a spirit of love, He can take care of them, but He does ask our obedience. We are to overcome evil, Paul tells us, with good. That is the only way of overcoming it, and the evidence of the cross still stands in proof that this way is an effective way. We are ready enough to say that war is un-Christian, but we do not seem to be willing to act upon this opinion.

But perhaps the difficulty lies in knowing what useful action we can take. The purely negative action, the mere refusal to fight, if taken up by the Church as a whole, would have a tremendous influence, but it is not enough. We need

to be able to take some definite action of a Christian character, varying according to the particular circumstances of the case, even if it involved, as the Peace Army enrolled in connection with the Sino-Japanese dispute proposed, going unarmed between the combatants. In a recent address the Rev. Leyton Richards has urged that the Church should have a Foreign Office of its own. Its function, he says, should be to scrutinise international affairs from a Christian standpoint, and to enunciate policies which the Churches could commend to the Statesmen. A body of this sort, in touch with Christian thought in every land, could make a great contribution to peace, not only by telling the world what the Christian policy would be, but also by telling the Church what practical steps it might take in face of the various problems which arise. A Church which, under the guidance of those who had a thorough understanding of the question at issue, was ready to give its life for the achievement of the Christian solution, would not be long in finding the line of action which it ought to take.

The Church has already expressed in its literature the main principles which should govern society, and has, in theory, applied them to the more important of our modern problems. But little has been done to put these theoretical solutions into practise, though in certain instances the nation has been persuaded to take some step towards the realising of them. Naturally enough, we who reach decisions, but do not practise them, make no great impression on those outside our Churches. The Church ought to be an example to the world, demonstrating how the Christian spirit can be put into practise in all the relationships of life. It may be true that there are limits to the extent to which we can apply Christ's teaching to our circumstances to-day, but does that absolve us from carrying it out as far as we can? Once we make the attempt we shall find that those limits are much farther off than we supposed. If those Christians who have assented to the main positions laid down in the Copec Report were willing to act among themselves in accordance with their principles, they are sufficiently numerous to add a Christian social order to those other departments of life in which the Church has previously revealed her Master's spirit. The less complex problems could be dealt with first, and as the number who were willing to follow Christ in this way grew, the application of His teaching could be made on a wider scale. If we set before those who join our Churches

the view that the call of Christ involves not only a personal, but also a social response, especially in so far as the family of God is concerned, there would be few who did not see its truth and the Church of the future would become a witness to all men of the true relationship which should obtain between man and man. In face of the difficulties which confront the world to-day we say that the only way out is Christ's way. We shall never convince men of this until we add works to our faith, and take up our neglected task of demonstrating the truth we assert in practical fashion. When shall we cease to protest, and begin to act?

REGINALD LILLINGTON,  
(Riding Mill, Northumberland).

#### OTTO BORCHERT'S "THE ORIGINAL JESUS."

A YEAR ago we devoted a special article to a review of Emil Brunner's monumental work *The Mediator* which, at that time, was the latest addition to the "Lutterworth Library." That book alone is sufficient to give outstanding merit to the series to which it belongs, and for many of us the meeting with Brunner's work gave us our first introduction to the "Lutterworth Library." It is not generally known, however, that the now famous series of theological works was initiated by the translation of a German work which is altogether worthy to be placed "cheek by jowl" with Brunner's book. It is called *The Original Jesus*, by Otto Borchert, a Hanover pastor and Inspector of Schools, and is published at the rather low price of 12s. 6d. I say "rather low price" although 12s. 6d. to many ministers will seem a lot of money, as indeed it is. But it is worth while saving on some of the "fiddling" things we buy (and even on smoking!!!!) in order to secure for oneself this remarkable volume.

In its original edition the book has had a somewhat unusual history. For sixteen years after the manuscript was completed Dr. Borchert found it impossible to get a publisher to consider it seriously. He offered it to no less than ten different firms, and ten times it came back to him with "the publisher's regrets." The explanation given for these repeated failures to find its way into print is that it was really ahead of its time; but fortunately the author persisted in his belief that he had a message for the modern world with the result that

he eventually found both a publisher and a public. In fact, after publication the book soon became a best-seller in Germany—no less than 40,000 copies having been sold of the German editions—and it has also found a ready public for the Dutch, Danish and Swedish translations.

It can be safely predicted that a like success will attend the English translation, for which L. M. Stalker is responsible. Rev. R. Mercer Wilson, M.A. (Literary Editor of the "Lutterworth Press"), is to be congratulated on having secured such an outstanding and unusual work with which to commence the "Lutterworth Library." For like *The Mediator*, Dr. Otto's book deals with the very foundation and central things of the Christian faith. As the Editor says in his preface, "the book sets forth the glory of Jesus as the *fons et origo* of the innumerable blessings which are ours in His salvation. He who is the 'effulgence of God's glory' is 'the author and finisher of our faith!' It also exhibits the *originality* of Jesus in the sense of His 'uninventedness.' The picture would have been utterly different if it had been invented by human genius, no matter how richly talented the mind or highly gifted the imagination."

The work falls into two Books of unequal length, but not unequal from the point of view of the high quality of exposition and treatment. In Book One Dr. Borchert deals with "The Stumbling-Block Characteristics" in the Life-Story of Jesus, and the various reactions in life and thought which these "stumbling-block characteristics" have called forth. But the fact that there is something in Christ that "offends" unregenerate human nature, something that "is contrary to flesh and blood," proves our Lord's transcendent origin and His unique place in the economy of history. It demonstrates that in the fullest sense Jesus came "from a far country" and entered into the human race as a complete "alien." With a wealth of historical reference and depth of spiritual insight Dr. Borchert develops this rather neglected aspect of the Gospel.

But it is not sufficient merely to set forth the "offence" of the Life-Story of Jesus and leave it there. That would be to give but a partial picture. Hence he goes on in Book Two to deal with the "beauty" of that wonderful Character and Career. The author's own attitude towards this aspect of the Saviour's Person and Work is well illustrated in the quotations with which he prefaces this part of his work. One is from Kahler: "Why

did He write nothing? Why did He dictate nothing? His gift to His people is not what He said but what He is—it is the gift of Himself." A second is from Heiler: "The positiveness of Christianity is rooted in the positiveness of Christ's personality. The miracle of the divinity of Christianity has its basis in the miracle of the personality of Jesus." A third is from Grutzmacher: "If an enquiry were to be put to Christians as to what they would miss most if their religion were taken from them, the answer would probably be unanimous; Jesus Christ Himself."

It is from this central Christian conviction that Dr. Borchert approaches his consideration of the glory of Jesus Christ. In four sections, containing innumerable beautiful passages, he deals with "The Natural Endowments of Jesus," "The Religious and Moral Personality of Jesus," "The Mystery of Jesus' Personality" and "The Course of History Corresponding to Jesus' Self-Estimate." The various chapters under these four sections are too numerous to particularise here, but it may be noted that, among other topics, Dr. Borchert deals with Christ's Knowledge of God; His prayer-life; His attitude to the Scriptures; His candour, love, humility, patience; His attitude towards the natural world and its blessings; His unprecedented authority; His miracles. How many sermons this book will inspire! But more, how rewarding and enriching will it be of the preacher's own life!

I do not think I can better conclude this short, and all-too-inadequate, appreciation of a truly great work than by quoting from closing page: "This then is the conclusion: this Man 'determines' me. All God's acts of revelation have the power to vouch for themselves, and the Son more than any of them. 'I am the truth'—we are sure of this with all the strength of assurance which we have ourselves won. And we are sure of something more, that here we have the face of the Father revealed. In Nature with its catastrophes and in human life with its convulsions we see nothing but the likeness of a sphinx. Where is thy God? What is He like? It is in vain that we seek there an answer to the puzzle. But in Christ we possess God 'from within' (Luther). We cannot make any mistake about God after we have known Jesus.

JOHN PITTS,  
(Liverpool).

## THE PREACHER IN HIS PUBLIC PRAYER.

*(Notes of an address to the Lancashire and Cheshire Ministers' Fraternal at Waterbarn.)*

IT is expected from the speaker in this annual address that he should share with his brethren some point of experience within the life and work of the Minister. That is the reason for the frequent use of the first personal pronoun in these notes.

One of my predecessors in this office began his address by saying, "If I were beginning my ministry over again I would give a much larger place in Public Worship to the proper reading of Holy Scripture." It is easy to recall with what wisdom, and logic and grace he justified his thesis, and how completely he won us to his point of view. Let me add, on my own behalf, and without in any way lessening his emphasis, that if I were beginning my ministry again, I would do with all my might what already for a few years I have been trying to do—often in a broken, and sometimes in a defeated way—to give more thought, to spend a good deal more time with the matter and form of Public Prayer. So may I speak to you on "The Preacher in his Public Prayer."

Dr. Dakin, speaking to us a few years ago, said: "We Free Churchmen have never set ourselves to discover and develop a technique of devotion." He meant, that we tell people they ought to pray, mourn the often prayerless condition of our churches, but we have not set out confidently to teach people how to pray. Yet the whole purpose of our services is to help men and women to come into realised fellowship with God. Apart from that fellowship, there is no worship, and apart from it, there is no reason for conversion. Our business is not to make men good, if that were possible, but to win them to a vital sense of the reality of God. I am sure you will agree with me when I say, that wherever else we falter, and however stumbling may be our going in this or that direction, we preachers ought to be versed in the lore of Prayer, and native travellers on the road that leads to God.

Further, I will say this with emphasis, whether you are just stepping out into the way of the ministry, or, like myself, can look back over a considerable stretch of the same way, there is no part of our life and work that brings more searching of heart, nor burdens us more heavily, than that of taking a people upon our Public Prayers. It is not that we are lost for words,

indeed words sometimes come too easily; it is not that we are hard put to it to fashion sentences of adoration, or to voice the intercession of a people whom we know; but to be secure in the sense of God's Presence, to stand in some reverent degree for that Daysman who shall lay his hand upon God and upon our people; to be a real Priest, and to stand as Horace Bushnell would say, in vicarious thought and feeling in the presence of a congregation, is an office that no lapse of time, and no amount of experience ever make easy.

Again I wonder if you will agree with me as I say, that the whole of a Service comes to its savour in the Prayer? I have learned by experience to dread nothing so much as poverty in Prayer. It casts its penuriousness upon everything else. I cannot ever remember to have had liberty in preaching (to use an old-fashioned phrase) that did not come to me first as liberty in Prayer. What is that something which lifts a Service out of the commonplace—sometimes boredom of a meeting? Our fathers, I think, called it "Uunction." Whatever we call it, the one way to it is through our Prayers, both for ourselves and for our people.

It is said you should never criticise a man in his Prayers. You may criticise his sermon both as to its matter and form; you may criticise his reading of the Scriptures, and, especially, you may criticise his recital of the weekly notices, but not his Prayers. Well, at least I will enter no carping criticism, but I will point out a common failing.

There is no part of my holiday that I look forward to with more zeal than that of going to chapel and sitting in a pew as a private person. It will be the same with you. We are able to sit with our families; we are able to see and hear another man standing in our position and doing our work. How many a good and choice word I can recall! I have listened with eagerness to great preachers and good preachers, and I can only remember one failure in the sermon. I cannot say the same with respect to the Prayers. With few exceptions they have been sermons interspersed with sentences of adoration, and paragraphs of petition. If I had gone to those preachers and said, "I thank you for the beautiful sermon you preached while you were praying," I am sure they would have been very surprised, and, perhaps, not a little offended, but it would have been an accurate description. What is more, it taught me that that was

exactly what I was doing Sunday by Sunday and to this day I confess it is fatally easy to fall into the same mistake.

I ought, indeed, to have known better, for early in my ministry I had a devastating illustration that should have been a lifetime lesson. In a church in which there was some division of thought, and at one of its meetings, two men engaged in Prayer. One was elderly, and let me say orthodox, the other younger, and not orthodox. They each prayed in their own terms. At the close, the younger man said to me, "You heard my prayer? I thought I ought to put the other side"!

It is not often as brazen as that. I recognise, of course, that anyone may say, "I do this preaching, as you mistakenly call it, of set purpose. Through it I suggest Prayer, and in that way help my people to pray." To that I say, if you know why you do it, it may well be proper, but it is uncommonly easy in Prayer to speak with people instead of Praying to God.

It may be because there is a recognition of this, that I notice a growing tendency to use forms of Prayer, and also, that our Free Church leaders have made some attempt to help us in this direction. I confess to a decided feeling of discomfort about it. I only speak for myself when I say that on the few occasions—sometimes ornate, and sometimes nerve-racking—when I have depended on the written Prayer, I have been deeply conscious of utter failure. It is perhaps a personal limitation.

There is, however, a feeling that we Nonconformists have a better order of Preaching, than say, in the Church of England, but that they have a nobler Order of Prayer. Not for a moment do I agree to that, if what is meant is that spontaneous Prayer lacks the better use of measured provision for a people's need. On the contrary, I believe there is no contribution we have to make to the Universal Church which is greater than that of a disciplined free Prayer that can take account of a people's joys and a people's sorrows.

Please pardon again a personal illustration. About ten years ago I had a serious breakdown in health. A doctor ordered me away for a time into the country, and eventually we found a little cottage in one of the mid-Wales valleys. There were no English services in any of the chapels. Necessity was laid upon us to go to the English church for a short morning service. Not once was there a Prayer that reached

down to link me in my sore need to God. Lovely and sonorous sentences there were, within the Gothic shape of that wayside church—sentences that made music—with never a discord of rough, or ill-chosen word, and nothing to offend good taste. Everything was seemly and in good order, but all of it made no boat to carry me across the stormy sea of my own little world.

I feel sure that the time is coming near when our people will for their good demand to have a greater and more vocal share in our services, and that the place we give to singing—often meaningless singing—will have to be disciplined. When that time comes, I hope we shall not ape other communions, but that we shall work out this new necessity within the genius of free peoples, and, that above all, we shall keep the glory of spontaneous Prayer.

Finally, I venture to offer one or two suggestions.

(a) It is high time that we broke with the tradition and, let me say, the tyranny of the "Long Prayer." There ought, indeed, to be space about our Prayers. We should carry the world upon our hearts, and so be delivered from losing ourselves in the little circle within which most of us live our lives. Mere length, however, may have no space about it. For myself—especially in the Evening Service—I have found it helpful to give up the idea of the short and long Prayer. I take one Prayer, and divide it into two parts. I make the first half a petition for the realisation of God's Presence, the other half to intercession for our needs. Sometimes again, I take all the Prayer after the first hymn, and then later, simply a petition for God's power to come with the spoken word.

(b) Then I am sure that we ought to cultivate a sense of words to help us in this part of the Service. A distinguished preacher staying with me for anniversary purpose told me that on Saturday mornings, he gave an hour to the reading aloud of some of the masterpieces of English literature. The passages had nothing to do with the subjects on which he was to preach. He simply practiced with them. Through them he exercised his mouth in the choicest words, and became sensitive to the balance of rounded sentences. I have often imitated him and have found it of great value, and especially for Prayer. If ever there is a time when a man should be simple and direct, avoiding all scientific and philosophical words, it is when he is at Prayer. There are some quite good words, which are

never at home in poetry. Equally there are good words that have no suitable place in Prayer. I cannot tell you what they are. I know them to be wrong the instant I have used them.

(c) As to the matter of Prayer, I will only say one thing. I cannot tell now when it was, but somewhere, a good few years ago, I found the surest way of Prayer for me at the close of the day, was simply to go over the day with God—to recall its good, to submit to the indicting of its ill. How often have I been lifted up! and how often abased! In the same way I have found no better way of preparation for Public Prayer—than to go through the week with my people. Great men have charged us to read the Psalms, to be on familiar terms with the great devotional books—"Augustine's Confessions," "The Imitation," "The Serious Call," etc. But to know and feel with men is for me a surer road.

J. H. MALINS JOHNSON,  
(Atherton).

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#### THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND THE CHURCH.

**I**N the history of Christian dogma the term "Divine Sovereignty" has undergone various changes of meaning. It has been associated with theories which not many of us would care to defend to-day. For my purpose now it represents the activities of One who in infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite power and infinite patience, is controlling the doings and destinies of men, and working all things after the counsel of His own will. God still occupies the throne of the Universe. He has not abdicated through impotence. He has not abandoned His rule in disgust or despair. He is not dismayed by any force that rears its threatening head in opposition to His will.

Life is very complex and puzzling. There are many storms and cross-currents and eddies and back-waters that seem to interrupt the steady flow of any discernible purpose. There are world movements that make us wonder if the powers of evil have been let loose to work their unrestricted will in God's fair earth. But we *must* hold to the belief that above all the clamour and chaos and confusion of our times *God sits enthroned*. With imperturbable calm, with invincible power, with unshakable confidence, He is working His purpose out, and His ultimate triumph is assured. That has been the confidence of God's saints in every generation. "The Lord

reigneth," cried the Psalmist, "let the earth rejoice. Let the multitude of the isles be glad. For the moment clouds and darkness may be round about Him, but righteousness and judgment are still the habitation of His throne. . . . The Lord reigneth. He is clothed with majesty. The Lord is clothed with strength wherewith He hath girded Himself. . . . The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

That is the only faith in which we can find any sort of anchorage. That is the faith which, for the salvation of her own soul, the Church needs to recover and to proclaim with trumpet voice. Such a conception of God, firmly and intelligently held, would have beneficent results upon the Church's life and witness.

Let me say in passing that we need to emphasise the sovereignty of God in order to give dignity to our church worship. *Sovereignty* implies *Majesty*. Divine Sovereignty implies infinite Majesty, and all our approaches to the infinite Majesty ought to be marked by reverence and decorum and awe. If our thought of God were more adequate our forms of worship would be more worthy. "Lo, God is here! Let us adore, and own how dreadful is this place!" If we really believed that, it would completely transform the character and the spirit of many of our church services. The most frequent charge against our Free Church Worship is that it is slovenly, and Mr. Leslie Weatherhead has taken up the attack with trenchant irony. After pillorizing the choir and making merry at the expense of some of the preacher's personal habits, he turns his light artillery on our manner of conducting worship. "The minister's prayer," he says, "is often an abrupt haranguing of the congregation, though the words are addressed to God. One cannot help feeling that he could collect himself with greater care in order to enter the presence of his doctor. It is incredible that he would talk like that if he really thought he was in the presence of the Holy God; if he really thought it was his task to lift his fellow-worshippers into the august Presence. Then having meandered and wandered in so-called prayer here and there, and probably mis-stated the political situation, he will proceed with a service, the success of which almost entirely depends on his own health, physical, mental and spiritual."

Mr. Weatherhead stoutly denies that that is a caricature. But even though it is not a *typical* picture of our Free Church Worship, there is sufficient truth in it to make us think, and think soberly. We should all prepare ourselves very much more carefully for an audience with the King than we do for our audiences with the King of Kings.

“When we meet together in worshipping communities,” asks Dr. Jowett, “do we look like men and women who are preparing to move amid the amazing and enriching sanctities of the Almighty? ‘When he come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hands, to trample my courts?’ That loud and irreverent tramp is far too obtrusive in our communion. We are not sufficiently impressed by the spirit of reverence which is the open sesame into the realms of light and grace. We are not subdued into the receptiveness of awe.” Our trouble is an impoverished conception of God. “We have robbed the Almighty of much of His awful glory, and to that extent we ourselves are despoiled. We have contemplated the beauties of the rainbow, but we have overlooked the dim severities of the throne. We have toyed with the light, but we have forgotten the lightening. We have rejoiced in the Fatherhood of God, but too frequently the Fatherhood we have proclaimed has been throneless and effeminate.”

I plead for a more careful attention to the details of public worship, not on æsthetic grounds merely, but because of the infinite Majesty of the Supreme Being to whom our worship is addressed.

Again we need to emphasise the Sovereignty of God in order to strengthen our loyalty and save us from compromise. Sovereignty implies authority, as well as majesty, and in the Christian Church the authority of the Sovereign God must be accepted without question, without equivocation.

This is one of the most serious, and at the same time one of the most clearly-cut issues that the Church has to face to-day.

On the Continent, the claims of the Totalitarian State are a direct challenge to the Sovereignty of God. Some of our brethren are facing a situation not unlike that our Free Church ancestors had to face in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the situation in which our Free Churches were born.

Signor Mussolini openly declares that “the State governs over all, is above all, and if necessary is against all.” Herr

Hitler has applied his "machine-like oppression" (to use a phrase of Karl Barth to the Church. He has thrust upon them an Archbishop of his own choosing, who is solely responsible to him. He has decreed that the Church exists to serve the end of the State, and has called upon its officers to administer its affairs accordingly. We are reminded of a passage in Skeat's "History of the Free Churches" of our own land: "From the reign of the second Tudor to the reign of the last Stuart the great object of the Crown was to retain its supremacy over all the actions of the subject."

But by those who have a high conception of the Sovereignty of God in the realm of conscience, such a supremacy cannot be conceded. That was what the early Separatists saw. It was not liberty *qua* liberty with which they were concerned. They only wanted freedom in order that they might express their unswerving loyalty to the sovereign will of God. They were quite willing to render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. They were not willing to render to Cæsar the absolute obedience which they believed to be due to God alone. Our

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brethren who are fighting again the battle for the Sovereignty of God in the Church command our sympathy and our prayers.

But we, too, have our challenge to meet. In the realm of morals the gauntlet has been thrown down. The Church's attitude to many of the moral problems of our day can only be settled by a reference to the Sovereign will of God. We have to make up our minds whether we are going to be loyal to that Sovereign will, or whether we are content to compromise on what has been called a policy of interim ethics.

In his recent book "Why Be Good?" Dr. James Reid quotes Mr. Walter Lippman on the loss of religious authority in the old sense. "The idea of a God who is Sovereign-Ruler and Father-King has been eaten away by the acids of modernity. And with it has gone the necessity that once gave authority to the moral law as being the command of God, to whom obedience is our supreme duty and our infallible rule of life. . . . Now we can no longer accept the idea that behind the universe there is this Divine Ruler, who reveals His will in a set of commandments which must be accepted if we would find our true good in this world and our security in the next. The strongest incentive to morality is therefore gone, and the moral world itself is in chaos." That is to say, men no longer do things merely because God tells them to. They no longer think of God as a Sovereign-Ruler and Father-King whose very word is law. But then to the Christian Church God's word is law; only we have to insist that His commandments are not arbitrary. They are rooted deep in the moral constitution of the universe and the moral character of God. That is why disobedience to them and neglect of them has thrown the world into moral chaos. For us they admit of no compromise.

One illustration of what I mean must suffice. Take the question of war. In view of what we know about the conditions and implications of modern warfare, there is no shadow of a suspicion of a doubt that it is a question involving deep and vital moral issues. If the Church's attitude to war was based solely on loyalty to the Sovereign will of God, does anyone doubt for a moment what that attitude would be? The Church must shake off her moral flabbiness and supineness and get some iron into her blood. That will come as our thoughts of God are more worthy. "A mighty God makes irresistible men." It is the old challenge, "All this . . . if thou wilt fall down and worship me." All this, that is, if you will com-

promise your loyalty to God. And the Church must take her stand by her Lord's side, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," even though the reward of loyalty be a cross. But we remember that the cross is not the end. I am personally convinced that a more uncompromising loyalty to the Sovereign will of God by the Church would more speedily possible the triumph of that sovereign will in the world.

Finally, we must emphasise the Sovereign will of God in order to confirm our faith and save us from pessimism. Sovereignty implies not only majesty and authority. It implies power, and if there is one thing more than another that the Church needs it is to recover and reassert its belief in the invincible power of God. We come back to the definition of sovereignty with which we started. We need to recover our faith in a God who in infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite power and infinite patience is controlling the doings and destinies of men and working all things after the counsel of His will; a God who cannot be ultimately defeated.

Whether we think of the Church's feebleness within or the Church's foes without, it is on the Sovereign power of God that we must build our confidence.

That was the message of Ezekiel to his people when they were in a desperate situation. He tells us how the situation appeared to him, like some ancient battlefield on which the dead had lain for long unburied. There was no sign of life anywhere. It was not even a field of skeletons. Bird and beast had done their work and the floor of the valley was simply an indiscriminate litter of human bones; and when the appalling desolation had sunk into the prophet's soul the question was forced upon him, "Can these bones live?" That is the question that is troubling many of us as we think of the religious life of our land. There is plenty of organisation. The bones have come together, but there is no breath in them; and "a Church without life is an organised hypocrisy." There is lacking that something extra which is needed to make the Church vital and effective. Do we despair? Must we write "Ichabod" across the portals of the Church? Not if we believe in the Sovereign power of God. Ezekiel learnt that God was able to achieve the seemingly impossible. That is the lesson we need to learn, and we may learn it from history. Can these bones live? With a mixture of doubt and hope we cry "O Lord, thou knowest."

And in reply to our doubt and in response to our hope, the Spirit of the living God moves upon the face of the community. In that breath the bonds of death are loosed and the throbbing and heaving of new life begin.

Similarly with the foes that menace us from without. In the year that King Uzziah died it seemed to the prophet Isaiah that his world was tumbling to pieces. His hopes were dashed. His ideals were shattered. The end of all things seemed at hand for himself and his nation. But in the year that King Uzziah died he "SAW THE LORD, HIGH AND LIFTED UP," and the vision restored his sanity and his confidence. That vision we too must cherish. The throne is not empty. God is not dead. He still sits upon the circle of the earth, and amid all the chaos and confusion of our time the counsel of the Lord standeth sure. His Kingdom will come. His will will be done in earth as it is done in heaven, for His is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory for ever.

W. H. COMPTON, (Llandudno).

#### THE MINISTER'S BOOKSHELF.

WE must give first place in this issue to a new and very useful book by our President, Rev. Henry Cook, M.A. It is called *The Prophets of the Bible* and is published by the Student Christian Movement Press at 5s. The book is based on a series of Sunday evening addresses in which Mr. Cook has attempted to popularise "the modern interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets." Of course, he owes much to the monumental and pioneer work of Sir George Adam Smith, and has also received help from one of our own Old Testament authorities, Prof. T. H. Robinson. But the personality of Henry Cook is stamped on the volume from beginning to end, and we can even hear him speaking as we read what he has written. He writes for the "man-in-the-pew" and does so with marked success, for every truly wide-awake Christian will find the book of real interest. But he also shows the "man-in-the-pulpit" how to preach an effective series of sermons on the most enriching parts of the Old Testament; and those who wish to preach such a series will find the study of Mr. Cook's book most rewarding. We place it side by side with A. F. Kirkpatrick's older volume *The Doctrine of the Prophets* as a great time-saver for those who want to make use of the prophetic oracles in the pulpit.

Three other books have come to hand from the Student Christian Movement Press, and all three can be thoroughly recommended. The first is *Creative Society* by Prof. John McMurray (5s.). For some time past Prof. McMurray has been trying to clarify his ideas on the relationship between Christianity and Communism, and this book is the result. His difficulty, so he tells us, was in determining the real meaning of Christianity, and he has some provoking things to say about the vagueness of much Christian teaching and about the pseudo-Christianity that has so often passed for the genuine article. He argues that the main theoretical ideas of Marxian Communism can be exhibited as "structural ideas in the religion of Jesus"; and he confesses that his own interest in Communism arose through the discovery of these ideas "in the Gospel in the first instance, and the subsequent discovery that they reappeared in different but recognisable forms in the philosophy of Karl Marx." But this does not mean that Marxian Communism as such is genuine Christianity. "There is in the teaching of Jesus something which lies at its very heart that is missing from the theory of the Communists"; and that something is the *eternal reality* which gives eternal significance to human life. It is impossible to give an adequate appreciation of this excellent book in so short a notice, but inasmuch as we must all be concerned with the impact that Communistic theory is making upon men's thinking in these days, I can strongly recommend (without necessarily endorsing all that it contains) this excellent book. It should find its place side by side with Prof. H. G. Wood's *The Truth and Error of Communism* (S.C.M. Press, 4s. and 2s. 6d.), and that same writer's more recent volume, *Communism, Marxist and Christian* (see below).

The other two S.C.M. publications may be mentioned together. One is *The Undying Wisdom*, by Frank H. Ballard, M.A. (3s. 6d.). It consists in studies in the teaching of our Lord and is written in the conviction that true wisdom for human life, both individual and collective, is to be found only in Him, and that to depart from His way of life is bound to mean chaos and confusion. Mr. Ballard is very familiar with the Gospels, but it is no technical work that he gives us on the teaching of Jesus. Rather what he offers us is a suggestive treatment of certain aspects of the subject in the light of the spiritual needs of the modern world. The other book is by

McEwan Lawson and is called *Adventure and Discovery* (3s. 6d.). Mr. Lawson believes that the Christian life is an affair of adventure and discovery, and it is from this point of view that he deals with such topics as "Christ Jesus," "The Cross," "The Holy Spirit," "The Bible," "The Church," "Prayer," etc. His treatment of the various topics is slight (he has seventeen chapters for his 160 pages), but he has his own way of putting things which makes all he has written well worth reading.

I made passing reference above to Prof. H. G. Wood's book *The Truth and Error of Communism*, and intimated that the Prof. has just written another very useful book on this important subject. It is called *Communism, Christian and Marxist* and is published by the Epworth Press at 2s. 6d. and 1s. 6d. There are three chapters in the book and they represent what their author had to say under the auspices of the "Beckly Lectureship." Of Prof. Wood's ability to deal adequately with his theme there is no doubt. He has made a very careful study of Communism in its various aspects, and can properly assess both its strength and weakness. His critique of Marxist Communism and his presentation of the Christian alternative are most illuminating. He is no advocate of out-and-out Communism and is strongly opposed to the method of violence. In fact, while admitting the elements of truth in Communism, he is not afraid to castigate what he regards as its sins and iniquities.

Another but different kind of book just published by the Epworth Press is entitled *Jesus and the Moralists*, by Prof. E. W. Hirst, M.A., B.Sc., and the cost is 5s. It is issued under the auspices of the "Fernley-Hartley Trust" and is a comparative study of the Christian ethic. Prof. Hirst takes the teaching of our Lord on human character and conduct and then compares this teaching with that of some of the representatives of the various schools of "non-religious" ethics, from Plato and Aristotle down to T. H. Green. In his review of these schools or "types of ethical theory" there is, as of course cannot be otherwise expected, a good deal of familiar material, but there is also a good deal of freshness in the comparative treatment of these "secularistic" moral theories in relation to the teaching of Christ. There is also a useful treatment of the "New

Morality" as it appears in the writings of such moderns as Nietzsche, George Bernard Shaw, Walter Lippmann, and others. Those who wish to know how to meet the present-day attack on the Christian moral standards (and we should all want to do this) as well as to acquire the background of ethical theory necessary for this will find Prof. Hirst an excellent counsellor and guide.

A year or so ago the Rev. T. B. Howells wrote a remarkably good book on the age-long controversy between the sacerdotal and anti-sacerdotal conceptions of the Gospel, the Church and the Ministry, under the title of *Roman and Anglican Claims*. He has now followed his earlier work a more imposing supplementary volume called *The Chair of St. Peter*, dealing with "the Rise and Fall of Papal Power" (Independent Press, 8s. 6d.). It is a first-class historical study within the manageable compass desiderated by the busy minister and the ordinary Christian reader. Mr. Howells is "convinced that modern Protestantism needs a re-study of the Catholic system, its claims and its history. To ignore them is to court a danger to its own principles." He readily acknowledges the notable contribution to this re-study made by Dr. C. J. Cadoux in his *Catholicism and Christianity*, but noting that Dr. Cadoux's book does not deal specifically with the history of the papacy, Mr. Howells seeks to fill up this gap. He writes as an unashamed and unrepentent Free Church Protestant, and has given us thirty-eight chapters of excellent material served up in an attractive and useful manner. We need more than ever to train our people in Protestant principles, and this book of Mr. Howells will help us in our own thinking on the "Roman Question" and in the presentation of the case for Protestantism to our people.

Another book that will help us along these lines is Dr. Karl Heim's truly great book *Spirit and Truth* (The Lutterworth Press, 6s.). This is the latest addition to the now famous "Lutterworth Library," which began with the publication of Otto Borchert's book *The Original Jesus* and is worthy to a place alongside of that and other notable Continental productions, such as Brunner's *The Mediator*. The publication of Dr. Heim's book in English (in its original language it has been before the German public for about eight years and has gone

through many editions) is most timely, since it deals with the fundamental question of the nature and meaning of Evangelical Christianity. In two years' time we shall be celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Reformation, but in order to enter fully into the spirit of that celebration we need to prepare ourselves and our people by thinking over afresh the true foundations of our Evangelical faith. It is just here that Karl Heim will help us by his critical and understanding review of "the recurrent collisions of Protestantism with the increasing power of Catholicism," and by his sympathetic treatment and gathering together of "all that emerges more and more clearly in recent years as convictions held in common by Protestants everywhere." He is a doughty defender of the evangelical interpretation of the Gospel, a clear-sighted and keen-minded exponent of the fundamentals of our Protestant heritage. There is no cheap polemic in his writings; he is not a "special pleader" in the bad sense of the phrase. But he is not afraid to face the question of Protestantism *versus* Catholicism, and in everyone of his ten weighty chapters he takes us to the very roots of the matter. He unites breadth of culture with depth of religious experience and has given us a truly great work. No wonder—as Prof. Hugh Watt points out in his introduction—Karl Heim has been hailed by many on the Continent as a true prophet of the Lord. He is worthy to be placed side by side with another Karl—Karl Barth.

JOHN PITTS.

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