

Thoughts for the Thoughtful

There is no man so sane as the man who is swayed and mastered by the Holy Spirit.—S. D. Gordon. * * * * *

Nothing is more common than our anxiety to reform other people, while we do not even make a beginning on ourselves.—Thomas à Kempis. * * * * *

There never was a religion so dangerous to go half way with as Christianity. When half the world is on fire this is no time for argument, but the supreme appeal is just to make the most of Christianity.—Francis J. McConnell. * * * * *

The best cure for heart-sorrow is ministry to others. God sometimes passes us into the valley of shadow that we may learn the way, and know how to lead others through it into the light. To get comfort, we must comfort with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted. In wiping the tears of others our own will cease to fall.—Rev. F. B. Meyer. * * * * *

"Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." The very word "Son" displays a bond of tender sympathy. "Go work." Inactivity is not permissible in the service of God.—"To-day." This is always the time God fixes for our service. The present is ours, the future is not.—"My vineyard." In every direction vineyard work may be found. Look at self. It requires culture. Those bound to us by ties of nature call for our attention. In short, there is no place where Christian effort can be put forth to which we are not directed by these words.—Dixon. * * * * *

Keeping oneself reasonably happy is a duty that ought not to be shirked. Science is telling us these days that to get out of the habit of enjoyment is to get depressed in vitality and vigour, to weaken in efficiency, and to grow old before one's time. There is nothing like laughter—not empty-headed laughter, but the intelligent, wholesome, kindly hearted kind—to keep people young and fresh and fit for business and the obligations of living. Of course, this is a prescription not easy to live up to always, but there is no reasonable excuse for not trying to do it. Sometimes it is just about as easy to be happy as to be miserable if one makes up his mind to it, and there is no doubt at all as to which pays the best.—Onward. * * * * *

A man recently undertook to justify himself in a conversation with me for abstention from church-going and from saying his prayers. He said, "It seems to me that doing one's duty to one's neighbours as one would be done by is good enough religion for anybody." I told him it was not religion at all, for it has nothing to do with God. Religion is concerned with our relations with God, and to practise religion means to cultivate these relations and get continually into more effectual personal touch with God. "Suppose," I said, "I were to say to my father, 'I love you with all my heart, and, therefore, I am going to do all I can to serve your children, my brethren, but I had rather let it go at this and not be obliged to meet you'; would that be a proper state of affairs? Surely not, and yet it would be strictly as logical as to make the doing to our neighbours as we would be done by an excuse for refusing to enter the House of God and cutting His acquaintance."—Rev. F. J. Hall, D.D., in a leaflet of St. John's Church, Ogdensburg, N.Y.

"Ministers of Christ"

Sermon of Archdeacon J. E. Woodall, preached on May 13th, 1917, at the Ordination Service in the Pro-Cathedral of the Bishop of Moosonee, Cochrane, Ontario.
I. Cor. iv. 1.

THE preacher of an ordination sermon is limited in his choice of a subject. There can be but one subject on such an occasion as this, "The Christian Ministry." But that subject is a fairly wide one, so, lest the preacher should wander over too wide a field, the course of his thought is marked out for him, and the current of his speech must flow in channels between well-defined banks. The Church rules that "there shall be a sermon or exhortation declaring (1) the duty and office of the Ministry, (2) how necessary that Order is in the Church of Christ, and (3) how people ought to esteem them in their office."

(1) "How necessary that Order is in the Church of Christ." The necessity for a regular Order in the Church lies in that word "Order." If our dear old Church of England with all her faults stands for one thing more than another it is for order in her life and worship. No one can read the Book of Common Prayer without coming to the conclusion that the principle which guided those wise men who framed it and drew up our forms and ceremonies, was the apostolic injunction, "Let all things be done decently and in order." There are some who think, and they generally belong to Churches other than the Anglican, that we carry this love of order too far for our own good. They tell us that we are too much tied to forms and ceremonies, by rubrics and episcopal directions, for the free exercise and development of our gifts, and that we do not breathe that atmosphere of liberty which they enjoy in their churches. Our reply is that "Order is God's first law," and among the laws which govern God's universe a primary place is given to the law of Continuity. Those who are able to read the Book of Nature as written in the heavens above, tell us that those heavenly bodies move in space, as wheels within wheels, in the most perfect order, and in accordance with the most inexorably fixed law. And in the earth beneath science has revealed the unity and continuity of law; so that the whole creation is the expression of a most sublime system. It is not strange to find this order written so deeply in God's natural kingdom likewise supreme in His Church. It would be strange indeed if we found it otherwise.

In all well-organized states there are various orders of ministers appointed for their government. Society could not hold together without officers, without rulers, without institutions of some kind. As experience has taught us that for efficiency in worship set days and set places are necessary, so experience has ratified what our Lord in His divine wisdom foresaw,—that the Church could not fulfil her mission in the world without rulers and teachers, without an order of men corresponding to what we find in all organized states and religions throughout the world. It was to supply a real need, the need of order in the Church, that the Christian Ministry, in itself a unity and a trinity, like the three-fold cord which cannot be broken, based on the law of continuity, stretching down through the ages from the earliest days of the primitive Church was instituted as an essential part of the Christian Church.

(2) The office and duty of such as come to be admitted to the ministry. For what does the Ministry stand? What is its nature? The early chapters of this epistle reveal a state of things existing in the Church of Corinth very similar to what we see in the world to-day.

People then, as now, had their favorite ministers on whom they showered their flattering admirations, while they spoke disparagingly of others. Some there were who upheld the Apostle Paul as their ideal minister and shouted "I am of Paul." Others, tickled by the lofty eloquence of Apollos, shouted as loudly, "I am of Apollos." Cephas, too, was not without his followers. In dealing with the question, St. Paul took altogether a higher view of the Christian Ministry. He asked, "Who is Paul? Who is Apollos?" Paul planted, Apollos watered. Both were God's husbandmen laboring together in His vineyard. To change the figure, they were "Ministers of Christ." Yes, we are ordained for Christ. His we are and Him we serve. It is for Him to command and for us to obey. If we are not popular with the world we must remember that it is our first duty to please Christ working "not with eye service as men-pleasers." The "offense of the Cross" is a fact in the world, and the faithful minister will soon discover it. In a railway terminus in London an official was trying to control a holiday crowd. Many were the jibes and jeers heaped upon him. Presently an old gentleman said to him: "Friend, you don't seem to be very popular down here." "No," said the official, "but it does not matter much what they think." Then, pointing up the stairs to the head office in which sat the general manager, he said: "He is up there and it does matter what he thinks." Again, although Ministers of Christ we must not forget that we are the servants of those to whom we minister. In a most inspiring sermon preached by the Archbishop of York at the coronation of our King the preacher dwelt upon the thought that although King and Ruler of four hundred million subjects, he was yet in the highest sense their servant, never ceasing to labor for their welfare. It was a bold, high ideal to set before our King. We know how faithful he has been to that ideal, how by adorning his reign with royal sacrifice and service he has set his subjects an example which they would do well to follow. But the text of the preacher on that occasion carries us to a higher authority and more royal example than that of our gracious King. "I am among you as He that serveth," were the words of "One who came" not to be ministered unto but to serve as a deacon (for such the word means) and to give His life a ransom for many. I would ask you, my brothers, who are to be admitted to the diaconate to-day, to ever remember that the word "deacon" means, "one who serves." Let it be stamped deeply in your mind. Although the lowest office in the Ministry, be not ashamed of it, but rather glory in the fact that you are united in the sacred service of humanity with One who was Himself the perpetual and the pattern Deacon. What ever higher order in our Church you may reach in the future you will never get beyond the order of "one who serves." So much for the nature of the office. As to its duties, they are many and various. No doubt you have pondered them well. There will be your duty as preachers and pastors, in your pulpits and in your parishes; yes, and your duty in private in the Presence chamber and in the study. As one who has been over twenty years in orders, I would warn you, my brethren, that our duty in private prayer, in preparation, although the most important of all our duties, is the most easy to neglect. No eloquence in the pulpit nor energy in the parish can supply the lack of prayer and communion with God. It is the source of our power. That prince of preachers, Mr. Spurgeon, was once taking a constitutional walk along a country road when he lit upon an old man breaking stones on the highway side. After watching the old man hammering away for a few moments the great preacher said to him: "Well,