

beseech God "to inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity and concord", and to "grant that all they that do confess Thy holy Name, may agree in the truth of Thy holy Word, and (so) live in unity and godly love".

Also, this order of spiritual progress, which begins in loyalty to the truth, and is fulfilled in the love of the brethren, follows the divine pattern for the Church and its unceasing enlargement. "This is His commandment that we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John iii. 23). As we do love one another in this way, the world (those still outside our fellowship) will move towards us. They will and must come by the only possible way into the fellowship, first to share our theology—to believe that God did send Christ—and then by the inspiration and outworking of this faith themselves to share in the life of brotherly love. There is, therefore, no way into Christian unity for either insider or outsider except by the way of loyalty to the Christian theology. Only as we fully believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ shall we fully love one another as He gave us commandment.

---

## Eschatology and Evanston

BY THE REV. F. D. COGGAN, M.A., D.D.

IT was a sound instinct—or may we rather believe the guiding of the Holy Spirit?—which led the leaders of the World Council of Churches to take as the theme of their forthcoming Assembly at Evanston, *Christ—The Hope of the World*. The Assembly could scarcely take place at a time when the commodity of hope was in shorter supply in the world than it is now. Despair reigns. It was typified in a recent letter to *The Times*, in which the writer told of the boy aged eleven who, on being asked what he was going to do when he grew up, replied: "Sir, I need not worry, as by that time there will be nowhere to grow up on". If St. Paul's delineation of the first century world was correct when he described it as "without God and without hope", how true is that description of multitudes of our contemporaries to-day! A world which has largely abandoned the trinity of Christian virtues, faith, hope and love, finds that it can no longer exist on the capital of spiritual wealth inherited from a bygone generation. Spiritual bankruptcy stares it in the face. A great question-mark shapes itself out of the mushroom growth of an atomic- and hydrogen-bomb explosion.

The Christian Church, meanwhile, takes stock. What is to be the special note of its message in such an age? Clearly, eschatology has come to the fore, in a way and with an urgency quite unparalleled a generation or so ago. An age which can comfortably believe in an

Utopian millennium only just round the corner need give but little heed to the wild extravagancies of apocalyptic. For such an age, eschatology may be viewed as a kind of appendix to theology, an optional extra to be taken by those who like that kind of thing. But an age which stands on the edge of the abyss must needs move on from faith and love to at least a consideration of *hope*. What is this thing? Is eschatology after all part of the very stuff, the actual warp and woof, of the Christian scheme of things? We cannot be content with Schweitzer. Will Dodd and his realized eschatology suffice? We may scorn the charts and dates of the sects; but what precisely do we preach on Advent Sunday? or at the graveside? or in the pulpit week by week to people sore perplexed as to the meaning attached by Christianity to the concept of eternal life? And if we must perforce answer that we generally evade these issues, that the horizons of our preaching are far more narrowly bounded than are the Biblical horizons, we must ask if we have not ourselves to blame that some of our churches are strangely empty, while the sectarian conventicles are thronged to the doors. Those who are starved of the sincere milk of the Word may be forgiven if they go to places where they think, however deludedly, that they will receive it.

It is a matter for thankfulness that, in recent months, there has appeared a number of books which deal specifically with the Christian hope. Evanston has no doubt given a fillip to such thinking and writing, and the delegates have much to read before the Assembly opens. But the whole Church will benefit from a revival of Biblical thinking on the subject of hope in particular and of eschatology in general. In this short article, I would mention, in alphabetical order, four outstanding recent publications:

Emil Brunner : *Eternal Hope* (Lutterworth Press, pp. 232, 18/-).

J. E. Fison : *The Christian Hope* (Longmans, pp. 267, 21/-).

H. G. G. Herklots : *The Hope of our Calling* (S.C.M., pp. 82, 4/6).

C. F. D. Moule : *The Meaning of Hope* (Highway Press, pp. 69, 3/6).

Let us glance at the last two first. They both had their origin as Bible readings given at the C.M.S. Summer Schools held in 1953. Both would serve excellently as the basis for group Bible studies. The Biblical references are plentiful—indeed Professor Moule furnishes us with an excellent little “Concordance (believed to be complete) of the Old and New Testament passages in which the word ‘hope’ appears in either the Authorized or Revised Version”; and Canon Herklots gives us a useful series of *Questions for Discussion*. In soil such as this, the roots of our thinking may go healthily down, and from it we may begin to grow the plant of our eschatological thinking.

Little need be said of Canon Fison’s *The Christian Hope*, for it has already been extensively reviewed and quoted. It has been called “an exhilarating study”—and such it is. If at points he is repetitive and the edges of his arguments run out loose, it is nevertheless the genius of Canon Fison to put his finger on the real issues which so many writers and speakers comfortably evade. From the point that *parousia* means both *presence* and *coming*, the writer works out an eschatology which is live enough to stab awake both the Christian who thinks he has got “The Last Things” nicely pigeon-holed in a scheme satisfactory to

himself, and the Christian whose theology has left him little room for an eschatology worthy of the name of all.

A little more should be said of Brunner's great book which appeared some months later than Canon Fison's, and which in some points unwittingly refutes it. (For example, Fison connects the Communist hope for the future expressed in the Marxist doctrine of the last things particularly with Marx's own Jewish background. Brunner, labelling Marx "absolutely a child of the atheistic bourgeois enlightenment", thinks it "naïve" to see "in the utopia of the Jewish Marx a link with Old Testament prophetic Messianism".) Brunner's work is translated by Harold Knight, and, with minor exceptions, especially on p. 7 (? and p. 59), well translated. That in itself is a considerable achievement. The book, as Brunner points out in his "Postscript instead of Foreword", "rests upon the conviction that a Church which has nothing to teach concerning the future and the life of the world to come is bankrupt". Brunner tells how, in spite of intense work on the subject, again and again he felt bound to pause before publication. Then came the death of his son in a tragic railway accident, and the logical problem became for the bereaved father a burning issue of personal life. Hence this "outline of an eschatology" which is one of the great works of one of the greatest contemporary theologians, and also "the fruit of the wrestlings of a simple believing Christian who, assailed by the sorrowful experience of death, has sought the consolation of the Gospel".

The result is a book which again and again has caused the reviewer to stop and think. Brunner's critique of the belief in progress, and of that nihilistic philosophy of despair which followed on the abandonment of that belief; his contrast between the Graeco-Roman "circular" conception of history as eternal recurrence and the Israelite-Christian tradition of history with its beginning and its goal; his analysis of the basis of Christian hope and his insight into eschatology as being central to the Christian faith, inasmuch as "the whole content of the Christian faith is orientated towards the *telos*, the end"—these and a score of other points call for thought and study.

His chapter on "The Last Judgment" should be read more than once. If one is forced to be dissatisfied with the passage in which he confesses to finding in Paul "a theology of judgment which seems curiously self-contradictory", one is impressed by his solemn insistence that, in the New Testament, it is to our Lord and by no means only to the later Church that the concept of judgment is due. Again, "if there is no last judgment, it means that God does not take His own will seriously". Nor will Brunner be bullied into the acceptance of an *either/or*—*either* heaven and hell, *or* universal redemption. "Both aspects remain juxtaposed in their harsh incompatibility. . . . Both voices are the Word of God. . . . Only through this indissoluble duality do we grasp the duality of God's being which yet is one: His holiness and His love. All symmetrical, logically satisfying knowledge of God is death-bringing. Hence the criterion of all genuine theology is this—does it lead to the cry 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' and, beyond it, to the exclamation: 'Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.'"