

Writers, although intended as a popular work, is worth consulting. The third chapter of W. T. Cairns's *The Religion of Dr. Johnson and Other Studies* deals with the constituents of a good hymn. *Music and Worship* by Walford Davies and Harvey Grace should certainly be read.

Any student who wants a further bibliography than that which Ratcliff supplies in *The Study of Theology* should consult Maxwell's *An Outline of Christian Worship* and Dearmer's *The Parson's Handbook*.

THE MINISTER'S GENERAL READING

BY THE REV. G. H. G. HEWITT, M.A.

"A person can be 'successful' without books, he can grow rich without books, he can tyrannise over his fellows without books, but he cannot 'see God', he cannot live in a present that is charged with the past and pregnant of the future without a knowledge of the *Diary of our race*." J. C. Powys, *The Pleasures of Literature*, p. 12.

TO enjoy as a hobby what one conceives to be a duty is a happy thing for any minister, but a certain moral difficulty in writing about it is created. It is frighteningly easy to praise as high Christian virtues the things towards which, by temperament and training, we have a natural inclination. I like reading—novels, biography, poetry, almost anything if it is well put together and well printed—and spend time and money upon it which brother ministers spend on photography or carpentry or painting; nor would I willingly miss an opportunity of commending general reading as a hobby to those who, with only a little persuasion, might come to find in it the same refreshment and delight. At the same time, I am increasingly convinced that in contemporary society the Christian minister has a definite duty in relation to literary tastes and standards for which he is uniquely fitted by his office and liberal education. He may often find himself in a position of leadership in a community which is culturally impoverished, and which for a variety of reasons has come to distrust or even to despise books. This new social context issues a challenge at the very heart of his ministry. It is coming to mean that he will hardly be successful in commending Bible-reading to his parishioners unless he has a care for general literature as well. Literature agencies in the younger churches have long realised that a balanced book programme must include general as well as devotional and theological works, and their experience, in this as in other matters, is placing the home churches in their debt to-day. The crisis of our time is cultural as well as religious, and indifference to our traditional culture may well delay and distort a revival of Christian faith. This alone would seem to justify the conclusion that some acquaintance with the literary trends and patterns of our time is part of the minister's job, apart from any inclination he may have to reading as a hobby. But reading under-

taken at the level of an unwelcome duty will seldom stay at that level; and, however undertaken, may be trusted to bring ultimate reward and enrichment to almost every part of a minister's varied undertakings. Having made that bold claim, I must seek to substantiate it in terms of two of those different duties.

(1) First in *preaching*. Looking through a volume of Spurgeon's sermon notes recently, one was impressed by the wide range of quotations he had noted for possible use, particularly those taken from "secular" poems and contemporary biography. They were obviously the fruit of wide general reading. It is true of course that quotations and literary allusions can work havoc with preaching if they get out of hand. Some readers will doubtless remember Dr. James Black's brother minister who "had three dandy illustrations" and was looking around for a text. All the same, illustrations culled from general reading, if aptly used, give "body" to a sermon; and such reading itself provides the best antidote for inept quotation, for it begets a sense of form and fitness in the use of words. Indeed, the indirect value of general reading is likely to be far greater than its direct yield in "quotable" passages or incidents, particularly in these days when the fashion has set against "literary" sermons. F. W. Robertson's sermons are almost barren of illustration, but it is impossible to read them without sensing their superb *literary* discipline. The present fashion of a formless spontaneity in preaching has still to prove itself as effective as the three-point sermons of our fathers, and simplicity has become strangely identified with the undisciplined use of words. It is a useful homiletic exercise to compare and contrast the sermons of Latimer and Robertson (in the "Everyman's Library" edition). Widely as their preaching style differs, one soon detects in them a common element which we so often lack to-day and which it is one of the offices of general reading to supply—a sense of history in the making, a frame of reference infinitely larger than their own experience.

Another office, performed chiefly by the novelist, is to point home the foibles of clergy, particularly in the pulpit. Novelists are often unfair to the preacher, but who would dare to say that their medicine is not salutary? There is a passage in *Barchester Towers* which might have been written for to-day when a much-needed note of authority is coming back into preaching, but not always with the happiest results.

"With what complacency will a young parson deduce false conclusions from misunderstood texts, and then threaten us with all the penalties of Hades if we neglect to comply with the injunctions he has given us; Yes, my too self-confident juvenile friend, I do believe those mysteries which are so common in your mouth; I do believe in the unadulterated word which you hold there in your hand; but you must pardon me if, in some things, I doubt your interpretation. The bible is good, the prayer-book is good, nay, you yourself would be acceptable, if you would read to me some portion of those time-honoured discourses which our great divines have elaborated in the full maturity of their powers."

(2) Second, in *pastoral work*. A valuable point of contact can often be found in reading which is common to the parson and parishioner—the best-seller of the moment, the local paper, one of the popular national dailies or weekly illustrated papers, several of which have a circulation of over a million copies. The parson who takes *The Times* or *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Spectator* or *Punch* and reads no other papers may miss a natural point of kinship with his parishioners, as well as some widening of his own horizons. Many of the popular papers are thoroughly healthy in tone; some are not so. To know at least a few of them may be a great help pastorally. Obviously there are few ministers who can afford to subscribe to more than one daily and weekly newspaper, but half an hour or so spent regularly in the reading room of the local library is sufficient to widen one's acquaintance, and one's very presence there may provide unexpected pastoral opportunities. Most large towns also have Christian Science Reading Rooms, and some knowledge of *Science and Health* and the other literature to be found there may also be counted a necessary part of the minister's equipment for visiting. In almost every parish there are one or two victims of this pathetic fallacy who are really ripe for the full Christian gospel, but they must be met with real knowledge of the literature which has been thrust upon them. The pamphlets of other sects both political and religious find their way readily into many homes nowadays. It is a hard discipline reading some of them, but it is sometimes well worth while. Children's comics, paper-back novels, all the riff-raff of the bookstalls and tobacconist-papershops create another field for investigation. Obviously no one minister can know this field intimately enough to separate the sheep from the goats. But it would be a great thing if, in every rural deanery, it was one parson's job to obtain a specialist knowledge of this class of general literature; for it has a deeply formative influence on the opinions and character especially of young people. "In books dwell all the demons and all the angels of the human mind." This is true of small literature as well as of great, and the Protestant churches have taken no effective action about it since the early tract societies virtually drove the bad stuff off the market by under-selling, and thereby largely created the moral standards of Victorian England. In countries where the Roman Church predominates, *e.g.*, Eire, effective action is taken by means of censorship. In repudiating that method, have we left things too much to chance? This subject cannot be pursued further now. One can mention it only as a field for inquiry and exploration in which the local knowledge of ministers could be most valuable. "To know one's people" is the (often frustrated) desire of every conscientious minister; to know with fair intimacy what they read is no small step towards full knowledge.

Ways and Means. Time and Money; who of us can afford either for general reading? Many ministers fight a losing battle to keep one morning a week for theological reading; and general reading, if it is to be worth while, demands at least as much concentration and freedom from interruption. The price of books steadily increases with production costs, and the choice of books is bewilderingly wide in spite of the paper shortage. These problems seem almost insoluble,

but there are a few things that can be done about them. A third of the annual book budget might be properly devoted to general books, and relations could be tactfully encouraged to give book-tokens as presents. The public libraries have improved rapidly in recent years, and some may be able to supplement these by a subscription to a circulating library. A book list based on reputable reviews will save time both in buying and borrowing; and it also saves time, if you have a poor memory for titles, to keep some pages at the back of a diary for noting the books you have read. Such a list is more useful in commending books to others if the name of the publisher and date of publication are included. A "commonplace book" containing notes of reading, and quotations, can be a source of lasting pleasure and profit. Some specialisation in general reading is almost inevitable, and a good bookshop manager or librarian regards it as a part of his job to keep regular customers or "browsers" informed of new books or reprints in their chosen field. (A short list of recent biographies is attached as a sample of specialised reading.) For full enjoyment of general reading it is useful, almost necessary, to have a few reference books on the craft of writing, printing, and publishing. (A short list of these is also attached.)

All this takes time, and time is more of a problem for most of us than money, now that free library facilities are so widespread and excellent. It is difficult to say anything about making time which is neither pompous nor impertinent. It is no help to say that "we make time for what we think is important," for the problem is precisely, What place *in the scale of competing priorities* should be given to general reading? Here the moral dilemma which was noted at the beginning of this article shows its face again. Is it because I like reading that I stay up reading at night? Would I do it from a sense of duty? What place should pure enjoyment have in the armoury of the Christian minister, and how can it be made safe against self-indulgence? These questions are too intimate and personal to admit of a general answer.

NOTE 1. SOME RECENT BIOGRAPHY (*including reprints*).

Brittain, F.	Arthur Quiller-Couch	Cambridge, 1947
Cecil, David	The Stricken Deer (the Life of Cowper)	Constable, new ed. 1943
Cecil, David	Two Quiet Lives (Dorothy Osborne and Thomas Gray)	Constable, 1948
Lawrence, T. E.	Seven Pillars of Wisdom	Jonathan Cape, new ed. 1940
Mathew, David	Acton : the Formative Years	Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1946
Milne, A. A.	It's Too Late Now ; The Autobiography of a Writer	Methuen, 6th ed. 1944
Moorehead, Alan	Montgomery	Hamish Hamilton, 1946.
Olivier, Edith	Four Victorian Ladies of Wiltshire	Faber, 1945
Oman, Carola	Nelson	Hodder & Stoughton, 1947
Quennel, Peter	Four Portraits (Boswell, Gibbon, Sterne, Wilkes)	Collins, 1945
Sackville-West, V.	The Eagle and the Dove (St. Teresa of Avila and St. Therèse of Lisieux)	Michael Joseph, 1943

Sitwell, Osbert	Left Hand !—Right Hand !	Macmillan, 1946
Sykes, Christopher	Four Studies in Loyalty	Collins, 1947
Ward, Maisie	Gilbert Keith Chesterton	Sheed and Ward, 1946
Wedgewood, C. V.	William the Silent	Jonathan Cape, 1944

NOTE 2. SOME BOOKS ON BOOKCRAFT.

Young, John L.	Books from the MS to Bookseller	Pitman, 1929
Harrison, F.	A Book about Books	John Murray, 1943
McColvin and Revie	British Libraries	Longmans, 1946
Morgan, Charles	The House of Macmillan	Macmillan, 1944
(Various)	Essays Presented to Charles Williams	Oxford, 1947
Montague, C. E.	A Writer's Notes on His Trade	Chatto and Windus, 1930
Powys, J. C.	The Pleasures of Literature	Cassell, 1938

CONTEMPORARY COMMENTARY—(*concluded from page 174*).

minister. Its use would make possible a free interchange of ministers, apparently avoid the awkwardness in South India of the continuance of non-episcopal ministries for a generation, and in making Christians accustomed to intercommunion, bring appreciably nearer the goal of full unity. What, however, is not yet clear, either in the Australian or the Canadian proposals, is how far this procedure is to be adopted voluntarily by individual ministers or to be officially accepted by the churches concerned, all of whose ministers would be required to accept the wider commissioning. The immediate need is for discussion and agreement to be implemented by action.

THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP

The four main articles in the last issue of *The Churchman*, which dealt with the general theme of "The Episcopate," have been reprinted in pamphlet form under the title *The Office of a Bishop* (Church Book Room Press, 1/6). Canon M. A. C. Warren contributes a Foreword in which he well remarks that "what a bishop is and why are the two questions which are most canvassed to-day when Christians meet to advance the idea of closer unity." Most of our readers will probably agree that these essays on the nature and origin of the episcopal office have something positive and constructive to say about these questions and that they comprise a useful contribution to the contemporary debate.