

Editorial Notes.

The war is at last at an end, both in Europe and in the Far East. We can and should give thanks to God with full hearts that, after nearly six years, fighting has ceased on land, on the sea and in the air, and that the victory has been won by the United Nations and not, as was nearly the case on more than one occasion, by Germany, Italy and Japan. "It is of the Lord's mercy that we have not been consumed." The victory has been ours through the self-sacrificing devotion of those in the armed forces, and those on the home front, through the resolution and skill of our leaders, and through those imponderable forces and unpredictable chances which clearly work in human affairs. These last the man of faith, who believes in the rightness of his cause, dares to relate to the Creator of the universe Himself, and to the principles of its structure and government. But now that the war is over, the peace has to be won. The dread consequences of six years of fighting are evident all over the world, most pitifully in the lands of the vanquished, but in other and in the long run hardly less dangerous forms, among the victors. Mankind dare not relax its efforts to build a more just and stable order of society and an order that shall match the needs of ordinary men and women in every land and the scientific knowledge and mechanical and material possibilities which now are ours. The aftermath of the 1914-18 war, and the circumstances leading up to the conflict just brought to a close, should surely make us all realise how difficult and dangerous are the affairs of twentieth century man.

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All this might have been written had the war in the Far East ended—as it probably would have done within a not very extended period—without the dropping on Hiroshima and Nagasaki of atomic bombs, heralding the release and harnessing by the scientists of the United Nations of the energy that runs the sun. How much these terrifyingly destructive bombs contributed to the date of the end of the war will not be known for a very long time, if ever; it may well become one of the debated questions of history. Whether the bombs should have been used when and where they were is already proving itself a difficult ethical problem, on which the opinions of sincere and morally sensitive men are divided. But the prospects before mankind are so serious that we cannot afford to waste much time or energy on discussing what has been

done. The question is what should now be done? A revolutionary discovery has been made. Vast new forces are at the disposal of mankind. How shall they be used? Atomic force—in the words of the *Times*—"holds without doubt the potentiality of reducing the physical labour needed to sustain life to a small fraction of what is now required, of bestowing undreamed of riches upon all men, of abolishing servile or mechanical toil, and of creating universal leisure for the cultivation of the higher ends of the mind and spirit. All these things are attainable—but are not offered as a free gift. The condition of their enjoyment, that the new power be consecrated to peace and not to war, is a choice set before the conscience of humanity; and in a terrible and most literal sense it is a choice of life and death."

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That moral issues are so clearly recognised as now searchingly confronting the world should be welcomed by the Christian man. His concern should be that he and his fellows are ready to give a lead to bewildered humanity. We hope to hear that the leaders of the Free Churches of this country are giving themselves to this and other urgent moral and spiritual issues, as we hope to hear that a united service for Thanksgiving and Intercession has been arranged in London, along the lines of that which took place in 1918. As the war drew to a close, some publicity was given to another very perplexing moral question. Artificial insemination of the human species is now possible. This again opens up the most bewildering and, to most people, shocking prospects. But the issues involved need calm and careful examination. Beside them, questions connected with the remarriage of divorced persons which are at present exercising Baptists and other Free Churchmen, pale into insignificance. Prejudice, reason and fear do not alone halt changes in this sphere any more than they prevent war. It is reported that the Anglican Church has appointed a strong commission to consider the moral and religious issues of a matter which already presents grave problems to both the medical and the legal professions. Free Churchmen should at once set up a parallel and co-operating commission.

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The death on May 12th last of Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson, Principal Emeritus of Regent's Park College, removes one of the very few British Baptists of this generation known far beyond his own denomination. As an Old Testament Scholar, and as a constructive theologian, he was listened to by all branches of the Christian Church, while the great practical achievement of transferring Regent's Park College from London to Oxford was watched with admiration by many outside our ranks. Nor were these things all. No one man contributed more to modern Baptist

apologetic. Those who dissented from some of Dr. Robinson's views on Biblical and theological questions gladly sheltered behind his exposition of Baptist principles and practices. Elsewhere in this issue will be found tributes to certain aspects of Dr. Robinson's work and character and also one of the last of his occasional writings. Here we note, as is only right and proper, that, next to Dr. Whitley, he was the one who gave the most consistent and generous support to the *Baptist Quarterly*. In season and out of season, both before and after his election as President of the Baptist Historical Society, this publication could count upon his efficient and generous help in matters great and small.

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The new Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Cambridge University, Dr. Norman Sykes, devoted his inaugural lecture to a discussion of "The Study of Ecclesiastical History". He traced in some detail the rather belated establishment of special chairs in Church History at Oxford and Cambridge, and the parallel developments in King's College, London, in Durham and in Scotland. In the second part of his lecture he offered some shrewd and interesting observations on modern developments in this special branch of historical study. The vogue for detailed research on a narrow field, which has characterised recent decades, has meant that there has come an unfortunate decline in familiarity with the classics of historical writing. Over-specialisation has been a real peril. Professor Sykes boldly pleaded for the giving of more attention to post-Reformation developments. "The Church historian is concerned with . . . the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the world; and dispersed also through nearly twenty centuries of history, yet with a vital consciousness of the unity and continuity of its tradition." Dr. Sykes quotes with approval the observation of Professor Powicke that "from one point of view the Christian religion is a daily invitation to the study of history". For those entering the Christian ministry the adequate study of Church history is essential, and not least at a time when certain contemporary vogues in theology seem to adopt a somewhat suspicious attitude to the historical method. Those interested in the history of their own ecclesiastical tradition may draw encouragement from the wise words of Professor Sykes and gain from them the constantly needed stimulus to set their specialised studies against a wide enough background.

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The remarks of Dr. Emil Brunner concerning infant baptism have naturally attracted considerable attention among Baptists. From within the Reformed tradition he says so many of the

things Baptists have long believed, and which they have tried to stress. They hope that Dr. Brunner's searching words will be widely pondered. It is important, however, to give heed not only to criticisms of paedobaptism, but to defences of it. In this connection, we would draw attention to Dr. John Baillie's recently published Riddell Lectures, *What is Christian Civilisation?* Much of his interesting argument turns, as he himself admits, "on the measure in which we believe the Church to have been justified in the principles governing its admissions to baptism in the various periods." Dr. Baillie is a warm defender of "the Christian doctrine and practice of the baptism of families." We should like to hear Dr. Baillie on Dr. Brunner and Dr. Brunner on Dr. Baillie.

A Great Time to be Alive, by Harry Emerson Fosdick. (S.C.M. Press, 235 pp. 8s. 6d. net.)

As far as style is concerned, this is great preaching. The language, the arguments, the illustrations are models of preaching at its best. It is also courageous preaching. Great courage was required to say in New York, or over the radio, some of the things which Dr. Fosdick has here about power politics, isolationism, and the colour problem. Nor does he shrink from confessing what he considers to be the weaknesses of his preaching in the past. As always, Dr. Fosdick is masterful in the way he holds the attention.

British readers will miss, however, the deeper theological note which characterises preaching on this side of the Atlantic. Dr. Fosdick spends little time on doctrinal matters. His concern is with the practical application of Christianity to the issues of a world at war. At times, one wonders if he quite succeeds. To point out the right road to men is not the same as persuading them to take it. Knowledge is not enough. Something else seems to be needed; a compelling, persuasive word of the Lord that is rooted in theology and that springs more explicitly from the Gospel. All the same, no one can read these sermons and continue to think that the Christian faith is irrelevant in the modern world. One could wish that a copy of this volume might be given to every newly elected Member of Parliament.

W. W. BOTTOMS.