

BOOKS AND THEIR WRITERS.

WHAT is meant by the term "the Modern Mind"? To some it may suggest Modernism, and conjure up ideas not in any way essentially connected with it. The Modern Mind is a fact which like other facts cannot be ignored. It is the outcome of the intellectual movements of recent years, and its characteristics must be taken into account, especially when we think of the best method of presenting the Gospel to the younger generation. Two Evangelical leaders have faced this problem and have brought out a volume to which I referred in the last number of *THE CHURCHMAN: The Modern Evangelistic Address*. Dr. W. R. Matthews, Dean of King's College, London, whose *Studies in Christian Philosophy* are well known, has dealt with the subject from a different point of view in a course of lectures delivered in New York, and now published under the title *The Gospel and the Modern Mind* (Messrs. Macmillan & Co., 7s. 6d. net). I regard it as a book of special usefulness to preachers, who have regretfully to acknowledge that they have reached the period of life described as "middle age" and feel that they are not as closely in touch with the thought of the generation which has grown up since 1914 as they ought to be. We have to recognize that there is a gulf between the older thought and some phases of this later thought—largely due to the study of the New Psychology, and to the new phraseology it has brought with it. This gulf must be bridged, and Dr. Matthews indicates some of the methods by which it is to be done. For this reason alone it is a book which in my opinion deserves attention from all who wish to make the message of the Gospel effective to the younger thinkers around us.

He begins with an analysis of the differences between our age and its predecessors, and finds that in our scientific age "the word 'continuity' is the key to the modern mind." But the need for the Gospel is permanent. The inner conflict with sin brings with it the need of peace and unity, therefore the modern man needs salvation. He requires to be shown a life that is worth living and to obtain the power to live it. The Gospel of Jesus is "something prior to organisation and institution." It is summed up in the words "the Kingdom of God," which means primarily the rule of

God. This leads to a further examination of what Jesus means for the world. The mystery of Calvary is shown to be central to the Christian message. He finds no foundation for the assertion that St. Paul perverted the simple ethical message of Christ. The threefold aspect of the Gospel is thus summed up: that God has revealed Himself in human life; that the life and death and resurrection of Christ have an eternal significance; and that with Jesus there has entered the world a spirit which can save society and achieve the ideal of brotherhood. The sermons go on to meet objections raised by modern thought; such as "Is God a Projection?"—an outcome of the "father complex." The important subject of personality is discussed in the section "Is God a Person?" The final emphasis is on love which never fails. We may not agree with all that Dr. Matthews says, but we appreciate the value of his study of a series of problems of the first importance for the future of Christianity. The views set out ought to be carefully considered, and more especially, as I have suggested, by those who may be least inclined to sympathize with the modern mind and feel the difficulty of keeping in touch with new modes of thought.

Another book with special appeal to the modern mind is *In Defence of Christian Prayer*, by E. J. Bicknell, D.D., Prebendary of Chichester and Vice-Principal of Cuddesdon College. (Longmans, Green & Co., 2s. 6d. net.) It is described as "A Consideration of some of the Intellectual Difficulties that Surround Prayer," and its aim is "to examine and meet various objections brought against the practice of prayer from the side of science, psychology, and philosophy, which, if admitted, would render prayer intellectually impossible or at least seriously limit its scope." It is intended to help the ordinary educated man or woman who has to face the difficulties raised by some sections of modern scientific and philosophical thought. Those who trouble little about these modern movements will not find much to interest them in the considerations which are reviewed, but the great body of those who are learning to think in terms of the New Psychology will find much in this book to help them to a correct view as to the permanent value of prayer, in spite of objections which may appear to be raised with some force against it. It is part of the constantly recurring problem which faces each generation—how to express the old truths funda-

mental to Christianity in terms of new thought. An opening chapter on the evolution of prayer makes clear several important distinctions, such as those between early religion and magic, and between spell and prayer, but shows that religion tends to slip back into magic and prayer into spell, so that "when Christianity has been weakened by superstition, Masses have been supposed as it were to put a certain compulsion on God." Prayer must be judged by what it is at its highest and best. It has been throughout history the expression of the desire to be at one with the presence behind the world, and must be taken as seriously as any other form of human activity. These general considerations open the way for the explanation of the special character of Christian Prayer. Here guidance is sought from our Lord's example in the garden of Gethsemane, and from the Lord's Prayer. The essential factor is that "All Christian prayer has for its primary aim the direction of desire towards the fulfilment of God's will." The common difficulties are then considered, such as, Why pray when God knows our needs? Ought we to ask for material benefits? Is prayer answered? The following chapters deal with the whole question first from the point of view of modern science and then from those of psychology and philosophy. Here there is much help for those who have felt the problems raised by modern thought. The limitations of science are clearly explained. It can furnish no answer to ultimate questions. Its laws are simply "observed uniformities." Prayer lifts up the individual to a realm of new and great possibilities which falls outside the range of natural science. The various schools of psychologists which treat prayer as auto-suggestion, or God as a projection, or religion as a product of the group mind are shown to fail because they question the validity of all knowledge. They attempt to deal with questions properly belonging to the sphere of philosophy, and these are discussed in a chapter which, after a brief examination of the special features of the latest phases of philosophical thought, states that prayer is one of the facts of experience to be explained and not ignored. There are many to whom this treatment of the whole subject will give just the help that they need.

The Religious Tract Society's Devotional Commentary series is so well known that it does not require commendation. The books of the Bible are treated so as to meet the needs of those who seek

guidance in their spiritual life, and desire to use the Bible as the chief means of their devotional development. The details of scholarship are not for them the chief interest, though the writers of the series are naturally adequately equipped in this respect. Devotional writing of this character requires special gifts, and among those well qualified for this work is Dr. Charles Brown, who has already written on the Epistle of James, and the Epistle to the Ephesians in the series. His latest contribution is two volumes on the Acts of the Apostles (3s. 6d. each), of which the second has just been published. The value of these commentaries can best be appreciated by those who use them for Bible Class purposes or for courses of sermons. The general impression of the life of the early Church can then be estimated, and the importance of particular incidents realized. Dr. Brown, who has a sound knowledge of the extensive literature on the Acts, gives some useful comments on such modern problems as the probable exercise of powers of auto-suggestion or hetero-suggestion in cases of healing. His use of a modern parallel to illustrate the significance of Agrippa's reply to St. Paul, when he says it would have been a far lower stoop for him to become a Christian than for a Prince in our day to don the uniform of a simple soldier of the Salvation Army, is an example of his effective method of making a point clear. I have read the Commentary, practically as a connected narrative, with both pleasure and profit.

The bi-centenary of the birth of John Newton was celebrated last July. Messrs. C. J. Thynne and Jarvis have appropriately published a second edition of their issue of his autobiography under the title *Out of the Depths*, together with some further particulars of his life, some selections from his conversation, and his well-known hymns, including "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," and "Rejoice, believer, in the Lord." I was glad of the opportunity of refreshing my memory by re-reading this account of one of the most remarkable of the great Evangelicals of the eighteenth century. The younger generation of Evangelical Churchmen to-day are probably much less familiar with the lives of the great leaders of the past than they ought to be. The story of Newton's life is one of exceptional interest. In these letters, written originally in the year 1764 to the Rev. T. Haweis, there is the narrative of a series of experiences which led their author to a firm conviction that a special

providence guided his career. As we follow his account of adventures in the slave trade on the African coast and note the various stages by which he passed to the ministry of the Church and finally to the position of rector of St. Mary, Woolnoth, from 1779 to 1807, few will question that he was justified in his simple faith. An interesting feature of his record is the way in which he prepared himself for his work by his study of Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac. His desire to gain as full a knowledge as possible of the Bible led him to these studies—an example which it must be confessed too few follow in these days, when the many calls of a busy life are made the excuse for neglecting the strenuous and often uncongenial duty of study. There is still much inspiration in the records of our Evangelical Fathers.

The recent celebration of the Sixteenth Centenary of the Council of Nicæa has attracted attention to the purpose of that gathering of bishops in the year 325, and the character of its decisions. There are features of Church Councils which are not edifying. We recall the oft quoted saying of Gregory Nazianzus: "I am disposed to avoid every assembly of bishops: for of no synod have I seen a profitable end; rather an addition to than a diminution of evils; for the love of strife and the thirst for superiority are beyond the power of words to express."

However our thoughts turn this year to the decision of the Council in regard to the person of our Lord and its effect on the history of the Church. The Dean of Salisbury (Dr. Burn) has written a short account of the Council (S.P.C.K., 3s. 6d. net) and its decrees which gives in scholarly fashion first the immediate events leading up to the Council, then the actual meeting of the bishops, the creed drawn up and the canons, the later developments and reactions with some general reflections on Councils, Creeds and their critics. Although it cannot be described as a popular account it will be found by students a useful summary of the results of the latest researches of scholars in regard to the origin and development of what is now known as the Nicene Creed.

In marked contrast with a book dealing with dogma is Professor F. S. Peabody's *The Church of the Spirit*, A Brief Survey of the Spiritual Tradition in Christianity. (Macmillan Company, New

York, 7s. 6d. net.) Some of Professor Peabody's previous works have had a wide circulation on this side of the Atlantic, the best known being *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, and *Jesus Christ and the Christian Character*. The present volume is intended as the last of a series of which the two mentioned are the first, and *The Christian Life in the Modern World*, and *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World* the others. The whole form a body of teaching which has secured wide attention here as well as in America. There have been many historians of Christianity as an institution. Professor Peabody desires to outline the history of its Spirit as of far greater importance. Although, as he frankly acknowledges, "it approaches at some points an exposition of the principles known as those of Liberal Christianity," the book is a stimulating account of the "inner inspiration" which is like "an invisible subterranean stream of thought gushing up intermittently through breaches that become larger with the advancing years." It is true that the institutional tends constantly to become stereotyped, and at times requires reformation and indeed revivifying. Here we have some striking examples of this process at work. At a time when the institutional is absorbing almost completely the attention of large sections of Christians it is of great value to have our thoughts directed to the inner power of the Spirit.

The issue of another volume of *The Speaker's Bible* gives me again an opportunity of expressing my high opinion of the series. The present number is the second dealing with the Psalms and covers from Psalms xiv. to I. There is a pathetic little note which reminds us of the loss we sustained by the death of the original designer of these volumes. It says: "This volume completes the material left by Dr. Hastings on the Book of Psalms." Sermons are sometimes regarded as dull reading, with little to attract and retain the reader's attention. The difficulty with these sermon notes is to lay them down. The Psalms always provide topics for practical treatment. Here the general divisions are Guidance, Waiting, Fainting, Charm and Christian obedience, while a special section is devoted to a full consideration of the Shepherd Psalm. Preachers will find this volume a source of inspiration, and a valuable aid to an adequate treatment of any passage chosen. The price of the volume is 10s. 6d. net.