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MINISTERS AND WORSHIP-SONG.

BEETHOVEN described music as "the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life," stating that its effect on man should be "to strike fire from his soul"; ideals that will be best realised by men of devout mind. Thomas Carlyle declared, "All deep things are song. See deep enough, and you see musically, the heart of Nature being everywhere music if you can only reach it." The truth of this utterance is made clear when we reach to the deep things and into the heart of Nature; for there we find God, who is not the author of confusion but of peace." True peace is more than stillness. It is harmony with the Divine will; such harmony being the only perfect music.

At each stage of God's self-revelation, He has made music His chosen minister. At the Creation, when He "*laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.*" At the coming of the Saviour, "*a multitude of the heavenly host*" hymned the praise of God in the angelic Gloria. At the consummation of the Divine purpose of salvation, the Seer of Patmos beheld the redeemed host of heaven, and "*heard the voice of harpers harping their harps*" singing "*a new song before the throne.*"

Thus we learn that music fulfils its highest function when it becomes the handmaid of religion, and when song aids worship. Elisha, desiring to interpret aright the will of the Eternal,

exclaimed, "Bring me a minstrel!" From his time until now, the wise among God's prophets have recognised the power of music in their ministry.

Each great revival of religion has been borne in upon the wings of song. Preaching, apart from the people's worship, would be robbed of much of its power. Luther's hymns wedded to noble chorales made the truths of the Reformation to live in the hearts of the German folk. John Wesley and his Evangelists would never have brought about the Methodist Revival without the aid of Charles Wesley's hymns sung to melodies such as those contained in the Foundery Tune Book. The great examples of pulpit oratory are found in volumes known only to the few. But, hymn-books are in the hands of men and women of all stations in life, belonging also to different races; and in hymns like "Our God, our help," "Rock of Ages," "Jesu, Lover," "All hail the power" and "Abide with me" they find the expression of their common needs and aspirations.

No minister, therefore, can afford to neglect a means of grace that may so effectively help his congregation to draw nigh unto God in supplication and confession, adoration and praise. Indeed, if he would be thoroughly equipped for his task, it is his sacred duty to give serious attention to the hymns sung by his people. The ministerial brother who said, "I give as much prayerful care to selecting the hymns as to preparing my sermons" showed true wisdom that might be copied by all ministers. He fully appreciated the truth that George Herbert (himself a preacher) embodied in his familiar couplet from "The Temple":—

A verse may find him who a sermon flies,
And turn delight into a sacrifice.

The recital of these general principles should lead to practical results. If the people's part in Public Worship is to be real, it must be intelligent. "*I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also,*" wrote Paul. We do not always recognise the fact that our worship-song will only be a spiritual force when it is rendered "*with the understanding.*" Thoughtless singing of words simply as words is a mockery. It is here—in saving the congregation from such meaningless pretence and awakening the singers to a realisation

of the truths underlying the words—that a minister may give valuable assistance to his people, and, at the same time, give pleasure and profit to himself. Is not this a duty that, too frequently, is “more honoured in the breach than in the observance?” In place of a perfunctory announcement of the hymn number, would it not be worth while for the preacher to draw attention to the truths about to be sung, and to point out the necessary difference between rendering a joyful hymn of praise and one of peaceful trust or confession of sin? Is it becoming for a leader to sit down during the singing of a hymn and con over his sermon notes “*as the manner of some is,*” thus holding himself aloof from common worship? Does not such a lack of reverence in the pulpit react upon the hearers, and induce a similar lack in the pew? (In cases of ill-health or extreme old age, such a plan may be excusable, but I have normal men in mind.) Should not a minister count it as much a part of his business rightly to conduct the worship as to preach a sermon? and will he not find that joining in song-worship proves the best preparation of heart and mind for preaching? If questions like these are pondered over, then some ways will suggest themselves in which a pastor may enable his congregation to worship God worthily.

Further aid might be given if in his week-evening addresses, and occasionally in his pulpit utterances on Sunday, he would take some of the great hymns of the Church as his subjects. As limited space forbids my going into details, I may be pardoned for referring to the information about hymns and tunes found in the “Handbook to the Baptist Church Hymnal Revised” (Psalms and Hymns Trust, 2s. 6d.). Rev. F. C. Spurr, reviewing the book in “The Baptist Times,” said: “This book should be on every minister’s desk, and in the hands of every choirmaster.” It deals with the Church’s growth in devotion, biographical notes on authors and composers, hymn-writers of the centuries, and gives a minister’s index of Bible characters, etc. The testimony of a ministerial brother is suggestive. “The first chapter has supplied me with material for week-night services that will carry me over several months. The biography, naming some of the best books on hymns and their writers, is invaluable.”

“Musical parsons,” as well as organists and choirmasters, will be interested in proposed tune topics and in particulars of

composers. Still fuller material will be found in Dr. W. T. Whitley's excellent volume on "Congregational Hymn Singing in England" (Dent and Son, 5s.), with Dr. Eric Thiman's closing chapter on recent thought and tendency in congregational singing. The titles of these works are named, not by way of advertisement, but because of my assured belief that they will help brethren wishing to make song-worship in their churches to be offered "in spirit and in truth."

CAREY BONNER,
(London).

THE RELIGION OF KEIR HARDIE.

I.

WHEN speaking at the Browning Hall, London, about a year before his death, Keir Hardie said that if he had his life to live over again he would be a preacher of the Gospel. His actual words were: "If I were a thirty years younger man, I would methinks abandon house and home, and wife and child if need be, to go forth amongst the people to proclaim afresh and anew the full message of the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth. Brothers, preach anew the Kingdom of God upon earth, not something visionary away yonder in the clouds beyond the dawn, but something living here and now. Could we but inspire a sufficient number of men and women literally to give up the world that they might follow Christ, the world could yet be saved." The newspapers gave considerable prominence to that statement, but I doubt whether many understood its real implications. The journalists viewed it from a political standpoint, and thought it was Hardie's repudiation of his political activities; but to those who knew Hardie well, and who had known especially his profoundly religious spirit, the statement simply proved his increasing recognition and appreciation of the Gospel as the world's greatest hope of salvation in all the spheres of its life.

Perhaps many do not know that Hardie began his public career as a preacher of the Gospel; and in saying so, I do not mean that he was a trained and ordained minister. When Hardie was a young man he joined a Scottish Evangelical Union church in his Lanarkshire home, and as a member of that church he spoke frequently at its open air meetings and took a prominent part in its indoor services. It was his religious activities, and the ardent support which he gave to the cause of the Good Templars, that attracted the attention of his fellow-miners, who elected him to be their chairman and their representative at conferences with the colliery managers. It is obvious, therefore, that religion was not something which Hardie talked about, "as a disappointed man," towards the end of his life, but that it was the fundamental and formative power in his life from his earliest years. When I was in my first pastorate at the Tabernacle, Merthyr Tydfil, Hardie spent hours in my study, and I came to know him, not only as a world-famous politician and Labour leader, but also as one of the most deeply religious men I have ever met.

Hardie's political opponents said many untruthful things about him, but the vilest falsehood they ever uttered was to call him an atheist. In those pioneering days the Labour Movement had no influential Press to deny these falsehoods, and the result was that they were accepted as truths by the uncritical adherents of other parties.

II.

During our fire-side chats Hardie told me that his Socialism was mainly based on the teaching of the Hebrew prophets and the New Testament, and that the writers who had influenced him most were Robert Burns, Carlyle and Ruskin. In his speeches he would quote frequently from the Hebrew prophets, and make effective use of passages from the New Testament, especially from the Sermon on the Mount. Hardie believed that a true Christian conversion was a revolutionary experience which detached a man from selfishness and attached him wholeheartedly to the ideals of life depicted in the Sermon on the Mount. He held a far more serious view of conversion than some slick revivalists with their emotional extravagances. Hardie himself was converted to a life of service and of sacrifice, and he believed that no other kind of "conversion" was real in a world that needed both so much, and in a religion whose central

fact and glory was a Cross. The real offence in Hardie was not that he was an atheist but that he was too Christian for his feebly Christian critics. He shocked people by taking his Christianity seriously. He felt he could do no other, for he had been converted to that positive life and to nothing less. Consequently, Hardie's Socialism was the political expression of his religious faith.

III.

Whether Christianity can be expressed in any or in every political system is a question I need not discuss here. I can also leave untouched the question whether the Kingdom of God means an earthly Utopia or something totally different. The point I want to stress here is that Hardie was first a Christian, and that, rightly or wrongly, he believed that Socialism, as he interpreted it, was the finest political expression of the Christian Gospel. I say "as he interpreted it" because there are many interpretations of Socialism. Hardie knew the Socialistic teaching of Karl Marx and of William Morris, but he did not accept their "revolutionary" doctrines. He was an "evolutionary" Socialist, for he believed in obtaining necessary reforms by constitutional methods—by ballot and not by bullets. There was little need for Hardie to read about poverty (the fundamental problem of Socialism) because he had experienced it in its most cruel forms. Nevertheless, he read carefully the political and economic history of our country, and especially the period from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to his own days. The story of the prolonged struggles of the working classes for their political rights and for a human standard of life was well known to him. He knew also that the wealth of England in the 19th century and the hideous edifice of Victorian industrial society had been built on the immense suffering and labour of the people. Moreover, he kept in close touch with the workers throughout his life, staying in their humble homes when on propaganda work in all parts of Britain, and meeting them in countless conferences. Not a man in Great Britain knew the sorrows and sufferings of the poor better than Hardie, and not a man was more determined to improve their social conditions. If that is not an essential part of the Christian religion it is difficult to know what is. Hardie had nothing but scorn for men who were too delicately spiritual and too comfortably pious to concern themselves with

the social evils which damaged the bodies and defiled the souls of thousands of their fellow-men. His kindred spirits in the religious world were men like Lord Shaftesbury, Frederick Maurice, Charles Kingsley and John Clifford. There was no disastrous dualism between body and soul, the secular and the sacred, the material and the spiritual in the outlook of these men. They all realised that "the life abundant," promised by our Lord, was not the thin spirituality of a ghost, but the full-orbed life of a human being in every aspect of his nature.

IV.

Hardie never taught that an abundance of material satisfactions would satisfy the deepest needs of the human soul. He knew that the soul had needs which higher wages, more comfortable homes, and greater leisure could not satisfy. But that fact, plainly acknowledged, does not mean surely that men, women and children should be compelled by unfair industrial conditions to live in poverty and squalor. We would not think highly a man's intelligence if he thought that science, philosophy and art should be neglected because neither of them nor all together can satisfy the deepest needs of the soul. Hardie knew that man does not live on bread alone; and he knew equally well that man, even the most spiritual of men, cannot live without bread in his present embodied condition. I was not surprised to hear Hardie say at times an angry word about rich religious people (with all the material comforts of life at their command, who condemned any departure from what they called "the spiritual gospel," and who censured any minister who applied the ethics of the Gospel to the concrete problems of life. I will change two words in Chesterton's rousing hymn:—

"From lies of tongue and pen,
From all the easy sermons
That comfort selfish men—
Deliver us, good Lord!"

I am glad to think that since Hardie's days, and largely owing to his exertions, there is a new and nobler social outlook in all political parties, in the Christian Church, and in the community generally.

V.

I will close this article with a few words about a memorable evening Hardie spent in my study in September, 1911. During that evening he told me about the sufferings of his early years and his later political conflicts; but what impressed me most was his frank expression of his religious faith. He spoke to me as a saintly old minister would speak to a young man fresh from college. He told me that he believed in God and that without that sustaining faith he would have been crushed long ago by his foes; that prayer was a real communion between the human soul and the eternal Spirit; that our Lord died for His divine ideals of truth and love, and that every thought of Christ was to him a fount of inspiration to continue his labours for International Peace, Social Justice, Better Homes for the workers, a higher Cultural Life for the people, and every other good cause that promoted the welfare and happiness of mankind.

He took care to indicate that his view of the atonement was not the doctrine of penal substitution. He believed that our Lord "satisfied" the Father by giving a full expression of His love for man. It was not a case of a judge being satisfied with an innocent victim, but of a Father being satisfied with a Son who, in His life and death, fully manifested His love for a sinful world. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." If that view is called a "moral influence" theory Hardie believed it ought to be preached all the more because the world is rapidly going to ruin from a lack of this Divine moral influence. When we came to discuss the Church he told me that he heartily believed in every church that was firmly loyal to its Lord and Master, but he thought many churches needed to be converted to a real Christianity. Far too much attention, he thought was given to the externals of religion, to ecclesiastical policies, ceremonies, and the other marginal things which have divided Christians into hostile groups. The weightier matters were forgotten, and the great world outside the Church was allowed to drift away from God. Lastly, he told me that we ministers had a wonderful opportunity of serving our generation in the name of Christ. That Name is the most honoured in the world to-day. It is the one untarnished name in human history. His Gospel is the priceless treasure of the human race. "If you preach it," said Hardie, "with humility, love and courage, and are willing to risk the

loss of everything but His approval, you will serve your generation in the finest way that is possible." Hardie had no sympathy with "preaching party politics" in the pulpit, whether that were done by an Anglican Tory or a Nonconformist Liberal or Labourite. But he did believe that ministers should proclaim fearlessly the teachings of the Hebrew prophets, and the still nobler teachings of Jesus Christ. If we are silent who will be God's "speaking men"? When Hardie died on September 26th, 1915, in the 59th year of his life, one of the bravest, kindest, and most unselfish of men passed away from this earthly scene.

"Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?"

Hardie would answer Tennyson's question with a triumphant "YES, the very peace of God."

W. ROWLAND JONES,
(Cardiff).

AN "OXFORD MOVEMENT" AMONGST BAPTISTS.

IN his volume "The Life and Faith of the Baptists," Dr. Wheeler Robinson, at the risk of much misunderstanding, expressed the view "that Baptists need an 'Oxford Movement' of their own order." What he had in mind was the need for a stronger and nobler Church consciousness as a complement to our historic emphasis on God's dealings with the individual. The Oxford Movement was of course concerned not only with the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ, but also with the reform of public worship. While we Free Churchmen cannot regard as a real advance some of the fruits of the Oxford Movement so far as worship is concerned, we cannot but be grateful for the new emphasis on reverence for which it has been responsible.

It would be an excellent thing for the churches of our faith and order if there were amongst us a deeper concern for what is fitting and conducive to reverence in the conduct of worship and in our church life. A few illustrations may be given.

Who has not been present at a service as a worshipper in which he has been brought into a deep awareness of God's presence, only to be rudely jostled out of it by an unnecessarily long list of announcements of all kinds, including such entirely superfluous news as that "the choir will meet for practice on Friday evening at the usual hour," and sometimes an unhappy reference to a "knife and fork supper," to which those who intend to be present are asked to bring certain household implements that they may be suitably equipped? If facetiousness is added the situation is worsened, and an occasion is recalled on which an official made an appeal at a service for a large collection on the grounds that the famous visiting preacher was more handsome than a certain film star, whom to see on the screen cost a shilling! It was a humiliating moment, and the present writer's fervent hope was that no Anglicans were present. Though in some churches there might at first be criticism, I believe that if we as ministers appealed on the grounds of greater worshipfulness for a drastic cutting down of pulpit notices, and arranged for boards giving particulars of the church's regular engagements to be placed in the vestibule, we should carry the bulk of our people with us. They know how difficult it is in these bustling days to "be still and know that I am God," and they need the help of a service that is as worshipful as possible.

We owe a great debt to our church choirs, for the fine part they play in leading the sung praises of God. It is still, however, a custom in some of our churches for the choirmaster, when the time for the anthem has come, to conduct the singing with numerous gestures, and even to advance to a prominent position to do so—a procedure which ruins for many the thought of the anthem as an act of worship which heightens their sense of the greatness and glory of God. It emphasises rather in an unfortunate way the identity of the choir in its separation from the congregation, and its prominence in the service. The remedy for such a crudity is in a steady teaching of the conception of the whole service as first of all an act of praise and worship offered to God, an act in which it is the aim of the minister and the choir alike to point the congregation away from themselves to the glory of God.

It would be a good thing if that same regard for the fitness of things in church life could be brought to bear upon the

notices exhibited outside our buildings. A neat announcement of a concert is one thing, but a huge advertisement of a "Pie Supper" as the principal feature in the life of a particular church in the next fortnight must give some passers-by a queer impression of what the Church stands for; and the present writer has even seen a "Bun and egg tea" announced for Good Friday outside a Free Church.

Some lay people might well say in reply to criticisms along these lines, "You ministers are just as bad with your sensational sermon topics." It is a matter for gratitude that this particular ministerial fashion, inspired no doubt by a desire to get hold of "the man in the street," seems to be on the decline. That large congregations have been gathered by this means is beyond dispute, yet one cannot but feel that it is wrong, and unworthy of our high calling, and that in the end it must be disastrous, appealing as it does to the superficial and less desirable elements in human nature.

A word may perhaps be said in conclusion with regard to that curious phenomenon known as "The minister's anniversary." It is natural and fitting enough that when a minister has been happily at work in a church for a good many years his people should want to find some occasion in which to rejoice with him before God. But it is difficult to see why the minister should have a first, second and third anniversary more than anyone else who is serving the church. Moreover, when one reflects on the way in which the occasion is sometimes celebrated, marked as it is by speeches in which flattery and an absence of seriousness are prominent, one feels ashamed of the whole business, and is relieved to find that these celebrations seem to be entirely confined to churches of the Congregational order. If either a minister or a church feels that the occasion ought to be given prominence, can it not be made an opportunity primarily and obviously for thanksgiving to God and re-dedication to His service?

Those who take a different view of the ministry from our own would perhaps argue that such features as showy sermon titles and ministers' anniversaries of the worst type are inevitable in churches in which the pulpit is made central. But is it rather that we have not meditated deeply enough on our

preaching office as sacramental, and on ourselves as "ambassadors for Christ"? What an excellent example John the Baptist has given us in this respect. It would be good for us to have inscribed on our hearts and minds his words, "He must increase, but I must decrease." The more brightly the desire to glorify our Master burns within us the more will our ministry and the whole impact of our churches be a powerful and self-effacing witness to Him whom we are called to show forth as the Saviour of the world.

JOHN O. BARRETT,
(Newcastle-on-Tyne).

PROBLEMS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

THE object of this article is to set down the most common problems associated with the spiritual life which have arisen in my own experience and in the lives of those who have consulted me on spiritual matters.

At every stage of his spiritual pilgrimage a Christian will find himself confronted with problems which threaten his spiritual life. He leaves behind old and cruder problems only to find new and subtler ones bestriding his path. It would seem that the devil (if there be such a person) grows more subtle as a Christian grows in grace! And from a study of the lives of the saints, the worst is yet to be!—albeit there is always a way out, and one is never left alone in the conflict.

(1) PRAYER—(a) THE FUTILITY AND UNREALITY OF PRAYER.

Easily the most common problem, so I have found, is centred in the subject of prayer, and not only for the most immature Christian. "Does God answer prayer?" "Is it any good praying?" These are representative questions which enter the minds of the most saintly when they have asked a boon which seems most necessary to them or others, and have sought it with an unselfishness which in some men and women is remarkable.

The only answer to the question "Does God answer prayer?" is that He does—always. His silence is an answer no less than His refusal—as when He says "No" to us in a way that cannot be misunderstood—or when He equally clearly grants the boon. God must be given time to answer some of our prayers, and His delays may mean that we are not ready to receive the favour: we need more discipline, or more personal effort is required of us. On the other hand it may not be possible for God to grant us the boon immediately: the time is not opportune.

Here faith is called into play. We must believe in the love, the wisdom, and the power of God, and that He knows what is best for us. And, of course, as we grow in knowledge and experience and review our prayers we find that either those prayers, the answers to which were delayed, were either selfish or offered in ignorance, and we are able to thank God that He treated us as He did.

But even so, there are times when prayer does appear to be futile.

The seeming unreality of prayer is another problem. "Is there a God?" "Does He listen?" These are actual questions.

For most of us there are times when, in our private and public prayer-life, there comes "the sense of a Presence strong and at the same time soothing," which we believe to be God Himself, with us. And yet, at other times, to pray—as it has been put to me more than once—is like praying into space which seems empty.

There is always the danger, of course, that we test the reality of our prayer-life by the emotional tone which at times accompanies it. But more of that later. And yet, the coldness and the vacuity manifest at times do strike at the reality of prayer.

(2) THE INEVITABLE FLUCTUATIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Our minds are so constructed that there are times when the candle of our spiritual life burns brightly, others when it scarcely flickers. It is questionable whether our minds could stand the strain of a "continuous mountain-top experience."

There must be relaxation, and the mind provides for it if the normal ways of relaxation, such as sleep and recreation, are not taken advantage of, or are rendered impossible.

Then there are the periods of reaction which follow hectic experiences. And in the same way our spiritual life is affected by our physical and psychical conditions. Girls and women in particular, at certain periods, experience this. And I myself, if I have a cold, or on a Monday, find my spiritual life at a low ebb.

But until one learns these facts the inevitable fluctuations of the spiritual life do present a problem.

(3) NO DEEP EXPERIENCE OF CONVERSION.

This was my problem once. I heard others testify to an extraordinary change in their lives. I had no experience of any, brought up as I was in a home where the Christian moral standards were acknowledged, at least, and through contact with the Sunday School from my earliest years. I realised later, of course, that there are other sins than those of the flesh, and as my knowledge of the spiritual developed I did find a deep experience of conversion.

I have met this problem often but invariably in young people. (Is it a problem confined to adolescent years?) And I have noticed that they have tried to create a feeling of repentance, so as to have, either for their own satisfaction, or for witnessing to others, an emotional experience. And if they succeeded quite naturally it did not last, and when it passed the reaction found them miserable, and led them to make such statements as "I am not religious," or "I find nothing in religion." This problem perplexes the more emotional type of person—or does it?

(4) THE COMMON ERROR OF TRUSTING TO FEELING INSTEAD OF TO FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE.

I suppose every Christian can look back to an experience (or experiences) carrying a rich emotional tone with it: the moment of surrender to Christ; at the first Communion Service; during Baptism—to name only a few, and so long as that experience continued old habits were forgotten, old temptations

lay dormant, or if they reappeared they manifested themselves so feebly as to present no conflict. There was a delightful sense of being "in touch with the Infinite," to borrow Trine's expressive phrase, and at peace with every thing and every body.

Then reaction set in. Our exaggerated feelings resumed normal, old habits began to reassert themselves, old temptations to reappear. We resorted to prayer, but there was no "feeling" in it, and it seemed so vague. We were assailed by doubts: Was my previous experience purely subjective? Have I been a victim of my over-heated imagination? We prayed again and again, but it seemed so dull and meaningless. Our besetting sin came back, we fought it, perhaps yielded—just once—then disillusionment set in!

Young people have come and described this bewildering experience to me. Who of us has not gone down that slope? And until we learn that prayer is not always accompanied by strong feeling, that God is near us when we cannot feel Him, that long-standing habits have a tendency to return, that mental associations once formed tend to cluster round the same stimuli when we meet them, and that always we must be on the alert and put up a stiff fight—well, these things do constitute a problem for us.

(5) A SENSE OF FRUSTRATION.

This, too, constitutes a problem. Again and again we cannot find jobs for the newly converted. They want to do something, be something. And unless you can harness them to a task at once they feel a sense of frustration, and if not watched tend to slip back to where they were before their experience, if not to give up altogether.

(6) THE NEED FOR SELF-DISCIPLINE.

Examining the fluctuations of my own spiritual experience, I find that I dare not allow myself certain pleasures and certain amusements if my spiritual life is to be kept at a high level. If I do I soon notice that thoughts are suggested, emotions stimulated which creep into my prayer-life and upset my concentration. I have therefore to watch carefully the pleasures and amusements that I allow myself, and submit myself to rigid discipline in regard to them.

The problem in this connection, as I have discovered it in many of those who have honoured me with their confidence, is to see the need for self-discipline. Drawn to certain pleasures, liking certain amusements, and attracted by certain friends, the questions asked again and again are, "Why must I give up the things and friends I like, to follow Christ more closely?" Or, "Some people in my church do many of the things I do, why can't I?" The answer is, of course, that their uneasiness in the matter, or the fact that they are driven to ask the questions, reveals that they cannot permit themselves the things about which they are uneasy and follow Christ at the same time. Hence the need for self-discipline. One's task is to guide them to see this, or, as more frequently is the case, to admit it.

There are other problems, but considerations of space preclude their being dealt with here.

ROBINSON BRUNSKILL,
(Norwich).

ACHIEVING EFFICIENCY IN

SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK

The Sunday School is the most promising part of the Church Organisation, and Ministers as well as Teachers and Officers should do everything possible to make their work for the children effective.

One of the best ways of doing this is to read "The New Chronicle of Christian Education," the only weekly journal devoted to Sunday School work. It is indispensable to the progressive worker. Send a list of the names and addresses of your staff to the Editor at 57 & 59, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4, and free specimen copies will be sent to each of them.

THE NEW CHRONICLE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Edited by SYDNEY C. LUCKER

JOHN MOTT AND JOHN FOSTER.

THERE is a strange but impressive apostolical succession by way of books. "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life," said Milton. Across the generations, through the medium of the written word, one man speaks to another, and the word comes with life and power. The names of master and disciple stand often in seemingly strange juxtaposition. Wesley listened to the reading of a commentary three hundred years old on a letter first written eighteen hundred years earlier—Luther's Commentary on Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians*—and the truth and wonder of personal salvation in Christ was revealed to him. H. G. Wells—speaking for a great company—has recently told of the effect of a first introduction to Plato's *Republic*—"very releasing book indeed for my mind." John Clifford had near him throughout his life a scored copy of Emerson's *Essays* which he found a continuous source of inspiration. And now it is revealed that one of the decisive influences on the development of Dr. John R. Mott has been John Foster's essay *On Decision of Character*.

John Mott and John Foster: a Christian statesman of international range and an almost forgotten Baptist minister. Many years ago now there was preached in a chapel in London a series of sermons on "Famous Johns of History." Neither of these names came in the impressive list of subjects. A generation on perhaps Mott will have made good a claim to such distinction. Foster is never likely to be singled out in this fashion. Nothing at first sight could be stranger than the bringing together of these two names. On reflection, however, it seems not so surprising. Indeed, it is fitting and reassuring that the man who appeared to be a ministerial failure should, many years later, in another continent, point the way to one destined to be among the most remarkable of the men of action of his generation.

Again and again we need reminding that the world is often far astray in its verdicts. When the tumult and the shouting dies, many who were thought to be last are seen to be first. He whose ways are not our ways "hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty."

John Foster was born in a small Yorkshire farmhouse in 1770. He was a lonely, self-conscious youth with an over-developed imagination. After a course at Bristol College he

could find no church to invite him to be its minister. For three months he preached to a little company in a private room in Newcastle; for twelve months he ministered to a dwindling group in Dublin; for two years he was in Chichester, for four years at Downend, for two years at Frome. Five places in little more than ten years; then resignation owing to ill-health! He turned to seek his livelihood as a writer and magazine contributor, and was only saved from its trials and uncertainties by a marriage that gave him material security as well as companionship and literary inspiration. Defective in voice, ungainly in manner, elaborate, involved, allusive in his pulpit style—an impossible ineffective person, you may say, yet, through his writings, in his own day and subsequently, he exercised as wide and enduring an influence as any of the better known public figures among his denominational contemporaries. Ryland, Rippon, Ivimey, even the great Robert Hall, did not do more for the cause of Christ than John Foster the essayist.

Two years ago I found a copy of the *Essays* among the books of an old Northamptonshire yeoman farmer, who had lived to be a centenarian—a fine, sturdy, distinguished character, whose life overlapped John Foster's. On the flyleaf these words are pencilled: "The best essays ever written, as witness my hand, John Radburne." The four essays in the volume have been reprinted many times. They are quaintly entitled—"On a man's writing memoirs of himself," "On decision of character," "On the application of the epithet romantic" and "On some of the causes by which evangelical religion has been rendered less acceptable to persons of cultivated taste." They are supposed to have grown out of talks and correspondence with the lady who became his wife—a lady who bore the unromantic name of Snook.

All Foster's essays contain shrewd penetrating counsel. It is the one on decision of character that cast a spell over John R. Mott. In Basil Mathews's recently published *Life* we are told that, the Bible apart, this has been the most influential book on Mott's habit of mind. When he was a student at Cornell University nearly fifty years ago he first heard of it. It had then been written more than eighty years, and he had difficulty in discovering a copy in the library. When at length he was successful in his search he sat down in an alcove and at once devoured his find. It showed him new possibilities of self-discipline and increased effectiveness. It has helped him,

he says, to save time, to conserve nervous energy, to increase his working efficiency and thus to use his powers to greater good.

Mott is one of the exceptional men of our time—big in body, in mind and in achievement. He planned and created the World Student Christian Federation. In his evangelistic tours in different parts of the world he has influenced leaders of many different races and nationalities. As chairman both of the Edinburgh and Jerusalem Missionary Conferences he has been largely instrumental in the shaping of modern missionary policy. For forty years he has been travelling about the earth, gaining a unique knowledge of conditions, and himself playing a decisive part in affairs. His has been a life of deliberately planned purposefulness, with Foster's essay as one of its main sources of inspiration.

The words of the essayist still have life in them. They are a masterly analysis of true effectiveness. The man who is to achieve anything, it is urged, must have confidence in his own judgment, and a confidence that is not misplaced. Decision must be followed by action, judgments being translated into deeds. There must be a courage that refuses to be daunted. These things, however, must not be at the expense of tenderness. John Foster was not describing himself as he actually was (though his firm championship of Carey, Marshman and Ward in the sad Serampore controversy showed him to possess many of the traits to which he refers). Rather he was portraying what he sought, by the grace of God, to become. His picture of the decisive man might be taken as an amplification of the words in 2 *Timothy* about the man of God "furnished completely unto every good work"—"the adequate man of God," as one of the modern versions has it.

In the narrowest sense of the word there is not much about religion in the essay. There is certainly nothing that can be called pious. There is but one direct allusion to Christ. It is most skilfully introduced, and it shows at once how John Foster regarded Him—how he set Him far apart from ordinary mortals, and yet was sure of His importance for true decision of character. He indeed is the One who gives clearness of judgment to the confused, strength to the weak-willed, tenderness to the strong. He it is who can use a John Foster to help shape a John Mott. Wherein is comfort and challenge.

ERNEST A. PAYNE,

(London).

THE MINISTER'S BOOKSHELF.

I WANT to give first place to a very important book which should be read by every intelligent man and woman—and certainly by every minister—throughout the English speaking world. It is called *The Yellow Spot* (Gollancz, 8s. 6d. and 5s.), and deals with the Nazi attempt in Germany to exterminate the Jews. The book is issued anonymously, with an introduction by the Bishop of Durham, but of the substantial truth of its amazing revelations there can be no doubt. I read the book while in hospital, though it is by no means a cheering or cheerful volume. But the house-surgeon was a young German Jewess who has herself been driven out of her own country, and knowing her story I felt compelled to study this "collection of facts and documents relating to three years' persecution of the German Jews, derived chiefly from National Socialist sources, very carefully assembled by a group of investigators." It is a devastating story and moves the reader to deep sorrow and burning indignation. It shows that the days of politico-religious persecution are by no means over, and points for us the moral that "the price of liberty is an eternal vigilance." This is not strictly speaking a review of the book; it is an attempt to call the attention of our members to it. It seems as if the battle for religious and political toleration will have to be fought over again. Every one of us should preach on this book and get our church members to read it.

It would be superfluous to praise Mr. Carey Bonner's contribution to the musical side of our religious life. For many years he has thrown the weight of his influence on the side of a richer and higher type of worship-song in our church services. His latest publication will further increase our indebtedness to his genius. It is called *Songs of the Saviour* (Pickering and Irglis, 2s. 6d. and 2s.) and consists of eighteen sacred solos suitable for evangelistic and devotional services. The words are by various authors, but the music for each piece has been specially composed by Carey Bonner. There is one common theme throughout—the Character and Person of our Lord, with chief emphasis upon His saving grace and power. In fact, the volume gets down to the fundamental things in Christian life and thought—a very pleasant change from some of the weak and "pretty" things we so often hear. Mr. F. C. Spurr writes

that "the songs are really melodious and the accompaniments worthy," while the *Baptist Times* says of the music that "it has the elements of dignity and reverence, and yet is appealing to the popular taste"—and I most emphatically agree with both opinions.

The Psalms and Hymns Trust has also published at the modest price of sixpence *For Hymn Festivals*. It consists of twenty hymns and tunes, and three anthems, all taken from the *Revised Baptist Church Hymnal*, and will be most useful for musical festivals. We are glad to see in it such tunes as the "Londonderry Air" (in Mr. Carey Bonner's setting), "Sine Nomine," "Caersalem," "Hyfrydol," "Penlan" and "Lancashire." It is a marvellous sixpennyworth, and should prove very popular with both individuals and choirs.

Presbyterians are rejoicing that Prof. H. H. Farmer, M.A., has been induced to return from America to his own country. Seven years ago Prof. Farmer came into prominence by his book *The Experience of God*; his reputation will be considerably enhanced by his recent volume *The World and God* (Nisbet, 10s. 6d.), the latest addition to the noteworthy "Library of Constructive Theology." As in his former book Prof. Farmer is concerned with man's experience of God, God being conceived in terms of personality; and this experience is regarded as the very heart of the religious life and as reaching its highest point in the believer's relationship to God in and through Jesus Christ. The book falls into two parts. In the first part, consisting of ten chapters, the author is concerned with general principles and categories, and he examines the experience of God as personal in relation to such questions as Revelation, Providence, Miracle and Prayer. The second part of the book, consisting of six chapters, deals with the specifically Christian experience of reconciliation to God through Christ, especially as manifested in faith in the over-ruling providence of God and in the life of prayer. Prof. Farmer is a careful and yet a courageous writer; and he is both a theologian and a philosopher. His latest book seeks to give us a Christian view of the world and God, but his line of approach and method of exposition are very different from that older, yet still weighty, work by James Orr, viz. *The Christian View of God and the World*. It is a book for the serious thinker and not for the man who foolishly

boasts that he gave up reading theology when he left college. It is well worthy of the very fine series to which it is the latest addition.

Another book published by Nisbet's that is meant for the student of religious philosophy is *The Purpose of God*, by Dr. W. R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's (price 7s. 6d.). Dr. Matthews remarked some years ago that "there are no modern philosophers, there are only modern philosophies," but he himself is the contradiction of his own pronouncement. For one thing is certain about Dr. Inge's successor (indeed, it is the thing that accounts for his being Dr. Inge's successor) and that is that he is a philosophical thinker of a very high order. Moreover, he is a philosopher who knows that he can be both a philosopher and a Christian. *The Purpose of God* is a Christian thinker's (with an emphasis upon both terms) contribution to the philosophy of religion. It is a reconsideration of the much maligned Argument from Design in the light of present day philosophy and science. Further, it is an essay in Christian apologetics presented in that spirit of "sweet reasonableness" which is bound to impress the thoughtful and fairminded reader. In six excellent chapters Dr. Matthews deals with some of the deepest questions of philosophical theology, but deals with them in a way that every tolerably well-educated man can grasp.

Two books have come to hand from those enterprising American publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons. The first is *God and the Common Life* by Prof. Robert Lowry Calhoun (price 8s. 6d.) and enjoys the distinction of being a Religious Book Club selection—that in itself is a testimony to its high quality. It may be described as an essay in practical theology, for it is certainly theological in outlook and treatment, and it is just as certainly concerned with the practicabilities of common life. Prof. Calhoun expounds the idea of man's work as a vocation. He analyses the classical Protestant doctrine of vocation, and defines and defends a revised doctrine of vocation in relation to the demands of this mechanical and changing world. He considers living minds at work and play and raises the question as to what kind or quality of life men should live in such an age as ours. God's relations with man, and religion as the way of life par excellence are also considered, and the values of work and worship as integral parts of a life-experience that

is a unity are set forth. Prof. Calhoun has given us a book of more than usual worth, and ministers in particular will find much of real value in it.

The other book published by Scribners is *The Renewing Gospel* by Dr. Walter Russell Bowie (price 6s.). It is an expansion of the "Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching" given by the author at Yale University last year. When Dr. Bowie received the invitation to the lectureship he asked permission to deal, not with the technique of preaching, but with "the interpretation of the Gospel which the Christian preacher must needs be preaching in this present time." We may well rejoice that such permission was asked and granted, for Dr. Bowie has given us a worthy and excellent book for which preachers will be truly grateful. There are seven chapters beginning with "The Preacher and the People" and ending with "When the New Prophets Come." Other chapters are entitled "The Jesus that Was and that Is," "Can we Trust the God of Jesus?" "Christian Ideals Confronting a Recalcitrant World," etc. Dr. Bowie knows his own mind, and knows how to express and defend his convictions. He offers to the world not a new Gospel, but the old Gospel in its significance for, and its relationship to, the world in which we live to-day. His book is constructive in tone and outlook, and is well calculated to set forth the worth and truth of Christianity and to enable men to realise that "life makes sense." The preacher will find this a most useful book—even though he may not agree with all that Dr. Bowie writes.

Two books have come to hand just as we go to press—two excellent volumes to which I feel I must call attention. The first is *Philosophy and Faith* by Dorothy M. Emmet (Student Christian Movement Press, 4s. 6d.). Miss Emmet is a lecturer in Philosophy at Armstrong College, Newcastle; she is also a convinced Christian; and she discusses the relations between Christianity and Philosophy in a most suggestive way. It is a book for the ordinary reader, i.e. for the reader who is not overloaded with technical philosophy (and, indeed, for the one who is) and no intelligent reader will be obliged to complain that he cannot understand what Miss Emmet is driving at. For those who are anxious to clear up points of difficulty in the contacts between contemporary speculative opinion and

the bases of Christian conviction this little book may be confidently recommended.

The other book is the re-issue of a work that has already made its way and really needs no recommendation. Just over five years ago Dr. L. W. Grensted gave us his illuminating and stimulating book *Psychology and God*. Now it has been published in a cheap edition (Longmans, Green and Co. 5s.) which puts it within reach of every minister. Dr. Grensted is a religious psychologist of the first order. He is a Christian who is a thoroughly competent psychologist, and not merely a psychologist who is favourably disposed towards Christianity. He is therefore for us a reliable guide, and those who have not yet read his book will now have a better opportunity of doing so. Many books on religious psychology have streamed from the press in recent years, but there are not more than a score—perhaps not so many—that can be confidently recommended to Christian ministers, and Dr. Grensted's work is one of these latter. It is a fitting companion to Dr. Selbie's *Psychology of Religion*.

JOHN PITTS.