

Editorial

GIVE ATTENTION TO READING

IT was to Timothy, the apostolic delegate (or ought we to say *shaliach*?) in charge of the church at Ephesus, that St. Paul gave the injunction, "Give attendance to reading." Commentators are generally agreed that the reference is to the public reading of the Scriptures in divine service, not to the minister's private studies, though it is by no means certain whether the allusion is exclusively to the Scriptures of the Old Testament or also includes the literature of the Christian Church. Be that as it may; for our present purpose we may perhaps be permitted to apply the apostolic dictum in another direction. "Give attention to reading" is excellent advice to any minister of the Gospel in regard to his personal pursuit of sacred learning. And the advice is by no means irrelevant in the case of the modern minister. One has heard of parsons who confess—in certain instances one might almost say boast—that they scarcely open a serious book from one week's end to another. In the case of others reading is too often confined to pamphlets, reports, digests and journals, to the almost complete neglect of genuine theological study.

It is indeed nothing less than a tragedy when a man abandons serious reading when he leaves his theological college—apart, that is, from whatever minimum of study may be necessary to aid him in the preparation of the weekly sermons or occasional addresses. No one will deny that it is all too easy to be overwhelmed with the incessant demands of parochial and extra-parochial activities; but such a situation demands the strictest vigilance with regard to the discipline of time. For a clergyman to admit that he has no time for reading is to confess to dismal failure on at least one level of his ministerial life. It is impossible to resist asking, What are the things of greater importance for which time can be found? When a parish priest can find time for every petty duty and fussy detail of the parochial round and yet can find no time for private study, it is surely not uncharitable to suggest that he needs to overhaul his whole conception of the pastoral office and to inquire whether, as in the sight of God, he is putting first things first. It may seriously be questioned whether such a man is making full proof of his ministry, or indeed whether he is being faithful to his ordination vows. We complain on occasions of the ignorance of the laity. If the truth were told, there is cause all too often to lament the ignorance of the clergy. In any case, is not the ignorance of the laity due in large measure to the ignorance of the clergy—or if not to their ignorance, at any rate to their indolence? One of the biggest needs in the church of to-day is for a genuinely teaching ministry; and a teaching ministry can only be sustained by continuous study. "Give attention to reading" is a watchword that should sound in every minister's ears!

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These remarks may serve to introduce the theme of the present issue of *The Churchman*, namely, that of the Minister's Library. In preparing this number we have had in view more especially the theological student and the young ordinand. This explains the character of the main article entitled "The Foundations of a Minister's Library" written by the Vicar of All Saints', Preston. Himself an omnivorous reader and the possessor of an enviable theological library, Mr. Leatham here draws upon his own experience and seeks to offer some counsel to those who in building up their own libraries are concerned to employ the best kind of materials. His list of recommended volumes (amounting to well over 150 titles in all) includes many of the more recent publications as well as the older standard works which no student can afford to ignore.

The next article is in the nature of a symposium under the general title of "Behind the Study Door." The four papers which make up this feature deal with particular aspects of the minister's reading. Canon J. E. Fison of Rochester offers help on the subject of Bible Study, dealing *inter alia* with biblical commentaries. The study of Church History is treated by the Rev. J. P. Hickinbotham, Vice-Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. The Rev. C. W. J. Bowles, Vice-Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, writes on the subject of Liturgical Study, and the Rev. G. H. G. Hewitt, Theological Editor of the Lutterworth Press, shares some thoughts on the minister's general reading.

Two further articles contribute to the particular theme of this issue. The Rev. P. E. Hughes, Tutor of the Bible Churchmen's College, Bristol, writes on "The Minister and His Greek Testament," and the Rev. Dr. F. W. Dillistone, Professor of Theology in the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass., sends us a welcome note on recent American theological literature.

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We take this opportunity of according a welcome to a new contemporary—*The Scottish Journal of Theology* (Oliver and Boyd, 3/6 net quarterly). The Editors are the Rev. Dr. Thomas F. Torrance of Aberdeen and the Rev. J. K. S. Reid of Edinburgh. The first number (June, 1948) sets a high standard of theological scholarship. In fact, the average reader is likely to find the fare offered him somewhat over-heavy and indigestible. But this is a fault—if it be regarded as such—almost to be expected in a theological journal emanating from Scotland! In any case, it is a good fault, and we have no doubt that the journal will have a salutary effect in promoting theological study, not alone among Scottish readers. It may be added that the outlook of this new quarterly is not exclusively Presbyterian, and that of the writers in the first issue two are Anglicans and one is a Congregationalist.

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