

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

MANY studies in Christian Ethics have appeared in recent years, but the movements and events of our time call for a continual revision of the treatment of this subject. Indeed it appears to be the most vital subject in theology at the present time. Accordingly, we welcome the appearance, under the name of Andrew R. OSBORN, New York, of a solid, meritorious, and up-to-date volume entitled *Christian Ethics* (Milford ; 15s. net). The book is worthy of a place among authoritative text-books, and gains from the writer's experience both in the classroom and in the pulpit.

The standpoint, method, and aim of the writer may readily be gathered from the following statement: 'Christian Ethics believes . . . that in the lives and the teaching of the prophets of Israel, in the life and teaching of Jesus, and in the lives and teaching of His disciples there is to be found a unique and authoritative statement and exemplification of the principles underlying conduct. Its method is to use the principles discovered from these sources as standards whereby to judge and interpret the facts which it has discovered from its observation of life and its analysis of the process of history. In its inquiry into the moral phenomena of life it uses the method of strict scientific investigation, and welcomes all facts which the moral and social sciences have discovered. Only it does not limit itself to these ; it brings also to its task the results of its own investigation into the eternal principles underlying human conduct as these are

set forth in the Bible. Thus it provides the knowledge and the guidance which our modern world with its lapsed standards of morality needs for its spiritual recovery.'

There has been a tendency among ethical writers to minimize the subject of Christian Ethics on the ground that there is only one true ethics, and Christian Ethics is therefore a question-begging phrase. Dr. OSBORN, who is obviously aware of this tendency, turns the tables on the critics by boldly claiming that the principles of Christian Ethics are in accord with those of scientific ethics.

The first part of the work, which comprises one-third of the whole, examines the foundations of Christian Ethics, and incidentally reveals the writer as a careful and competent expositor of Biblical teaching. The second part, which reveals the writer as a thoughtful and judicious investigator of modern ethical and social problems, applies the principles of Christian Ethics to such problems as war, the State and the individual, marriage and divorce, birth control, work and leisure, capitalism, gambling, propaganda, and compromise.

It is difficult to avoid dwelling in these days on the topic of war when a treatment of it comes under review, and we should like to offer our readers some account of Dr. OSBORN'S chapter on this topic. It begins by sketching briefly the

attitude of the Old and the New Testament to the question of war, but admitting that there is no clear statement in either Testament on the ethics of war, just as there is none on the ethics of slavery. Then the attitude of Christianity in history is sketched, and the urgent need is affirmed, in view of the peace movement that followed the last war, that Christian Ethics shall re-examine the issue in the light of fundamental principles.

There are certain points on which it is not difficult for Christian Ethics to give a clear judgment. Unquestionably the Christian must be peace-minded. Unquestionably also war is brutal and inhuman. But it would also appear that any form of pacifism which merely consists of anti-war sentiment and opposition to military preparedness, is out of harmony with the dynamic spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. 'Better to resist unrighteousness by force of arms than not to resist it at all.' 'If it is clear that by an inert pacifism justice, truth, and right will be defeated, such pacifism is injurious to the moral structure of humanity.'

The Christian thinker should not regard the preservation of peace as the supreme standard of a nation's conduct. True peace is never an end in itself. It is the fruit of righteousness. Nor should the Christian thinker regard the preservation of human life as the supreme standard. If a choice must be made between surrender of principle and resistance even unto blood, it becomes the duty of the State to accept the harsh alternative and maintain the right, even at the cost of war.

While Christian Ethics must rule that the moral principles which justify the State in waging war justify the individual in responding to the call to war service, there is grave danger in applying this general position to particular cases without taking into account all the facts involved. To cite the most patent instance, it is usually conceded that those devoted to the religious life should be exempt from definite military service as soldiers. Also, conscientious objectors receive more consideration if they belong to a body such as the Quakers, who have maintained their principles for centuries.

Dr. OSBORN proceeds to define more exactly the ground on which the general will of the State in its summons to military service may be set aside or modified in its application to individual citizens. It is a difficult undertaking, and not every one will be inclined to follow him here. He makes too much, it might be said, of considerations of capacity and disposition and of allegiance to a calling or to a standard of life.

Finally, it is contended that the attitude of the Church as an organised body within the State must, like the attitude of the individual to the State in relation to war, be decided on ethical grounds. The Church cannot support war as an instrument of aggression. But if the Church is persuaded that a war is necessary in the interests of right and justice, then it can support the State wholeheartedly, always seeking however to catch in the midst of chaos a vision of the righteousness and the eternal law of God. 'When after bitter experience men have learned that righteousness is the only solid basis for human relations, the process of history will be able to record another great advance towards the consummation of the Kingdom of God.'

To aid in the elucidation of moral problems arising from the war, the Student Christian Movement Press has been issuing a series of 'War-time Discussions' which aim at presenting in brief and popular form various aspects of the question. One of the freshest and most helpful of these is *The Call of God in Time of War*, by the Rev. Geoffrey F. ALLEN (9d.).

The spectator, it has been said, sees most of the game. Here is a spectator who looks at this dreadful game from an unusual viewpoint. The writer, who is a teacher in Canton Union Theological College, had experience of a year of day and night air raids, and thereafter being evacuated he has continued his work and wrestled with the issues 'in the remote security of the mountains of West China.'

One merit of his thinking is that it is concrete and grapples with the problem at close quarters. Simply to proclaim generalities is not enough. They may claim assent in Christian quarters but they leave the central issue unanswered. 'If the war is right then the call comes to use all our energies for its support. If the war is wrong, then the call comes to use all our energies as strongly in active opposition.'

Peculiarly unsatisfactory in his opinion is the idea that the troubled Christian conscience can take refuge in the half-way house of non-combatant service. It violates Kant's great moral principle that the rule governing the action of the individual must be capable of universal application. In this case 'if active combatant service is wrong for the Christian, then it is wrong for all, and we should use all our energies in opposition to military service. If military service is right for others, then it is also right for the Christian, and he has no right to shelter himself from the greater cost which others are paying.'

It may throw light upon our problem if we consider the ethic of inter-group relationships. In the monotheism which was first preached by the Hebrew prophets and is fundamental in the Christian faith it is axiomatic that the righteous law of God is binding upon nations as well as upon individuals. No nation can claim to be a law to itself. Such claim is blasphemous and a denial of human brotherhood. In the process of human development we have reached the stage when God's righteous law is embodied, doubtless most imperfectly, in national codes of law by which the individual citizens are bound together, so that each abandons the claim to be judge in his own cause, and admits the right of an impartial system of justice to judge between him and his neighbour. It is implicit in monotheism that this system should be extended to govern international relations, so that the nations of the world should be bound together in one vast community obedient to the righteous law of God.

But we are yet very far from reaching that

ideal. Our immediate problem is to find out what is the best action which a Christian can take in the midst of an imperfect world. 'Here precisely the Christian ethic for individuals may serve as our guide, for the Christian ethic is essentially an ethic for redemption and world-reform in an imperfect world. In individual relationships the Christian Gospel places at the heart the ethic of forgiveness; and we may get a clue for international relationships if we see precisely what this means.'

What is forgiveness as taught and manifested in the gospel? Are we sure that we understand it? If we conceive it as wholly consisting in softness and amiability our conception is most inadequate and unscriptural. Forgiveness, as Emil Brunner has clearly shown, has two sides. 'It is both an opposition toward evil and yet a love breaking through the opposition. It is a No and a Yes. The forgiveness of God means first the No of the wrath of God. There must be repudiation of the sin that needs forgiveness; this is involved in the very statement that there is something to be forgiven. Further, this opposition to evil must last, and make itself felt, until the evil doer is aware and recognizes that his behaviour is evil.'

Forgiveness of the evil-doer is not incompatible with stout resistance of his evil-doing. If we take away from love the capacity for sternness and even for anger, love at once degenerates into amiability. We get the weak, emaciated, ineffective, powerless thing, so fatally characteristic of much present-day Christianity, and so far removed from the mind of Christ. Is it not manifest that in the sphere of human relationships a man may be so softly kind as to become for all practical purposes a nonentity? Just as the charity which is ready to give indiscriminately to every one is sure to be abused, so that gentleness which knows not how to make a stand for right and truth is simply brushed aside in this evil world and held to be of no account. In like manner it is hopeless to expect that a nation by tamely submitting to the aggressor would thereby restrain his violence and turn him to ways of peace. The aggressor would

without doubt attribute such inactivity to lack of manhood, and would rejoice in having found so easy a prey.

There are dangers on both sides. There is the danger that in opposing the evil-doer righteous indignation against the evil may easily pass over into unholy anger. On the other side there is the danger that love may degenerate into a soft and morally flabby amiability. If on the one hand the unholy passion for revenge may parade itself as the vindication of justice, so on the other hand a morally weak and timid spirit may clothe itself with the mantle of Christian charity. If we would be true to the Christian revelation of forgiving love we must hold the balance even. 'As we must continually be ready to be used as the instruments of the grace and pity and mercy of God, so also we must be ready on rare occasions to be used as the instruments of His anger. . . . As in the heart of God, so in the heart of man, forgiveness must be waiting to break through the opposition of evil, the instant there is the first sign that evil is penitent and ready for forgiveness. Yet the fact remains that a love that is true and strong has the capacity for sternness in reserve; and that without this capacity it degenerates into a weak and soft amiability, which is very far from the real meaning of Christian redemptive love.'

In the present controversy a good deal has been made of the contrast between the spirit of the Old Testament and of the New, and it has been assumed that the Old Testament must be left out of account in a Christian argument. But the Church very decisively refused to follow Marcion in his rejection of the Old Testament. It remains an integral part of the Christian revelation, a permanent undertone in the message of the New. No doubt the New Testament resounds with the mercy and grace of God, but it never denies the wrath of God against evil and His righteous judgments upon men and nations.

There is much in the teaching of the prophets of the Old Testament which throws light upon the interpretation of history. They saw how God, the

Moral Ruler of the world, used the nations as the instruments of His purpose, calling at times even nations that knew Him not to be the 'rod of His anger,' and then again, when they overstepped the line, punishing their stout heart. May we not read some such divine purpose in the dire upheavals of our own day? Indeed, if like the prophets we believe that God is the Lord of history, ought we not so to read them? May the war in China not be a judgment on the proud ignorance and corruption of that great people? 'Who shall say that there is nothing of the Spirit of God at work in the Communist revolution in Russia? . . . Who shall say that at first God may not have called Hitler to restore the fallen fortunes of Germany?' And for our own nation, what? 'We hoped in the last war that we were fighting a war to end wars, but we were terribly blind to those Gospel lessons of forgiveness which alone can bring to the world the end of war. Now we are plunged again into the sufferings of war. Who shall say that the lesson is not again true in our time, "Because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed His voice, therefore this thing is come upon you?"'

It is a narrow, dangerous, precipice path which our nation is called to tread. If we believe that we are called to be God's instrument in the vindication of justice, we must give ourselves without restraint to this service, 'yet at each moment we must feel, in our obedience, how terrible a thing it is we are called to do. We must hope and pray that the instant of anger may be short. . . . It may be that this time we may be the instrument of the wrath of God, without saying, "By the strength of my hand I have done it," and without therefore calling down upon ourselves a further judgment from God.' But if ever we are to break the vicious circle of war and counter-war we must understand and live the paradox of forgiveness. 'We must at one and the same time allow ourselves to be the instrument of divine anger and give every energy to the service of our nation in war; and yet we must also preserve the urgent longing to become the instrument of the divine pity, and prepare and pray for the day when we may forgive and love

our enemies, and build with them the supra-national fellowship of world peace.'



The April number of *Religion in Education* contains no fewer than six articles dealing with various aspects of the educational problem at the present time. This magazine is edited, and very well edited, by Dr. Basil YEAXLEE, and it contains normally articles of great value not only for teachers but for all interested in the questions raised by the training of the young. There are few, if any, journals to rival it in its own field. In the latest number Dr. YEAXLEE has gathered a number of authoritative pronouncements which raise some fundamental problems in the all-important matter of Christian education.

We draw attention to some of the questions which are suggested by our present condition and the answers suggested or implied by the writers. Emphasis is, of course, laid on the vital importance of religious education. It was always important, but to-day it is urgently so. Our task, the editor says, is to ensure that the liberties and values for which our generation is fighting and dying are kept alive in the hearts and minds of those young people who are to carry on after. We cannot imagine what the future may hold, but we know that if a Christian England is to be born from the sufferings of the present, the gospel must be presented in all its fullness to the boys and girls of to-day, and in this evangelization the schools must play a vigorous part.

We all agree. It is certain that after the war there will be great changes in the economic and social life of our country. And the main influence that will prepare the future citizens to meet and shape such changes must be Christian education. And that means that worship, religious instruction, the general curriculum and organizations, school life and that of home, church and city, vocational and continued or higher education, and recreation, shall be of one piece, and shall be in conformity with the mind of Christ.

The difficulties in the way of this ideal are very serious. They are dealt with by Mr. M. L. JACKS and others. For one thing, evacuation has threatened to push out the teaching of Scripture. Time is limited in the schools. In many cases two schools share the one school for half a day each. And there is a severe temptation to drop Scripture as a non-essential subject, and to concentrate on the 'three R's.' And further, evacuation may well lead to the weakening of family ties as well as the dislocation of the educational system, with, on both counts, serious loss to the children. No doubt there is another side. Evacuation has led to a closer personal relation between teachers and children, and this does present a priceless opportunity to the teachers. But the negative side is real and serious.

Then there are the intellectual difficulties. These are present to the minds of most of the writers in the magazine. Thoughtful boys and girls will be faced with questions about the relation of New Testament Christianity to war in general and to this conflict. Is the gospel an old wives' tale? Is force the only remedy? Can a Christian fight? And there is the other kind of problem—the social. One headmaster puts this with great frankness. To the younger generation it seems self-evident that if a nation misuses or fails to use its resources in men and material, allows its skilled workmen to fall into demoralization, on the grounds of some economic necessity of which they do not see the force, lets its land go sour, destroys its timber and flings back into the sea the harvest of food which, if it cannot be sold, might be given to those in need, that nation is hard put to it to justify its existence.

And there is a problem which stands by itself—the class cleavage in education. This has been surmounted largely in the universities. State and county scholarships have brought many boys to Oxford and Cambridge, and to the more democratic universities of Scotland. There they have held their own and passed to posts of importance. But in the schools there is a different story. Here there is a wide gulf between the children of the wealthy educated at expensive schools up to the age of

eighteen, and children of the less well-to-do leaving the elementary school at fourteen and plunged at once into the business of life. And it is a matter not only of years spent in education, but of the whole quality of the education for mind and character alike.

Mr. Middleton MURRY (in *The Price of Leadership*) has pointed to one result of this contrast. The 'public school' education trains *leaders*. Mr. MURRY says that the lack of leadership is the present weakness of the Labour party which ought to play a big part in the changes to come. And this alone shows that the abolition of the Public School type of education would be a national disaster. What is needed is not to destroy the Public Schools but to make them accessible to all. And this, says Dr. Cyril Bailey, who writes on 'The Schools and Christian Democracy,' can only be done by bringing the Public Schools into the national system under the Board of Education.

We have been pointing a finger at some of the questions raised by the interesting articles in *Religion and Education*. Let us glance at some of the positive suggestions in the same pages as to what should be done. Mr. JACKS singles out for emphasis what must seem to experienced Christian teachers a point of the greatest moment. He says 'let us stick to the Bible and remember that *we are teaching not history or literature, but religion.*' The italics are ours, and we use them because we regard this saying of a very successful and experienced teacher as containing the First and Greatest Commandment in religious education.

Many teachers delude themselves with the idea that if you teach the 'facts,' these 'facts' will somehow have a magical influence in producing religious results. But the Scripture 'facts' are the incidents *plus their meaning*. The mere history or literature of the Bible is not more religious *in itself* than the history of Britain or English literature. What makes it religious is its significance, the message of God's will for us, in it. We shall never have religious education in our schools till the teachers get over to the children the divine reality in the Bible, the 'Word of God.'

The second suggestion of Mr. JACKS is that we should teach the reality of the living God, the God with a purpose, the God who not only did things but does them now. 'Boys and girls to-day are acutely conscious of the senselessness of things, and they, even more than adults, ask that sense should be made somewhere. It can be made in this conception of God, and it can be made in no other way.' But even more vital is the fact that this truth illuminates the failure of mere humanism, which is largely responsible for bringing our civilization to its present pass. Nearly every religious writer of note has lately been emphasizing this bankruptcy of humanism. It has been thoroughly tried. It has had a long innings, and it has been shown up. The very disasters of the present are a fresh opportunity for teachers to teach the reality of God and His sovereignty.

Finally, Mr. JACKS deals with one of the most serious of the intellectual problems that face children to-day: Can we worship the Prince of Peace and at the same time take part in a cruel war? Mr. JACKS has a rather unexpected answer to this. He directs attention to the kind of peace of which Jesus was the Prince. 'My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' That is the 'peace that passeth understanding,' which may be won in the midst of conflict, and which may sometimes be won in no other way. It is something that has to be made every day, that demands activity and as much vigour and courage and self-devotion as the making of war demands. By peacemakers Jesus meant not those who sign treaties, but His soldiers who are enlisted in a great warfare. If the generation now at school is ever to achieve a peaceful world, it must think of peace in terms of active service.

This does not dispose of pacifism. And Mr. JACKS admits that we must go deeper. His final answer to the question is that a man's duty is what he owes to God, and the test of his duty is whether he can bring it into the presence of God and still feel it right. Even this may not be an answer. But it gives us something better than an answer. It points the way in which an answer may be got.