

Seeks To Encourage Love

Instrument of Thy Peace by Alan Paton The Seabury Press, New York, 1968, pp. 124, \$3.50.

The "Peace Prayer of Saint Francis" is universally known and loved:

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is sadness, joy;

Where there is darkness, light.

O Divine Master, grant that I may

Not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;

Not so much to be understood, as to understand;

Not so much to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

This prayer Alan Paton has taken as the starting point for 21 meditations, written, he says, "for sinners, and for those who with all their hearts wish to be better, purer, less selfish, more useful; for those who do not wish to be cold in love, and who know that being cold in love is perhaps the worst sin of them all; for those who wish to keep their faith bright and burning in a dark and faithless world; for those who seek not so much to lean upon God as to be the active instruments of his peace." (p.7) Coming from such a country as South Africa, where

on that point. It is primarily, he thinks, "consenting to an orderliness of life and to a conscription of one's energies and talents. . . . This discipline, even if not extreme, means, negatively, refraining from any unloving or mean or cruel act, and positively, the offering of oneself to be made an instrument of God's peace." (p. 63) Following through on this last idea, Paton ends each of the meditations with a plea for this grace:

Meditation 14—

O Lord, grant that we may not be conformed to the world, but may love it and serve it. . . . May we remember the poor and the prisoner and the sick and the lonely, and the lost and the lonely, and the tramps and vagabonds, and the lost and the lonely, as we remember Christ, who is in them all. And may we this coming day be able to do some work of peace for Thee.

Meditation 15—

. . . As for me myself, make me more joyful than I am, especially if this is needed for the sake of others. Let me remember my many experiences of joy and thankfulness. . . .

If only it could deepen the desire for genuine peace among men, it would be worth reading. If it could, more than that, acquaint its readers with the names and some of the thoughts of men who have been makers of peace it would be good just for paging through it. But the main value would be for those who would read it thoughtfully, prayerfully, meditating in the presence of God on the truth it contains. For special readers Paton has particular passages. For those who worry about the young people who have become "hippies" he has this question: "Are these young people looking for love? If they are looking for love and not just for pleasure, why do they not turn to the Church? Is it because there is some lack in us, some coldness? . . ." For parents who worry about the seeming irreligion of their children: "A Hasidic Story: A father complained to the Baalshem that his son had forgotten God. 'What, Rabbi, shall I do?' 'Love him more than ever,' was the Baalshem's reply."

now skip the last part of it. Soon I shall be closer to you than before. . . . ' To his sister he wrote: . . . Never forget that life is nothing but a growing in love. . . .'"

If there is weakness in the book, it is in the rather abrupt and over-crowded ending. To have quoted widely from Francis Thompson's poem, "The Hound of Heaven" would have been more than enough for one meditation but Paton adds also a strange poem apparently his own composition. This, however, not enough to invalidate the very real value of the book. Seabury Press has done the American reading public a genuine service in introducing them to this spiritual exploration of peace in times. — (Sister Marylian Baird, R.S.M.)

FOR THOSE who have lost loved ones in war,